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Review Article

Disability Movements – A Growing Field of Research?

Rosalyn Benjamin Darling: Disability and Identity: Negotiating Self in a Changing Society, Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013, ISBN: 978–1-58826–864–8, 189 pp.

Swantje Köbsell: Wegweiser Behindertenbewegung: Neues (Selbst-)Verständnis von Behinderung, Neu Ulm: AG SPAK Bücher, 2012, ISBN: 978–3-940865–35–9, 102 pp.

Nils Löffelbein: Ehrenbürger der Nation: Die Kriegsbeschädigten des Ersten Weltkriegs in Politik und Propaganda des Nationalsozialismus, Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2013, ISBN: 978–3-8375–0839–0, 494 pp.

Fred Pelka: What Have We Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement, Amherst/Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012, ISBN: 978–1-55849–919–5, 656 pp.

Heather Ridolfo/Brian W. Ward: Mobility Impairment and the Construction of Identity, Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013, ISBN: 978–1-935049–96–8, 188 pp.

Ylva Söderfeldt: From Pathology to Public Sphere: The German Deaf Movement 1848–1914, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013, ISBN: 978–3-8376–2119–8, 316 pp.

The history of people with disabilities has recently generated growing interest within German academia. Although in other countries, such as Great Britain and the United States, disability history already became a serious field of research some time ago, German attention to this field is relatively recent. This gap is surprising as German scholars have extensively dealt with the history of disabled people in the context of

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the National Socialist euthanasia and its ideological roots.[1] Over the past few decades, several important and influential studies about eugenics or medicine in the Third Reich were written by German historians, although it should be noted that these works were often initated or written by academic "outsiders", such as Ernst Klee in the 1980s or, more recently, Götz Aly.[2] The negative flipside of this focus on the Nationalist Socialist's persecution of people with disabilities was a marginalisation of other aspects of the broader history of disabled people. Thus only a few notable studies have examined topics beyond the National Soicialist crimes or the intellectual history of the "racial State" ideology.[3] The predominance of the fascist past meant that the social history of disabled people, their normal course of life or the emergence of disability movements especially in the second half of the 20th century did not receive much attention in German historiography. This situation changed around the years 2000 and 2002 when the exhibition *Der [Im]perfekte Mensch* was shown at the *Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden* and the *Martin-Gropius-Bau Berlin*. Accompanied by two major international conferences about disability and society, the exhibition dealt with the position of the body in society and the situation of disabled people throughout history.[4] By doing so, the exhibition acted as a catalyst for the establishment of a particular German branch of disability studies.[5] Not only did the exhibition lead to increased awareness of the life of people with disabilities in today's Germany, but also triggered a greater interest in the field of German historiography.[6]

Originally the type of disability studies that explore the social construction of disability emerged in the United States, where the disability rights movement came into being earlier than in Europe. Scholars in this field consider disability to be a social and cultural attribution instead of a biological quality. They seek to analyse the relationship

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[1] An excellent overview is provided by Robert Jütte et al. (eds.): Medizin und Nationalsozialismus: Bilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung, Göttingen 2011.

[2] See for example Ernst Klee: "Euthanasie" im NS-Staat: Die "Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens", Frankfurt am Main 1983; Götz Aly (ed.): Aktion T4 1939–1945: Die "Euthanasie"-Zentrale in der Tiergartenstraße 4, Berlin 1989; Götz Aly: Die Belasteten: "Euthanasie" 1939–1945: Eine Gesellschaftsgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main 2013.

[3] For example Klaus Dörner: Bürger und Irre: Zur Sozialgeschichte und Wissenschaftssoziologie der Psychiatrie, Frankfurt am Main 1969; Walter Fandrey: Krüppel, Idioten, Irre: Zur Sozialgeschichte behinderter Menschen in Deutschland, Stuttgart 1990.

[4] Petra Lutz et al. (eds.): Der [Im-]Perfekte Mensch: Metamorphosen von Normalität und Abweichung, Köln 2003.

[5] See Carol Poore: "The (Im)Perfect Human Being" and the Beginning of Disability Studies in Germany: A Report, in: New German Critique 86:1 (2002), pp. 179–190.

[6] See Elsbeth Bösl: Dis/ability History: Grundlagen und Forschungstand, published at H-Soz-u-Kult, 7 July 2009, available online at: http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2009–07–001; Gabriele Lingelbach/Sebastian Schlund: Disability History, Version: 1.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 8 July 2014, available online at: http://docupedia.de/zg/Disability_History?oldid=92951.

between people with disabilities and society, and emphasise the normative, disciplinary effects of the concept of disability. From this perspective, disability becomes an analytical category like race, class or gender. The focus of research in the field has expanded recently from merely examining historical medical or legal themes to recognising the broader context of the history of people with disabilities. Thus research in Germany, for example, has ranged from the political and legislative treatment of disability for the period between the end of the Second World War and the 1970s,[7] and the representation of people with disabilities in the German media throughout history[8] to works centred on the situation of disabled people within asylums or hospitals.[9] A more recent trend among scholars is to make people with disabilities visible as historical actors. That is why one can witness a rising awareness for the importance of the various disability rights or identity movements in the USA and elsewhere.[10] Historians in Germany have also started focusing on disability movements – especially in the connection with the New Social Movements of the 1970s. Against this background this review article tries to summarise some selected recent publications on disability rights or identity movements in Germany and the United States. The publications under review extend beyond the 1970s, covering the first half of the 19th and the whole 20th century, and even the very present. The aim of this review is to recap the current state of research in the field and to outline promising issues for future research. The focus themes are addressed chronologically: the first section examines two studies dealing with early German disability movements before 1945, while the second section juxtaposes a monograph about the German disability rights movement against a monograph on the US-American precursor. The third section covers two publications dealing with the current situation of disabled people in the United States. Since historical literature on the current situation of people with disabilities is unsurprisingly uncommon, this section focuses on social scientific literature. This does not aim to situate these studies within the social sciences but to explore the areas for historical research that they suggest. The conclusion collates the general impressions emerging from these works.

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7 Elsbeth Bösl: Politiken der Normalisierung: Zur Geschichte der Behindertenpolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bielefeld 2009.

8 See for example Beate Ochsner/Anna Grebe (eds.): Andere Bilder: Zur Produktion von Behinderung in der visuellen Kultur, Bielefeld 2013.

9 Hans-Walter Schmuhl/Ulrike Winkler (eds.): Welt in der Welt: Heime für Menschen mit geistiger Behinderung in der Perspektive der Disability History, Stuttgart 2013.

10 See for example the articles published in this issue of *Moving the Social.*

Early Forerunners: German Disability Movements in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich

Even though the situation of disabled people in Germany in the first half of the 20th century was primarily determined by oppression, marginalisation and – especially in the 1930s – persecution, several early disability movements already existed. Ylva Söderfeldt reveals this in her PhD-thesis about the history of the German deaf movement from 1848 till 1914.[11] Even though some research on this topic had been already undertaken, Söderfeldt's study is the first comprehensive work covering the entire territory of the German Empire as well as a longer period of time. She is very aware of the special situation of deaf people, who view deafness rather as cultural and linguistic category than as medical diagnosis. This caused the emergence of a deaf community at a quite early stage in history compared to people with other types of handicaps. Söderfeldt's main aim is to highlight how this group of the "deaf-mutes" was shaped. She writes about the ideas, beliefs and opportunities of people who were deaf as well as the perspective of hearing people upon them. The first chapter *The 'Deaf-Mutes' in Numbers, Words, and Practice* (pp. 29–91) examines the position of the German authorities towards deaf people and the political measures they imposed on that account. Drawing on the work of Ian Hacking, Söderfeldt explores the various attempts of counting "deaf-mutes" in the 19th and 20th century. She describes the efforts in Bavaria, Saxony and the whole empire to produce statistics about the deaf. She shows how this statistics were used to shape an image of the average "deaf-mute". Simultaneously deaf people became objects of political and educational actions. Söderfeldt characterises how these official measures in the field of legislation, education and labour led to a formation of a deaf community. The institutionalised deaf education probably played the most significant role in developing this community. Deaf specific education originated in the 18th century in Germany and France, but its importance rose significantly over the course of the 19th century. An effect of the attempts of schooling deaf children was their concentration in special schools. On the one hand this meant their segregation from the society, but on the other hand the schools offered them for the first time an environment in which deaf people were the majority. In this way the education system turned out to be a key institution in forming a deaf identity.

Söderfeldt's second chapter tries to explain how the members of this deaf community actually lived. First (pp. 93–144) she asks in what ways did deaf people participate in the upcoming *bürgerlich* ideals during the 19th century. Interestingly, particularly adult urban "deaf-mutes", who originally had come for schooling into the cities, were able to

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[11] Ylva Söderfeldt: From Pathology to Public Sphere: The German Deaf Movement 1848–1914, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013, ISBN: 978–3-8376–2119–8, 316 pp.

adapt bourgeois behaviours and some eventually managed to become successful artists or worked as civil servants. Because of the growing economic potential of deaf people connected to the social elevation of some persons, special establishments emerged in bigger cities like Berlin. Söderfeldt traces down this "Deaf Topography" of deaf clubs or institutions which were not necessarily limited to deaf people but discovered them as promising customers. So urban deaf people had at least the chance to live to some extent an independent public life according to *bürgerlich* expectations, even if they still had to face a marginalisation and paternalism in their private life. However there were several deaf people, usually in rural areas or the countryside, who were excluded from such societal acceptance. After analysing the deaf networks in the cities Söderfeldt thus looks at the oppression of deaf people by the German authorities. This gives an impression of the life of the uneducated and isolated deaf people who did not get the opportunity to socialise in the cities and receive a proper education. While the second chapter focuses on the everyday life of deaf people, the third one (pp. 145–220) asks if these people can be labelled as a "deaf community".[12] Here Söderfeldt traces the appearance and development of formal organisations of German deaf people. She shows the impressive growth of deaf clubs between the founding of the Empire and the break out of the First World War and concludes that deaf people started to cope with their problems in a collective and independent way. In addition Söderfeldt portraits some influential actors of the deaf movement, such as Eduard Fürstenberg, the president of the *Centralverein für das Wohl der Taubstummen*, or important activities such as church feasts or congresses. Her protagonists eventually succeeded in creating a public sphere for deaf people. The congresses, the spreading silent press and the deaf clubs helped to form an imaged deaf community. But the author points out that this public sphere was limited to a very small elite group that fulfilled the *bürgerlich* demands of their time and were able to be financially independent. Unskilled and undeducated deaf people, as well as most women, did not have access to the social sphere.

The last major chapter (pp. 219–266) is interested in the political attempts of the institutions mentioned above to influence the social as well as political situation of deaf people. Right from the beginning they were, for example, engaged in issues concerning the education of deaf children. Söderfeldt shows that, despite the social improvements, deaf people remained dependent on hearing allies who took sides for them in public conflicts. Closing with an outlook on the deaf movement during and after the First World War, Ylva Söderfeldt has written a highly interesting and notably reflected book about a remarkable early disability identity and rights movement.

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[12] Ylva Söderfeldt: From Pathology to Public Sphere, p. 145.

The years 1914 and 1918 when Söderfeldt's study ends are the starting point for Nils Löffelbein's voluminous work on disabled veterans of the First World War in Germany.[13] While this field has been already researched by others,[14] no work has concentrated entirely on the attitude towards disabled veterans by the National Socialists. Löffelbein's interest lies in the meaning of disabled veterans for the National Socialist propaganda and politics. By doing so Löffelbein discovers the propagandist importance of war veterans for the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). His main thesis is that disabled veterans of the the First World War were widely exploited by the National Socialists for political purposes. They did so by emphasising the military "honour" of the veterans which they claimed had been neglected by the Weimar politicians. Löffelbein does not describe the history of the movement of disabled war veterans but focuses on their political, institutional and propagandist treatment by the NSDAP. The publication is nevertheless worth reading for scholars interested in the history of social movements, since he exemplifies the instrumentalisation of a movement in a dictatorial regime.

The book can roughly be divided into two major parts: first it portrays the situation during the Weimar Republic and second he outlines the changes within the 1930s and 1940s. The author starts with a summary of the social situation of disabled veterans after the First World War. He explains that in this period an improved public care and an active governmental employment policies for the veterans was developed, while at the same time a growing body of bureaucratic and anonymous public authorities was gaining power. Even worse, the disabled veterans were used politically as embodied representatives for the traumatic war, the German defeat and the successive humiliation through the Treaty of Versailles, which eventually resulted in a marginalisation of disabled veterans. The invalids on the other hand demanded a more respectful treatment and wanted to be honoured for their physical and sometimes psychological sacrifices. When the government was forced to reduce the pensions for disabled veterans due to the world economic crisis, the invalids finally turned away from the democratic republic. The National Socialists played on this disidentification for their own purposes. In his first major chapter (pp. 65–173) the author describes how the National Socialists succeeded in convincing the disabled war veterans to support them. One strategy was to stress Adolf Hitler's own war injury as temporary blinded which made him Germany's most influential and best known war veteran. Even after the National Socialist seizure of power, Hitler still sought public contact with blind veterans

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[13] Nils Löffelbein: Ehrenbürger der Nation: Die Kriegsbeschädigten des Ersten Weltkriegs in Politik und Propaganda des Nationalsozialismus, Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2013, ISBN: 978–3-8375–0839–0, 494 pp.

[14] For the latest piece of research see Sabine Kienitz: Beschädigte Helden: Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914–1923, Paderborn 2008.

on a regular basis. As another strategy party members announced their intention of improving the social situation of the invalids. Even more important was their promise to re-establish the honour and reputation of the former soldiers. They exaggerated them as heroes of the fatherland and called for an honourable place for them within the German society. This was not self-evident as the National Socialists usually emphasised the image of a strong, heroic and masculine man that stood in a striking contrast to the wounded body of the invalids. The recognition of the war veteran's sacrifices during the First World War and the ideal of an able-bodied "*Volksgenosse*" created a tension which influenced the behaviour of the NSDAP during the whole time: the National Socialist attitude towards disabled veterans remained ambivalent.

It is this tension that characterises Löffelbein's argumentation in the second major chapter dealing with the situation of disabled war veterans during the Third Reich (pp. 173–437). Here the author argues that war veterans on the one hand indeed gained an increased political and public influence. Further, the Weimar era reductions of social allowances were cancelled in 1938, but with the caveat that the veterans had to follow the the NSDAP guidelines and show their gratefulness to the new government. They were also expected to work and conceal their impairments when in public. The National Socialists further insisted on the equal treatment of disabled war veterans and members of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) or *Schutzstaffel* (SS), who had been impaired through the political battles during the Weimar Republic. In addition the chapter offers a thoroughly and insightful description of the National Socialist War Victim's Care (NSKOV) – the only legal organisation for disabled war veterans after the National Socialist *Gleichschaltung*. Earlier important organisations, such as the *Reichsbund der Kriegsopfer*, were forced to join the NSKOV or be dissolved. Löffelbein shows that the NSKOV promoted a militarisation of the veterans. In the official propaganda their wounds or impairments were idealised; images of pain and grief vanished in the public. At the same time he indicates that the NSKOV continued to act as an institution for social policy, continuing largely the same actual work of its Weimar Republic predecessors.

The National Socialist emphasis on working capability and general physical fitness, in addition to its eliminatory anti-Semitism, marked a radical break with the 1920s. Löffelbein highlights that Jewish war veterans, as well as veterans with mental disabilities, became eventually victims of the Holocaust and respectively the euthanasia programme, but their persecution was delayed in comparison to other groups of victims. At the end even the status as disabled war veteran did not save these men from annihilation. During the Second World War the war victims were exploited one one more time. Joseph Goebbels, in particular, drew on them and pointed out their earlier willingness to sacrifice their bodies with the objective of legitimising his call to a "*Totalen Krieg*". As Löffelbein states, this was the final chapter of the National Socialist instrumentalisation of the disabled veterans, which was part of a process leading to an even greater war causing more deaths and disabilities than everyone before. Nils

Löffelbein has written an impressive study based on a widespread collection of primary sources and combining various historiographic approaches. He deals with forms of symbolical communications, highlights the history of the NSKOV and describes the social history of disabled war veterans during the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. Everyone who is interested in the history of people with disabilities in the first half of the 20th century will certainly benefit from reading his monograph.

Disability Rights Movements after the Second World War

Disability rights and identity movements have already been researched to some extent for the first half of the 20th century, but the post-war period remains largely unexplored despite the presence of the influential German disability rights movement during 1970s and 1980s. Despite a existing focus on New Social Movements within German historiography,[15] no comprehensive work has been written about the differernt disability rights movements.[16] The only available works are retrospective biographies of former movement members.[17] The most comprehensive work on the lives of people with disabilities in the Federal Republic of Germany so far is Elsbeth Bösl's PhD-thesis *Politiken der Normalisierung*, but this work concentrates also rather on the political sphere than the movement itself.[18] Swantje Köbsell's small booklet *Wegweiser Behindertenbewegung* is too short and shallow in its research to thoroughly portray the German disability rights movement as well.[19] The publication is nevertheless worth mentioning because it points out some remarkable aspects of the movement in Germany and raises some interesting questions for further research. Köbsell was herself involved in the *Krüppelbewegung* as part of the German disability rights movement, providing the work with her personal contemporary insights and first hand motivations of a former activist. The first chapter *The (Western) German Disability Movement: History and Consequences of a New (Self-) Concept of Disability* (pp. 7–55) gives a brief summary of the development of the German disability rights movement. Here Köbsell sketches

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[15] See Dieter Rucht/Roland Roth (eds.): Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945: Ein Handbuch, Frankfurt/New York 2008.

[16] Currently Gabriele Lingelbach's research group in Kiel promises to change this situation soon.

[17] See for example Christian Mürner/Udo Sierck: Behinderung: Chronik eines Jahrhunderts, Weinheim/Basel 2012; Christian Mürner/Udo Sierck: Krüppelzeitung: Brisanz der Behindertenbewegung, Neu Ulm 2009.

[18] See Bösl: Politiken der Normalisierung.

[19] Swantje Köbsell: Wegweiser Behindertenbewegung: Neues (Selbst-)Verständnis von Behinderung, 1st ed., Neu Ulm: AG SPAK Bücher, 2012, ISBN: 978–3-940865–35–9, 102 pp.

the most important milestones for the growing emancipation of disabled people. She describes the various institutions of the movement, its slow formation during the 1970s and its erratic rise after 1980 when a discriminating decision of the provincial court in Frankfurt provoked furious protests within the community of people with disabilities. The author particularly notes that one cannot speak of a movement until this year. Köbsell follows its evolution – the beginning exchange with the USA, an increasing political engagement of individuals from the disability movement and its proceeding institutionalisation. She emphasises the main aim of the involved actors was to enable people with disabilities to live an independent and self-determined life. Other brief subchapters cover cursory important issues for the German disability rights movement: The fight for the legal equality of people with disabilities, the debates about medical assisted suicide and bioethics, the situation of women within the movement as well as the emergence of the disability studies in Germany.

The second part of the book *Institutions Originated From the Disability Movement* (pp. 57–100) provides the reader with a summary of the various institutions that evolved from the German disability rights movement. In this chapter the author lists the numerous institutions for people with disabilities ran by people with disabilities. She describes programmes for assisted living and national as well as international institutions of political self-representation. Each institution gets a brief passage explaining its formation as well as its main intentions. This gives an impressive overview of the motley topography of the institutionalised disability rights movement today. Alhough, in its scope and purpose, Swantje Köbsell's publication cannot be compared to the other works under review, it does highlight some promising issues needing further research. This applies for example to the influence of disabled people on the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* or the relationship between the German and the American disability rights movement. Each of these topics would be worth a more comprehensive analysis. Despite this, her book provides a good introduction to the history of the German Disability Movement for a wider audience.

In contrast to Köbsell's contribution Fred Pelka's voluminous publication, *What We Have Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement,*[20] does not attempt to systematically describe the American disability rights movement. Instead Pelka offers a collection of several transcripts of oral history interviews conducted with important figures of the movement, thereby "recount[ing] the political struggle for disability rights in the United States, focussing on the decades immediately preceding the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990."[21] By doing so Pelka gives

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[20] Fred Pelka: What Have WE Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement, Amherst/Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012, ISBN: 978–1-55849–919–5, 656 pp.

[21] Ibid., p. IX.

the historical actors the opportunity to recall their history from their own perspectives. The interviews are taken from three major sources: the collection of oral histories of the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley, the interviews recorded by the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) and further interviews conducted by the author himself. Pelka's publication makes the interviews accessible for a broader academic as well as public audience. Most of them are conducted with people who are disabled; some interviewees were important non-disabled allies of the movement. The interviews are arranged in 35 thematically and chronologically organised chapters that start with the childhood of the interviewee and close with the passage of the ADA and its aftermath. Pelka concisely places each chapter in its historical context, and briefly portrays each activist. However, the editor does not publish the whole interviews, since they lasted sometimes several hours, but shortened and rearranged them according to the 35 chapters. This means that Pelka changed the narratives of the original interviews to some – for readers unknown – extent, which makes it somewhat difficult to use them as material for historical research, since one is not able to reconstruct the exact context of the personal testimonials.

The thought-provoking compilation of interviews makes the book nonetheless an interesting and relevant read. After an insightful introduction (pp. 1–29), which sketches the history of the American disability rights movement and provides the less informed reader with the necessary historical details to understand the following parts of the book, Pelka depicts over more than 500 pages the statements of important figures of the movement, which give an insight into the network of the disability rights activists, highlight the first attempts to make universities accessible for people with disabilities, deal with the various forms of social protest of the movement or describe the daily life of people with disabilities in the United States between the 1950s and the 1990s – just to name a few subjects. Attentive readers will discover numerous topics surfacing now and then or will be able to draw a comparison between the situation of people with disabilities in the United States and Germany. The oral histories raise questions which are sometimes more and sometimes less obvious: which effect did the different educational system in the United States compared to Germany have on the emergence of a disability rights and identity movement? Which networks between different social movements – for example between the Black Panthers and the disability rights movement – did exist? What was the relationship between the social movement and disabled war veterans? At last it is interesting that thalidomide seems to be of less importance for the US disability history than for the German one. It could be insightful to check if poliomyelitis had a similar relevance in the United States than the German *Contergan Skandal* (thalidomide disaster).

Fred Pelka has edited an interesting volume that is – the methodical concerns mentioned above besides – attractive for both an academic public and a wider audience. It shows the potential of oral history for the analysis of disability rights movements. A collection of interviews with actors of the German disability rights movement would make a relevant and useful countpart, and hopefully Pelka's publication encourages similar efforts in Germany. Unfortunately the printing quality of the copy under review here was in parts quite poor. This affects the overall positive impression of the book.

People with Disabilities and the Disability Rights Movement Today

The German, as well as the international, disability rights movements have without a doubt deeply affected the situation of disabled people in western societies today. People with disabilities have – even if the social and legal equality with people without disabilities is still not fully reached – the chance for a largely independent and inclusive life. The main task of Rosalyn Benjamin Darling's work, *Disability and Identity: Negotiating Self in a Changing Society*, is to explore how this change affected the identity and self-esteem of disabled people.[22] Darling has already published several studies on this topic and her work draws heavily on her existing publications. Since her book includes some of her recently published articles, her results may not be that surprising for advanced readers.

The starting point of her investigation is the shift in the public image of disability over the past few decades. In recent years disability – foremost physical disabilities – has to some extent lost its quality as a stigma. The author is now interested in the question whether this change has led to a more positive self-perception or a form of "disability pride" among the affected. The first three major chapters of the publication (pp. 13–66) present a meta-analysis of the socio-scientific research about the relationship between stigma, the self-conception of disabled people and intersecting identities, for example, in case of women or African Americans with disabilities. By reviewing the scientific studies about disability and identity since the end of the Second World War, Darling gives an impression of the development within the social sciences during the last 60 years. She shows how research questions and sociological theories shifted over time, thus shedding light on the biases concerning disability that influenced the social scientists themselves. She further argues one cannot speak of a definitive identity of a disabled person. Instead one has to assume that everyone chooses out of a set of several identities dependent on the given social situation, particularly for persons with overlapping minority identities.

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[22] Rosalyn Benjamin Darling: Disability and Identity: Negotiating Self in a Changing Society, Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013, ISBN: 978–1-58826–864–8, 189 pp.

The following chapter *The Disability Rights Movement and Identity Politics* (pp. 67–84) leads to the most interesting part of the book concerning the history of disability movements. Here Darling explores "the changing views of disability since the 1970s" and asks "how these more positive views have been associated with newer self-views like disability pride."[23] She follows the formation of the American disability rights movement and traces the influence of former movements, such as the African American civil rights movement. Its greatest success was the "reframing of 'disability' as a social and political, rather than simply a medical and rehabilitative, problem."[24] This change offered people with disabilities new possibilities for a positive self-definition and an identification with the whole population of disabled people in America. But interestingly the evaluated data suggests that the disability rights movement was not that popular within the community of people with disabilities as one might expect. Fewer than half of the people with disabilities perceived themselves to be part of a nationwide community of disabled persons and only a minority were politically active. Darling concludes that a high self-esteem, a positive view of oneself and a strong identification with the own disability is not necessarily mutually associated. Furthermore, a positive self-perception does not inevitably lead to an increased engagement in the disability movement.

In the following chapter, *The Diversity of Disability Orientations* (pp. 85–104), she more broadly assesses the indiviudal's attitude towards disabilities. Based on secondary literature and autobiographical material, Darling develops a model of disability orientations including the factors of identity, the accepted model of disability (social or medical) and the personal role within the disability movement. The model seeks to clarify the self-perception of persons with disabilty and their disposition to become involved in social movements. She then (pp. 105–122) contrasts this model with her own quantitative research combining qualitative and quantitative methods, which reveals that almost all respondents agreed to some extent with the social model of disability no matter whether they were involved in the disability subculture or not. But at the same time she highlights that the orientations of the interviewed subjects towards their own disability are remarkably diverse, revealing there is no homogenous identity connecting all disabled people in the USA. The last chapter (pp. 123–139) traces the nexus between the point in time of acquiring the disability and the corresponding self-perception. The general insight of this investigation is that people who became disabled later in life tend to have a more negative view of disability than people who are born with an impairment.

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[23] Rosalyn Benjamin Darling: Disability and Identity, p. 67.

[24] Ibid., p. 70.

The concluding chapter *Disability and Identity: Past, Present, and Future* (pp. 141–155) gives a comprehensive summary of the results of the study and sketches an agenda for future research. Once again Darling emphasises that the identities of disabled persons are varying and influenced by numerous factors. This might be a reminder for scholars not to conceive of disabled people as a homogenous group but of a fractioned one affected by intersectional aspects or the time of the acquisition of the disability. Although Rosalyn Benjamin Darling's work does not aim to provide a historical analysis of the American disability rights movement in the second half of the 20th century, the work would have benefited from a broader historical investigation. Nevertheless the publication raises questions about the transformation of the situation of disabled people in the USA. This invites historians – as well as scholars from other disciplines – to explain the "having-become" of this situation or to conduct comparative studies for other countries.

Darling does not ask why some impaired people consider themselves as disabled and some with the same impairment do not. This issue is addressed by the – also socio-scientific – monograph *Mobility Impairment and the Construction of Identity* written by Heather Ridolfo and Brian W. Ward.[25] Ridolfo and Ward commence their work by describing the two traditional approaches to defining the nature of disabilities: the medical and the social model. While the medical model focuses on biological impairments of the body and locates the issue of the disability within the individual, the social model emphasises the physical and social barriers of impaired people. Ridolfo and Ward claim some people disidentify from a disabled identity, thus although they may have a severe impairment they do not view themselves as disabled. Based on this surveillance the authors ask whether physical impairments or social barriers were the main reason for an individual to claim a disabled identity. In contrast to Darling, who focuses on the relationship between people with disabilities and the society, Ridolfo and Ward take both bodily and social experiences into account. To do so they use a mixed method approach combining national representative data as well as qualitative data from 30 in-depth-interviews. The quantitative data was collected by National Health Survey on Disability (NHIS-D) from 1994 and 1995, making it 20 years old. A further limitation of the study is that Ridolfo and Ward solely investigate the construction of identity by people with mobility limitations, in contrast to Darling who considered a wider range of disabilities. This might be a reason for some differences between the results presented in these two publications.

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[25] Heather Ridolfo/Brian W. Ward: Mobility Impairment and the Construction of Identity, Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013, ISBN: 978–1-935049–96–8, 188 pp.

In the first main chapter *Building on Models of Disability* (pp. 11–40) the authors review various models of disability and portray several important definitions of disability, such as the WHO's International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH) from 1980 and its successor the International Classification of Functionality, Disability, and Health (ICF) from 2001. They then introduce their own model of disability identity construction which integrates three self-processes – social comparisons, self-presentations and reflected appraisals. Furthermore, they include the social statuses gender, race, age and class. The following chapter *Everyday Experiences of the Body and the Environment* (pp. 41–80) is almost exclusively based on the 30 in-depth-interviews the authors have conducted. It offers an instructive insight into the everyday life of the respondents – the barriers of their environment as well as their physical impairments. They spoke about barriers at home, in the community and at the workplace. At the same time they report on the experience of social barriers, such as dismissive behaviours of people without disabilities in the public transport system. The interviewees also describe their individual experiences of impairment. Ridolfo and Ward point out that nearly everyone felt pain, fatigue, weakness or immobility on almost a daily basis. The authors lengthy include the statements of the respondent throughout the chapter allowing the "voices" of the interviewees to come through.The authors conclude that "even twenty years after the ADA was passed, the individuals we interviewed encountered numerous physical and social barriers […]."[26] The authors then (pp. 81–115) turn towards their national representative dataset drawn from the NHIS-D to explore the relationship between these experiences of barriers in the environment and the identification of being disabled. Their most important finding here was that neither the social or physical barriers, nor the physical impairment had a crucial impact on the identification as disabled, although the degree of impairment as well as the status of employment had a measurable but minor influence. Thus they conclude, that social comparisons and self-presentations are highly influential on the construction of the own identity: "Respondents' identity claims varied based on a complex interaction among their level of impairment, their awareness of and resistance to stigmatisation, and the type and consistency of messages received from others and society as a whole regarding their disablement."[27] The last main chapter (pp. 117–131) looks at the effects of social statuses on the self-perception of people with disabilities. Interestingly and in contrast to Darling's work their quantitative and qualitative data did not reveal strong evidence that race, age or social class had a great influence on choosing an identity as disabled. However, they perceived that gender had an outstanding impact. It was much more likely that women disidentified as disabled

[26] Heather Ridolfo/Brian W. Ward: Mobility Impairment and the Construction of Identity, p. 80.

[27] Ibid., p. 95.

than men. Women's disabilities are also more often not taken seriously or neglected. Furthermore, women were more likely to internalise the stereotype that disabled persons are unattractive and undesirable, while men in contrary often associate physical disability with the absence of athleticism.

In their conclusion Ridolfo and Ward sum up their findings and discus the limitations of the study. Once again they state that neither the social model nor the medical model can fully explain why some people view themselves as disabled and some do not. Instead one has to take into account self-processes such as social comparisons and self-presentations for a better understanding of these circumstances. However they emphasise that people with a severe mobility limitation are more likely to identify themselves as disabled than people with less serious disabilities. As interpretation therefore they assume that the "strong focus and emphasis on the body in the United States […] may result in impaired individuals being more strongly encouraged to identify as disabled."[28] Here further historical research on the discourse about the body, self-processes of individuals and the reduction of barriers in the environment may show if their assumption is right. All in all Heather Ridolfo and Brian W. Ward contributed an interesting addition to Darling's work. From an historical perspective however, it seems somewhat doubtful whether that one can find an objective measure to determine the degree of a personal impairment as the authors did in their examination – that is probably a sign for the different approaches of the social sciences and the historiography. This indicates that an intensified discussion between social scientists and historians may enrich the field of disability studies on the whole.

Conclusion

The six publications under review here in addition to the current issue of *Moving the Social* illustrate that disability rights and identity movements in Germany and elsewhere are receiving increasing attention within academia. Moreover the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities may lead to an ongoing interest in the situation of people with disabilities today and in the past. The six titles presented before examine various periods of time, are based on different methodical approaches and illuminate a variety of topics. Several assumptions, however, underlie most of the studies. Firstly, almost every author tends to view disability as a social construction rather than a medical or biological quality. Closely associated with this point is the growing interest in the identity as well as self-perception of disabled people. Scholars from the social sciences, such as Rosalyn Benjamin Darling or Heather Ridolfo and Brian W. Ward, ask why people with impairments view themselves as

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[28] Ibid., p. 135.

disabled or lack self-esteem. The historian Ylva Söderfeldt is instead concerned with the emergence of communities of people with disabilities, such as the deaf community in the 19th century. Thirdly, the influence of these movements on political legislation and social change is particularly interesting. Swantje Köbsell sketches the contribution of the German disability movement to the transformation of the German disability policy and lays out the institutions derived from the movement. In contrast Fred Pelka contributed an Oral History, which shows the role the American disability rights movement played in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Fourthly, scholars are interested in the representation of people with disabilities in the public as well as in the media. Nils Löffelbein, for example, wrote a highly instructive study about the National Socialist propaganda and policy towards disabled veterans of the First World War. All of these publications provide inspiration for further studies.

At the same time there are some unanswered questions that might be promising fields of research in the future. Firstly, despite several scholars highlight that earlier social movements served as role models for the disability rights and identity movements, no comprehensive work has analysed this connection systematically. An examination of the relationship between disability and other social movements would deepen our understanding of both. Secondly, although the disability rights movements, especially after the Second World War, quickly became international in reach, their transnational dimension is seldom reflected. This is due to the fact that historical research still concentrates primarily on the national movements. Focusing on the international entanglement of the various disability rights or identity movements could open up new perspectives for the disability history. Furthermore, it could link disability history in general to the innovative field of global history. Lastly – at least for Germany – it is not certain how extensive the mobilisation of the disability movement really was. Further research could clarify whether the German disability rights movement was an elite project or activated by the majority of the people with disabilities. This also applies to the effects of the movement on the asylums and hospitals as well as the institutionalised rehabilitation's system.[29] These topics seem to offer questions for upcoming studies, and as disability history is gaining importance in both German and international historiography, many interesting publications about the disability rights or identity movements are still to come.

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[29] An example for the potential of such an approach is Gabriele Lingelbach/Jan Stoll: Die 1970er Jahre als Umbruchsphase der bundesdeutschen Disability History: Eine Mikrostudie zu Selbstadvokation und Anstaltskritik Jugendlicher mit Behinderung, in: Moving the Social: Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements 50 (2013), pp. 25–51.

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