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social sciences

Disabling practices

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Abstract: Following Foucault's theory of discourse this article aims at reformulating the established concept of disability. To this end, the author reconstructs ways in which disabling practices of subjectivation occur in and through public media discourses. The article focuses on the discursive production of infantile identities in people with cognitive disabilities. The examples demonstrate that this discursive production occurs in self-representational media formats and in outside media representations. Hence, the author develops a concept of disability as a discoursively produced ordering category, from which follows a reformulation of the disability concept. This reformulated concept, which grasps disability as discourse disability, allows in turn for a perspective on disability as practice and thus as independent from the subject. To conclude, the article discusses implications of such a perspective of disability for pedagogy and the social sciences, ultimately arguing for a broader definition of disability and for making respective benefits a matter of social pedagogy.

Subjects: Social Sciences; Disability Studies - Sociology; Education; Cultural Studies; Media & Film Studies; Disability

Keywords: discourse; disability; Foucault; disability studies; media; SNE

1. Approach

While questioning the difference between being disabled and becoming disabled is not new, the issue has gained currency in the context of pedagogical and socio-political debates on inclusion. This contribution sketches a basic discourse analysis in order to exemplarily develop the thesis that disabled identities are discoursively (re)produced. Ultimately, the paper at hand identifies a central problem, namely that disability-specific knowledge constitutes disability as an ordering category. Along the discourse analysis of the (self-)representation of people with cognitive disability, the author

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The paper at hand discusses the representation as well as the self-representation of people with cognitive disabilities in public media. The most important result of the studies referred to is, that almost every coverage und presentation of people with cognitive disabilities is in a way child-like. These so-called infantilisations lead to infantile identities of people with cognitive disabilities and the picture of cognitive disability as "eternal childhood" seems to be reproduced continuously. In consequence the paper offers a different understanding of disability, which focusses on "becoming disabled" instead of "being disabled". This understanding is deduced from a Foucauldian understanding of "discourse".

challenges the seemingly matrimonial link between disability and subject by way of construing disability as practice, which may potentially affect anyone—including those who already qualify as people with disabilities and those who do not. Following this, the primary purpose of the paper is to show, how disability is executed as a practice. Finally, the author discusses the ramifications particularly for the relationship of special needs pedagogy and social pedagogy.

2. Concept of discourse

The human and social sciences frequently invoke the concept of discourse, often without further qualification, but rather as already part and parcel of everyday language. However, "discourse" is likely the term which has "perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory" (Mills, 2004, p. 1) so that its actual meaning remains relatively vague. Aside from use in specialized academic contexts, "discourse" is also present in common speech. Social sciences have differentiated the term since the 1960s in various ways. Accordingly, one may refer to a pluralism in meanings of the concept of discourse.

The social sciences generally conceptualize "discourse" as "the production of social meaning, understood as the symbolic-linguistic representation, mediation, and constitution of social objects in communicative processes" (Nonhoff & Angermüller, 2014, p. 82).[1] The concept of discourse might thus be read in two ways. On the one hand, discourse signifies the dimension of the symbolic; on the other hand, it is to be understood within a framework of a historical specificity, in a sense of a thematic context of communication (Lemke, 1995, p. 6).

This contribution follows Michel Foucault's conceptualization of "discourse". Throughout several of his works, Foucault dealt with the concept of discourse, which accordingly underwent continuous transformation. Thus, a case can be made that there is not "the" Foucauldian concept of discourse; although in light of underlying, argumentative chains said transformation might, at least in part, be interpreted as incremental differentiation. "Despite the clearly delimited discourse function in Foucault's work, a certain fuzziness is attached to the term" (Ruoff, 2007, p. 17).[2] The Foucauldian concept of discourse seems promising in a twofold manner for the context at hand: first, intrinsically by way of theorizing changeability of discourses and thereby also implicit definitions of disability as well as practices of disability. Second, the exemplifying character of Foucault's treatments about discourse appears thematically fruitful, since Foucault describes the discourse and its emergence, reproduction, power, and changeability in the context of society's treatment of people, who were considered "insane" (in that sense also "cognitively impaired"). Thus, the example of formation of the Foucauldian discourse itself might well illustrate the transformation of the construction of cognitive disability.[3]

Foucault identifies discourses as "the group of statements that belong to a single system of formations" (Foucault, 1992, p. 107). In this context, discourses should not be treated "as group of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe" (Foucault, 1992, p. 49).

Thus, the discourse surrounding society's dealing with people with cognitive disabilities amounts to more than what is being said about it. A discourse is more than the sum of its part—it has a certain (executive) force. Consequently, discourses are considered as "practices" (Foucault, 1992, p. 49). Concretely, this means that society's discourse around people with disabilities exerts a certain force on the allegedly disabled subject and others.

At this point it should be noted that Foucault derives the significance of power in discourse from procedures of exclusion—particularly since discourse is not simply present, but a place of authorization (Foucault, 1972, p. 216f). Discourse is that of which and through which one fights; it is power, which one seeks to appropriate (Foucault, 1972). In this context, Foucault understands "power" legally. Later, he distances himself from this definition of power, which is given "externally" and delineates "power" as procedural element within discourse. "Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable Points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, 1998, p. 94). "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1998, p. 93). "Power" is then not simply given, but occurs via practices of authorization within discourses or as the case may be within different discourses.

Hence, what is said in discourse (for instance, the depiction of people with disabilities in the media) generates a certain mode of thought, a perspective on disability as well as people with disabilities. This is not to question the ability for reflection among subjects participating in discourse. Nonetheless, it should be clear that the collective as well as each individual "perspective" are determined by certain parameters.[4] This force of discourse also manifests itself in that one may speak of a jurisdictional paradigm regarding care for people with disabilities. This paradigm, in turn, addresses certain institutions and subjects as accountable experts in the domains of care and accommodation for people with cognitive disabilities (Trescher, 2015a, p. 304). By way of this addressing the discourse around care deploys its force on the subjects (who themselves generate the discourse) and (re)produces them as specific authorities for the object or as the case may be the handling of people with cognitive disabilities. This is to say that "thematic emphases" as well as perspectives on the matter might well adapt to the discourse, but might also affect it. In this context, one might invoke the so called paradigm change within special needs education. Accordingly, the principle of normalization was introduced as parameter into the discourse towards the end of the 1950s (Mürner & Sierck, 2012, p. 69). Since the 1970s, however, paradigms of integration and inclusion emerged, so that the principle of normalization diminished somewhat in its discursive force and presence. Today the social science discourse on special needs pedagogy is visibly marked by "inclusion" rather than normalization. A plethora of publications and studies referring in one way or another to "inclusion" indicate this development rather clearly. Hence, discourse is contingent (changeable). This changeability would then also extent not only to the discourse around the living conditions of people with disabilities, but also to the construction of "disability" itself.

The discourse regulates, who is "discourse-able" and thus allowed to "speak" in it. "[N]one may enter into discourse on a specific subject unless he has satisfied certain conditions or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so" (Foucault, 1972, p. 224f). To illustrate this, Foucault uses the example of the madman, whose word is deemed irrelevant within the discourse (Foucault, 1972, p. 217)—which today might well apply to some people with (cognitive) disabilities, whose needs might hardly be "heard" within a care apparatus (see for example Trescher, 2015a, p. 143ff; 2017a, p. 180ff; 2017c). It is, thus, externally stipulated that "the madman" may not actively participate in certain discourses, by way of denying him the possibility to (co)alter discourses. In this context, Foucault references the disenfranchisement of affected persons. Even today, this applies to some people with cognitive disabilities in Germany; in some circumstances, these people might not be eligible to vote[5] (see also Trescher, 2013a, 2013b). Such practices "function as exclusionary practices" (Seifert, 2013), as Foucault genealogically derives them, for example, from the systematic exclusion of lepers (Foucault, 2013a, p. 64ff). This exclusion involves negotiating what may be said in the discourse, who may speak, and ultimately acting on that basis (see Foucault, 1972).

Aside from these external rules of exclusion, Foucault describes "internal rules" (Foucault, 1972, p. 220) of exclusion. These are, in other words, those powerful intra-discursive processes, through which discourse or discourses regulate themselves and among themselves. This occurs "with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution" (Foucault, 1972, p. 220). For the purposes at hand, the exclusionary procedure of classification is particular interest, since it is manifest in various

empirical results, for instance in the context of living conditions of people with disabilities in total institutions (see in this regard Trescher, 2015a, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). Accordingly, these institutions display a "caste-like split between staff and inmates" (McEwen, 1980, p. 157), materializing the classification of people in the institution into two separate "casts".

These extent remarks to the Foucauldian concept of discourse have been necessary due to the aim of developing a reformulated concept of disability (see Section 5), which is the primary purpose of the paper at hand. The following, then, exemplifies how discourses, specifically media discourses, present the object of "cognitive disability". Referring to this, the link between the above exposed understanding of discourse and media theory is, recurring to a Foucauldian understanding of media as public discourse, represented.

3. Disability as a practice in media discourses

Discourses produce representations of objects, persons, and circumstances, which impact public perception and contribute towards the forming of opinions. That is why talking about discourses is always talking about media discourses, too (Fraas & Klemm, 2005, p. 5). In this context, media can be understood as stages for public discourses, which perform certain orchestration of its respective object.

Foucault doesn't develop an explicit understanding of "media" in his work but is "sensible for media-related characteristics" (Ernst, 2004, p. 241). He doesn't ask about the "being" of phenomena, not about the representation of the real (Weibel, 2004, p. 141), but about the power, that constitutes this "reality" (Weibel, 2004). Using the example of film Foucault explains how media governs the public discourse (Foucault, 2013b, p. 129ff). He states that in this manner, film (and media in general) has a certain power (Foucault, 2013b). Media, as other representations, are "the birth place of symbolic orders that represent most effective systems of power" (Foucault, 2013b, p. 142). Therefore, his "analysis of power would be updated as anatomy of media" (Ernst, 2004, p. 241). According to this an analysis of media as public discourse is an analysis of "discourse practices communicated through media" (Barth, 2005, p. 9).

One example for such an analysis is a study which examines the influences of a well-known British television sketch show and its characters, a man in a wheelchair and a man with cognitive disabilities, on the public view on disability and related themes (Montgomerie, 2010). The author develops the idea, that this satirical view on disability can "draw attention to contemporary discourses of disability. [...] it questions the social expectations of the compliant disabled person" (Montgomerie, 2010, p. 101). Ultimately she comes to conclusion that the television show "inverts the power and authority of the 'normate'" (Montgomerie, 2010). This analysis of fictional media is opposed to non-fictional media, as in the analysis of the representation of autism in the French press (Vallade, 2016) or of sport photojournalism and disabled athletes (Lebel, Marcellini, & Pappous, 2010). The discourse analysis of autism in the French press reveals that two guiding schools of autism-therapy are predominant with the result that "the theory of the public problems shows that the public problem of autism, as it is presented today, leads to obstacles against other ways of thinking and acting" (Vallade, 2016, p. 275). This shows, again, very clearly how powerful discourses and discourse practices are. The public "image" produced in turn results in respective practices. In light of these short abstract about studies examining the power of media discourse and in light of the following discussion of studies of (self)representation of people with disabilities in public discourse (Trescher, 2014, 2015b, 2016) this means that we may expect media representations of people with cognitive disabilities to affect the way a public engages with cognitive disability.

People with cognitive disabilities are hardly able to publicly represent themselves, but are rather excluded from "authorship" (see Foucault, 1972, p. 221f) and are represented through others. This lack of authorship in media discourses already describes one exclusionary practice. One of the few media formats that enabled people with cognitive disabilities to represent themselves was the magazine "*TOLL—Magazin für Wundertage*".[6] The following section *Self-representation of people with cognitive disabilities in the public media* elaborates on this self-representation of people with

cognitive disabilities. Thus, the section explores the (self)construction of subjectivities of people with cognitive disabilities.

What is also at stake here is the extent to which representations of people with cognitive disabilities, for instance in common magazines or newspapers, contributes to a (re)production of practices specific to disability—one might here recall the image of people with disabilities as "the eternal child" (see also Trescher, 2013a). In this regard, the section *Representation of people with cognitive disabilities in the public media* traces how people with cognitive disabilities are (mis)represented concerning their public portrayal in the general media.[7]

The following table offers an overview of the studies presented respectively considered in the theoretical discussion of this paper:

Study	Material	Research question	Method
Self-representation of people with cognitive disabilities	Magazine "TOLL—Magazin für Wundertage" in which people with and people without cognitive disabilities write articles	*How do people with cognitive disabilities represent themselves?*	Qualitative reconstruction (objective hermeneutics[a])
Representation of cognitive disability	20 print and online media in the areas of "quality press" (daily/weekly newspapers), "tabloid press" (e.g. *Brigitte, Super Illu*) and "magazines" (e.g. *NEON, Spiegel*)	*How are people with cognitive disabilities represented?*	Qualitative reconstruction (objective hermeneutics)

[a]See Oevermann (2002).

3.1. Self-representation of people with cognitive disabilities in the public media

The study "*Toll—Magazin für Wundertage*" (Trescher, 2014, 2015b, 2016) examined the magazine of the same title as a medium of self-representation of people with (cognitive) disabilities. An impact study of the magazine was conducted by way of multi-layered and multi-method research setting. Three empirical phases served as a way to explore the potentials of the magazine. The magazine itself was examined in the third empirical phase through sequence analysis according to the procedures of objective hermeneutics (i.a. Oevermann, 2002; Trescher, 2015b). These procedures allow uncovering the objective sense of the protocolled life practice (Trescher, 2015b, p. 145). The methods aim is to carve out regularities that show which of them are leading for decisions made in life practices. These find, ultimately, embodiment in the practice of action. Though the objective hermeneutics main assumption is that every action underlies an objective sense, because action is based on universal rules (Kraimer, 2010, p. 207). Latent sense-structures are hence manifested in every embodiment of life practice—also in a magazine.

The study of the magazine itself shows that it has no recognizable layout. There are no columns or a trending theme, which guides through the magazine. On some points, the magazine irritates, for example because the authors texts aren't grammatically corrected and thus sometimes have plenty of spelling mistakes. On the other hand it offers content that cannot be found in other magazines or newspapers and hence allows a different view on topics.

But the study also revealed that people with cognitive disabilities portray themselves as rather infantile or as the case may be youthful (Trescher, 2016, p. 45). The question arose, to what extent such a voluntary representation of adults with cognitive disabilities is itself a result of a mature decision or rather a consequence of practices which generate infantile identities discursively (Trescher, 2015a, p. 211f; Trescher & Klocke, 2014, p. 291). This infantile, that is to say not adult-like, staging is exemplified in the article "I am James Bond" (Gerlach, Tietjen, Plomitzer & Nast, 2011, p. 8f). The two authors (both in the mid-20s) also posed for the title cover on which they appear like children who dressed up; their suits are too large, their hands mimic guns. The article, like so many others, demonstrates that the central questions prompting the editors are by and large in regards to the adolescence. Thus, one recurring theme in these self-representations is "coolness". As one author writes, "I wear my hair like James Bond. It's cool" (Tietjen, 2011, p. 9). Juvenile boasting and almost childish omnipotence make

up the magazine's content aside from being in love, sexuality, or parties (from a rather pubertal perspective). A contribution of a 40-year-old author clearly supports this finding: "I, Gundi, imagine that I invite 20.000 guests to my party and celebrate with them until 10:30 in the morning" (Breul, 2011, p. 17).

Further media in which people with cognitive disabilities represent themselves cannot be referred to, because they hardly exist. The phenomenon of "cognitive disability" is generally marked (to the extent that it occurs at all) by representation through people without (cognitive) disabilities.

3.2. Representation of people with cognitive disabilities in the public media

The research project "Representation of cognitive disability" analysed print and online media (with an emphasis on heterogeneous target groups) with regard to their portrayal of people with disabilities. As well as in the study of the self-representation of people with disabilities in the magazine "TOLL" the procedures of objective hermeneutics were used to detect the objective sense of the articles' representations of people with cognitive disabilities. The project explored a total of 20 print and online media in the areas of "quality press" (daily/weekly newspapers), "tabloid press" (e.g. *Brigitte, Super Illu*) and "magazines" (e.g. *NEON, Spiegel*) using methods of sequence analysis. Object of the sequence analysis were the last four articles of every magazine that thematised people with cognitive disabilities. The analysis focused on the question of how people with disabilities are depicted in the respective media. The research suggested that portrayals of people with cognitive disabilities vary considerably among the consulted media. Even within media samples the image of "cognitive disability" is differentiated and cannot be distinctly delimited.

Only one out of the 80 examined online and print media articles portrays people with cognitive disabilities as autonomous subjects and as distinctly non-childlike. Some representations depict people with cognitive disabilities as "uniquely normal". Through emphasizing the "normality" of the people with cognitive disabilities, the distinguishing category "cognitive disability" ossifies. This is evinced in those articles, in which "normal" performance of people with disabilities is highlighted as "special". These contributions tend to point out that "despite" their impairment the affected are "even" able to carry out a certain task. Thus, *Bild* runs the title, "TV-Star Despite Down-Syndrome" (Brockötter, 2012) and thereby accentuates the category of "disability", which in a way was overcome and thus made possible a "uniquely normal" career in television.

Alternatively, the article "Down Sports Festival with Record Attendance" (Becker, 2015) celebrates the accomplishments of participants in a trial for people with disabilities by ultimately awarding everyone a medal (Becker, 2015). Thus, the athletic competition is carried to an absurd extreme. For the addressed people with cognitive disabilities a different norm is settled and that (again) manifests a difference between people with and people without disabilities. Concerning this matter, the critical question asked by Schantz and Gilbert (2012) "does the Paralympic movement serve the struggle for justice and equal treatment for people with a disability?" (p. 358) should be discussed. In this context, the fundamental question arises whether the differentiation in categories (for example sex, age or, as the case may be, disability) is appropriate and plausible. This question affects particularly the field of sportive competition and is also reflected in the coverage about it, as can be seen in the results of the study represented in the paper at hand (see also: Lebel et al., 2010). The attempt to portray people with cognitive disabilities as "normal"—keen on sports and performance-oriented—results mostly in the construction of an image of said people as "uniquely normal".

Yet other articles present people with cognitive disabilities as pitiable and their "cognitive disabilities" as a heavy cross to bear. They repeatedly stress that relatives suffer from the "cognitive disabilities" of their child/sibling etc., but that in spite of the challenges in their everyday lives, they pull through. While subjectively this might be correct, it objectively[8] construes the person with cognitive disabilities as a "burden". An instance of this can be seen in an article of the *Bild* newspaper, in which the 11-year-old sister of a girl with cognitive disabilities is called a "hero" (Anonymous, 2015),

because she cares for her sister. The article puts disability in the spotlight; the whole coverage is focussed on that. Disability and the caring for the sister with disabilities is the main characterization of the siblings' relationship. So their relation is construed as affected by the disability of the sister with disabilities. Hence, the coverage reproduces disability as a "personal tragedy" (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 118) and takes part in reducing the subject of the girl to an alleged incontestable fact.

These examples show the scope of public representation of people with cognitive disabilities and illustrate the extent to which representations of cognitive disability are contained within "blurry lines" (Reckwitz, 2008). Despite these different "disability images", which should of course be problematized respectively, the research indicates a common core among representations of people with cognitive disabilities. It was revealed that virtually all articles analysed portray people with cognitive disabilities in one way or another, as lacking or childish. Indeed, all contributions, independent of trajectory and target group of that medium, engage in infantilizing modes of representation. In this context, infantilisation means that the represented people with disabilities are not represented as the adults they actually are. People with disabilities are often not seen as powerful and able to self-determinate. They are construed as persons that need care in every part of their lives and are therefore in no part of their lives independent from (professional) carers. This (re)produces the image of the not ageing, always childlike person with disabilities. This "eternal childhood" (Trescher, 2013a) is reproduced in the representation of the analysed magazines.

One instance from an article shall highlight the infantilizing practice of representation. "*Cognitively disabled Andre F. (21) of Waltrop never arrived at home*" (Anonymous, 2014)—reads an article's headline of online media "*Bild.de*". The article, which obviously constitutes a missing person's report, uses the category of "cognitive disability" as the missing person's central characteristic positioning it in front of the name. Although the missing person is 21 years old, we only learn their first name, which is rather unusual in missing person reports, since, at least with missing adults, a first and last name is generally provided. This denial of adult status infantilizes missing Mr. F. As a consequence, should a reader encounter Andre F., he or she would be unable to address him in an adult manner and instead would have to refer to him by his first name, which is a rather unorthodox practice among adult strangers. Such unreflecting practice of addressing people with cognitive disabilities informally can be witnessed in many, even professional, contexts. The problem lies in the reproduction of the infantile subject status of the affected.

The missing person report continues as follows:

> Where is Andre F. of Waltrop? The 21-year-old cognitively disabled Andre F. left his place of employment in Datteln at 4 PM on Monday and has been missing since. The young man wanted to take bus line SB 24 from Neumarkt to Waltrop. He never arrived at home though. Andre acts reticently towards strangers and does not initiate communication. (Anonymous, 2014)

Two aspects here are worth noting. To reconstruct the report soundly, one has to assume that Mr F. lives under rather guarded structures. Nothing else can explain the fact that a missing person report is released within just a few hours after his "disappearance". In everyday life practice, it is hardly unusual for working young adults not to directly go home after work. Rather, it is a matter of routine to pursue recreational activities or to meet friends. In the case of Mr F., however, it is well-known which bus line he uses and when he arrives at home. Any deviation from this schedule is considered a potential crisis and results in quasi-automated responses, such as issuing a missing person report. Thus, Mr F. is construed as a victim. It is alleged that he is helpless and in need of protection. It seems unlikely that Mr F. voluntarily and autonomously decided not to embark on his way home. The construction of Andre F. as weak and in need of protection is infantilizing and extends applies to the

entire report. A second aspect to note corroborates this notion. Accordingly, the pointer that Mr F. does not actively engage in communication is only worth mentioning in the context of "cognitive disability", since it is quite common not to approach strangers unwarranted. The construction of Mr F. as dependent on help is thereby further materialized.

Overall, as the above paragraph briefly suggested, representations of people with cognitive disabilities in the media are primarily infantilizing. People with cognitive disabilities are predominantly depicted as childish and in need of guardianship. This discursive representation can, respectively will, lead to a certain view on persons with disabilities in society, which in turn result in specific practices. The picture construed in media discourses ossifies, through the certain power of discourses, and so manifests disability as an infantilizing, dependency-(re)producing category.

4. Disability as an ordering category

The above excursus of two studies aimed to show how the (self-)representation of people with cognitive disabilities (potentially) leads to "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1992, p. 49). The studies show, that people with cognitive disabilities are not depicted in one particular way, but that all practices of representation, independent of whether self-representation or representation through another party, share a common denominator—childishness. Childishness is generated discursively through media, as the examples suggest. The detailed explications of Mr F's missing person report were meant to illustrate how media produces practices of dealing with people with cognitive disabilities. The above media representations of people with cognitive disabilities, to the extent that they are represented at all,[9] reproduce an image and understanding, which is (mediated through practices) seemingly adopted by the affected themselves, as indicated by the above summarized analysis of the magazine "TOLL". Thus, the infantile representation becomes a disabling practice itself manifesting a discursively generated organizing category (see Trescher, 2015a, 2017a, 2017b; Trescher & Börner, 2016).

The subject labelled as "disabled" by way of categorization is subsequently unable to escape the constituting public gaze and largely remains fixed on an identity determined by society. People with cognitive disabilities are subject to far-reaching discursive practices, "which considerably influence the subjectivation of respective persons. The label of 'cognitive disability' becomes the 'pivotal element' of identity formation and in many ways leads to practices, which in turn contribute to the development of a corresponding (cognitively disabled) subjectivity" (Trescher, 2015a, p. 295; see also Trescher & Börner, 2014, 2016; Trescher & Klocke, 2014). Thus, disability, consistent with Foucault's concept of discourse and the forces of subjectivation in discourse (see Foucault, 1972, 1992), becomes an organizing category, which is discursively produced and through which ultimately emerge "norms that lead to societal practices of inclusion and exclusion" (Rösner, 2014, p. 9; see also Trescher, 2017a, 2017b). Among other things, such practices occur along mechanisms of "classification, ordering and distribution" (Foucault, 1972, p. 220) described by Foucault. The subject marked as disabled "is the performative effect of discursive and institutional practices, which produce self- and external perception of a group of individuals by way of a dense web of ascriptions" (Rösner, 2014, p. 140). In this sense, disability should be understood not so much as manifestly being-disabled, but rather as continuous becoming-disabled "through controls, interventions and sanctions, which produce deviations from norms and which constitute 'disability'" (Rösner, 2014, p. 9; see also Trescher, 2017a; Trescher & Börner, 2016).

5. Attempt of reformulating "disability"

Disability was for a long time defined unilateral from a medical point of view (Dederich, 2012b, p. 31; Köbsell, 2010, p. 18; Trescher, 2017a, p. 13f). In these definitions, the role of the social environment is disregarded, that is why currently (respectively in the at least last 30 years) definitions of disability are more and more focussed on including social perspectives (as can also be seen in the "International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health" (ICF)). Consequently the view changes from an understanding of disability as "individual tragedy" (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 118) to more non-individual approaches. There are different traditions that formulate this non-individual view on

disability. Most important in this context are the Disability Studies. One of the most influencing scholars in this regard is Michael Oliver (1990), he "elaborated and promoted what is broadly known as the social model of disability" (Gallagher, Connor, & Ferri, 2014, p. 1123). In this regard, Oliver (1990) aimed "to show that disability as a category can only be understood within a framework, which suggests that it is culturally produced and socially structured" (p. 22). As the implementation of the social model of disability into the scientific and public community was at first a revolutionary act against the oppression of people with disabilities (see for example Gallagher et al., 2014, p. 1122f), it was broadly spread in the further discourse (as can be seen by the high number of publications). So the concept of the social model of disability is linked with further disability theory studies, which are mainly found in the Disability Studies discourse (see for example: Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Davis, 2010a, 2010b; Oliver, 1990; Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Riddell & Watson, 2003; Shakespeare, 2010; Titchkosky, 2007; Tremain, 2005, and for the German discourse for example: Dederich, 2012b; Rathgeb, 2012; Waldschmidt, 2007, 2009). There are scholars that criticise the social model of disability because of its "essentialist core" (Waldschmidt, 2006, p. 89) and the focusing of disability as a (solvable) problem (Waldschmidt, 2006). That is why Waldschmidt (and other scholars) present a cultural model of disability, to reconsider disability as a form of diversity (Waldschmidt, 2006, p. 89; see also Dederich, 2004, 2012a). This cultural view on disability aims to "deconstruct segregating structures and the reality linked to it" (Waldschmidt, 2006, p. 90f). Hence the cultural understanding of disability focusses not the subject with disabilities but the society as a whole and questions social practices of normalization and exclusion (Waldschmidt, 2006, p. 91ff).

This article aims to go one step further and states that from this close link of subject and category an urgent demand of a concept of disability arises, which might be formulated independent of the subject. Accordingly, disability should no longer be considered a "characteristic" of the affected, but instead needs to be uncoupled from the subject. This requires resorting to a perspective of society as a whole, in order to disclose those disabling structures that (co)produce "disabled identities" (Trescher, 2017a, p. 200; see also Trescher, 2015a; Trescher & Börner, 2016).

One challenge in the course of such an attempt of reformulating the concept of disability is the affected experience of disability on a daily basis as an objective criterion. Gallagher et al. (2014) call attention to that, too. They state that "it is sometimes useful and indeed necessary to consider the *lived* reality of impairment (how an individual interprets her or his experiences)" (p. 1131; emphasis in original; see also Barnes et al., 1999, p. 48ff). Consequently, a plain annulment of the concept of disability makes little sense and would hardly contribute to altering discriminatory structures and practices. For "as long as violent conditions persist and constitute disability, a concept of disability remains necessary" (Dederich, 2001, p. 122). Hence, instead of an annulment, a reformulation of the concept of disability is required. In this context, what has heretofore been designated as disability, should decidedly not be negated, as Butler argues: "To question a term, a term like 'the subject' or 'universality', is to ask how it plays, what investments it bears, what aims it achieves, what alterations it undergoes. The changeable life of that term does not preclude the possibility of its use" (Butler, 1997, p. 162). The claim to reformulate the concept of disability, then, calls for two objectives, namely to identify disability as "violent condition" (Dederich, 2001, p. 122) and to decouple the category "disabled" from the subject. A reformulated concept of disability might thus meet the requirement of exclusion, which follows from the ascription to the category "disabled" (Trescher, 2017a, p. 181f).

As a meta-theoretical framework of such a reformulation, the project refers to Foucault's concept of discourse or, as the case may be, to the subjectivating forces inherent to discourses. Accordingly, *disability* should be construed as a *powerful discursive practice*, which occurs whenever a subject or a group of subjects is partially or fully excluded from (pertinent) discourses by way of powerful practices (see i.a. Trescher, 2015a, p. 182; Foucault, 1972, 1998[10]).[11]

The here reformulated understanding of disability as disability of discourse focusses participation and thus broadens the construction of being disabled on any possible persons, situations or interactions. Disability is thus not something that can be deemed a characteristic of subjects, but rather *disability is always disability of discourse, which occurs in interactive (everyday) practices*. Subjects experience disability whenever they are denied access to (general) discourse (see also Foucault, 1972, p. 221f). Here, the affected subjects face barriers preventing them to participate in discourse. Continuing this line of thought *disability is then*, construed as disability of discourse, *theoretically solvable*, by way of granting subjects access to discourses and thereby to discourse participation.

At this stage, one needs to distinguish between general and specific discourses. A reformulated concept of disability refers primarily to general discourses. General discourses are discourses, which all members of a society may partake in. In a democratic order, for example, active and passive right to vote constitutes such a discourse. If people are excluded from this basic right to vote, because they are considered "cognitively disabled", a barrier to discourse participation manifests precisely at that location. Whether discourses are general and the extent to which subjects are afforded participation is ultimately a matter of justice which in turn is always a matter of politics (Forst, 1994, p. 215ff, 2005; see also Trescher, 2017a, p. 182, 2017b).

In the end, the proposed understanding of *disability as disability of discourse* makes it possible to resolve the stigmatizing status ascription inscribed onto the subject. Disability construed as disability of discourse affects not only people deemed "disabled", but ultimately any subject and group disabled to participate in discourse. This is the core thesis of this paper; it is derived from a theoretical as well as empirical perspective. Thus, "foreigners" experience the same disability to discourse in terms of political participation as people with (severe) cognitive disabilities, since neither has the right to vote (at least in Germany).[12] Conversely, disability refers to single discourses and is not, as is the case with common concepts of disability (to be specific concepts claiming an individual view on disability as well as the ones recurring to disability as social construction), applicable to the entire subject. Thus, subjects heretofore labelled disabled cannot be disabled in many living circumstances. Consequently, this article aims to introduce this perspective into Disability Studies discourse.

This understanding includes an intersectional perspective on disability respectively diversity in general that is in most instances not part of the Disability Studies theory. Intersectionality is "in a special way depending on inter- and transdisciplinary relations. It is inspired by these relations and can evolve them in a productive way" (Riegel, 2016, p. 43; see also Emmerich & Hormel, 2013). Research based in an intersectional logic is interested in "a critical analysis of relations of inequality and dominance" (Riegel, 2016, p. 45) and the possible social outcomes.

6. Outlook

At the end of these considerations, the question arises as to the conclusions which may be drawn from a concept of disability as a disability of discourse. What ramifications does such a reformulated concept of disability, decoupled from the subject, for the theory and practice of (special needs) pedagogy? On the one hand, it seems necessary to broaden the narrowing perspective on groups of people, as it is so frequently employed, and to avoid inquiring about alleged deficits, but rather to highlight marginalizing conditions of society as a whole. This also means to deconstruct disability as a responsibility of experts (construed as non-disabled). This also applies to special needs pedagogy as "special" discipline. If in the context of assistance, it presumes an expertise "specific to disability", which somehow seems necessary, its ultimate purpose is to improve the living conditions of these people (with disabilities). At the same, one could ask by way of thought experiment, whether the care of people with cognitive disabilities might not also be located within the domain of social pedagogy (alongside other fields of practice and research). Against the background of a concept of disability as disability of discourse it appears reasonable to interrogate specifically societal practices which (co)produce exclusion, instead of merely highlighting so called individual factors, such as disability, backgrounds of migration, or even gender. According to this concept, the individual is no

longer the sole centre of pedagogical intervention, but rather excluding practices and structures are taken into focus. That is, pedagogical thought and action must in this context refer not merely to its target group, but also to society as a whole. The concept of disability as disability of discourse questions practices and can therefore change the way both scholars and people working in the care system think about and act with people with disabilities. It challenges the handling of cognitive disability in an all society related way. In context of subject theories, more research is needed, because the field of "cognitive disability" is in that case often neglected. In context of pedagogical practice, one may need to question and improve practices of self-determination.

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Notes
1. Some of the literature cited is available in German Language only. For a better understanding, the cited parts were translated into English. Nevertheless, the indication of source refers to the original version of the book in German.
2. Foucault reconstructs and develops the concept of discourse in at least five of his (main) works: "Madness and Civilization" (1965), "The Birth of the Clinic" (1975), "The Order of Things" (1971) as well as "The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language" (1972). (The dates stated refer to the first American edition respectively).
3. The following text will not engage with each of Foucault's aforementioned works. For a respective treatment as well as a corresponding introduction into special needs pedagogy or as the case may be disability studies see Trescher (2015a, p. 261ff). Foucault's concept of discourse is presented, due to the limited scope of this article, in a summary manner.
4. This can be illustrated using the example of middle age "Germany" where certain customary norms labelled as "Christian" predominated. Among these were a certain piety, clothes covering shoulders and knees, no premarital sex, no marriage among relatives and other confessions or religious groups, no same-sex romantic relations, and many more. Today these conducts are considered more or less acceptable forms of life. That is to say that participants in discourse, in this pithy case "members of society", think differently about "premarital sex" than 200 years ago.
5. See in this regard § 13 of the German Election Law (Bundeswahlgesetz (BWahlG)).
6. This magazine was analysed in a research project at the Goethe University Frankfurt under the auspices of Hendrik Trescher.
The magazine itself can be found on http://www.toll-magazin.de/downloads/TOLL_Magazin_Nullnummer.pdf.
7. This was object of the research project "Representation of Cognitive Disability", conducted under the auspices of Hendrik Trescher at the Goethe University Frankfurt. Print and online media were analysed regarding their portrayal of people with cognitive disabilities.
8. The objective meaning designates the actually present or as the case may be represented (Mead, 2000, p. 117), subsequently an action or an utterance is (interpretatively) "accorded" meaning (Weber, 1976, p. 8) which then constitutes subjective meaning.
9. The fact that people with cognitive disabilities are hardly present in German (print)mediascapes by way of this "discursive non-presence" is part of a particular (in the sense of uncommon) production of cognitive disability; in short: discursive presence of people with cognitive disabilities is not part of everyday life-practice.
10. The reference to powerful discourse practices approximates Foucault's later concept of power (i.a. Foucault, 2003, Foucault, 2005).
11. There are other scholars that deduce a concept of disability from a discourse-theoretical point of view, but in many cases the focus is still (comparable to the medical model) on "disability" as an individual problem—caused by society (e.g. Bruner, 2005, p. 57).
12. See in this regard § 12 of the German Election Law (Bundeswahlgesetz (BWahlG)).

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