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“He really isn’t like his father at all is he?”
Disability and Stereotypes
in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

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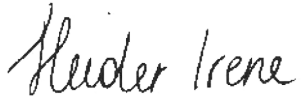
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I confirm to have conceived and written this paper in English all by myself. Direct quotations and passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are all clearly marked and truthfully acknowledged in the bibliographical references within the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heider Irene". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Heider" written in a larger, more prominent style than the last name "Irene".

Signature

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1. INTRODUCTION

The world-renowned author Joanne K. Rowling has so far enchanted her readership with the famous book series evolving around the young wizard Harry Potter and his friends Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley. Due to high demand by an immense fan base, Rowling continued her work on the Harry Potter universe and released a play named *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* in 2016. Similar to her famous book series, the play incorporates numerous thought-provoking topics such as Othering, stereotyping and disablism, which will be approached in my diploma thesis.

The purpose of this thesis is to present an overview of the relatively new field of research named Disability Studies as well as of topics such as Othering and stereotyping. Subsequently, the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* written by Jack Thorne that is based on a story by Joanne K. Rowling and John Tiffany will be analyzed on the basis of these theoretical findings. In order to ensure an informed analysis, the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* will provide a framework since it addresses fundamental cultural constructs established in the wizarding community. It proves to be vital for my thesis as it introduces the reader to the magical world, its essential elements and significant terms such as 'wizard', 'muggle' or 'squib'.

My thesis is that ableist behavior based on cultural constructs, such as the inherent division between 'able' wizards and 'deficient' muggles and the ostensible hierarchy within the wizarding community, which places muggles and squibs at the periphery of society, is employed in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* as a means to alienate the main character Albus Potter. Through stereotyping, seemingly 'natural' constructs are generated by powerful institutions within the wizarding community, which are perceived as common and essential among them, and used to justify discriminatory behavior. In the play, Albus' father, Harry Potter, represents the strived-for, exemplary embodiment of an able wizard with whom he is continuously compared. Furthermore, attitudinal barriers are established by the more prestigious ingroup of wizards to exclude and disable individuals who are considered members of the outgroup as a result of their perceived differences, stigmatized labels and associated narratives such as 'squibs are a burden to the family' and 'all Slytherins are evil'.

The first section of this diploma thesis approaches stereotypes and power relations. It addresses the formation of stereotypes and attempts to delineate their role in the establishment of order and the maintenance of power in a society. The second section presents the cultural practice of Othering and related mechanisms and dimensions such as 'value judgments', 'social distance' and 'knowledge'. In a further step, relevant theoretical approaches to Othering will be outlined as they prove to be vital for the analysis of group formations. The third section constitutes the main theoretical part of this diploma thesis, as it discusses concepts of 'normalcy' and the conception of the 'normal' body, which serves as an introduction to the topic of disablism in the same section. It comprises definitions of the terms 'disablism', 'impairment' and 'disability' as well as an overview of the three most common models of disability, namely the religious, medical and social model as well as associated topics such as disabling barriers and the issue of loneliness. Master narratives and stigmatizing labels will be addressed since they constitute a crucial disabling factor in the lives of people with disabilities. This section will further depict the portrayal of disability in literature to provide an overview of differing conceptions of disability in varying time periods. The analysis presented at the end of this diploma thesis will investigate the formation of groups within and outside of the wizarding community and present stereotypical depictions of the main characters in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, as these will be referred to in the analysis of their children in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. Conceptions of disability and impairment from the wizarding point of view as well as disabling practices will be considered and integrated into the analysis of the protagonists of the play. Similarly significant, common narratives associated with stigmatized labels will be addressed in association with *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.

2. STEREOTYPES & POWER RELATIONS

2.1. Definition: Stereotypes & Categories

The term 'stereotype' has been coined by the American reporter Walter Lippmann in 1922 and thoroughly addressed in his pioneering book *Public Opinion* in 1965 (Pickering 17). Since stereotypes are commonly understood as individual or shared psychological "perceptions", "representations or impressions of groups", they are fundamentally linked to the topic of group affiliations (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 1-2). In general, stereotyping depicts the attribution of certain features to groups or group members (McGarty 31, Yzerbyt and Rocher 38). They are neither rigid nor immutable but perceived as varying and "dynamic" (Spears 127, Brown and Turner 87-88). Brown and Turner highlight that alterations of existing stereotypes *are* feasible and might be triggered by "disconfirming information", which challenges the universal perceptions of certain groups (73).

McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears propose three guiding principles that illustrate the diverging functions stereotypes assume: they are considered "aids to explanation", "energy-saving devices", and, most importantly, "shared group beliefs" (2). The first mentioned refers to the elemental, cognitive process of categorizing observed impressions as a means to cope with the plethora of information encountered in day-to-day life (Tajfel *Cognitive Aspects of Prejudice*, qtd. in McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 2-3). With regards to group perceptions, which are integral to stereotyping, this categorization process depends considerably on the identification of commonalities and differences between distinct groups as a means to differentiate between them and interact accordingly (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 3). The second mentioned, stereotypes as "energy-saving devices", are perceived as practices simplifying individual or collective perceptions of groups as they "reduce effort on the part of the receiver", who apprehends individuals not distinctly but as affiliated with larger groups that share certain features; this allows the perceiver to disregard an immense number of information (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 2-4). These "shortcuts", however, engender "biased and erroneous perceptions of the world", which frequently arouse an overall negative perception of stereotypes (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 4). In relation to the first principle, 'aids to understanding', McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears consequently bestow the epithet "aids to misunderstanding" upon the second principle (4).

The latter, most acknowledged principle, stereotypes as “shared group beliefs”, constitutes a vital aspect as collective perceptions about groups represent an indispensable prerequisite for the assertion of a specific stereotype in a society as opposed to insufficient single, individual perceptions (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 5). Researchers have examined the formation of stereotypes and discerned two variants that provide an explanation to the shared character of stereotypes: they are either the result of a “common environment [that] provides similar stimulus experience to different people”, thus, triggering shared beliefs, or the consequence of “shared cultural [...] knowledge, social representations, ideology or culture [...] [that] produces the commonality of views” (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 5). Shared stereotypes provide informative insights into relations between groups and enable presumptions on their conduct towards each other (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 5).

In his introductory work *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*, Pickering emphasizes that the terms ‘stereotype’ and ‘category’ must not be used synonymously as they entail dissimilar meanings (2). Rather, the term ‘category’ may be associated with the term ‘concept’, highlighting its “explanatory nature” crucial for processing impressions of the world and, thus, for stereotyping (McGarty 16). Categorization represents a cognitive activity that “creat[es] mental maps for working out how we view the world and negotiat[es] our ways through it in our everyday social relations and interactions” (Pickering 2). Their formation relies on pre-existing knowledge, but more significantly, on the identification of commonalities and variations among groups, which facilitates discrimination between them (McGarty 17, 20; Berndsen et al. 95). Similar to stereotypes, they exhibit the potential for alteration and modification (Pickering 3).

2.2. Stereotype Formation

Resulting from the attempt to discriminate between groups of people, stereotypes form to highlight diverging features perceived as decisive for one group (“ingroup”) while negligible for the other (“outgroup”) (Spears 128). Such distinctive features represented by stereotypes are emphasized to mark affiliation with a certain group and distance to the other. They might also form for reasons of “self-enhancement” as “accentuating or magnifying differences on relevant dimensions may serve to underscore the positive features of some ingroup with respect to outgroup members thereby contributing to a positive social identity” (Schaller and Maass, qtd. in

McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 7). A further rationale for the formation of stereotypes constitutes the socio-political endeavor to pertain a certain status quo in the interest of powerful ruling systems, which abuse stereotypes as justification for their hegemony (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 8, McGarty 17; see also section 2.3. *Stereotypes as a Means to Establish Order and Maintain Power* below).

In their article *Subjective Essentialism and the Emergence of Stereotypes*, Yzerbyt and Rocher differentiate between passive and active formations of stereotypes. The passive formation paradigm refers to a mere exposure of the individual to environmental stimuli that consequently results in the unconscious, automatic production of stereotypes (Yzerbyt and Rocher 38). This formation process can be ascribed to the person's cognitive ability and inherent aspiration to categorize his/her environment to create meaning and facilitate perception (Yzerbyt and Rocher 38). From this perspective, the formation of a stereotype is simply a neutral "reflection of the environment" (Yzerbyt and Rocher 38). Apart from that, stereotypes may also be actively constructed on the basis of prior theories or perceived data that presents itself in the individual's social environment and fulfill certain socio-political needs (Yzerbyt and Rocher 38).

With respect to the formation of stereotypes on the grounds of perceived data or prior theories, Spears distinguishes between four degrees of bottom-up and top-down processes. Traditional bottom-up processes depict stereotype formations as entirely dependent on available, observable stimuli; the more distinctive and prominent the feature, the more applicable it is for stereotype formation (Spears 131, 134, see also Brown and Turner 68, 70; Jussim, qtd. in McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 10). As ample information is available in bottom-up approaches, evaluative conclusions prove to be dispensable (Spears 131). If data is available but not as distinctive and prominent as in straightforward bottom-up processes, stereotypes can only be deduced from its context; Spears terms this phenomena "[a] bit of 'bottom up'" (131, 135). Spears, Jetten and Scheepers generally refer to bottom-up processes of stereotype formation as "reflective distinctiveness" (qtd. in Spears 129). While stereotype formation engendered through data is related to bottom-up processes, theory and former knowledge are associated with top-down processes (Brown and Turner 68), also referred to as "creative distinctiveness" (Spears, Jetten and Scheepers, qtd. in Spears 129). Spears terms instances, in which only "very limited

information such as background knowledge or category labels” can be invoked and employed for stereotype formation, as “[a] bit of ‘top down’”; due to their limitations, this might also entail making inferences (131, 145). Lastly, “[n]either up nor down” processes describe “the ‘information poor’ end of the spectrum” which lacks data as well as theory (Spears 131). Spears highlights that groups might be, in fact, similar to each other, hence, stereotype formation might not occur; otherwise, distinction and stereotypical understandings of the groups might solely depend on “evaluative differentiation”, which is highly problematic as it triggers “ingroup bias” (Spears 150-151, 153). Brown and Turner emphasize that stereotype formation may eventually result from the combination of theory and data (68).

Stereotypes form to differentiate between groups of people on the grounds of perceived or imagined commonalities and differences. Distinctive, perceptible features are most prominently employed as justification for discriminating between groups and entail visually discernable features associated with certain groups of people (McGarty 23). Yzerbyt and Rocher list “categories like race, sex, and age” as characteristics providing ‘justifications’ for erroneous, biased stereotype formation (41). They argue that the common basis for the formation of group stereotypes appears to be “similarity”, such as “proximity” or “appearance”, and commonality in, for instance, religious conviction or political affiliation (41). Constructed notions of normalcy stimulate members of societies to strive for adherence to the constructed norm and affiliation with the ‘normal’ ingroup (McGarty 33), these notions of normality influence “ingroup theories, knowledge and ideologies” which are employed to discriminate between groups (Brown and Turner 84). Clear differentiation is best achieved by “exaggerat[ing] differences” perceived in the outgroup while emphasizing commonality in the ingroup (Brown and Turner 68). More distinctive and prominent features allow for more effective discrimination between groups (Yzerbyt and Rocher 57). While enhancing positive values in the ingroup, members of the former attribute negative values to the outgroup; these value judgments “allow us to make our group positively distinct from relevant outgroups” but bear negative potential with regards to the outgroup (Tajfel *Social Stereotypes and Social Groups*, qtd. in Brown and Turner 69).

2.3. Stereotypes: A Means to Establish Order and Maintain Power

Spears emphasizes that the differentiating behavior in stereotype formation may engender negative, biased beliefs about certain groups of people and “may put social constraints on” them as a result (Spears 129). Haslam et al. depict stereotyping not merely as a subjective, cognitive process of categorization, but highlight its performative role in a society – stereotypes are formed so that people may “act meaningfully and *collectively* in it”; though not contesting its relevance in processes of categorization, they stress their socio-political impact (161, emphasis in original). As stereotypes bear the potential to function as a means to inscribing sets of values into a society, they occupy a fundamental role “in the politics of power maintenance and enhancement” (Haslam et al. 177). Powerful agents abuse stereotypes to establish, enforce and perpetuate their hegemonic position (Haslam et al. 177). This is best accomplished by “deny[ing] any flexible thinking with categories” (Pickering 3), although categories as well as stereotypes are actually varying and malleable in nature. This denial of flexibility contributes to the maintenance of powerful structures in a society as they negate the possibility for change (Pickering 3) and impose notions of order.

2.4.1. Social Order through Erroneous Representations

Lippmann emphasizes the necessity of stereotypes for a society resulting from their potential to provide order in an otherwise chaotic world through processes of categorization (63, qtd. in Pickering 18); from this perspective, stereotyping constitutes an imperative (Pickering 19). The problem with stereotyping, however, can be detected in its susceptibility to error and biased group perceptions; this partially results from homogeneous portrayals of groups vital in stereotype formation, which negates individuality and heterogeneity within a group (Pickering 4). Pickering explains that “[c]ertain forms of behavior, disposition or propensity are isolated, taken out of context and attributed to everyone associated with a particular group or category.” (Pickering 4). This accentuated, ostensibly determinant feature becomes segregated and depicted as sole and “uniform” characteristic of the entire group (Pickering 4). Those parties involved in the production of the stereotypical representation of the other group may experience the stereotype, in line with an understanding of stereotyping as categorization, as providing order in a world crowded with impressions; it “lock[s] a category irrevocably into its place, in an

apparently settled hierarchy of relations” (Pickering 4). Adhering to a social order that is constructed as ‘natural’ and enforced by the accentuation of differences between ‘more valuable’ and ‘less valuable’ groups proposes an “illusion of precision, of order, of the way things should be”, of stability, “certainty, regularity and continuity” (Pickering 4).

2.4.2. Stereotypes and Power Structures

The categorization process involved in stereotyping, while seemingly establishing order in an otherwise chaotic social environment, actually entails a detrimental “twofold movement”: On the one hand, stereotype formation triggers negative value judgments about the outgroup, “marking it marginal to the moral order”; at the same time, by comparison, the ingroup members are elevated to a superior position compared to the deficient, inferior outgroup members who are perceived as ‘lacking’ of features the ‘normal’, superordinate group displays (Pickering 5, 48). Thus, stereotyping can and should be perceived as a political instrument that is “inadequate and biased, [...] endorsing the interest of those who use them” (Lippmann, qtd. in Pickering 18) while neglecting those who are stereotyped and marginalized as a result. Pickering stresses that

[t]he evaluative ordering which stereotyping produces always occurs at a cost of those who are stereotyped, for they are then fixed into a marginal position or subordinate status and judged accordingly, regardless of the inaccuracies that are involved in the stereotypical description given of them. (5)

While ingroup members represented and supported by powerful socio-political agents occupy a privileged position, stereotyped outgroup members are disempowered, “fix[ed] in place”, and deprived of an individual voice (Pickering 5, 47). Features or characteristics employed as pretense to marginalize a certain group are presented as ‘natural’ and pre-existent, thus, justifying discriminative behavior and the outgroup’s inferior position in society (Pickering 5). To entrench their inferiority, the construction of barriers and boundaries constitutes an essential element in exclusionary practices employed by powerful agents in a society that strive to maintain their supremacy (Pickering 48-49).

From a socio-political perspective, stereotyping constitutes a highly problematic, dangerous process that induces discriminative, exclusionary behavior often resulting in “exploitative, unjust treatment, or [...] aggressive behavior” (Pickering 10). Its perception as natural and fixed in society prevents emancipating approaches against

socially discriminative behavior as well as physical and attitudinal barrier removal (Pickering 10). Pickering argues for the consideration of theoretical knowledge on the processes of stereotypes in education, as information and knowledge potentially engender critical awareness and challenge wide-held stereotypical beliefs about groups (11).

3. OTHERING

3.1. Definition

The concept of Othering was fundamentally influenced by the emergence of postcolonial studies as well as the ideas and writings by Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak (Riegel 51). It describes the social process of objectifying a person, a group of people or entire peoples on the basis of perceived differences; most importantly, this objectification further becomes naturalized in discourse and utilized as a justification and a means for discriminative practices (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 299). Imperialism and the related emergence of racism based on the pseudo-science named phrenology constitute the most prominent examples in this area followed by discourses about eugenics and racial hygiene in the 19th and 20th century. “[D]ominance and control” are exerted by oppressive rulers, governments or institutions that ostracize certain people and elevate others in order to establish, enforce, perpetuate and legitimate their preeminence and the existing, hierarchical social order (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 299, Riegel 52). It is understood as a “process by which one group reproduces and reinforces distinctions, dominance, and subordination against those without power” (Al-Saji, qtd. in Williams and Korn 23). The ‘Other’ is devalued, deprived of a voice and left in a marginalized, inferior position (Riegel 53, 58) or, as Hall terms it, in a “symbolic exile” (qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300). Vazquez addresses the issue of producing “different levels or categories of citizens”, or “partial citizens”, as a result of Othering practices (2). While the powerful group claims access to social resources and privileges, such prerogatives are denied to the powerless ‘Other’ (Riegel 55, 58). ‘Superior’ ruling institutions exert symbolic and material oppression, affecting areas such as education, economy, science and politics (Riegel 67-68, see also section 4.3.3.2. *Barriers* below).

A general psychological approach views Othering as an “essential part of the process of differentiation of the Self from Others” and the “develop[ment of] a sense of self”, depicting it as a general, *neutral* process of humanity, whereas a sociological approach emphasizes the socio-political power it exerts (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 307). Although the formation of an identity remains central, this perspective addresses issues of marginalization, exclusion and discrimination. Krumer-Nevo and Sidi emphasize that “[t]he oppressive force of Otherness comes from the separating line or border created, and from its exclusionary effect” (300). Through the creation of binary oppositions such as familiar/exotic, civilized/wild, white/black, male/female, West/East, able/disabled and their allocation to certain groups of people, the hegemonic ‘us’ is distinguished from the inferior ‘them’ (Said, qtd. in Riegel 52).

The ‘Other’ is commonly denied desirable attributions such as respect, value and identity and mostly assigned unfavorable traits and feelings of shame and fault (William and Korn 23-24; Joshi, qtd. in Williams and Korn 24). Powerful agents depict the ‘Other’ as insufficient, flawed and deficient in order to vindicate their supremacy and strengthen their conception of normalcy (Riegel 52-53, 59). Thus, the perception of these negative character traits in certain groups of people as *natural* and *preexisting* constitutes a vital aspect of Othering. The population at the center of a community serves as representative of the undisputed, self-evident and central concept of ‘normality’, which obtains its superior position through its naturalization and opposition to the ‘unnatural’ and ‘abnormal’ (Riegel 58) (see also section 4.1. *The Concept of ‘Normalcy’ and the ‘Normal’ Body* below). On the basis of this opposition of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’, peoples and groups of people continue to experience social in- or exclusion; crucial for this process is the accentuation of certain properties and the omission of others in the interest of dominant, hierarchical social orders (Riegel 58-59). Notably, in Othering processes, “heterogeneous social groups are perceived as a homogenous category” that is deprived of its individuality and characterized solely by difference and inferiority (Riggins qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300); Williams and Korn reinforce this emphasis on “commonality” and demarcation as essential to Othering practices (23). An enhanced emphasis on similarities and differences may trigger a sense of belonging, or otherwise, exclusion (Riegel 8). Salient aspects of difference that are employed as rational for marginalization and devaluation comprise the categories race, ethnicity, gender,

social class, sexual orientation and ability/health (Riegel 61-62, Williams and Korn 23). At its most extreme, Othering triggers “dehumanization and expendability of other humans who find themselves excluded from the ‘us’ category” as a result of their devaluation (Bauman qtd. in Karmiris 115).

3.2. Othering Dimensions

In *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, Todorov distinguishes between “three dimensions of the relationship between Self and Other” that form the basis of Othering processes: (1) “value judgments”, (2) “social distance” and (3) “knowledge” (qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300). The first dimension, value judgments, refers to opposing ideas and perceptions that entail values such as good and bad, polite and impolite, or civilized and uncivilized (Todorov, qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300). In the process of Othering, the othered person or group is typically depicted as malign, corrupt, sick or negative in any other form; these depictions function as a justification for discriminative practices on the part of the powerful group. Since Othering operates on the basis of opposition, the superior group is portrayed as the favorable antonym that is benign, truthful, healthy and good-natured in general. However, features displayed by the superior group are typically not explicitly mentioned in Othering processes as the accentuation of the negative features associated with the othered group poses the key factor in their ‘legitimate’ discrimination.

The second dimension, social distance, pertains to actual physical as well as psychological distance (Todorov, qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300). With regards to the first-mentioned, Eurocentrism and the ‘normal’ European citizen constitute central positions from which Othering commonly exerts its discriminatory practices. Consequently, various forms of racism resulted from spatial differences, for example, the pejorative perception of the exotic Orient versus the familiar West as delineated in the fundamental book *Orientalism* by Edward Said. Close vicinity suggests familiarity whereas distance might be perceived as a threat, thus, objected to the process of Othering. Besides physical proximity and distance, Todorov also names psychological distance as a decisive factor (qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300); aspects such as mindset, mentality, religious beliefs as well as values and ideals might differ between the ‘othered’ and the dominant group and cause alienation.

The last dimension relates to shared and unfamiliar knowledge as a substantial basis for Othering practices (Todorov, qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300). Collective cultural practices, common languages, traditions and customs or even common bodily experiences such as ability trigger a sense of commonality and belonging; the absence of such knowledges, on the other hand, may engender exclusionary practices and the creation of 'Others'. The rationale for Othering practices can be identified in the fear of the unknown and unfamiliar, for instance the presence of a disability, a foreign language, differing traditions and customs or variant cultural practices.

3.3. Othering Mechanisms

In the light of these three fundamental dimensions of Othering, Krumer-Nevo and Sidi formulated four mechanisms that build on one another to generate otherness and, consequently, exclusion and social isolation: "(1) *Objectification*", "(2) *Decontextualization*", "(3) *Dehistorization*" and "(4) *Deauthorization*" (300).

In a first step, individuals and groups of people experiencing Othering are typically deprived of their human value and individuality; they are objectified and "turn[ed] [...] into stereotypes composed of inferior, mostly negative features", which stand in opposition to favorable traits displayed by the dominant group (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300). Superior, powerful agents occupy the active subject position and claim the right to determine the passive objects' status and privileges in a society. In a second step named decontextualization, "behavior [is] abstracted from the context in which this behavior was developed and continues to exist", frequently resulting in inaccurate depictions of behavior patterns as irrational, detrimental or preposterous (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300). The third step, dehistorization, outlines the practice in which the individual past of the objectified person or group is invalidated and, hence, disregarded in the process of Othering even though it might provide significant information about the marginalized group that would prevent such discriminative practices. Ultimately, the objectified 'Other' is deprived of its voice; this "authorless" position induces the demand for a knowledgeable, "omniscient narrator", which is generally provided by external, powerful agents in the subject position (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300); the 'Other', however, is left muted and invisible (Spivak, qtd. in Riegel 38).

3.4. Theoretical Approaches to Othering

Within the study of Othering, various theoretical approaches prove to be valuable to depict marginalizing processes and structures, unmask discriminatory regimes and scrutinize socio-political constructs such as the notion of normalcy that naturalize and justify exclusionary practices. In the following section, an exemplary number of vital approaches will be briefly outlined.

3.4.1. Structural Theory

Structural theory investigates concepts of Othering considering hegemonic power relations. Exclusion and inequality are perceived as resulting from structural differences provoked in the interest of powerful agents who strive to maintain and entrench their supremacy in a society (Riegel 19). Structural discrepancies in social capital and the access to various social and economic resources constitute a critical element as they provoke disparity and prevent participation (Riegel 20). Scientists who employ structural theory for their research exhibit special interest in historical developments of hegemonies and exclusionary practices that structure societies (Riegel 19). Riegel names class, gender, ethnicity/race (“Klasse, Geschlecht, Ethnizität/race”, German original) as prevailing factors that are employed as justification for discrimination (19); in addition, health or ability have been viewed as pivotal for these practices as well. These categories operate as structuring mechanisms or ushers (“Platzanweiser”, German original) that position the powerful group at the center of a society while marginalized groups are relegated to the social periphery (Riegel 20). Riegel, however, criticizes the naturalization of these categories (“Naturalisierung der Kategorien”, German original, 20).

3.4.2. Social Constructivism

The critique on the ‘reality’ of categories such as race, gender, class and ability is addressed in social constructivism, which firmly repudiates their naturalness and uncovers their socio-political construction (Riegel 21). Notions of identity, of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, central to the process of Othering, are scrutinized and considered as highly problematic (Riegel 23-24). Researchers relate social inequality imposed by powerful agents to such constructed categories that serve as a means for discrimination. These categories are not perceived as objective variables but social constructs that obtain meaning through active social and institutional discourses that are performed

and repeated by all members of a society; a prominent example of this understanding constitutes the concept of 'doing gender' as proposed by Judith Butler (Riegel 21). Demonstrations of these constructs as natural and hardly perceptible prove to be crucial for Othering since they facilitate and justify the exertion of dominance and control (Riegel 22-23).

3.4.3. Post-structuralism, Discourse Analysis and Deconstructionism

Approaches in post-structuralism, discourse analysis and deconstructionism emphasize language use and discourse as essential aspects in the creation of objects, identities and of 'Others' (Riegel 28). Well-known researchers practicing in these fields, such as Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, and Judith Butler, contributed immensely to an understanding of the influence discourse exerts on social relationships (Riegel 28). Koppers states, "[w]e frame our understanding of ourselves and other people [...] through discourses or modes of knowing" (*Disability Arts and Culture* 21). Wielding enormous power, language does not merely portray the world objectively but creates it in the first place; through labeling or signifying, meaning is allocated and observed categories are classified (Riegel 28). In her contributions to feminist studies, Butler highlights the performativity of language and the fact that through labeling and addressing ("Anrufung und Adressierung", German original) and their consistent repetition, categories become naturalized, integrated into discourse and positioned within power relations (qtd. in Riegel 31). While discourses may appear indiscriminating, they implicitly convey notions of dominance, norms and ideologies ("Dominanz[...], Normen und Ideologien", German original, Riegel 28). Koppers highlights "power relations [are] inherent in naming a particular way of being in the world as normal" (*Disability Arts and Culture* 14). Such ideologies generated through discourse depict a crucial aspect of a society's perception of 'Others' and their consequent actions that may include discrimination or exclusion (Riegel 28). Deconstructionism attempts to expose fundamental categories that are perceived as natural but are actually man-made, societal constructs that trigger discriminatory practices; it questions power relations and hierarchies and dispels categories of difference (Riegel 30). A vital contribution of this theoretical approach is the understanding that categories such as gender, race, class and ability are not natural, not preexisting, not self-evident but evoked through language and permeated by power relations (Riegel 31). It is worth noting, however, that

discourses are apt to variation and novel ways of categorization (Kuppers, *Disability Arts and Culture* 21).

3.4.4. Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Theories

Cultural and postcolonial studies both examine the process of Othering as it constitutes a crucial part in practices of everyday life as well as principles of sovereignty. Representatives such as Stuart Hall, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak consider everyday cultural practices, including various forms of media and activities, as vital for the occupation and maintenance of hegemonic positions (Riegel 33). Postcolonial studies focus their attention on topics related to colonialism, including its history, formation and effects (i.e. Othering) that continue to be perceptible in today's society, especially the emergence of racism (Riegel 34). This continued effect constitutes a central research subject in postcolonial studies. Postcolonial theorists investigate systems of classifications that developed during imperialism, such as the pseudo-science phrenology, which attributed positive or negative character traits to peoples by means of bodily features, thus, discriminating those who did not correspond to the constructed ideal or notion of 'normalcy' (Riegel 34-35). Hubbard also addresses the issue that the motives behind the practices of eugenics and racial hygiene, which were prevalent during the Nazi regime and led to the murder of thousands of disabled children and adults, persist in the process of prenatal and genetic testing as physicians continue to question "which lives are 'worth living'" (101-102). Affiliated with cultural studies and postcolonial theories, critical whiteness studies critically examine the implicit centrality of being white ("Weiß-Sein", German original) as a consequence of colonialism, which continues to convey notions of normalcy, distributes privileges inequitably and governs social relations (Riegel 38). In a similar sense, ability and health has been culturally constructed as implicit normalcy by the medical discourse of disability (see 4.3.2. *The Medical Model*) and employed as a means of discrimination and devaluation.

4. DISABLISM

4.1. The Concept of 'Normalcy', the 'Ideal' and the 'Normal' Body

Lennard J. Davis and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson are two major figures in the formation of a social understanding of disability, who published two fundamental texts

named *Enforcing Normalcy* in 1995 and *Extraordinary Bodies* in 1997 (Barker and Murray 3). In these texts, both authors discuss the issue of normality in relation to disability – Davis uses the term “normalcy” while Garland-Thomson refers to the “normate” (*Enforcing Normalcy*, qt. in Barker and Murray 3). They argue that the ‘normal’ constitutes the central reality from which disability is measured against and understood as diverging in a derogatory sense; the disabled person is perceived as negative deviation from the normate, or as Koppers terms it, from the “TAB: temporarily abled-bodied” (*Disability Arts and Culture* 11). “Normate [...] is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them” (Garland-Thomson 8, qtd. in Koppers, *Disability Arts and Culture* 12).

Although commonly perceived as naturally given, the notion of normalcy is the result of developments in modern natural sciences, which put forth new methods of testing and measuring (Barker and Murray 3). Before these advancements, the notion of the ‘ideal’ was prevalent in societies from the seventeenth century onwards; it depicted a mythical, divine representation of the body that was unachievable for the ordinary human due to its proximity to the gods (Davis, *Constructing Normalcy* 4). Davis outlines, “an ideal, by definition, can never be found in this world”, but only in “mythology” (*Constructing Normalcy* 4). The connotation that the word ‘norm’ occupies today as “constituting, conforming to, not deviating or different from, [...] standard, regular, [and] usual” is strongly interconnected with developments in statistics from the middle of the 18th century onwards (Davis, *Constructing Normalcy* 3-4). While its initial purpose was to collect data about the state, it was soon transferred to the medical field in the 19th century with the mission to depict the average, healthy body (Davis, *Constructing Normalcy* 4). The French statistician Quetelet coined the term “l’homme moyen” (“average man”, translated by Davis), which provoked severe implications as the introduction of an ‘average man’ subliminally implied the notion of an ‘inferior man’ or ‘inferior classes’, justifying and naturalizing the superiority of some and the inferiority of others (Davis, *Constructing Normalcy* 4, 5). Davis explains, “the average then becomes paradoxically a kind of ideal”, “the way the body ‘should’ be” (*Constructing Normalcy* 5, 8). The construction of the ‘normal’ body, the notion of deficiency in those bodies that deviate from the norm and the question about the right to life remain essential in contemporary

medical practices as well, for instance in genetic engineering, prenatal screenings and abortion legislations (Hubbard 93, 101).

Normality, as depicted above, is a value-laden, social construct, which considers the human body as a measureable entity, triggering idealistic perceptions of what constitutes a 'normal' body and the question of who possesses a 'normal' body. Its central position implies that the large majority of people in a society conform to the norm while only a few exceptions diverge from it (Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* 23, qtd. in Barker and Murray 3). The advent of a measurable norm concurrently drew attention to "deviations or extremes"; Davis argues that societies favoring the idea of a norm tend to perceive disabled people as deficient and highly problematic as they are inconsistent with their constructed and acquired expectations of 'normal' bodies (*Enforcing Normalcy* 29, qtd. in Barker and Murray 3). Michalko and Titchkosky emphasize that "normalcy matters because it is understood as the legitimate way of being in the world and the *only* version of the good life" (5, qtd. in Karmiris 103, emphasis added). Conforming to prevalent notions of normalcy, thus, constitutes the ultimate goal for the majority of people in a society (Michalko and Titchkosky 5, qtd. in Karmiris 103, Davis, *Constructing Normalcy* 3). This aim results from the integration of such "norms and values [...] in everyday practices", which is problematic as these cause the establishment of a hierarchy within society (Holt 10, qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *Critical Psychologies* 5). Shildrick emphasizes that theoretical approaches to the 'normal' body solely value "the normative, seemingly biologically given, [...] fully functioning body" and put the 'abnormal', disabled body in direct opposition to this conception (qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole *The Body As Disability and Possibility* 5). Children with disabilities, for instance, often fail to meet certain developmental expectations put forth by the medical discourse, resulting in their devaluation (*The Body as Disability and Possibility* 2). As a consequence of the construction of deviations and the universal attempt to conform to the norm, "multiple professional institutions, including special education [were established], to remain devoted to curing and rehabilitating" variances from the norm (Michalko and Titchkosky 5, qtd. in Karmiris 103). Relating to the observance of a norm, Michel Foucault coined the term 'bio-power' to describe "forms of social control that regularize life not by imposing power from above but by inscribing power onto and through the body" (1990: 139, qtd. in Davidson 75). On the one hand, this bio-

power depends on scientific knowledge that proposes notions of normalcy through the application of measurements and statistics, on the other hand, it relies on the individual's desire to conform to the suggested normalcy and their "engage[ment] in self-surveillance" as a result (Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance* 5).

As stated above, the conception of normality as a natural, universal element in societies is misleading and incorrect; it is, in fact, a problematic socio-political construct induced and perpetuated in the interest of powerful, governing institutions occupying a superior position. Kliever highlights the massive link between the conception of normality and the understanding of disability as deviation from that specified normality (qtd. in Lalvani *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 380). As Davis emphasizes, "the 'problem' is not the person with disabilities: the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the 'problem' of the disabled person" (*Enforcing Normalcy* 24, qtd. in Barker and Murray 3). Garland-Thomson consents with this view and adds that disability is "not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do" (6, qtd. in Barker and Murray 4).

4.2. Terminology: Disablism, Impairment & Disability

4.2.1. Disablism

The term disablism describes the practice by which the group of disabled people is discriminated, oppressed and excluded on the grounds of their perceived differences relating to physical, sensory or cognitive impairments that are contrasted with a socially constructed normalcy of health and ability. Ableism, on the other hand, delineates the privileging treatment people with a 'healthy', 'normal' body experience. In a society that prefers ability to disability, disabled people are ostracized through various constructed barriers that prevent them from integration and full participation. Thomas describes disablism as "a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well being" (73, qtd. in Goodley, *Disability Studies* 8-9). As outlined in the dimensions of Othering above, value judgments constitute a vital part in alienating certain groups of people and rendering them inferior to the wider community. People living with disabilities exhibit a vast history of discriminative practices that devalued and dehumanized them (Kuppers

Disability Arts and Culture, 24); examples include the 19th-century freak shows, the medical theater and teratology as well as 19th- and 20th-century eugenicist practices in the UK and the U.S. and racial hygiene in Germany.¹ These extreme, ableist practices share the common perception that “people with disabilities as a group are inferior to nondisabled people” (Linton *Reassigning Meaning* 161).

Disablism is penetrated by hegemonic power relations that aim to enforce their superior position through positioning people with disabilities at the social periphery, depicting them as ‘deficient’, ‘inferior’ citizens. This depiction is then deployed as justification for discriminative practices. To uncover such processes, discourse analysis suggests to examine questions such as “who has power to name and label whom and why” (Kuppers *Disability Arts and Culture*, 26). As objectification constitutes an integral part in the process of Othering, the abusive use of language that puts people with disabilities into a passive position proves to be especially interesting when analyzing discourse; in phrases such as “*victim of*”, “*suffering from*” or “*wheelchair bound*”, people with disabilities are “disempowered”, deprived of their subjectivity, depicted as “helpless” objects that are defined and perceived solely in terms of their disability (Linton, *Reassigning Meaning* 169, emphasis in original). This conception of disability neglects any individual value or existence beyond the attribution of ‘disabled’. More generally, the prefix ‘dis’ in disability entails meanings such as “not”, “absence of”, “opposite of” or “deprive of”, marking *dis*-ability as predominantly negative and lacking of certain features able-bodied people exhibit (Linton, *Reassigning Meaning* 171). Titchkosky subsumes, “disability is first, foremost and seemingly forever, ‘not’. It is not strength, not ability, it is not x, y or z” (663, qtd. in Vazquez 9).

4.2.2. Impairment

The human rights organization *Disabled People’s International* (DPI) defines impairment as “functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment” (qtd. in Goodley, *Disability Studies* 8). These varying impairments are traditionally associated with medical specifications such as paralysis, blindness, deafness or learning disability, to name only a few (Sherry 10,

¹ for more information on these practices see Dederich; Hubbard; Davidson; Davis *Constructing Normalcy*; Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance* and *Disability Arts and Culture*

qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *The Violence of Disablism* 603-604). Impairment is understood as an “individual and private” corporeality that resides within the disabled person’s body and is perceived outside of the social reality (Shakespeare, *Social Model of Disability* 198). Tremain emphasizes that impairment constitutes “a real entity, with unique and characteristic properties” (191) as opposed to the conceptional, social understanding of the construction of disability (see below). Hence, researchers from the field of disability studies strictly differentiate between impairment and disability, arguing against their synonymous usage (Tremain 191).

4.2.3. Disability

In 1975, the *Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation* defined disability as “the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities” (qtd. in Shakespeare, *Social Model of Disability* 198). The *Disabled People’s International* acknowledged this conception and further outlined disability as a “loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers” (qtd. in Goodley, *Disability Studies* 8). These definitions are congruent with the conceptions proposed by the social model of disability and picture disability as “structural and public” in contrast to a medical concept of disability as residing in the individual body (Shakespeare, *Social Model of Disability* 198). Both organizations delineate a socio-political understanding of disability and highlight structural barriers imposed and enforced by institutions as the main disabling factors in the lives of people with varying impairments (see section 4.3.3.2. *Barriers* below). Tremain states, “disability is a form of social disadvantage that is imposed on top of one’s impairment” (191). She elucidates that, while impairments might not inevitably engender disability, they constitute an essential prerequisite for the individual attribution of the label ‘disabled’ (Tremain 191). Goodley emphasizes that impairments are *not* disabling, societies are (*Disability Studies* 8).

4.3. Disability Models

4.3.1. The Religious Model

In medieval times, the religious model of disability was prevalent (Wheatley 18). The Catholic Church exerted significant influence on the conception of disability through church-led hospitals and charities as well as the depiction of divine, miraculous cures of disabled people performed by Jesus, which constituted a regular element in religious texts and reinforced people's perception of disability (Wheatley 18-19). Medicine in its modern sense was non-existent at the time and the presence of a disability was commonly explained in terms of a "divine punishment for sinful behavior", triggering a negative understanding of disability (Wheatley 17, 19). Such sinful behavior might include non-observance of saint's days or criminal acts against institutions associated with a particular saint (Wheatley 19). Apart from that, some disabilities were perceived as resulting from natural causes and, thus, curable provided that the affected person "venerate[s] a saint or perform[s] other Christian rites" (Wheatley 19).

4.3.2. The Medical Model

This primary focus on curing the disabled body of its abnormality and deficiency remains dominant in the medical understanding of disability and continues to influence contemporary society's perception and cultural representation of disability. From a medical perspective, disability is private and primarily located in the disabled persons' body or mind (Linton *Claiming Disability*, qtd. in Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 389). Corporeal impairments are perceived as sole decisive factors disabling the affected person in a society, rendering it unfit for inclusion and participation. Disability, from this perspective, is "lodged within a person", it is pathological and considered to require medical attention and treatment, hence, attempts to "normaliz[e]" the body are prevalent in the medical model of disability (Kuppers, *Disability Arts and Culture*, 23-24). The disabled person is predominantly perceived as patient who seeks to (re)gain 'normal' bodily functions; to achieve this ultimate goal, impairments are treated medically, surgically, cosmetically or psychiatrically (Linton, *Reassigning Meaning* 162; Kuppers, *Disability Arts and Culture*, 24, Dederich 71). Kuppers emphasizes that the medical model of disability abides by conceptions of normalcy and that "all have to align themselves with this

norm, or risk being seen as ‘different’”, which engenders prejudice and discrimination (*Disability Arts and Culture*, 24). From this perspective, the person with a disability is obliged to alter his/her body or mind to resemble the wider, ‘normal’ society and be able to partake in everyday life; he/she is at fault while the able-bodied rest remains unaffected of change (Kuppers, *Disability Arts and Culture*, 24). As a result of being marked as deviant and deficient, people with disabilities frequently exhibit feelings of guilt, fault or shame and withdraw from public view and activities (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *The Body as Disability and Possibility* 2). Conclusively, Linton argues that, on the one hand, medical treatment of disability proved to be beneficial for people living with disabilities as it contributed to an increase in livability for disabled people, whereas, on the other hand, it triggered negative judgments and biased perceptions of disability as “deviance from the norm, as pathological condition, as deficit, and, significantly, as an individual burden and personal tragedy” (Linton *Reassigning Meaning* 162).

4.3.3. The Social Model

Paul Hunt first proposed the revolutionary theoretical concept of the so-called social model of disability in 1966 in Great Britain (Saunders). In 1975, the *Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation* was founded by Paul Hunt and Vic Finkelstein; they described disability as a

disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities. (qtd. in Saunders)

In this view, disability is not located in the individual body but caused by discriminatory socio-political agents and “practical, environmental, attitudinal or administrative framework[s]”, which favor ability over disability (Saunders). To this point, disability has been viewed as a personal affliction resulting from congenital, inherent or acquired corporeal conditions and relied heavily on medical treatment such as surgical procedures and rehabilitation. The inability to participate in ordinary social life has traditionally been ascribed solely to the person’s impairment, preventing inclusion of the disabled person who is regarded as problematic and inherently different from the otherwise ‘normal’ society. Gaining momentum from the 1990s onwards, the social model exposes socio-political practices as sole disabling factors (Kuppers, *Disability Arts and Culture* 27) and strives for “de-naturalizations of disability” (Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance* 50, emphasis in

original). Shakespeare highlights that this shift in the conception of disability strengthened the self-esteem of disabled people, who cease to be perceived as 'dysfunctional' first and foremost (*Social Model of Disability* 199). Shakespeare argues that

[t]he social model has the power to change the perception of disabled people. The problem of disability is relocated from the individual, to the barriers and attitudes which disable her. It is not the disabled person who is to blame, but society. She does not have to change, society does. Rather than feeling self-pity, she can feel anger and pride. (*Social Model of Disability* 200)

The social model perceives discriminative attitudes and socio-political practices as disempowering and oppressive; these practices engender inequality, construct difference and exclude people with disabilities from day-to-day life. Saunders suggests that "man-made societal arrangements" require adjustment in order to guarantee equal conditions for people with disabilities. The removal of various barriers constitutes the main objective of the social model of disability (Kuppers *Disability Arts and Culture*, 28). Medical labels traditionally convey certain "cultural expectation[s]" and "locat[e] the cause of the 'problem' in the individual" (Saunders). While proponents of the social model of disability do not neglect the varying pathological conditions of individuals, they simply do not perceive them as the main, decisive disabling factors. The explicit separation between "disability (social exclusion) and impairment (physical limitation)" constitutes the essential consideration in the social model of disability (Shakespeare, *Social Model of Disability* 198). Saunders refers to the example of a wheelchair user to distinguish between a medical and a social approach to disability:

[C]onsider a wheelchair user trying to gain access to a stepped entrance of a building. By the medical definition, the person is disabled by a medical condition that makes use of a wheelchair appropriate. By the social definition, the same person is disabled by the absence of ramps or lifts which allow the person to enter and proceed unhindered. Where lifts or ramps are present, the person is not 'disabled' although their medical condition remains unchanged.

Researchers supporting a social conception of disability attempt to locate specific areas which cause inequality to people with disabilities, for instance, politics, education, legislation or public as well as private establishments, and argue for more enabling, inclusive approaches (Barker and Murray 3). Medical conceptions of disability as located merely in the individual body of people who have an impairment are neglected by social theorists of disability, who emphasize "processes of disablism

that are produced in the relationships between people” and enforced through hegemonic structures and discourses (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *The Violence of Disablism* 604).

4.3.3.1. *The Realist Theory*

While the social model of disability locates the cause of difficulties people with disabilities face in various disabling man-made structures, practices and institutions, another principle has developed as an extension to this understanding. The so-called realist disability theory has been proposed by various relevant figures in the field of disability studies, for instance Tom Shakespeare, Nicholas Watson and Tobin Siebers. Shakespeare and Watson’s article *The Social Model of Disability: An Outdated Ideology? Exploring Theories and Expanding Methodologies* and Sieber’s contribution in *Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body* prove to be especially notable in this context. These researchers endorse the reintroduction of corporeality into the discussion on disability since the omission of bodily realities from cultural ones neglects impairment in general and the essential aspects diverse impairments entail (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *The Body as Disability and Possibility* 3, Shakespeare *Social Model of Disability* 200). Goodley and Runswick-Cole underline that “[i]mpairment is a key reality of the disability experience”, which must not be ignored or mitigated (*The Body as Disability and Possibility* 3, emphasis added). While impairments might not or only rarely constitute an obstacle for some individuals, its bodily reality should not be underrated as it proves to be obstructive to many (Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *The Body as Disability and Possibility* 3) as some “impairments are [...] static, [...] episodic, [...] degenerative [...] [or even] terminal” (Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs* 54, qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *Critical Psychologies*, 3). Goodley emphasizes that “[i]mpairment is a predicament and can be tragic” (*Disability Studies* 28, emphasis in original). A recent study by McDonald et al. confirms this point of view, stating that “87.2% of the disabled group [in their study] suggested that disability had a significant impact on their daily lives” (18). Realist theorists understand disability as “an umbrella term for impairment, activity limitations, and participation restriction, [...] [which] forms part of a broader classification scheme covering three domains: body functioning and structures; activities and participation, and environmental factors” (Shakespeare *Disability Rights*

and Wrongs, qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *The Body as Disability and Possibility* 3). While the potentially disabling environment in which the person with a disability finds him/herself remains essential to the definition of disability, their interpretation attaches equal significance to corporeality. Shakespeare outlines that the “real priority is to accept impairment and to remove disability” by removing the barriers people with disabilities face (*Social Model of Disability* 198).

4.3.3.2. Barriers

The social model of disability considers physical, attitudinal, economical, socio-political and structural barriers as the main disabling factors in the lives of people with disabilities. They struggle to overcome these disempowering barriers, which are systemically manifested through institutions that continue to discriminate people with disabilities, to deny them equal opportunities and to prevent access to activities of everyday life (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *The Body as Disability and Possibility* 1). Hansen emphasizes that these constructed barriers strive to “effectively kee[p] disabled people in their place, on the periphery of mainstream society” (qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *Critical Psychologies*, 4). However, it must be noted that people with diverse impairments encounter different barriers and that these barriers are also context-dependent (Olsen 3). In the following paragraphs, a representative number of ostracizing barriers that impede attaining an equal status for people with disabilities will be outlined.

As mentioned in the example of the wheelchair user above, many obstacles people with disabilities face are of a physical nature. A vast number of public as well as private buildings, especially older facilities, lack disabled-friendly premises such as ramps, elevators, stair lifts, door-widening, electronic door-openers, screen readers or modification of sanitary installations; as a result, these facilities remain inaccessible for people with certain physical impairments. Another substantial physical aspect in which people with disabilities feel discriminated in the participation of day-to-day life is the unsatisfactory equipment of various modes of (public) transportation with regards to their mobility. Again, a lack of ramps, disabled-friendly seating and access possibilities as well as the construction of parking spaces in close proximities to entrances constitute decisive barriers for people with disabilities. Acoustic traffic lights and visual aids for people with sensory impairments are crucial

preconditions for inclusion as well. These examples represent only a small fraction of required modifications. While many public areas have improved their accessibility over the last decades, others continue to require significant alterations and modifications in order to provide environments conducive for disabled people.

The medical model initiated a long tradition of naturalizing the conception of the disabled body as deficient and the portrayal of it as inherently different; this understanding of disability engendered attitudinal biases and positioned the person living with a disability as inferior, disruptive and even threatening to the 'normal', able-bodied society. Although social approaches critically examining disability have increased over the last decades and have been considered in various fields of academic research, common medical specifications of disability, and prejudices relating hitherto, persist in contemporary societies' perception of disability. Vazquez emphasizes that individuals living with a disability continue to be "seen as someone who lacks rather than someone who displays different abilities to perform tasks in alternative and innovative ways" and that "stereotypes of inability or deficiency" prevail (2). Hehir states that the wider community pursues the idea that "*it is better [...] to walk than to roll, to speak than sign, read print than read Braille, spell independently than use a spell-check*" (3, qtd. in Kuppers *Disability Arts and Culture*, 24, emphasis in original).

Researchers such as Olsen reinforce that the main problems are incorrect information and knowledge assumed about disabilities by individuals, institutions and companies alike (3). He claims that it appears to "res[t] solely upon disabled people to not only fight to be included, but to educate those within our social circles about the barriers we face" (3). He also expresses that there appears to be a common belief that people with disabilities only need to contact the owner of a certain facility in advance to be able to access a building, visit a concert or partake in a social activity (Olsen 3). This stems from biases, uninformed beliefs about disability as well as the insufficient inclusion of disability related topics in the curriculum of schools. Latter carry the potential to raise awareness and educate children on adequate social encounters with people with disabilities as well as the possibilities to combat their disempowerment and exclusion. McDonald et al. add that the inner emotional state of people with disabilities also carries a disabling potential as feelings of shame, anxiety

and stress, which result from a devaluing, pathological judgment about disability determined by the nondisabled group influenced by the religious and medical discourse, frequently hinder and discourage the disabled community to partake in 'normal', everyday social life (2).

Vazquez argues that the conception of disability as proposed by the medical model not only triggers negative biases but also evokes economic barriers (2). Being disabled is commonly interconnected with unemployment, a disadvantageous position in the employment market compared with able-bodied individuals, low income or even impoverishment (Vazquez 2). He further connects employer's biased attitudes towards disability to economic barriers impeding equality; a large number of employers refuses to engage a disabled person in their business as the majority of occupations are based on an ideology of ability and independence, which raises doubts if a person with a disability can work efficiently (Vazquez 2, 6). Reluctance to adapting the working environment in conformity with the disabled person's needs constitutes a further barrier although some disabled individuals do not even require such adjustments (Vazquez 6). As a result, the group of disabled people face "limited opportunities to perform according to market demands" (Vazquez 2). "Those who do not fit neatly into a market model", Brodie argues, "are treated as inadequate or dysfunctional market players or they are completely erased from the public agenda" (98, qtd. in Vazquez 5). Hiranandani confirms these claims and states "most legislation, policies and practices have regarded people with disabilities as unfit for society, as sick, as functionally limited, and as *unable to work*" (qtd. in Vazquez 5, emphasis added). Since unemployment is a key risk factor in social isolation (Vazquez 11, see also section 4.3.3.3. *Loneliness and Stress* below), people with disabilities seek to work; however, attitudinal, structural and physical barriers impede their appointment (Vazquez 6). While 'normal' citizens are encouraged to pursue their dreams and obtain an employment that conforms to their personal interests and talents, the majority of disabled people ends up in low-paid, "sheltered jobs" that are inconsistent with the individuals' notions of happiness and self-realization (Vazquez 9). In a market-driven, capitalistic environment, people with disabilities face tremendous disadvantages resulting from economic barriers such as unemployment, low incomes and high expenses on disabled-friendly equipment (Olsen 4). Their

inability to participate in social activities as a consequence of these barriers “creates a situation that is the antithesis of inclusion” (Olsen 4).

Attitudinal biases informed by the medical understanding of disability continue to not only influence economic opportunities of disabled people decisively but education as well. As a result of the emphasis on corporeal, biological demands of people with disabilities and their alleged opposition to ‘normal’ students, self-contained environments and ‘special needs’ schools have developed that reassert the conceptions of otherness (Karmiris 101). Michalko also addresses the issue that “the very idea of ‘special education’ is built upon a sense of exclusion” (71 qtd. in Karmiris 108). Apart from that, inclusive approaches to education have gained momentum in recent decades. While inclusionary practices in education bear the potential for emancipation of disabled children, they also exhibit issues of standardization and exclusion (Riegel 7). Erevelles argues that exclusionary practices persist under the pretext of inclusion, “construct[ing] certain student subjectivities as deviant [...] thereby justifying their exclusion” (2157-2158, qtd. in Karmiris 108). Researchers such as Baker, Slee and Erevelles consistently question whether inclusive classrooms actually contribute to decreasing social exclusion of disabled people and to increasing awareness on the part of the non-disabled group; they reasoned that “[a]ssessment and evaluation policies continue to compare children based on abilities deemed as normal”, thus, reiterating common notions of the ‘normal’, functioning body as opposed to the ‘abnormal’, ‘deficient’ body of disabled people (qtd. in Karmiris 108, 109). Holt attests this argument by stating that disabling barriers are not sufficiently tackled in inclusive forms of education (20 qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *Critical Psychologies* 5). A possible solution proposed by Karmiris constitutes the introduction of “multidirectional” learning objectives and teaching practices (112).

Public visibility and participatory production of research and legislative regulations constitute decisive socio-political preconditions for equality and inclusion; exclusion from these areas, on the other hand, displays an obstructive barrier for people with disabilities. Vital aspects in developing visibility and a voice are theoretical approaches to disability, which inform and influence legislative regulations. Goodley addresses the critical issue that political leaders who lack personal experience with disability impose regulations that substantially affect disabled people’s lives while

rejecting valuable contributions on the lived experiences by this group of people (*'Learning Difficulties in Disability Studies*, 49). He argues that “participatory ways” of research production constitute a crucial part of empowering people with disabilities; ideally, “research [is] started and controlled” by people living with a disability (Goodley *'Learning Difficulties in Disability Studies*, 50). Such “*person led research*”, in contrast to so-called “*rejected research*” excluding people with disabilities from the production of research on disabilities, forms an essential precondition to the removal of discriminative barriers, providing authentic insights and challenging common, negative beliefs about disability (Goodley *'Learning Difficulties in Disability Studies*, 50).

Structural barriers that continue to follow the tradition of a normalizing society strengthen the social isolation of disabled communities. A “barrier-based approach”, as suggested in this section, strives to identify and remove disempowering mechanisms and institutions in a society which position disability as significant risk factor to social exclusion (McDonald et al. 1). Vazquez argues for a “structural change that would recognize the need to promote the full inclusion of [...] people with disabilities” (1); this structural change needs to affect the various barriers listed above that inhibit social integration and participation in everyday life in a lasting manner (Olsen 1). Fundamental for a sustainable approach to equality appears to be the fight against attitudinal prejudices the wider community perpetuate as a consequence of the dominant medical conception of disability as well as uninformed beliefs held about people with disabilities; Vazquez suggests that “governmental initiatives should include the use of media and other institutions to remove stigma and discrimination” in various areas in which people living with a disability experience inequality (11).

4.3.3.3. *Loneliness and Stress*

Following the definition proposed by Robert Weiss in his book *Loneliness: The Experience of Social and Emotional Isolation* published in the year 1973, MacDonald et al. distinguish between “emotional loneliness” and “social isolation” (1). Dahlberg and McKee adopted this definition and outlined that

social loneliness refers to the absence of an acceptable social network, that is, a wider circle of friends and acquaintances that can provide a sense of belong-

ing [...] [while] emotional loneliness refers to the absence of an attachment figure in one's life and someone to turn to" (504 qtd. in McDonald et al. 3). The first-mentioned primarily results from environmental barriers, which exclude or prevent people from participating in social life as well as from establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships (Tanskanen and Anttila 2042, qtd. in McDonald et al. 3). McDonald et al. equate social isolation with "a breakdown in concrete social networks" (3). General key risk factors promoting social isolation include relationship status, social status, low income or poverty, unemployment, living arrangements, old age, negative self-perception, ethnical affinity, low participation in social activities and disability (McDonald et al. 4-5). The latter, emotional loneliness, refers to individual, subjective impressions about the *quality* of social relationships in one's life; while people may have a large number of friends, these friendships might not be as meaningful as desired and, as a result, people continue to experience emotional loneliness nevertheless (Tanskanen and Anttila 2042, qtd. in McDonald et al. 3).

In their article, '*The Invisible Enemy: Disability, Loneliness and Isolation*', MacDonald et al. argue that people with disabilities are more prone to loneliness than the wider community (1). Olsen confirms "loneliness [...] seems to be one of the main characteristics which accompany living with a disability in an inequitable society" (1). Scorpe.org.uk, a charity for disabled people, conducted a study which identified that approximately 50% of people with disabilities over the age of 16 suffer from loneliness (qtd. in Olsen 3). A study conducted by McDonald et al. in 2018 investigated the rates of emotional loneliness and social isolation within the group of disabled people. 51.6% of the participants attested to feel lonely and 26.4% expressed social isolation as an issue in their lives; in contrast, only 15.5% of the able-bodied respondents reported feelings of loneliness and 8.5% acknowledged that they felt socially isolated (12-14). Olsen emphasizes that the main contributor to loneliness in the lives of people with disabilities are socio-political barriers, which impede the establishment of meaningful friendships and participation in social groups; the engagement in social activities is also further complicated through various physical and attitudinal barriers people with disabilities commonly face (see section 4.3.3.2. *Barriers* above) (1). Although individuals with physical, sensory or learning impairments constantly attempt to overcome these barriers and partake in social life, these impediments continue to be the cause of exclusion and discrimination (Olsen 1). A further, significant factor preventing people with

disabilities to be involved in social life is the substantial unemployment rate associated with being disabled, which hinders the establishment of work-related social relationships (McDonald et al. 2). Chappell addresses the issue that people with disabilities are more likely to establish friendships with disabled peers than with non-disabled members of a society as a result of inaccessibility and inequity in various social areas and attitudinal biases; in a study he conducted in 1994, respondents validated that they had difficulties maintaining relationships to the nondisabled community resulting from, for instance, diverging social and economic capitals (qtd. in McDonald et al. 7-8). As a result, people with disabilities frequently abandon any hope for inclusion; they “choose to travel less and to remove [...] [themselves] from numerous social activities”, which causes “isolation, depression, and loneliness” (Olsen 2).

A second feature dominating the lives of people with disabilities is stress, which can also be directly linked to attitudinal, physical and socio-political barriers (Olsen 1). In order to partake in a certain social activity or to enter a building, for instance a theater or a concert hall, people with disabilities usually have to announce their participation or presence well in advance while able-bodied people can decide spontaneously on which activities to participate in; moreover, tickets for disabled people are often more expensive than ‘normal’ tickets, which can also be purchased discounted at last minute - this constitutes a further act of discrimination (Olsen 3). In his article *Socially Disabled: The Fight Disabled People Face Against Loneliness and Stress*, Olsen recounts the tedious process he experienced when attempting to purchase a ticket for a concert; after several troublesome and ineffective phone calls, which cost him six hours of his time, he also had to tackle the issue that he would have to seat separately from his friends as seats provided for people with disabilities were located in an entirely different section of the concert hall (3). He explains that “time and stress trying to make [...] arrangements work can often result in a net increase in stress for the disabled person”; often the attempt to participate in social activities results in “work, arguments, and stress” or non-participation to avoid despair (Olsen 3). It can be argued that “the experience of disability disrupt[s] social participation and exacerbat[es] the occurrence of loneliness and isolation” (McDonald et al. 6).

When facing stress in everyday life, a large number of people try to relieve stress by practicing sports or partaking in social activities. Olsen emphasizes that various options to de-stress are “blocked” for people with disabilities as a result of inaccessibility or increased costs (4). Fitness centers, for instance, might not own disabled-friendly sports equipment or employ fitness coaches competent in supporting people living with disabilities (Olsen 4). Local communities might not offer programs accessible or suitable for disabled people. In his account of stressors in his life as a person living with a disability, Olsen mentions his failed effort to purchase a handcycle and explains that “the cheapest handcycle [...] was more than eight times the cost that a non-disabled person would be expected to pay for a bicycle” (Olsen 4). Another example related to de-stressing presented in the article *Socially Disabled: The Fight Disabled People Face Against Loneliness and Stress* by Olsen concerns vacations; Olsen highlights that besides the lack of conducive facilities for people with disabilities and the stress one has to endure in the booking process, most hotels charge considerably more for rooms equipped for people with disabilities (4). As the majority of disabled people cannot afford such expenses, they are denied the opportunity to partake in certain activities to relieve stress. Olsen argues that “[p]olicy-makers and politicians must recognize the extra costs, time, and effort required for disabled people to be included” (4).”

The cause to a “decrease in [...] health” and an increase in the overall occurrence of “premature death” has been linked to stress and difficulties people with disabilities encounter in everyday life as well as the emotional harm they endure as a result of biased attitudes and physical barriers excluding them from the wider community (Olsen 1). McDonald et al. highlight that especially social isolation contributes negatively to one’s health (4); studies conducted by Tanskanen and Anttila in 2016 confirmed this assumption (qtd. in McDonald et al. 5). These findings have often been neglected in the research from disability studies; while the medical model of disability disregards psycho-social impacts of disability altogether, it seems that the social model of disability concentrates primarily on the existence of disabling barriers while neglecting the actual impact they exert on the individual person (Olsen 2). Thus, Shakespeare, Watson and Alghaib propose a “biopsychosocial approach” to disability and loneliness (qtd. in McDonald et al. 6).

4.4. Master Narratives & Stigmatizing Labels: Disability as Tragedy, Burden and Denial

Narratives can be understood as commonly held presumptions about all areas of life that are shaped, reshaped, reiterated and enforced through discourse by powerful agents and, thus, privileged by the majority of the social community (Bamberg 2004, qtd. in Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 380, Dederich 46). Bamberg refers to narratives as “social products and devices through which meaning unfolds” (qtd. in Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 380). Hence, these constructed narratives influence, and at the same time are influenced by, a person’s perception, actions as well as encounters with others (Phoenix and Smith, qtd. in Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 380). Andrews understands “[m]aster narratives” as “dominant constructions of [...] storylines that are assumed to be the normative experience and are culturally reproduced” (qtd. in Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 390). Counter-narratives, on the other hand, challenge such universal beliefs, question their veracity and carry the potential of reallocation (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 390). They enable authorization, reflexivity and the presentation of contextualized positions (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300).

A qualitative study conducted by Lalvani in the United States in 2015 investigated beliefs held by teachers about what it means to be disabled and to raise a child with a disability; in a further step of the study, the teachers’ expectations were contrasted with the parents’ accounts about their experience with disability and their actual family life which revealed profound contradictory assumptions (*Disability, Stigma and Otherness*). The following paragraphs serve to illustrate common narratives about disability and proposed counter-narratives by people experienced with disabilities.

The interviewed teachers mostly referred to a medical understanding of disability as an aid to appropriate placement, curriculum planning and the specification of learning objectives (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 379, 389). Struggles in lessons were predominantly explained in relation to the child’s disability and related aspects such as short “attention spans, behaviors, or abilities to function independently or semi-independently”; in the tradition of the medical model of disability, teachers located the problem in the disabled person while ignoring structural and attitudinal parameters (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 385). Students with disabilities

were largely described in terms of their perceived differences, while commonalities with the disabled group were entirely ignored (Lalvani *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 385). Lalvani adds that

in discussing the topic of peer rejection, bullying, or the social isolation of students with disabilities in general education classrooms, the problem was more often understood as stemming from the inherent differences of students with disabilities, rather than attributed to lack of understanding, awareness, or acceptance among the nondisabled population. (*Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 385)

Children with disabilities are traditionally transferred to self-contained environments, which enhance the feeling of social isolation even more; this fact, however, remained neglected by the majority of the interviewed teachers (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 386).

Moreover, ample beliefs about disability as a tragedy and a burden to the family were expressed (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 384). Lalvani elucidates that “notions of profound loss, grief and burden [...] are upheld in institutional discourse and practices”, for instance by educational professionals (*Constructing the (M)other*, qtd. in Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 379-380). In the preface of his introductory work on disability studies, Goodley also emphasizes that people with disabilities are most commonly associated with a “personal tragedy” and reduced to their perceived impairment while neglecting the social aspects of disability (Goodley, *Disability Studies* xi). Dossa states that “images of dependency and passivity” of disabled people prevail in contemporary society (2530, qtd. in Vazquez 3). Teachers interviewed in Lalvani’s study expressed their concern for parents who have ‘lost’ the opportunity of raising a ‘normal’ child and living a ‘normal’ life and, as a result, experience grief; in line with preeminent narratives on disability, this point of view precludes any joy in the upbringing of a disabled child (*Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 386). A vast number of people in contemporary society consider raising a child with a disability as strenuous, stressful and onerous; this was confirmed by the teachers participating in Lalvani’s qualitative study, in which one teacher even expressed that she was “‘lucky not to have’” a disabled child and another teacher suggested that raising a disabled child was a rather “undesirable experience” (*Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 386, 387). In the greater number of participants, the cause of despair and stress was located in the disabled person’s impairment (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 386). Similar to the disregard of attitudinal

barriers mentioned above, teachers omitted any consideration of socio-economic barriers such as low income, social welfare and access to inclusive education as well as common attitudes towards disability as factors which increase parents' level of stress and influence the quality of their family life (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 387).

Parents participating in Lalvani's study countered these popular narratives confirmed by the beliefs educational professionals held about disability and the lived, familial experience associated with it. The majority of parents addressed issues such as the superficial, common understanding of 'normal' family life and the socio-political as well as attitudinal barriers that negatively influence their children's life; the discriminative practices in education that result from certain labels attached to their children's disability were addressed as well, which can be seen in the paragraph on labeling below (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 379). Parents consistently highlighted their children's commonalities with the non-disabled group while avoiding any additional emphasis on the difference of their child in order to prevent social isolation and stigmatization (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 385). To further impede a discriminative perspective on their disabled child, a vast number of parents in the study opted for inclusive schools to inhibit "reifying notions of the *otherness* of their children [...] because of beliefs that their children "belong" with their peers" (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 385). As can be discerned from this quote, a large number of children but also adults living with disabilities struggle with the sense of belonging and the desire of affiliation to a peer group. Parents also addressed the issue that teachers who are not trained to teach children with disabilities frequently carry negative views towards this group of children and often refuse to teach them (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 386); this aggravates the parents' endeavor to include their children with disabilities in general classrooms. With regard to confrontations between non-disabled and disabled children in inclusive schools, parents propose to educate the former group about disability and raise awareness of diverse barriers children living with disabilities face, thus, creating an empathetic, welcoming and supportive environment for their children (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 386). This corresponds with parents' general perception of attitudinal and structural barriers within society and

education as the main factor disabling their children (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 386).

Other counter-narratives expressed by parents in Lalvani's study pertain to the perception of disability as burdening their family life and personal happiness, which are heavily disputed by them (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 387). They argued that their familial experiences neither differ from 'normal' families' nor suffer from their child's disability; in contrast, they "highlighted the joys or simply the 'ordinary' moments of being parents" (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 387). Factors increasing their stress level were not solely related to their children's disability but "resulting from a combination of their children's impairments and environmental factors" (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 388; see also section 4.3.3.3. *Loneliness and Stress* above); this reflects the conception of disability as proposed by the realist theory introduced as a reaction to the social model of disability above. According to this theoretical approach, disempowerment of people living with a disability results from an interplay between the actual bodily impairment, environmental factors/barriers and the quality and quantity of social activities and interactions in which people with disabilities engage themselves. Parents felt considerably stressed (1) by their need to explain their children's disability to other parents of non-disabled children as well as to educational professions, (2) by their efforts for their disabled children to be accepted in inclusive schools, (3) by their attempts to ensure welcoming environments and a positive attitude on the part of their children's peers towards disability as well as (4) by their fight against discriminative and pitying beliefs held about their family lives (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 388).

A large number of parents in the study expressed concerns towards the issue of assigning medical labels to their children's disabilities and, thus, enforcing master narratives outlined above; while they did not neglect the fact that their children had certain corporeal impairments that required appropriate treatment, they feared that such classifications would serve as a barrier and trigger stigmatization and discriminating attitudes towards the disabled person (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 383). This belief was confirmed by Koppers and Linton, who state that a large number of disabled people reject to reveal their disability resulting from the fear

of being discriminated and excluded because of their disability (*Disability Arts and Culture* 3, *Reassigning Meaning* 166). By assigning a specific label to a child, this child becomes marked as different or even deficient, causing its peers to overlook and neglect similarities, which can further result in discriminative behavior and social isolation. One parent argued, “it’s more harmful to give it a label than it is helpful” (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 384). In general, parents in the study graded some labels as more derogative than others, such as “cognitive impairment or intellectual disability” or even “mental retardation”, and advocated for their replacement with less marked ones that would engender milder or no reactions (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 383). They reviewed that teachers and peers displayed altered behavior and perception once their child was labeled with a certain disability (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 383). This was also confirmed by a study conducted by Goodley and Runswick-Cole, in which parents expressed their concern about certain labels and concurrent negative reactions from teachers and peers (*Critical Psychologies*, 9). The majority of the interviewed parents in Lalvani’s study “expressed beliefs that negative reactions to their children were elicited by their being identified as having a disability or as receiving special education” (*Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 384). Parents also feared a decrease in the overall expectations of performance of their child in school as a result of specific labels (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 383).

Lastly, another frequently reiterated belief was that parents are in denial of their child’s disability (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 388). Teachers reasoned that “‘unrealistic expectations’ about their children’s disability, their opposition to their children being evaluated for special education purposes, or their dispute of a diagnosis or of their children’s placement in self-contained environments” resulted from repudiation (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 388). Parents, however, resolutely disclaimed these allegations, explaining that they sought expert opinions on their children’s impairments independently and ensured appropriate actions (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 388). Some parents participating in Lalvani’s study interpreted their “initial lack of knowledge about children’s development, or their ‘missing certain cues’ that would have pointed to delays in their children’s development [...] as ‘denial’” (*Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 389). One participant of the group of parents referred to a “‘healthy denial’”, adhering to the

conviction that disabled children *can* accomplish high achievements and participate in ‘normal’ social life as well (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 389). As mentioned above, parents in the study were not hesitant about receiving medical information and support from physicians, but refused to accept certain labels of disability that might trigger discrimination, alienation and exclusion (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 389, 390).

In general, parents of children with disabilities were consistent with the conceptions proposed by the social model of disability (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 389) as well as associated realist theories; they disproved master narratives that generated the belief that disability equates tragedy and a burden on families concerned (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 390). Educational professionals, on the other hand, predominantly adhered to medical explanations of disability and master narratives about disability and families raising a disabled child (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 389-390). Lalvani’s findings insinuate “a need for a conceptual shift in the ways in which educators, and indeed *all* professionals, conceptualize disability” on the sole basis of a biological conception of disability (*Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 391, emphasis in original).

4.5. Portrayal of Disability in Literature

In the recently published *Cambridge Companion to Literature and Disability*, the editors Clare Barker and Stuart Murray present notable articles discussing the ubiquitous presence of disability in diverse literary genre and historical periods. Considering the journal *Disability Studies Quarterly* also proved worthwhile since several articles address literary representations of disability. In the course of time, authors have depicted characters with disabilities as either deficient and monstrous or special and gifted to arouse emotions such as “shock”, “fear”, or “pity” (Barker and Murray 2). Davis emphasizes that people with disabilities portrayed in literature typically occupy only minor roles (*Enforcing Normalcy* 41, qtd. in Koppers *Disability Arts and Culture* 25). Traditionally, disabled characters were depicted in opposition to able-bodied characters to highlight their difference and deviation from the norm. The following section will present an overview of diverse portrayals of and approaches to disability in the literature of various time periods.

4.5.1. Disability in the Middle Ages

In his article *Monsters, Saints, and Sinners: Disability in Medieval Literature*, Edward Wheatley explains that during medieval times terms such as 'disability' or 'disabled' did not exist until the middle of the 16th century (17). Instead of perceiving people with disabilities as a homogeneous group, they were mostly distinguished on the basis of visible differences such as sensory or physical impairments; cognitive or mental impairments, however, constituted a conceptional problem due to the lack of medical explanations at the time (Wheatley 17). As medical interventions and therapies were not available in the Middle Ages, occurrences of a diverse range of disabilities were perceived as commonplace and "accepted as part of daily life" (Wheatley 17). As mentioned in section 4.3.1. *The Religious Model*, the belief that disabilities were divine sentences as a result of committing a sin was widespread among medieval communities and enforced by the Catholic Church (Wheatley 19, 25). Religious institutions had a powerful influence on the perception of disability and the social interaction with disabled people resulting from the illustration of miraculous cures performed by Jesus and the presumed connection between disabled people and saints (Wheatley 18-19). Besides these religious interpretations of disability, it was also commonly associated with witchcraft and curses (Haffter 61, qtd. in Kendrick).

Authors from the Middle Ages frequently drew from this perception of disability as a divine punishment and portrayed sinful individuals who offended a saint or a religious institution and had to suffer as a result (Wheatley 19). While godly cures were portrayed in the texts as the character's sole objective, it was usually only granted to innocent characters who worshipped certain saints but strictly denied to sinful characters (Wheatley 19). Individuals cured from their disabilities are also frequently depicted as rectified in character (Kendrick). A further popular representation of disability at the time was the exaggerated portrayal of disabled people as monstrous, non-human beings banished from the community (Wheatley 19-21). Disabled characters were generally denied human representation; instead, they were stereotyped, blamed for their families' perdition and victimized (Kendrick). Although overstated, these depictions indicate disability as socially undesirable and justifiable cause to ostracize certain individuals perceived as disabled.

4.5.2. Disability in the Long Eighteenth Century

Hobgood and Wood stress the fact that from the late 16th and 17th century onwards, nascent scientific norms and the idea of a normal body strongly influenced society's perception of disability (33). However, Joshua stresses that detailed, precise descriptions of disabilities during that time were nonexistent and that medical discourses only slowly emerged and examined the human body (47). Hence, "the term 'disability' [...] describe[d] any kind of *incapacity* in a person" (Joshua 47, emphasis added). At the time, people with perceptible disabilities were more commonly referred to as people with 'deformities' rather than people with 'disabilities', which highlights the importance of aesthetics as a basis for discriminating individuals who were perceived as the opposite of beautiful and, consequently, defective in character as well (Joshua 47, 55). Visible impairments were perceived as distortions or so-called "*lusus naturae* (a sport of nature)" (Joshua 47-48, emphasis in original). While a preference for ability was perceptible in general, at its extreme, the distinction between able-bodied and non-abled-bodied was employed as rational to justify who was perceived as human and who was not during the Renaissance and later periods (Siebers 8, qtd. in Hobgood and Wood 33). During early modernity, the notion of normality was already accepted as natural and undisputed, creating the idea of what Hobgood and Wood termed "ability logics" (33) and what commenced to be understood as ableism in the study of Othering processes. This term delineates the commonly accepted preference of people with 'normal', 'functioning' bodies as opposed to disabled bodies, which were perceived as deficient. Joshua refers to philosophers of the long eighteenth century (1660-1832), who "characterize[d] deformity negatively, and standardize it as something that exhibits irregularity, disproportion, disharmony, asymmetry, peculiarity, sickness, and decay" (55). What started as religious institutions treating people with disabilities in the Middle Ages, continued in the Renaissance as powerful institutions such as the education system, which *handled* the disabled bodies and isolated them from everyday social life. Bearden argues that "norming effects", which value abled bodies higher than disabled bodies, are discernible from the 16th and 17th century onwards and continued to be relevant in later centuries as well (qtd. in Hobgood and Wood 34).

Literary production of that time was characterized by the portrayal of various deviations from normative bodies, ranging from visibly perceivable impairments to imperceptible mental impairments (Hobgood and Wood 33). While some authors in early modern literature continued to use terms stemming from medieval times which portrayed the disabled human body as “*unnatural* and *monstrous*”, other authors already presented it as “*abnormal* or *imperfect*” (Hobgood and Wood 34, emphasis in original; Joshua 55), following cultural constructions of the ‘normal’ body as proposed by powerful agents such as science. These literary representations reinforced common ideas of ability and “the standardization of human bodies” (Hobgood and Wood 34). Authors of this time also commenced to attach certain clinical terms to the description of disabled characters, as they slowly emerged from the new medical discourse (Hobgood and Wood 36). According to Joshua, narratives about disabled characters in the long eighteenth century typically consisted of four elements: (1) the character acquires a deformity, (2) he/she attempts to eliminate it, (3) certain “qualities or gifts” are associated with the deformity and (4) the character either accepts his/her faith, secludes him/herself, or dies (58).

4.5.3. Disability in the Long Nineteenth Century

While disabled characters remained quite underrepresented in the long eighteenth century (1660-1832), a considerable increase in representation can be observed in the long nineteenth century (1789-1914). On the one hand, this growth can be associated with “[t]he rise of industrialization and the factory system creat[ing] new types of disabilities through nonfatal accidents and injuries” and, on the other hand, the progress in medicine, which allowed for more successful treatment of disabilities, “transform[ing] acute, formerly fatal, conditions into chronic ones” (Holmes 62). As a result of these developments, people with diverse disabilities were characteristic for the landscape of the 19th century despite governmental attempts to confine them in exclusionary institutions such as asylums, special schools or workhouses (Holmes 63).

The literature of the 19th century has brought forth iconic characters featuring disabilities such as the ‘paralyzed’ Colin in *The Secret Garden* (1911), the ‘crippled’ Tiny Tim Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol* (1843) or the ‘mad’ Berta Mason in *Jane Eyre* (1847) (Holmes 62, Dowker). Literary production of the time is characterized by

manifoldness, including not only fiction but also journalism and technical literature on topics associated with medicine and education (Holmes 63). Following the tradition of the long eighteenth century, people with disabilities continued to be depicted as “defective”, however, the catchword of the time was “afflicted” as highlighted by Holmes (63). Most disabled characters of this time were children whose disabilities, due to the lack of medical knowledge, were either outlined in an unsophisticated way or not discussed at all (Dowker). In *The Treatment of Disability in 19th and Early 20th Century Children’s Literature*, Dowker outlines that “[t]he lack of medical specificity in these books has the effect of facilitating highly improbable and stylized treatment of disability” while “it [also] prevents the reduction of a disabled character to a specific medical condition”. At that time, disabled boys were mostly depicted as criminals while disabled girls were portrayed as “saintly invalids” (Dowker). In general, disabilities were directly associated with specific negative character traits; volition, a positive mind and, more importantly, discipline were regarded as a means to successfully cure the defective body (Dowker). Keith emphasizes that English authors during the reign of Queen Victoria and King Edward followed didactic motives and that children with disabilities commonly portrayed in these texts were guided to “overcome selfishness or a too strong-will” and to “conform to traditional roles and [...] expectations”.

While former literary epochs predominantly emphasized the negative nature of the disabled person, some exceptions from the 19th century explored the “lived, individual, and familial experiences of disability” and addressed issues such as “social welfare, medicine, heredity, and education” (Holmes 71). According to Dowker, some even highlighted certain talents and positive characteristics, which were associated with a particular disability. While a complete cure of the disability appeared to be most desirable in the long nineteenth century, some authors renounced from this idealistic concept and opted for a partial cure or none at all, presenting the hitherto ignored possibility that a disabled character can lead a purposeful life despite his/her disability (Dowker). This new emphasis had the power to challenge widespread beliefs about the nature of disability held by the able-bodied majority. Nevertheless, disability continued to be represented as deviation from the ‘normal’ body and ‘afflicted’ people were commonly degraded.

4.5.4. Disability in the 20th century

Due to a rise in scientific studies and publications on disability from the beginning of the 20th century onwards, disabilities were perceived as “more rare and more ‘abnormal’” than before but also as “treatable and preventable” (Dowker). Discourse about people with disabilities was highly influenced by the perception of disability as an inherent “disease” brought forth by the pseudo-science named eugenics associated with Sir Francis Galton (Davidson 75). While medicine and psychology had a long tradition in studying the body and its varying features, the development of evolutionary biology by Charles Darwin triggered eugenic ideas associated with actively shaping societies and

improv[ing] the human race by controlling reproduction and weeding out “imperfect” or “dysgenic” individuals. Selective reproduction, sterilization, and the euthanasia of infants born with mental illnesses were among the procedures advocated by eugenicists. (Davidson 75)

At a time when racist and discriminative behavior had reached its peak on the grounds of ostensible scientific evidence for the inferiority of some members of society, disabled people experienced strict segregation and persecution.

Common topics treated in the 20th century literary production followed the former period and included physical disabilities acquired as a result of working in an industry and ailments such as tuberculosis. Moreover, authors commenced to address psychological disabilities such as “shell shock” (i.e. post-traumatic stress disorder), stemming from experiences in World War I, hysteria or agoraphobia (Davidson 75). Topics frequently dealt with after World War II included trauma and disabilities acquired as a result of radioactivity (Murray 91).

4.5.5. Disability in the Late 20th Century and Contemporary Literature

From the 1960s and 70s onwards, stories about ‘outsiders’ living in the social periphery gained popularity in various literary genres, most prominently in novels aimed at young adults (Keith). As large numbers of people with disabilities experience discrimination and exclusion on a daily basis, authors employed this narrative and portrayed characters who struggled with self-realization or recognition and inclusion in their daily life (Keith). Although a rigorous examination of the inner perception of the excluded individual would require the disabled protagonist to be the

focalizer of the story, most literary texts from that time denied the disabled person this position, leaving him/her in the minor, secondary role (Keith). Thomson introduces the term “second fiddle books” for these instances when a disabled character portrayed as an outsider assumes only a supporting role alongside an able-bodied character whose personality develops in the course of the story (24, qt. in Keith). Another popular representation of disability in the late 20th century was the “rite of passage” novel, which depicted the tragic struggle with and, finally, acceptance of a certain disability, which significantly altered the protagonist’s relationship to his body, family and peers (Keith). These stories are predominantly concerned with the disabled person’s inner, psychological developments and experiences of his/her impairment and often neglect socio-political, disabling aspects of his/her environment (Keith). Instead of miraculously healing the protagonist as proposed in medieval literature and the religious model, disabled characters are medically treated and, sometimes, recover from their disabilities (Keith), which emphasizes the persistent prevalence of the medical model of disabilities at the end of the 20th century and supports the notions of rehabilitation and recovery.

Contemporary society is characterized by a greater understanding of disability inspired by the civil rights and feminist movements as well as the foundation of organizations such as the Commission for Racial Equality, which encouraged many disabled activists to raise their voice and address issues such as discrimination, unemployment, inequitable living conditions and civil rights for people with disabilities (Murray 90, Kendrick). Exemplary legislative amendments following this activism include the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act in the U.S. and the 1995 Disabilities Discrimination Act in the UK (Murray 90). Kendrick underlines that “[c]rucial to the move from segregation to integration is the evolution of a *voice*, because a voice implies significance: something to say, and a position from which to say it” (emphasis added). Apart from the significant presence in the legislative, people with disabilities are increasingly involved in scientific research and appreciated as authors in literary production; however, one might add that there is still a substantial underrepresentation of people with learning difficulties in these areas (Kendrick).

One of the most relevant achievements in literature of the 20th and 21st century for people with disabilities was that disabled characters began to appear as focalizers

(Kendrick) instead of flat, minor characters. This development allows readers with disabilities to identify themselves with the characters (Pinsent 124, qtd. in Kendrick). This identification process is particularly important in literature for children and young adults as this kind of readership has yet to develop their attitudes towards everyday topics – which also includes an understanding of disability (Blaska, *Children's Literature That Includes Characters with Disabilities*). Within the literary production, writers began to acknowledge people with disabilities “as the individuals they are, with a unique range of skills and needs” (Kendrick). Murray observes that, from the 1990s onwards, traditional genres such as memoirs are particularly important to writers with disabilities as these offer an insight into their lived realities for disabled and non-disabled readers alike (90). The publishing industry has never before experienced a comparable participation of writers with disabilities in the literary production or an equivalent interest in the topic of disability (Saunders). Nevertheless, in comparison to the overall number of publications, characters with disabilities remain underrepresented in various areas of literary production, such as children's literature (Blaska, *Children's Literature That Includes Characters with Disabilities*).

Albeit the increased inclusion and presence of people with disabilities in the production of cultural assets, people with disabilities continue to be stereotyped and marginalized by non-disabled members of the society. Frequently, the sole characteristic of a character with a disability is the disability itself, which marks him/her as different from the other characters (Blaska, *Children's Literature That Includes Characters with Disabilities*). Able-bodied authors, often unintentionally, reiterate uninformed, common representations of disability resulting from difficulties in empathizing with unfamiliar conditions (Stemp). Keith highlights the fact that many authors are “limited by their own narrow view”, their “lack of any real understanding of what it is like to be disabled” as well as their “lack of research and attention to detail”. Instead of portraying the protagonist's true nature and personality, representations of disabled characters continue to emphasize what individuals are able or unable to do (Little 182, qtd. in Kendrick).

In various visual media, people with disabilities continue to be depicted merely as stereotypes who are “powerless and pathetic” or even “criminal or only barely

human” (Cumberbatch and Negrine 137, qtd. in Kendrick). Besides exclusion or underrepresentation of disabled characters in literature for children and young adults, people with disabilities continue to be portrayed as “negative stereotypes”, who are “pitiful [...], evil [...] or a burden and incapable of fully participating in the events of everyday life” (Biklen and Bogdan, qtd. in Blaska, *Children’s Literature That Includes Characters with Disabilities*). For Cheyne, typical narratives included in fictional texts comprise “the disabled horror monster, the romance hero who is cured by the love of a good woman, and the cognitively exceptional detective” (185). Some genre, particularly science fiction and fantasy, continue to present miraculous or scientific cures as the main endeavor in association with disabilities (Stemp). Especially in children’s literature, authors tend to portray aspects and members of societies in opposition, thus, reinforcing universal beliefs about disabilities by confronting ‘abled’ with ‘disabled’ in a simplifying manner and neglecting the complex relations within this continuum (Kendrick). Kendrick notes that “[l]ess perceptive writers appear to encode the character with special needs as primarily a signifier of disability rather than as an individual”.

4.5.6. Future Perspectives & Application in Educational Settings

In her article *What Disability Studies Can Do For Children’s Literature*, Saunders highlights the influential power literature wields and its capacity to shape its readers beliefs about disabilities. She argues for an indispensable need to review literature featuring disabled characters and to inform authors of current developments in research on disability to allow for an appropriate, proficient portrayal of people with disabilities (Saunders). Otherwise, a new generation of readers will be confronted with stereotypical, inaccurate and biased depictions of various kinds of disabilities, which will most likely result in a continued existence of prejudices and misjudgments (Saunders). Authors should, therefore, consider theoretical developments in the portrayal of disabled characters to challenge their readers’ understanding of disability. Saunders provides an example of an uninformed use of terminology in recent literature: *The Cambridge Guide to Children’s Books in English* edited by Victor Watson was published in 2001 and comprised an overview which named various titles including characters with disabilities; however, they were unaware of any “affirmative language preferred by disabled people” (Saunders) and employed terms such as “‘imprisoned’ in their wheelchairs, ‘wheelchair-bound’ and ‘crippled’”

(Watson 209, qtd. in Saunders), which are considered discriminatory and objectifying by people with disabilities. Saunders notes that

[t]he insight that disability scholars can bring to analysis of children's literature lies in their understanding of "disability" not as a personalized, wholly biological and medically mediated characteristic, but as a social construction evidenced in texts as the described attitudes of both disabled and non-disabled characters, and in the rationale of plots which both create and consolidate the attitudes and circumstances that are commonly found in contemporary society. She therefore emphasizes the importance to distinguish between a medical and a social model and encourages readers to identify these models in literary texts including characters with disabilities; an awareness of a specific concept of disability in accounts about disabled characters might prevent the continuation of misleading, stereotypical interpretations of disability and allow for a critical, competent approach.

When questioning parents and teachers on the appropriate use of books featuring characters with disabilities for educational purposes, Blaska discovered that only an alarming minority of the respondents was confident in discussing these books with their children or students and that the majority was uncertain where to find appropriate examples (*Children's Literature That Includes Characters with Disabilities*). A decisive number of educational professionals confessed that they would only integrate a story including a disabled protagonist if a child with a disability attended their class (Blaska, *Children's Literature That Includes Characters with Disabilities*). This approach denies able-bodied as well as disabled children the opportunity to empathize with characters with disabilities and learn about the socio-political challenges and barriers they face in everyday life; such insights carry considerable potential in challenging wide-held beliefs about disability and biased behavior towards people with disabilities. In her book *Using Children's Literature to Learn about Disabilities and Illness*, Blaska emphasizes that an inclusion of the topic of disability in the curriculum would provide children with valuable insights about diverse forms of disability which they can employ in encounters with people with disabilities in everyday life (qtd. in Blaska *Children's Literature That Includes Characters with Disabilities*).

5. ANALYSIS

The following analysis will concentrate on both, the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* as well as the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. The former will be analyzed with respect to issues of group formation, hierarchies within groups as well as stereotypical character depictions. It will further be noteworthy in relation to perceptions about disability, impairment and disablism within the wizarding community. These aspects will provide the basis for the analysis of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. Issues of power relations, disabling barriers as well as language use and master narratives will be addressed to allow for an informed analysis of the play's main characters.

5.1. 'Us' vs. 'Them' – Group Formation & Othering

5.1.1. Muggles vs. Wizards

The first novel of the popular, groundbreaking series evolving around Harry Potter and his friends, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, introduces the reader to the magical world, in which he finds himself after his eleventh birthday. Already from the first chapter onwards, the characters depict a world divided into two highly distinct groups of people: the so-called 'muggles', on the one hand, and witches and wizards, on the other hand. The construction of these dissimilar groups serves to portray a seemingly natural order of the world presented in the novel, which is characterized by segregation and enforced through discourse. This, however, is only partially true, as the larger part of the muggles appear to be entirely unaware of the wizards' presence, thus, of the separation of their worlds. While the majority of the Harry Potter novels adhere to the wizard's perspective of 'normalcy', *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* presents a particular muggle's point of view at the beginning of the story as the main character, Harry Potter, grows up living with a related muggle family called Dursley, not knowing about his abilities and the magical world in general since the family keeps this a secret. The following section will present the Dursley's understanding of a 'normal' world and 'normal' citizens in contrast to their 'abnormal' counterparts as presented by Mr. Dursley. Afterwards, the wizards' point of view will be outlined.

5.1.1.1. *The Dursley's Perception: Muggles as Ingroup*

The very first sentence in the novel states, “Mr and Mrs Dursley [...] were proud to say that they were perfectly normal” (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 1). This sentence positions them at the center of the community, which is in accord with prevalent notions of normalcy (Barker and Murray 3); in one sentence, they even equate the word “Dursleyish” (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 2) with ‘being normal’. Mr. Dursley “steps into a position of authority” (Garland-Thomson 8, qtd. in Kupperts *Disability Arts and Culture*) and constructs his family's conception of normality by quoting their daily routine and appearance as well as a regular day at work, but more importantly, by accentuating the opposite perception of normality portrayed by the ostensibly “*abnormal*” behavior and conspicuous appearance of witches and wizards (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 58, emphasis in original). This approach is characteristic for Othering processes as the emphasis on similarities and differences triggers a sense of belonging, or otherwise, dissociation (Riegel 8).

Right from the beginning, the Dursleys evoke a sense of dislike, if not disgust against wizards, perceiving them as varying from “the normative, seemingly biologically given, [...] full functioning body” (qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole *The Body as Disability and Possibility* 5), thus, enforcing their status at the center of ‘normal’ society. Mr. Dursley's repetitive choice of dismissive words such as “strange”, “mysterious”, “peculiar” (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 2) or even “mad” (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 96) highlights the witches' and wizards' divergence from the norm and the Dursley's own affiliation with the ‘normate’ ingroup. Following Judith Butler, the reiteration of these words as well as the labels assigned to witches and wizards can be perceived as performative in the sense that they become naturalized and integrated in the relationship between the two distinct groups (qtd. in Riegel 31), providing informative insights into the conduct between groups (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 5); this can be observed in the family's depreciative behavior on the basis of value judgments displayed towards the wizarding community.

Anything associated with magic is referred to as “acting in a way it *shouldn't*” (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 27, emphasis added), thus, as abnormal or

deficient. To engender a sense of alienation on the muggles' part, the narrator repeatedly mentions numerous appearances of owls in broad daylight at the beginning of the chapter (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 2, 4, 6), which are perceived as highly unusual by Mr. Dursley and other muggles in general, which can be inferred from sentences such as "[people] pointed and gazed open-mouthed" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 4). The presence of "strangely dressed people" wearing green and violet robes furthers this sense of alienation; at one part, Mr. Dursley is depicted as highly enraged as he "couldn't bear people who dressed in funny clothes", expressing his anger about the non-adherence to 'normal' clothing (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 3). Following Davis, Mr. Dursley constructs the problem of normalcy to present the magical community as inherently problematic (*Enforcing Normalcy* 24, qtd. in Barker and Murray 3). By depicting wizards as flawed, he strengthens his own perception of normalcy.

From the Dursley's perspective, a clear distinction between humans and wizards is proposed as they emphasize, "*they're not like you and me*"; the use of the personal pronouns 'they', 'you' and 'me' evokes the notion of two separate groups, while "*you and me*" refers to the ingroup consisting of muggles, "*they*" depicts the outgroup, the wizarding community deviating from Mr. Dursley's proposed conception of normal citizens (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 42, emphasis added). They generate stereotypes of people able to perform magic by attributing pejorative features such as nonsensical, odd, "unwelcome" or even "dangerous" to this group while simultaneously highlighting their own conformity to the norm and their rejection of *such* people (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 1, 3, 9, 39). This practice follows the principle of "self-enhancement" as proposed by Schaller and Maass (qtd. in McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 7). It appears that Mr. Dursley employs stereotypes as "energy-saving devices" (McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears 2) as his portrayal of the wizarding community proves to be highly simplifying since he considers them as a homogeneous group that collectively shares the same features such as 'strange' appearances and 'nonsensical' behaviors while ignoring their individuality. Mr. Dursley, in this sense, objectifies and decontextualizes the wizarding community on the basis of their perceived differences and naturalizes this perception of abnormality displayed by wizards by re-addressing their deviation from the norm in discourse, thus, justifying his discriminative attitude; this procedure is typical for Othering

processes (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 299, 300). Mr. Dursley apparently deprives wizards of desirable attributions such as respect, value and identity, triggering a sense of non-affiliation.

The second and third dimension of Othering processes, social distance and knowledge, appears to be especially noteworthy since the relationship between the two groups is characterized by mutual absence in either lives. Resulting from the segregation of the wizards' and muggles' worlds, the Dursleys are not acquainted with any other witches or wizards than the Potters, with whom they have practically no contact before they die, and Harry, who is unaware of his abilities - therefore, not using them -, hence, they lack any data that could inform the formation of stereotypes conclusively. Although the Dursleys know about the wizards' existence, their knowledge about them is highly restricted and primarily informed by value judgments. This absence of available data is discernible in Mr. Dursley's accounts of "strangely dressed people" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 4) who he fails to associate with wizards at first since he appears to be unacquainted with their actual appearance. His unfamiliarity with the wizarding folk is accentuated by his confusion that is generated after someone wearing a robe addresses him as a "Muggle", a basic term frequently used in the wizarding community but apparently entirely unknown to him (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 5). As a result, the Dursleys can only employ some 'top-down' processes on the basis of their prejudiced knowledge about the Potters to form an impression on wizards, which results in an erroneous and limited depiction of the wizarding community.

In the lives of the Dursleys, master narratives occupy a crucial role as they predominantly act upon their presumptions held about the wizarding folk. For the Dursleys, the master narrative motivating their behavior appears to be that the ability to conjure necessarily marks deviation, abnormality and affliction, while an inability depicts the normal, strived-for, only valid form of being. The narrator emphasizes that "their greatest fear was that somebody would discover it" and that "[t]hey didn't think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters", they even "shuddered to think what the neighbors would say if the Potters arrived in the street" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 1,2). The universal, negative portrayal of wizards and witches constructed by Mr. Dursley climaxes as the narrator states that the family actually

denies Harry Potter's ability to conjure and keeps it a secret from him, from their own child named Dudley and the rest of the society (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 1). The narrator highlights this by stating, "they didn't want Dudley mixing with a child *like that*" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 2, emphasis added). They even exclude Harry from their daily family life and force him to live in a "cupboard under the stairs" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 20). These practices and attitudes result from their general, biased perception about the magical folk and the fact that the wizarding world is hidden and segregated from the muggle world. They appear to be in denial of their nephew's magical abilities, which they perceive as pathological and repulsive. This narrative influences their conduct towards Harry Potter, which can be observed in the second chapter of the novel as the narrator outlines that there was "no sign at all that another boy lived in the house, too" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 19).

Mr. Dursley repels any indications that might ascertain Harry's magical family background and despises it when Harry is "talking about anything acting in a way it shouldn't" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 27), enforcing the notion of normalcy repetitively. Once letters from Hogwarts commence to be delivered to their house, the Dursleys are terrified and desperate, leaving for a remote island in the middle of the sea during a storm to hide from the witches and wizards attempting to contact Harry (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 47-48). As can be seen from the examples above, the Dursleys display narratives related to denial, anger and fear with reference to magic. On the one hand, this frequently repeated, derogatory narrative stems from the absence of witches and wizards in their society's daily life, thus, the lack of actual data, and, on the other hand, from Mrs. Dursley's complicated relationship to her sister Lilly Potter, who was able to conjure, influencing her theory about wizards; she even "pretended she didn't have a sister", calling her "a freak", and Mr. Dursley acknowledges that he would despise "a sister *like that*" as well (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 2, 5, 57, emphasis added). The repetition of the phrase 'like that' triggers and enforces negative reactions and feelings while depicting the ability to perform magic as highly undesirable and deficient. Mrs. Dursley considerably influences this perception as these value judgments result from the envy she felt for her sister growing up as her parents favored Lily over herself due to her magical abilities (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 57). Ultimately, this

triggers statements such as “the world’s better off without them [i.e. wizards]” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 61).

The joyful acceptance of magic in a muggle family as displayed by Mrs. Dursley’s parents, who “were proud of having a witch in the family” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 57), however, represents a crucial counter narrative to the Dursley’s negative perception of the wizarding community; the fact that some muggle families appear to approve of their children’s magical abilities emphasizes that the stereotypes generated by the Dursleys are not shared, universal beliefs but rather deceptive, biased and erroneous perceptions resulting from the objectification, decontextualization and deauthorization of the wizarding group stemming primarily from a substantial lack of data. The construction of distinct groups is complicated by the fact that the Dursleys display practically no knowledge about the othered group, thus, they resort to value judgments to justify their discriminative attitude towards them.

5.1.1.2. *The Wizard’s Perception: Wizards as Ingroup*

Except for these accounts by the Dursleys presented in the first chapter of the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, the rest of the novel’s narration focuses on the wizard’s perspective, triggering the sense that *theirs* is the authentic normality, that *they* are the actual ingroup whereas the muggles represent the outgroup. This results from the muggles’ underrepresentation in the *Harry Potter* series and an overall emphasis on the wizards’ lives. The novel informs the reader about the wizard’s ‘normality’ and initiates him/her to the magical world parallel to the young wizard Harry Potter, who struggles to believe in magic at first, thinking that “[i]t was a dream” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 66) since he grew up in the non-magical community of muggles but who affiliates himself with the wizarding community by the end of the novel, stating that “*They* don’t know *we*’re not allowed to use magic at home” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 332, emphasis added); in this sentence, he explicitly refers to himself as part of the magical community by using the personal pronoun ‘we’ while distancing himself from the muggles (‘they’) at the same time.

The very first encounter with Professor Dumbledore, the popular headmaster of Hogwarts, and Professor McGonagall, a teacher in the same school, deconstructs

the notions of normalcy put forth by Mr. Dursley as the former “just popped out of the ground” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 9), while the latter transforms from a cat into a human (Rowling 10); though this might have engendered fear, confusion and alienation from the part of the muggle community, it appears to be perfectly ordinary for the magical community as the characters neither exhibit confusion nor astonishment. The formerly constructed concept of normality is threatened by the mere presence of these two characters. The earlier conception of the muggles as ingroup is reversed as the magical community positions itself as the new ingroup; this is enforced by the narrator’s focus on Albus Dumbledore, who can be clearly allocated to the wizarding community with reference to his appearance and overall demeanor. Depictions of wizards as abnormal, deficient and repulsive are presented as invalid from that moment onwards whereas muggles concurrently obtain these features, however, not always in an equally offensive manner.

By reiterating personal and possessive pronouns such as “[w]e”, “us” and “ours” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 11, 14) on multiple occasions and stating that “even the *Muggles* have noticed something’s going on [...] [, i]t was on *their* news” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 10, emphasis added), Dumbledore establishes the notion of ‘us’ versus ‘them’, of two distinct groups, through naming them in discourse. This is also replicated in the first encounter between Harry Potter and Draco, who inquires whether Harry’s parents “were *our* kind” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone*, emphasis in original) as well as the first meeting of Harry Potter and Hagrid, who tells Harry about “*our* world, [...] [y]our world. *My* world.” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 54, emphasis in original). In his account of dragons in Britain, Ron tells Harry that “[o]ur lot have to keep putting spells on *Muggles* who’ve spotted them, to make *them* forget” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 248, my emphasis). These scenes constitute a significant turning point and change in perspective as Harry learns about the wizarding community that he actually belongs to. From this scene onwards, Harry is confronted with an alternative concept of normality in a considerably different world (see 5.1.1.3. *Differences between Muggles and Wizards*). A world, in which muggles, “non-magic folk” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 57), exist only as outgroup in the periphery of society and some wizards even eschew them altogether.

The avoidance of contact results in a lack of data, which can be discerned from various instances in the novel, for example, Professor McGonagall's ignorance of the name of a popular "Muggle sweet" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 11) as well as Hagrid "pointing at perfectly ordinary things like parking meters and saying loudly, 'See that, Harry? Things these Muggles dream up, eh?'" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 70). Hagrid even gets "stuck in the ticket barrier on the Underground" as he "was obviously not used to" the muggles' world, complaining that he does not "know how the Muggles manage without magic" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 72, 73). At their first encounter, Ron asks Harry "[w]hat are they [i.e. muggles] like?" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 106) and is amazed by the fact that muggle portraits "don't move at all" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 100) as well as by the shape of muggle money, which he finds "*Weird!*" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 215, emphasis in original). In Hogwarts, one of Harry's colleagues asks "What's basketball?" after Harry compares it to Quidditch (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 180). These minute details suggest that the majority of the wizarding community displays no knowledge about muggles at all and infers stereotypes about them from theories, but most importantly, from value judgments. As McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears emphasize, stereotypes either form from mutually perceived stimuli, which are absent in this case, or from ideologies and perceptions of certain groups (5). The latter applies to the stereotype formation of muggles conducted by the wizarding community that actively shapes these to mark their own difference by relying on value judgments.

The lack of perceived data and background knowledge results from their segregation from the muggle world. The fact that witches and wizards hide their abilities as well as their entire community from the muggles can be discerned from sentences such as "yer not ter use magic in the Muggle world" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 86) or "People are being downright careless, out on the streets in broad daylight, not even dressed in Muggle clothes" or "if [...] Muggles found out about us all" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 11). However, their concealment is most pronounced in accounts on the Ministry of Magic, which is primarily responsible for "keep[ing] it from the Muggle that there's still witches an' wizards up an' down the country" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 70) by "putting spells on Muggles who've spotted them, to make them forget" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 248). It appears to be

noteworthy that witches and wizards deliberately establish boundaries between the two worlds to avoid their encounter; this suggests a general aversion to people who are unable to conjure as they perceive them as inferior or deficient. This, however, prevents the establishment of meaningful stimuli that would inform stereotype formation for both groups. Apart from a few exceptions, neither the muggles nor the wizards can rely on tangible data to arrive at valid representations of the other group.

5.1.1.3. Differences between Muggles and Wizards

The perception and accentuation of commonalities and differences constitutes a crucial prerequisite for group formation. This also applies to the distinction between muggles and wizards, who are highly differential in several aspects of life, as emphasized by Harry Potter who “was starting to feel that nothing would surprise him” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 108). Whereas traditional Othering processes rely on the accentuation of negative and diverging features displayed by the outgroup, which frequently trigger derogatory value judgments and justify the ingroup’s superior position, group formation on the part of the witches and wizards actually relies on the accentuation of their own group’s distinctive features while predominantly ignoring the outgroups’ features resulting from the substantial lack of data and the muggles’ underrepresentation in the novels. The fact that Harry commences his journey into the wizarding world from the perspective of the muggle normality contributes to the accentuation of distinctive aspects displayed in the wizarding world that constitutes normalcy for the group of witches and wizards. In the following paragraphs, a number of prevalent examples will be outlined that are perceived as group markers for the community of witches and wizards by Harry Potter.

With regards to visual appearances, witches and wizards are characterized by wearing long, colorful robes and cloaks as well as pointed black hats (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 3-4). In their letter of acceptance, students from Hogwarts are prompted to purchase this attire, as they are part of a proper wizard’s wardrobe. Apart from that, wizards and muggles differ with regards to ordinary, daily objects such as “Put-Outers” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 9) as magical counterparts to conventional lighters or watches that “ha[ve] twelve hands but no numbers; instead, little planets [...] moving around the edge” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s*

Stone 13). Moreover, wizards utilize “spell books and wands” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 63) that enable them to conjure in their daily lives. With regards to transportation, muggles prefer ‘conventional’ vehicles such as motorcycles, cars or planes while witches and wizards utilize floo networks, portkeys and brooms, apparate or even enchant ordinary vehicles such as motorcycles and cars so that they can fly, as represented by these two scenes: “a huge motorbike fell out of the air and landed on the road” or “[t]here had been a flying motorbike” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 15, 20). Another significant difference between the group of muggles and the group of wizards constitutes their diverging mail service. While muggles typically transmit their letters via post offices that employ mailmen who deliver letters in person, witches and wizards rely on owls. The narrator reports that an owl “held [a newspaper] in its beak” and “held out its leg so he [Hagrid] could put the money into a small leather pouch tied to it” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 66-67), and Hagrid states, “they’re dead useful, carry yer post” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 87). Owls not only serve as mail carriers but constitute a popular pet besides cats and frogs among witches and wizards as well. Hagrid, the gamekeeper employed at Hogwarts, even states that he would like to own a dragon as a pet (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 70, 72). Among the students of Hogwarts, certain seemingly peculiar sweets such as “Every-Flavor Beans” or “Chocolate Frogs” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 107, 108) enjoy great popularity.

In general, muggles and wizards share a common language, however, there appear to be some exceptions, for instance, Parsel, the ability to speak to snakes, which proves to be highly exceptional among wizards. In the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, for instance, Harry is able to talk to a boa constrictor (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 29-30). The two distinct worlds resemble in the banking system, although witches and wizards utilize a different currency, namely “[k]nuts”, “[g]alleons” and “[s]ickles”, instead of ordinary “Muggle money” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 81, 70), and their only bank “Gringotts” is led by “goblins” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 68), which are magical beings. In Gringotts, vaults are sealed by goblins who have to “strok[e] the door gently with one of [their] long fingers and it simply melt[s] away”, if someone else tried to unclench it, “they’d be sucked through the door and trapped in there” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone*

81). Flora and fauna in the magical world proves to be entirely dissimilar as several magical plants, beings and creatures, for instance, mandrakes or whomping willows, ghosts, vampires, hags, trolls or dragons characterize the magical landscape. Professions among wizards are equally extraordinary such as aurors, obliviators, curse-breakers, dragon keepers, healers while a number of employments are similar to the ones muggles obtain, for instance, ministry workers, teachers, authors, bar tenders, journalists, professional athletes, or librarians, to name only some.

Art in the wizarding world appears to be especially noteworthy as people depicted in portraits actually move, they depict “subjects [...] which move freely from frame to frame” (Pottermore, *Everything a First-Years Should Know about Hogwarts*) or vanish from the portrait from time to time (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 110), some even speak (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 137). Magical architecture is characterized by moving staircases, “doors that wouldn’t open unless you asked them politely or tickled them in exactly the right place” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 140-141) as well as by “vanishing steps [...] that lead somewhere different on a Friday” (Pottermore, *Everything a First-year Should Know about Hogwarts*). With regards to (technical) literature, titles such as “*A Beginner’s Guide to Transfiguration*” or “*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find them*” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 72) appear to be noteworthy as they highlight the commonality with muggles on genre such as introductory works or guidelines but emphasize the difference with respect to the topics discussed in those books, which would trigger immense confusion on the part of the muggles. This also applies to school equipment and books as students in the wizarding world are required to purchase broomsticks, “robes”, “protective gloves”, a “wand”, a “cauldron” and various books on spells, on “[m]agical theory” and on the “[h]istory of [m]agic” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 71-72). This stems from the distinctive subjects taught at school, for instance lessons on flying, potions, transfiguration, and charms. Another aspect marked by difference relates to sports and leisure activities: while typical muggle sports such as basketball appear to be entirely unknown to the wizarding community, witches and wizards cheer for “Quidditch” teams (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 83), the most popular sport in their world, or as Hagrid refers to it, “our sport” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 85, emphasis added). “[W]izard chess” might appear similar to muggle chess, however, “the figures [are] alive” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 214).” Lastly,

their medical system proves to be especially distinct from the muggles' conception as patients admitted to wizard's hospitals are treated with potions and charms.

These aspects, which can be associated with two of the three Othering dimensions proposed by Todorov, namely "social distance" and difference in "knowledge" (3, qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300), prove to be considerably important as they provide the formerly missing data, which enables Harry Potter to form an impression on the wizarding community and, hence, stereotypes about them. Common features associated with the magical world are presented as natural and pre-existing within the ingroup of witches and wizards and contribute to the justification of their superiority. Harry's transition between the two distinct groups can be perceived as evidencing the flexible, alterable nature of categories since he acquires a novel conception of normality; however, due to the wizard's concealment of their world, stereotypes and the understanding of normality within the group of muggles persist unaffected.

5.1.2. Hierarchy within the Magical Community

While the distinction between muggles and witches and wizards appears to be quite straightforward on the grounds of their dis-/ability to perform magic and perceptible on the basis of discernable differences as outlined above, a fourfold division is constructed in terms of lineage within the wizarding community that is premised on the strict separation of these two groups. In the wizarding world, witches and wizards distinguish between so-called pure-bloods, half-bloods, muggle born witches/wizards, also referred to as mud-bloods, and, lastly, squibs, also referred to as wizard born muggles. Whereas the first describes individuals who stem from a long line of parents who are both witches and wizards themselves, the second refers to descendants of a witch or a wizard and a muggle. Muggle born witches and wizards, as the name implies, stem from muggle families but develop magical abilities in their childhood. The latter, which is also referred to as wizard-born, represents a special case as it relates to a person who is technically a witch or a wizard as he/she has at least one parent that is able to conjure but who is unable to perform magic himself/herself.

This distinction appears to be the result of the construction of the two distinct groups of witches/wizards and muggles and its consequentially derived, naturalized justification of the supremacy of certain groups. The first group is commonly referred to as 'pure'-blooded or as old wizarding families; it positions itself as ingroup located at the top of the constructed hierarchy within the wizarding community. With regards to discourse analysis, the appointment of the word 'pure' to this particular group appears to be especially noteworthy as it emphasizes the group's ideological motivation presenting itself as the *only* true group of witches and wizards entitled to claim this status on the grounds of their parentage and excluding any derivations from this perception. The term 'pure' infers immaculateness, cleanness and genuineness, which are universally positively connoted words, thus, they generate a sense of a desirable ideal and naturalize the pure-blooded magicians' superiority as a result. These assumptions can be discerned from scenes including Draco Malfoy, such as:

I really don't think they should let *the other sort* in, do you? *They're* just not the same, *they've* never been brought up to know *our* ways. Some of *them* have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families. (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 84, emphasis added).

Similar to the analysis of the word 'pure', the use of discourse analysis proves to be especially instructive with regards to this quote as Draco Malfoy, descendent of Lucius Malfoy, positions pure-blooded magicians at the center of society through the use of phrases such as "our ways" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 84) while distancing the ingroup from the remaining outgroup through employing the phrase "the other sort" and the personal pronoun "they" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 84). The content of these sentences further enforces their hegemony.

While pure-bloods claim to be at the center of the wizarding community, they assign certain labels to groups they perceive as inferior and position them at the social periphery. From their perspective, witches and wizards descending from muggle families represent a threat and a disgrace to the wizarding community similar to muggles in general. This aversion is displayed by the terms 'half-blood' and 'muggle born', whom they even address as 'mudblood'. The word 'half' implies that witches and wizards born to one muggle parent are perceived as 'half-citizens', not 'whole', 'not good enough' for the community as they cannot legitimately claim full membership in the wizarding community due to their parentage. Although perceived

as a neutral term, from a structural perspective, the hidden ideology behind the term 'muggle' already entails certain negative connotations as they are presented as impaired human beings who are, therefore, inferior to the community of wizards. They are even depicted as 'mudbloods', which is highly offensive as the term mud commonly relates to dirt and filth; the association of muggle born witches and wizards with mud proves to be highly problematic and insulting and puts this group of wizards and witches in direct opposition to the 'pure' and 'spotless' ingroup. The allegedly superior group condemns the last-named group, squibs, as well; although they actually stem from a wizarding family, in which at least one parent is able to perform magic, they are, in fact, considered muggle-like as they are equally impaired with regards to their absence of any magical abilities (see 5.3.5.3. *Master Narrative: 'Squibs are a Burden to the Family'*).

By assigning abusive labels to the other groups within that hierarchy, the pure-blooded witches and wizards deprive the remaining groups of their voice and assign them into a passive position that denies them the opportunity to speak for themselves, thus, depicting the remaining groups as inherently inferior as they rely on the superior ingroup to speak for them, this is also referred to as deauthorization in Othering processes. The ostensibly 'highest' group within the wizarding community, the pure-bloods, generates biases towards the members of the other groups and enforces these through repetition of discriminative labels in daily discourse. The 'pure' wizarding community portrays the members of the latter groups as inherently inferior and as a threat to the 'natural' order to justify strict segregation between the communities or even persecution. This division has led dark wizards such as Lord Voldemort and his evil supporters, all of them 'pure' and 'able' wizards, to conspire against so-called 'mudbloods' and squibs, whom they try to murder.

At this point, it appears to be highly relevant to mention that not all witches and wizards who are considered pure-bloods within this constructed, hierarchical order act according to these attitudes. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, this ideology is predominantly enforced by Draco Malfoy and his father Lucius Malfoy and reiterated at various points of the story. However, the reader is only introduced to these viewpoints as a result of Harry and Draco's antagonism, which constitutes a popular theme within the *Harry Potter* series. However, other pure-blooded families

prove to display welcoming attitudes towards half-bloods and muggle born witches and wizards, for instance, the Weasleys. There are several mentions within the first novel that reinforces a positive opinion on seemingly 'lower' groups within the community of wizards. Harry does not appear intimidated by Draco's beliefs and argues that "[t]here was so much to learn that even people like Ron [i.e. pure-bloods] didn't have much of a head start" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 144). Hagrid affirmed that "some 'o the best I ever saw were the only ones with magic in 'em in a long line o' Muggles" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 85) and Ron, stemming from a pure-blooded family himself, remarked that "[t]here's loads of people who come from Muggle families and they learn quick enough" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 107). Since the protagonist befriends Hermione Granger, who comes from a muggle family and proves herself one of the best and cleverest witches at Hogwarts, any assumptions about the superiority of pure-blooded witches and wizards are deconstructed on the part of the reader. With reference to stereotype formations, such disproving information of ideologies proves to be vital and representative for their flexible nature. With regards to Othering processes, however, it might be argued that the 'mudblooded' group of witches and wizards continues to be perceived as inferior or even deficient within the wider wizarding community as they are typically apprehended as homogeneous group.

In the new play, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, Draco Malfoy seems to have altered his mindset slightly as he confesses that he is "mildly enjoying" it when Hermione is "bossing [him] around" at the end of the play (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 306). Draco generally appears to be more open-minded with regards to muggle born witches and wizards, such as Hermione, as he steps up to share the blame for the unfortunate events in the play, stating "Hermione and Harry have done nothing wrong but try and protect us all. If they're guilty, then I am too" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 265) and confesses to Harry, "I always envied you them you know – Weasley and Granger" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 146); measured by his former attitude towards muggle born witches and wizards, who he traditionally despised, teased and tantalized, these scenes depict an entirely different attitude. The most striking aspect in relation to pure-blood ideology in the new play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, however, proves to be Scorpius Malfoy's attitude towards other wizarding families as he neither exhibits discriminative behavior nor

biased, pejorative language use. In fact, he even experiences amorous feelings towards Rose Granger-Weasley (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 25, 55, 323). These facts infer that Draco Malfoy has either altered his opinion on ostensibly 'lower' groups of wizards, thus, not passed them on to his son in his upbringing, or that Scorpius has formed his own, unbiased opinion, which allowed him to ignore the constructed ideology traditionally perceived as natural. However, the scenes described above suggest that the first assumption might be true.

5.1.3. Othering Dimensions in the Harry Potter Universe

The objectification of people or groups on the basis of perceived differences constitutes a vital tradition in the Harry Potter universe, in which witches and wizards are differentiated from muggles. Although not shared by all members of the wizarding community and sometimes heavily refuted, some display discriminative behavior justified by the naturalized perception that muggles are inherently inferior to witches and wizards. However, the separation of these two distinct groups appears to be especially interesting as they commonly exhibit no knowledge about the other group at all as a result of the wizarding community's concealment. Thus, the community of witches and wizards primarily initiates Othering processes since the majority of the muggles does not even know about their existence. As direct contact between the groups is absent except for mixed families and the cooperation between the Muggle Minister and the Ministry of Magic, it appears noteworthy that the main rationale for Othering processes in the wizarding community is not motivated by the desire to control the other group, but by their wish to maintain the seemingly natural order in the magical world through excluding the muggles from it by establishing barriers (see 5.3.3. *Barriers*).

Within the magical community, however, so-called pure-bloods construct the 'Others' to enforce their ostensibly superior position within their world's hierarchy. Members of this group exert dominance and place themselves at the center while constructing the inferior 'Other', i.e. half-bloods, muggle born witches and wizards, and squibs. Through the construction of a seemingly pre-existing order triggered by the accentuation of purity and lineage, these old wizarding families establish, enforce, perpetuate and legitimate their preeminence and the existing, hierarchical social order; this process is also depicted by Krumer and Nevo (299) and Riegel (52). Vital

for their hegemony appears to be the accentuation of these positive features associated with the ingroup of pure-blooded witches and wizards and the lack thereof in the othered group, who are portrayed as “partial citizens” as a result (Vazquez 2). With regards to this proposed hierarchy, the ‘superior’ group exerts symbolic oppression.

Value judgments employed in Othering processes commonly describe the accentuation of opposing ideas and perceptions that entail values such as good and bad, strong and weak, civilized and wild (Todorov, qtd. in Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 300). The othered group is customarily associated with negative and derogatory features while the ingroup depicts itself as exemplary and conforming to a social norm. With regards to the construction of difference between muggles and wizards, both groups employ value judgments. However, it needs to be highlighted that these value judgments do not reproduce universal beliefs held about either of the groups as they are only taken from individual accounts delineated in the novels; they must not be confused with shared common beliefs about the distinct groups. Muggles, especially Mr. Dursley, depict witches and wizards as strange, mysterious, dangerous, unwelcome, and nonsensical, thereby eliciting negative perceptions of them as these adjectives collectively portray a detrimental picture of this group of people. Witches and wizards, on the other hand, appear to be less judgmental, which might result from their lack of data or contact respectively. However, there are accounts of ‘pure-bloods’ who indicate detest in statements such as “Muggle families shouldn’t even be allowed in” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 85). These disparaging views influence conduct between pure-bloods and the remaining groups of wizards. In general, it seems that, although value judgments are expressed, their formation is impeded by the lack of empirical knowledge about the other group.

As clarified in the section above, the physical separation of muggles and witches/wizards is decisive and formative for their relationship. While only a minority of witches and wizards live among muggles, frequently hiding their magical abilities from them, the majority of the wizarding community resides in areas that are marked by barriers creating impenetrable boundaries for the muggle community. As a result, the groups perceive each other as alien and strange since their own living environment constitutes the central location from which the other group deviates. This stems from the universally shared feeling that close vicinity suggests familiarity

whereas distance might be perceived as a threat. Similarly threatening prove to be differing aspects with reference to psychological distance as the two distinct communities vary in their values, ideals and convictions, which causes significant alienation.

Within the wizarding community, the superiority of pure-bloods is established and naturalized, frequently depicting pure-blooded families such as the Malfoys as wealthy and powerful. This implies that issues of social class obtain a crucial role in the magical world as these further contribute to Othering processes. The Weasleys, for instance, can actually be assigned to the pure-blooded group of witches and wizards, however, they are demeaned anyway as they seem to be impoverished deducing from Ron's statements that he "never get[s] anything new" and that his parents "couldn't aff[ord]" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 106) as well as in the narrator's account that "Ron's set was very old and battered. Like everything else he owned, it had once belonged to someone else in his family" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 214). While "Harry didn't think there was anything wrong with not being able to afford" new objects, it elicited numerous negative comments on the part of Draco Malfoy, who stems from a highly wealthy family. He repeatedly taunts Ron, claiming "the Weasleys have [...] more children than they can afford" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 115-116) and that "Hagrid's [hut] must seem like a palace compared to what your family's used to" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 210). In general, Draco Malfoy as well as his father Lucius Malfoy display dismissive behavior towards members who belong to lower social classes, which can be deduced from sentences such as "I'm not going in that forest [...] this is servant stuff [...] if my father knew I was doing this, he'd" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 268).

The last Othering dimension, unfamiliar knowledge, proves to be particularly crucial in relation to the Harry Potter universe as the mutual absence in the lives of both groups substantially influences their perception of each other. This lack of experience frequently results in value judgments as credible bottom-up processes are inapplicable without concrete data about the other group. The wizarding community even introduced a subject named "Muggle Studies" (Pottermore, *Hogwarts School Subjects*) in their curriculum to compensate for the lack of data, however, these lessons neither seem popular nor fruitful as witches and wizards continue to display ignorance and a substantial lack of knowledge, which can be inferred from

statements such as “I have made the Muggle Prime Minister aware and he is filing what is known as a misper. Sounds like a spell. It isn’t” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 78). Although some groups within the magical world display negative attitudes or even disgust towards muggles, others exhibit immense interest and fascination such as Arthur Weasley, Ron’s father, who repeatedly questions Harry about his muggle relatives and is employed in the “Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office” department in the Ministry of Magic as he is passionate about “[s]tudying how the Muggle world works” (Pottermore, *Arthur Weasley*).

5.2. Stereotypical Characters

The following section will provide an account of some of the main characters presented in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and features typically associated with them. As these stereotypical depictions form the basis for the analysis of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* below, only a small selection of characters will be addressed, which prove to be essential as point of reference, while other characters, such as Ron Weasley, appear to be insignificant in the play.

5.2.1. Harry Potter

Harry Potter is the main character in the book series, who develops into a celebrated hero in the course of the novels as he saves the magical world from the dreaded Lord Voldemort despite his tragic background. He is depicted as a natural leader that fights bravely for justice and parries any threats and obstacles that emerge. He is commonly associated with the House of Gryffindor, “which most values the virtues of courage, bravery and determination” (Pottermore, *Hogwarts Houses: Gryffindor*). The scene involving the sorting hat at the beginning of Harry’s first year at Hogwarts seems to be particularly notable:

‘Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind, either. There’s talent, oh my goodness, yes – and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that’s interesting... So where shall I put you?’ Harry gripped the edges of the stool and thought, ‘Not Slytherin, not Slytherin.’ ‘Not Slytherin, eh?’ said the small voice. ‘Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it’s all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no? Well, if you’re sure – better be GRYFFINDOR!’ (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 129-130)

In the course of the book series, Harry strongly identifies himself with the house of Gryffindor and even becomes one of its poster children despite his dangerous adventures. Among the other Gryffindor students, he enjoys great popularity as he is

exceptionally talented on the broomstick. Already in the first flying lesson, “Harry’s broom jumped into his hand at once” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 156), which instantaneously ensured him a spot in Gryffindor’s Quidditch team as he is considered “a natural” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 162).

In general, Harry proves to be a highly remarkable, gifted and successful wizard. He is most characterized by his loyalty to his school, Hogwarts, which “felt more like home than Privet Drive had ever done” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 183), but more importantly, to his two best friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. Such loyal behavior is essentially depicted in conversations such as,

‘You’ll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don’t want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there.’ He held out his hand to shake Harry’s, but Harry didn’t take it. ‘I think I can tell who the wrong sort are for myself, thanks’ he said coolly.” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 116),

in which he stands up for his best friend Ron Weasley. While he establishes a number of meaningful friendships during his years at Hogwarts, he displays a substantially negative attitude towards Draco Malfoy, who is presented as Harry’s antagonist in the novels. This is emphasized through plain sentences such as “I hate [...] Malfoy” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 210) or “Harry had never believed he would meet a boy he hated more than Dudley, but that was before he met Draco Malfoy” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 153).

5.2.2. Draco Malfoy

Draco Malfoy, son of Lucius Malfoy, is depicted as the stereotypical villain in the novels. Similar to Harry Potter, he proves to be a leader and not a follower; however, his intentions are evil in the majority of cases. He is devious and presented as highly unlikeable within the novels; this is notable in plain sentences such as “[he] looked extremely mean” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 115). Draco is most prominently characterized by his affiliation with the house of Slytherin, to which he was immediately assigned in the school’s sorting process, “the hat had barely touched his head when it screamed ‘SLYTHERIN!’” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 129), about which Hagrid remarks, “[t]here’s not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn’t in Slytherin” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 86). Besides the house of Slytherin, he is also typically associated with his pure-blooded family’s malign reputation. Ron retells that “[t]hey were some of the first to come back to our side

after You-Know-Who [Voldemort] disappeared. Said they'd been bewitched. My dad doesn't believe it. He says Malfoy's father didn't need an excuse to go over to the Dark Side" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 117). These accounts trigger a sense of dislike as Draco is presented as quintessentially evil.

Following his family's ideologies and naturalized understanding of the hierarchy within the wizarding community, he is biased, judgmental and despises muggle-born witches and wizards as the Malfoys are obsessed with lineage and the purity of the magical world. The very first question Draco asks Harry concerns his family background: "But they were *our* kind, weren't they?" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 84, emphasis in original). However, it is most prominent in the sentence "[y]ou'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 116). In a subsequent encounter between the two, he argues that "they should [not] let the other sort in [...] [t]hey're just not the same [...] I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 84). Stemming from a wealthy, influential family, he grew up looking down on people, which is notable in sentences such as, "I heard he's a sort of *savage* – lives in a hut in the school grounds and every now and then he gets drunk, tries to do magic and ends up setting fire to his bed" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 84, emphasis in original) or "[n]o need to ask you who you are. My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 115-116). In these encounters, Draco Malfoy repeatedly positions himself as superior and devalues his counterparts by comparing them to wild savages and deriding other's poverty. The dislike between him and Harry Potter stems from his pejorative behavior and proves to be mutual. He continuously teases Harry as portrayed by statements such as, "'I do feel so sorry,' said Draco Malfoy [...], 'for all those people who have to stay at Hogwarts for Christmas because they're *not wanted* at home'" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 208-209, emphasis added) or the narrator's account that "Malfoy, jealous and angry, had gone back to taunting Harry about having no proper family" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 209). Similar to this example, he seems to enjoy highlighting other people's misery in the following claim:

'You know how I think they choose people for the Gryffindor team? [...] It's people they feel sorry for. See, there's Potter, who's got not parents, then

there's the Weasleys, who've got no money – you should be on the team, Longbottom, you've got no brains.' (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 239)

5.2.3. Hermione Granger

Hermione Granger is commonly perceived as the female heroine in the *Harry Potter* novels. She is exceptionally ambitious and intelligent, which can be discerned from statements such as,

'I've tried a few simple spells just for practice and it's all worked for me. Nobody in my family's magic at all, it was ever such a surprise when I got my letter, but I was ever so pleased, of course, I mean, it's the very best school of witchcraft there is, I've heard – I've learnt all our set books off by heart, of course, I just hope it will be enough' (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 112-113)

or "I do hope they start straight away, there's so much to learn" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 134). Her ambition is repeatedly addressed since it constitutes the most stereotypical feature of her; this is prevalent in examples such as, "Hermione stretched her hand as high into the air as it would go" so that her teachers would notice her (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 147). In Hogwarts, she is praised for her high achievements and success in various subjects, for instance in Professor McGonagall's class, in which "only Hermione Granger had made any difference to her match" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 143) or Flitwick's, in which she "got a hundred and twelve per cent on his exam" (Rowling 291); the sentence "Hermione, of course, came top of the year" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 330) outlines her overall achievement in Hogwarts.

She is generally portrayed as bookish and refers to thick, bulky volumes as "light reading" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 235). Her profound interest in books proves to be particularly useful as she frequently detects relevant clues that aid in the friends' various adventures. Similar to Harry Potter, she proves to be a loyal friend to him and Ron Weasley, as apparent in statements such as "Books! And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and bravery" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 308). Since Draco Malfoy continuously offends her because of her muggle family background, she despises him in particular.

5.2.4. Voldemort

Lord Voldemort, “[f]ormerly known as Tom Marvolo Riddle and commonly referred to as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named” (Pottermore, *Lord Voldemort*) is one of the most evil wizards in the magical world, who is obsessed with power and dominance. Even Albus Dumbledore confesses that he “ha[s] powers I will never have” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 12). He is depicted as “powerful” and “evil”, characterized by a “high, cold, cruel laugh” (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 60). In his youth, he is referred to as a “troubled young wizard with an affinity for the Dark Arts and manipulation” (Pottermore, *Tom Riddle*). Voldemort is most famous for his ability to speak Parseltongue, his troublesome magical bond with Harry Potter and, moreover, his scheme to exterminate all ‘mudbloods’, which was the reason why he murdered Harry Potter’s family as well since his mother was born into a muggle family. Besides these accounts on his malignant character and his exceptional powers, the reader is not presented with additional information in the first novel.

5.3. Disablism in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

5.3.1. Conception of Disability and Impairment in the Harry Potter Universe

It appears that the concept of (dis)ability is applicable in the wizarding community evolving around Harry Potter and relies heavily on the seemingly straightforward question whether a person is *able* to perform magic or not. Based on this simple conception, the world is divided into two different kinds of humans: *able* witches and wizards and *unable* muggles and squibs. The simplistic portrayal of muggles as inherently different from magicians enforced by governing institutions such as the Ministry of Magic and extremists such as Lord Voldemort alike evokes the belief that muggles are different by nature. This naturalized belief results in the creation of superiority or inferiority and a powerful hierarchy resulting from the strict exclusion of muggles from the wizarding community (see 5.1.1. *Muggles vs. Wizards*) that also influences the perception of muggle born witches and wizards, as outlined in 5.1.2. *Hierarchy within the Magical Community* above and 5.3.4.2. *Master Narrative: ‘Squibs are a Burden to the Family’* below. These practices can be considered highly problematic and ableist in the sense that the wizarding community explicitly favors ‘able’ bodies over ‘disabled’ bodies; this can be inferred from their concealment from

the muggle community and the refusal to allow muggles access to their magical world.

At this point, the distinction between impairment and disability proves to be crucial. From a medical perspective, impairment is perceived as “functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment” (*Disabled People’s International* qtd. in Goodley, *Disability Studies* 8). As already outlined in section 4.2.2. *Impairment*, it is understood as personal corporeality that resides within the disabled person’s body and is perceived outside of the social reality (Shakespeare, *Social Model of Disability* 198). In that sense, the functional disability to conjure is apprehended as directly linked to the individual person, in the case of the wizarding world, to muggles as well as squibs. The *inability* to perform magic is closely related to the perception of a ‘normal’ body, a construct entrenched by powerful agents that perceive the ‘normate’ citizen at the center of their understanding of normality and devalue deviations from the norm. In the Harry Potter universe, the ‘normal’, ‘able-bodied’ citizen is a witch or a wizard and the ‘normal’ body is *able* to cast spells with a wand, *able* to fly on a broomstick and *able* to brew potions in a cauldron. It is noteworthy that while assistive devices such as wheelchairs and crutches are commonly associated with disability, instruments such as wands and brooms are considered ‘enabling’ among the wizarding world. Similar to the perception of prostheses as enable people living with impairments to walk or use their hands, wands might be perceived as an extension to one’s arm that enables magicians to conjure. Thus, the absence or presence of these instruments represents the underlying system. Impairments constitute a “real entity” (Tremain 191) in this understanding as the inability to conjure *is* a fact that cannot and must not be overlooked similar to the fact that someone *is* paralyzed, *is* deaf or *has* a learning disability. Since the ability to conjure presents a naturalized, essential quality of the ‘normal’ human body for the wizarding community, muggles and squibs are perceived as pathological, biologically impaired and deficient since they deviate from this conception. The perception of inherent variance from the norm is employed as justification for the discrimination and exclusion of disabled people in the wizarding world as they are perceived as ‘unfit’ for inclusion and participation.

The term disability, on the other hand, is traditionally linked to socio-political constraints that prevent the individual living with an impairment from full inclusion and participation (see 4.2.3. *Disability*). The *Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation* defines disability as “the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities” (qtd. in Shakespeare, *Social Model of Disability* 198). While the formerly mentioned, impairment, is perceived as residing in the individual body, disability is presented as induced by society and understood as “structural and public” (Shakespeare, *Social Model of Disability* 198). Disability is presented as socio-political issue stemming from the establishment of structural barriers that prevent inclusion and equal rights for people who have an impairment; thus, the decisive disabling factors in the lives of people with varying functional limitations are of a constructed nature. Shakespeare emphasizes that “[t]he problem of disability is relocated from the individual, to the barriers and attitudes which disable her. It is not the disabled person who is to blame, but society.” (*Social Model of Disability* 200). From this perspective, with reference to the wizarding community, muggles are not *disabled* by their individual bodies but by the socio-political endeavor to prevent them from participation, which is discussed in 5.3.3. *Barriers* below. A muggle, in that sense, is not disabled by his/her functional limitation to properly perform magic but by the wider societies’, i.e. the wizarding community, construction of boundaries that prevent contact between wizards and muggles.

From the perspective of realist theory, however, impairment and disability are both substantial factors in a disabled person’s life. Functional as well as socio-political limitations are perceived as contributing to a person’s marginalization (Shakespeare, *Social Model of Disability* 200). In that sense, muggles are disabled as a result of their inability to conjure, on the one hand, as well as their “activity limitations, and participation restriction” that exclude them from the community of wizards on the other hand (Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, qtd. in Goodley and Runswick-Cole, *The Body as Disability and Possibility* 3)

5.3.2. Powerful Institutions in the Harry Potter Universe

Within the community of witches and wizards, certain institutions exert power by actively shaping and enforcing stereotypes that depict muggles and squibs as deficient and unqualified for participation in the magical world resulting from their substantial difference to witches and wizards. By naturalizing this perception, powerful institutions attempt to maintain the status quo, the segregation of the two groups, as well as their supremacy. They deliberately shape and influence the wizards' conception of 'normal', 'functioning', 'able' bodies to justify the outgroups' oppression while strengthening their own hegemony.

In the Harry Potter universe, the Ministry of Magic constitutes the most powerful and influential institution in the wizarding community. It is "[t]he building from which the magical community is governed and its laws enforced" (Pottermore, *The Ministry of Magic*). Although it is centered at the heart of London, muggles, except for the Muggle Prime Minister, are entirely unaware of its presence. "There are seven main Ministry departments: Magical Law Enforcement, Magical Accidents and Catastrophes, Magical Transportation, Mysteries, Magical Games and Sports, Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, and International Magical Cooperation" (Pottermore, *The Ministry of Magic*). Their main responsibility, however, is keeping the magical world a secret from muggles by establishing invisible, insurmountable barriers that prevent Muggles from entering their world and take part in it. This is certified by Hagrid, the gamekeeper of Hogwarts, who explains to Harry that the ministry's "main job is to keep it from the Muggles that there's still witches an' wizards up an' down the country" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 70). Their scope of functions entails monitoring witches and wizards as they are "not [allowed] to use magic in the Muggle world" (Rowling 88) as well as obliterating muggles that witnessed magic with the help of a memory charm so that the muggles cease to remember anything they would perceive as unusual, as depicted in this conversation between Harry Potter and Ron Weasley

'Dragon-breeding was outlawed by the Warlock's Convention of 1709, everyone knows that. It's hard to stop Muggles noticing us if we're keeping dragons in the back garden – anyway, you can't tame dragons, it's dangerous. You should see the burns Charlie's got off wild ones in Romania.' 'But there aren't wild dragons in *Britain*?' said Harry. 'Of course there are', said Ron. [...] The Ministry of Magic has a job hushing them up, I can tell you. Our lot

have to keep putting spells on Muggles who've spotted them, to make them forget." (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 248, emphasis in original). The fact that they are monitoring witches and wizards on their use of magic indicates their oppressive force on the wizarding community. Since the Ministry of Magic imposes the effective legal situation in the magical world, it is primarily responsible for the enforcement of segregation through the implementation of barriers that separate the world of witches and wizards from the world inhabited by muggles. Underlying ideologies about able-bodiedness and the 'normal' citizen within the wizarding community inform their decisions that disable impaired individuals, hence, muggles as these constructed barriers prevent them from partaking. Their ideologies are propagated in various media such as newspapers, for instance, *The Daily Prophet*, "[o]stensibly an independent news source, [...] has more than once been influenced by the Ministry (or ruling power) of the day to hush up certain stories" (Pottermore, *The Daily Prophet*).

Education occupies a further significant role with respect to the enforcement and maintenance of naturalized ideologies of ability and disability. Hogwarts, the School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is located in the Scottish Highlands and known as one of the most prestigious schools for young witches and wizards, as acknowledged by Hermione claiming that "it's the very best school of witchcraft there is" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 113). Although Hogwarts is not explicitly referred to as pursuing certain ideologies, it can be implicitly inferred that underlying conceptions of 'normal' bodies and ability exert significant influence on everyday school life. Hogwarts is inaccessible for muggles as it is "concealed with numerous charms and spells to make it impossible for Muggles to trespass. For instead of an enormous school, any passing Muggle would only see ruins and signs warning them of danger" (Pottermore, *The Origins of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*). The mere fact that muggles are prevented from detecting the school implies that they are unwelcomed among the teachers and students as they are perceived as unfit for participation. In the sense of Othering, they are deauthorized as they are deprived of a voice, excluded from a vote to decide whether or not they would actually want to partake and perceived as passive, objectified 'Other'. Through the continuation of this practice and its reiteration among the wizarding community, this policy becomes naturalized and perceived as pre-existing and legitimate, thus, employed as justification for the exclusion of disabled individuals, i.e. muggles.

5.3.3. Barriers Established by the Wizarding Community

As a means to exclude the disabled, 'deficient' outgroup of muggles from the wizarding community as well as to maintain the constructed hierarchy and, at the same time, inequality between the groups, powerful in-group institutions as the ones presented above deliberately establish barriers to prevent, or at least significantly minimize, encounters between the groups. With reference to the social model of disability, barriers are considered to disempower certain groups that are discriminated on the basis of their perceived impairment, the functional disability to perform magic in the case of the Harry Potter universe, thus, actually *disabling* them. Socio-political institutions engender unequal opportunities in everyday social life and deny the constructed outgroup access to social activities. With regards to the wizarding and the muggle community, latter proves to be especially significant.

The most prominent aspect that prevents the integration of muggles into the wizarding community proves to be the witches and wizards' deliberate efforts to physically impede access for unable muggles. The two worlds are strictly segregated and the mere existence of the magical world is hidden from the muggles. Entrances to the magical realm as well as their facilities and their transport system are concealed and enchanted so that the disabled part of the society, i.e. muggles, is excluded entirely from their community. A prominent example constitutes the train leading to Hogwarts, the school for Witchcraft and Wizardry, as it departs from the concealed platform nine and three-quarters at Kings Cross, a train station located in Northern London. Muggles can neither spot nor enter the train station hidden between the platforms nine and ten. Witches and wizards only "have to [...] walk straight at the barrier between platform nine and ten" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 99), whereas disabled muggles display lack of this particular knowledge as it is kept a secret from them. Furthermore, floo networks are used by the wizarding community to travel between different places; typically

every witch or wizard home is connected to the Floo Network. While a fireplace may be disconnected by the use of a simple spell, connection requires the permission of the Ministry of Magic, which regulates the Floo service and *prevents Muggle* fireplaces becoming inadvertently joined up (Pottermore, *The Floo Network*, emphasis added).

Apart from that, witches and wizards also use telephone boxes to enter the Ministry of Magic or travel with the so-called Knight Bus; all of these modes of transportation are either completely inaccessible for muggles or hidden in a way they cannot detect them.

Further entrances, such as doorways in Hogwarts, are blocked by portraits that require a password from the person trying to enter (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 138), whereas others, such as the one to the famous shopping street named Diagon Alley, are protected by charms that require specific knowledge of how to enter them; in the first novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, for instance, Hagrid enters Diagon Alley by

tapp[ing] the wall three times with the point of his umbrella. The brick he had touched quivered – it wriggled – in the middle, a small hole appeared – it grew wider and wider – a second later they were facing an archway large enough even for Hagrid” (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 76).

Most importantly, entire landscapes and facilities such as schools are concealed by charms to exclude muggles from the community of wizards. As already mentioned above, Hogwarts, the School for Witchcraft and Wizardry, is “concealed with numerous charms and spells to make it impossible for Muggles to trespass. For instead of an enormous school, any passing Muggle would only see ruins and signs warning them of danger” (Pottermore, *The Origins of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*).

Besides actual physical barriers that prevent an encounter between ‘able’ witches/wizards and ‘unable’ muggles, attitudinal barriers constitute a substantial issue as they considerably contribute to the establishment of two distinct groups. As already discussed in section 5.1. ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ – *Group Formation & Othering*, the formation of stereotypes on the basis of value judgments proves to be central to the development of the two distinct groups, witches/wizards and muggles, as well as the hierarchy within the wizarding community. Lack of data appears to characterize both groups respectively, as, with only a few exceptions, neither display any actual knowledge about the other group. The refusal to share knowledge with the group of the disabled muggles constitutes a further barrier established by the ‘able-bodied’ wizarding community, which obviates muggles who witnessed magical phenomena

instantaneously. Both groups, provided they know about the other's existence, rely on assumptions made about the othered group; however, stereotypical depictions only provide biased, erroneous portrayals of the groups that are utilized as justification for the construction of physical barriers that prevent contact. The following section will outline common assumptions made about muggles, which are traditionally marked by their inability as opposed to their 'able' counterparts.

5.3.4. Language Use & Master Narratives

5.3.4.1. Binary Oppositions and Discriminatory Language Use

The consideration of binary oppositions presents a substantial aspect in Othering processes as proposed by one of the leading researchers in the field, Edward Said (qtd. in Riegel 52). He explains that through the creation of binary oppositions as well as their allocation to certain groups of people, the hegemonic 'us', the able witches and wizards in the case of the Harry Potter universe, is distinguished from the inferior 'them', i.e. the unable muggles (Said, qtd. in Riegel 52). With respect to the wizarding and muggle community, the following binary oppositions can be inferred: wizard/muggle, able/disabled, normal/abnormal, functional/dysfunctional, complete/deficient, gifted/inept, familiar/strange, high/low and superior/inferior.

The constructed ingroup, the witches and wizards, associates itself with favorable, affirmative traits such as 'able', 'gifted', 'functional', 'familiar' and the collaboratively strived for 'normal'. This self-enhancement through the use of positive language strengthens the belief that witches and wizards are inherently superior since belonging to this specific group is presented as desirable and favorable within the community whereas the affiliation with the outgroup is presented as undesirable and devalued. This conviction is strengthened by the use of purely negative terms linked to the outgroup, which is depicted as 'disabled', 'inept', 'deficient', 'strange', and 'dysfunctional'; the group of muggles is characterized as naturally different and inferior by the powerful group of witches and wizards. As outlined in 4.2.1. *Disablism*, the prefix *-dis* or *-dys* entails meanings such as "not", "absence of" or "opposite of", marking the terms *disabled* and *dysfunctional* as predominantly negative and lacking of certain features able-bodied people, i.e. witches and wizards, exhibit (Linton, *Reassigning Meaning* 171). Hence, muggles are perceived as *not* able, *not* gifted, *not* functional and *not* normal, which is employed as excuse for discriminating and

marginalizing practices and the witches and wizards' concealment. Similar to the prefix –dis, muggles are typically referred to by names that entail markers of absence such as 'non', 'no', 'half', or 'can't' as in *non*-magic folk, *no*-maj, *half*-blood or *can't*-spells, as portrayed in a scene with Gellert Grindelwald in the new Harry Potter screenplay *The Crimes of Grindelwald*: "It is said that I hate Les Non-Magiques. The Muggles. The No-Maj. The Can't Spells" (Rowling 245). The commonality between these various terms are associations with defectiveness, imperfection and pathology that disempower and disable the marginalized outgroup. From the perspective of social constructivism, these categories are perceived as social constructs that are repeated by the members of the wizarding community, thus naturalized, while serving as a means for discrimination. Constructing the other group as inherently different and reiterating these differences in discourse allows powerful institutions such as the Ministry of Magic to maintain the status quo, to justify their supremacy.

5.3.4.2. Master Narrative: 'Squibs are a Burden to the Family'

Squibs, often referred to as 'wizard born muggles', represent a particularly interesting group of disabled people as they actually have access to the magical world as well as knowledge about it resulting from their family background, however, they are usually only partially included, devalued, neglected full citizenship in the wizarding community or even dispelled. Carrying the label 'squib' proves to be problematic in most cases as it is associated with stigma and the master narrative of 'being a burden to the family'. Narratives are commonly held presumptions that are shaped, reiterated and enforced through discourse by powerful agents and, thus, privileged and repeated by the majority of the social community (Bamberg 2004, qtd. in Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 380). They can be understood as social constructs that influence behavior and attitudes within a society. Master narratives refer to "dominant constructions of [...] storylines that are assumed to be the normative experience" linked with a particular label (Andrews, qtd. in Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 390).

The dominant assumption associated with the stigmatized group of squibs appears to be that they are a disgrace to wizarding families, which is emphasized by the fact that they are frequently abandoned after the 'anomaly' or impairment is revealed. Squibs are characterized by feelings of shame and guilt and deprived of their individual voice

similar to people with disabilities that are judged from a medical perspective of disability. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Neville Longbottom recounts his experiences as a child who was suspected to be a squib:

'Well, my gran brought me up and she's a witch,' said Neville, 'but the family thought I was all Muggle for ages. My great-uncle Algie kept trying to catch me off my guard and force some magic out of me – he pushed my off the end of Blackpool pier once, I nearly drowned – but nothing happened until I was eight. Great-uncle Algie came round for tea and he was hanging me out of an upstairs window by the ankles when my great-aunt Enid offered him a meringue and he accidentally let go. But I bounced – all the way down the garden and into the road. They were all really pleased. Gran was crying, she was so happy.' (Rowling 133-134)

Statements such as "Gran was crying, she was so happy" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone*) imply that the suspicion that her grandson might actually be a squib had been a significant burden to the family; the grandmother cries in relief as she is liberated from this ostensible tragedy. The implication that squibs are a burden to the family is heightened considering the fact that Neville's uncle actually risked his nephew's life repeatedly hoping to elicit some magic.

Counter-narratives, on the other hand, challenge such universal beliefs through contextualized accounts and carry the potential to sustainably influence the perception of certain groups that regain their voice (Lalvani, *Disability, Stigma and Otherness* 390). A short story called *Scottish Rugby* published on Pottermore.com constitutes a noteworthy counter-narrative to the commonly held presumption that squibs are a burden to wizarding families. It recounts the story of a squib named Angus Buchanan, who stems from a family that prides itself that "such an *anomaly* had never occurred in their family" (Pottermore, *Scottish Rugby*, emphasis added). In line with the common narrative, his grandfather even claims, "a Squib in any family was a sign that they were in decline and deserved to be winnowed out" (Pottermore, *Scottish Rugby*). The presumption that squibs are traditionally devalued in the wizarding community is heightened by the fact that he is hiding his impairment out of fear and shame from his parents and grandparents with the help of his siblings. After being exposed, he is "humiliated [by his] father, who barred his entrance, bade him never darken their door again, and fired curses after Angus as he fled" (Pottermore, *Scottish Rugby*). Once he settled in the muggle community, he proved to be a talented athlete that even "represent[ed] his country in the first ever international rugby match", in which he "scored the first try" and won the game (Pottermore, *Scottish Rugby*). In the following years, he became known for his "worldwide

bestseller *My Life As A Squib*”, which enjoyed great popularity among the wizarding as well as the muggle community; it “brought the plight of these individuals to the wizarding world’s attention” by liberating squibs from their passive position that denied them an individual voice (Pottermore, *Scottish Rugby*, emphasis in original). He is further known for “The Angus Buchanan Cup for Outstanding Effort [...] awarded at Hogwarts each year” and the “Wizarding Supporters of Scottish Rugby Union”, which was founded in his memory (Pottermore, *Scottish Rugby*).

Squibs are commonly perceived as impaired individuals among the wizarding community, who are characterized by the absence of magical abilities and, thus, perceived as pathological and deficient. These traditional presumptions constitute decisive attitudinal barriers that deprive wizard born muggles from their voice and the right to actively participate in the wizarding society. These barriers inhibit inclusion and at the same time disable them. The counter-narrative proposed above critiques this medical perception of disability embodied by squibs and proves that social and ideological attitudes actually contribute to disempowering these individuals. As such barriers were non-existent among the muggle community, Angus was not disabled any more and could participate in everyday social life. This example outlines that Angus was only disabled in a society that favored ability over disability, wizards over wizard born muggles, and once he overcame these attitudinal barriers prevalent in the wizarding world, he actually proved himself a successful athlete and author in the muggle world. Although his functional inability must not be neglected with reference to a magical world, as proposed by the realist theory of disability, attitudinal barriers stemming from negative value judgments towards the label ‘squib’ had a crucial, negative impact on his life.

5.3.4.3. Master Narrative: ‘All Slytherins Are Evil’

Another label frequently employed in the Harry Potter universe and traditionally associated with negative character traits is the House of Slytherin. It is claimed that all its members are evil witches and wizards obsessed with power, which is enforced by statements such as, “[t]here’s not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn’t in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one” (Rowling 86); the reference to ‘You-Know-Who’ strengthens this master narrative behind the label Slytherin as Lord Voldemort is known as the ultimate embodiment of evil. On Pottermore.com, the

House of Slytherin is associated with “values of being sly and cunning” (*The Origins of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*). Harry Potter’s archenemy, Draco Malfoy, is presented as poster child for Slytherin since the sorting hat “had barely touched his head when it screamed, ‘SLYTHERIN!’” in the welcoming ceremony (Rowling 128) and he frequently displays features typically associated with being in Slytherin. Furthermore, Harry confesses, “after all he’d heard about Slytherin, [...] he thought they looked an unpleasant lot” (Rowling 128). These instances trigger the presumption that all witches and wizards sorted into the house of Slytherin are invariably evil and vile. This master narrative influences the characters’ behavior towards members of said house in the novels as well as the play. The commonly held presumption that Slytherin spawns malign witches and wizards can be discerned in Albus’ genuine concern that he might be sorted into Slytherin:

ALBUS. Dad [...] Do you think – what if I am – what if I’m put in Slytherin...

HARRY. And what would be wrong with that?

ALBUS. Slytherin is the house of the snake, of Dark Magic... it’s not a house of brave wizards (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 9).

Through the reiteration of presumptions such as the ones uttered above, the master narrative associated with the label Slytherin becomes naturalized through discourse.

However, the scene continues as follows and triggers a counter-narrative,

ALBUS. Dad [...] Do you think – what if I am – what if I’m put in Slytherin...

HARRY. And what would be wrong with that?

ALBUS. Slytherin is the house of the snake, of Dark Magic... it’s not a house of brave wizards.

HARRY. Albus Severus, you were named after two headmasters of Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was probably the bravest man I ever knew. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 9)

In the course of the play, the second protagonist Scorpius encounters Snape in an alternative reality generated through time-traveling, in which he tells him that Harry Potter acknowledged that he was “the bravest man he’d ever met” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 192). In the novels, however, Snape is continuously presented as “stereotypical Slytherin” (Pottermore, *Slytherins that Broke the Mould*) as he is the head teacher of the house and a former Death Eater. Harry’s first impression in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* strengthens this perception, he states that Snape’s “eyes [...] were cold and empty and made you think of dark tunnels” (Rowling, *Philosopher’s Stone* 146); the associations of features such as ‘cold’, ‘empty’ and ‘dark’ with Severus Snape evoke a purely negative picture and propose that he is an unpleasant character. These presumptions, however, are misleading

and stem from the characters' as well as the readers' lack of knowledge since Snape actually works undercover for Albus Dumbledore in the fight against Lord Voldemort, thus, refuting the allegation that all members of the House of Slytherin are evil witches and wizards.

It appears that the label Slytherin ultimately triggers negative assumptions stemming from derogatory value judgments typically associated with the House of Slytherin and its members. These presumptions are strengthened through reiteration in everyday discourse presented to the reader by the three main characters and their connection to stereotypical characters such as Voldemort and Draco Malfoy, who seem to confirm the master narrative that Slytherins are inevitably evil. Characters associated with this specific label prove to be disabled by attitudinal barriers as well as its association with viciousness and malice; in the Harry Potter universe, Slytherin characters are stigmatized and portrayed as dissociated from the wider community resulting from their presentation as an unpleasant group of people, which the protagonists of the Harry Potter series commonly eschew.

5.3.5. Character Analysis in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

Examining the characters in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* proves to be especially interesting as the story evolves around the children of the former central characters Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, Draco Malfoy and Lord Voldemort. The following section will provide an analysis of Delphi, who is Bellatrix Lestrange and Voldemort's daughter, Rose Granger-Weasley, Scorpius Malfoy and Albus Potter. A comparison between the parents and their children appears to be worthwhile due to the commonalities and differences represented between those two groups. Section 5.2. *Stereotypical Characters* provides the basis for the analysis. Whereas Delphi and Rose seem to reflect stereotypical depictions associated with their parents, Scorpius and Albus prove to be more complex. Special attention will be given to the protagonist Albus Potter, who appears to be disabled by the comparison to his famous father Harry Potter, who is portrayed as the embodiment of an able wizard, and his peers' discriminative behavior towards him resulting from attitudinal barriers in relation to the label "Slytherin Squib" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 22).

5.3.5.1. *Rose and Delphi – The Stereotypical Daughters*

Right at the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, Rose Granger-Weasley confirm the primary stereotypical assumption put forth about her mother, Hermione Granger. Similar to her, she is portrayed as exceptionally ambitious and intelligent, which can be inferred from sentences such as, “Rose is worried whether she’ll break the Quidditch scoring record in her first or second year. And how early she can take her O.W.Ls”, i.e. ‘Ordinary Wizarding Level’ (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 11). Her father Ron confirms the commonality with her mother by ironically stating, “I have no idea where she gets her ambition from” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 11). The fact that she is further sorted into the prestigious House of Gryffindor and portrayed as “brilliant” by other characters in the play strengthens the fulfillment of the stereotypical picture associated with her mother (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 26).

In accordance with her mother’s negative attitude towards Draco Malfoy, Rose displays prejudiced behavior towards Draco’s son Scorpius Malfoy. Bias stemming from Draco’s former demeaning conduct towards Hermione considerably influences her own stance. Once she spots Scorpius on the train, her “*face is growing colder by the minute*” and she emphasizes that his “mum and dad are Death Eaters” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 14, emphasis in original). Negative values assumed about the Malfoy family cause deauthorization as they put Scorpius in the passive position whereas Rose actively depicts him as malign and evil in concordance with the stigmatized label of Slytherin, the house in which all the Malfoys have been sorted in, as well as Voldemort, as he is accused of being his actual son; thus, she justifies her negative conduct through the underlying master narrative. During the first conversation between Albus and Scorpius, Rose indicates her dislike by hitting Albus repeatedly so that they might leave the train compartment in which Scorpius is seated (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 15). In these instances, Hermione’s daughter behaves according to the stereotype that Grangers hate Malfoys. Albus, however, decides to remain with Scorpius, which infuriates Rose and causes their friendship to cease. At this point, Rose disproves stereotypical assumptions made about her family, as her mother Hermione always remained loyal to her best friends Harry and Ron whereas she terminates the friendship with Albus because of his amity to Scorpius as well as his affiliation with the house of Slytherin; this can be discerned in scenes such as

ROSE and ALBUS *stand ready with their cases*.
 ALBUS. As soon as the train leaves you don't have to talk to me.
 ROSE. I know. We just need to keep the pretense up in front of the grown-ups.
 SCORPIUS *runs on – with big hopes and an even bigger case*.
 SCORPIUS (*hopeful*). Hi Rose.
 ROSE (*definitive*). Bye Albus (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 25, emphasis in original).

This scene underlines her negative stance towards the Malfoy family and the House of Slytherin, with which she also associates Albus Potter. In line with the master narrative proposed in 5.3.4.3. *Master Narrative: 'All Slytherins Are Evil'*, she establishes attitudinal barriers that prevent a meaningful friendship between her and the two boys.

Delphi, the main villain in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, is the daughter of Lord Voldemort and Bellatrix Lestrange, “[o]ne of Voldemort’s most loyal Death Eaters” and “[o]bsessed with her master and blood-purity” (Pottermore, *Bellatrix Lestrange*). While the majority of Delphi’s time on stage proves to be pretense, the reader discovers her secret at the end of the play when she reveals her true identity and that she has “never been to Hogwarts” and “didn’t have a best friend” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 143, 145) but grew up with a family named Rowle who “were pretty extreme Death Eaters” themselves as Scorpius concludes (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 236). She schemes to bring back her father by altering the past through the use of a time-turner. In a scene between Harry Potter and Bane, the centaur indicates that she is “[a] black cloud that may endanger us all” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 111).

In her actions and statements, she proves to be the stereotypical embodiment of a descendent of Lord Voldemort, as she is affiliated with dark magic and delighted by the idea of what Scorpius refers to as “the worst possible world” in which “[p]eople [are] being tortured – Dementors everywhere – a despotic Voldemort – [...] the world surrounded by Dark Magic” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 233). This appears to be most palpable in the following conversation between Delphi and Scorpius:

SCORPIUS. Hell. You want to resurrect hell?
 DELPHI. I want a return to pure and strong magic. I want to rebirth the Dark.
 SCORPIUS. You want Voldemort’s return? (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 244)

In an alternative reality, in which she succeeded in bringing back her father Lord Voldemort, she ruled under the name ‘The Augurey’ and promoted the torture and murder of muggles and muggle born wizards; this ideology mirrors Lord Voldemort’s

extremist convictions towards blood purity precisely, proving that she reflects stereotypical depictions associated with the Dark Lord.

The name Augurey relates to a tattoo on her back, which depicts a “sinister-looking black bir[d] that cr[ies] when rain’s coming”; Delphi elucidates that “[w]izards used to believe that the Augurey’s cry foretold death” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 235). This statement and the fact that she wears a tattoo of said bird on her back suggest that she considers herself an Augurey bringing death upon the non-wizarding community and everyone she perceived as deficient, inadequate and unfit. Her evil character is evidenced when she “kills Craig Bowker Jr.”, a minor character in the play, and is referred to as “a murderer” by Harry Potter (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 247, 313). She proves to be similarly powerful as her father Lord Voldemort as she has the ability to fly without a broom, as indicated in the stage direction “DELPHI *effortlessly rises into the air*” and speaks Parseltongue as well (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 252, 258, 307, 313, emphasis in original). Her might is displayed in sentences such as “[w]here there was discomfort and insecurity, now there’s just power” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 244, emphasis in original) or “she is far stronger [...] she quickly overpowers him” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 236, emphasis in original).

However, it must not be neglected that both female characters, especially Rose, have only limited presence in the play. While Rose is only introduced at the beginning of the play and has some brief appearances in the middle and at the very end of the play, Delphi is the main villain. However, as already mentioned above, both may be considered flat characters as they display stereotypical behavior associated with their parentage that does not change in the course of the play. Since Delphi pretends to be someone else for the most part of the play, a genuine characterization of her proves to be challenging.

5.3.5.2. Scorpius – The Counter Narrative

Scorpius Malfoy represents a particularly interesting character since he proves to be the personification of a counter narrative. He appears to disprove any stereotypical assumptions made about his father Draco Malfoy, the Malfoy family and the House of Slytherin. The following paragraphs will strengthen this assertion by outlining several

examples from the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* that establish why he might actually be considered the opposite of his father.

Before comparing Scorpius to his father Draco Malfoy, it seems noteworthy that, in the course of the play, Scorpius is repeatedly accused of being the son of the dreaded Lord Voldemort. These accusations stem from the fact that his mother appeared to be unable to conceive a child in a natural way. Scorpius himself acknowledges that “[t]he *rumor* is that my parents couldn’t have children. That my father and my grandfather were so desperate for a powerful heir, to prevent the end of the Malfoy line, that they ... that they used a Time-Turner to send my mother back” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 16, emphasis in original). For this reason, his environment appears to not only compare him with his unpopular father Draco Malfoy but to associate him with the most evil and powerful wizard the wizarding world has ever seen, as discernible in the comment, “a Malfoy who may be a Voldemort? Who’s to say you’re not involved in Dark Magic?” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 69). Draco confirms that the “rumors – about my son’s parentage – they don’t seem to go away. The other Hogwarts students tease Scorpius about it relentlessly” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 24), for instance in statements such as “[l]eave him and *Voldemort’s child* to it” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 26, emphasis added), and even Harry Potter once inquires “are you really sure he’s yours Draco?” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 139).

Negative assumptions established about Draco Malfoy seem to continue to exist in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* following the stereotypical depiction of Draco Malfoy as an evil villain who is obsessed with blood purity, hence, ability, social class and his resentment towards the Potters, Weasleys and Grangers. Rose Granger-Weasley, for instance, terminates her friendship with Albus Potter on the grounds of his friendship to Scorpius. This behavior stems from her mother’s underlying aversion towards the Malfoy family, which demeaned her disabled muggle family constantly and influenced her daughter Rose’s conduct towards their descendent Scorpius considerably. Harry Potter also proceeds to exhibit biased attitudes towards the Malfoy family and, thus, their son Scorpius. Prejudices against former Death Eaters, hence, the Malfoys among others, persist among the wizarding community, which can be discerned from sentences such as “Back to being

prejudiced against those with a Dark Mark are we, Potter?” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 63). One scene proves to be particularly revealing:

HARRY. I need you to stay away from Scorpius Malfoy.

ALBUS. What? Scorpius?

HARRY. I don't know how you became friends in the first place, but you did – and now – I need you to –

ALBUS. My best friend? My only friend?

HARRY. He's dangerous.

ALBUS. Scorpius? Dangerous? Have you met him? Dad, if you honestly think he's the son of Voldemort –

HARRY. I don't know what he is, I just know you need to stay away from him [...] I need to keep you safe from it. Safe from him. Safe from Scorpius. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 124-125)

Besides the stigmatization associated with his family name, the label Slytherin proves to be influential as well, since Malfoys are typically affiliated with this particular house in Hogwarts. Similar to his ancestors, Scorpius is sorted into the House of Slytherin, which, according to another student, “makes sense” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 20). The fact that his peers were anticipating this assignment suggests that they rely on the biased knowledge that Malfoys naturally belong to Slytherin and that his ideologies must inevitably be in accordance with those of his father and grandfather. It might be assumed that Scorpius' environment anticipates the same evil and demeaning behavior as well as self-confidence as displayed by his father Draco. These expectations associated with the stereotypical depictions of Voldemort, the Malfoys and the House of Slytherin constitute attitudinal barriers that *disable* Scorpius in the sense that they objectify him, degrade him into a passive position that deprives him of the chance to express his individuality; as a result, he appears unable to establish meaningful friendships besides his only friend Albus Potter since these barriers inhibit his peers from recognizing the real person behind these labels and cause exclusion. This is apparent in descriptions about him such as “*a lonely blond kid – SCORPIUS – in an otherwise empty compartment*” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 14, emphasis in original). However, considering the social model of disability, Scorpius cannot be perceived as disabled as he does not exhibit any signs of impairment with reference to the distinction between ‘able’ wizards and ‘unable’ muggles. As stated in 4.2.3. *Disability*, impairments constitute an essential prerequisite for the attribution of the label ‘disabled’ (Tremain 191).

The very first scene involving Scorpius Malfoy in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, however, deconstructs this proposed picture and refutes stereotypical depictions associated with his relatives and the House of Slytherin as he kindly offers Albus and Rose sweets and a seat in his train compartment. He is, in fact, presented as an amiable, clever, shy and unbiased person who, as Draco confirms, “is a follower [and] not a leader despite everything I’ve tried to instill in him” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 79). His intelligence is highlighted in comments such as “[y]ou are an enormous geek” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 56) or “you know as well as I do, I’ll entirely mess it up if you don’t come with me” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 79) as well as “do I really need to explain to you – uber geek and Potions expert – what Polyjuice does?” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 75).

Those who encounter him unprejudiced and *really* get acquainted with him, most prominently depict him as being kind and good-hearted. The following scene reinforces this conviction:

ALBUS. My dad said – said that you were this dark cloud around me. My dad started to think – and I just knew I had to stay away, and if I didn’t, Dad said he would –

SCORPIUS. Your dad thinks the rumors are true – I am the son of Voldemort?

ALBUS (*nods*). His department are [sic] currently investigating it.

SCORPIUS. Good. Let them. Sometimes – sometimes I find myself thinking – maybe they’re true too.

ALBUS. No. They’re not true. And I’ll tell you why. Because I don’t think Voldemort is capable of having a kind son – and you’re kind, Scorpius. To the depths of your belly, to the tips of your fingers. I truly believe Voldemort – Voldemort couldn’t have a child like you.

Beat. SCORPIUS is moved by this.

SCORPIUS. That’s nice – that’s a nice thing to say.

ALBUS. And it’s something I should have said a long time ago. In fact, you’re probably the best person I know. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 155-156, emphasis in original)

This conversation proves to be particularly interesting as it depicts the strong bond between Albus Potter and Scorpius Malfoy. Their friendship is perceived as exceptional and unanticipated as their parents are presented as archenemies in the novels, which Scorpius verifies upon their first encounter as he states, “our parents – they didn’t get along”, which is clearly an understatement considering the hatred that existed between them (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 15). Unlike his prejudiced father, he proves to be open-minded and delighted to be in Hogwarts and have a Potter as a friend, as stated in a conversation between Scorpius and Albus:

SCORPIUS. Still get a tingle, don't you? When you see it?
And revealed through the tress is HOGWARTS – a splendid mass of bulbous buildings and towers.

From the moment I first heard of it, I was desperate to go. I mean, Dad didn't much like it there but even the way he described it ... From the age of ten I'd check the *Daily Prophet* first thing in the morning – certain some sort of tragedy would have befallen it – certain I wouldn't get to go.

ALBUS. And then you got there and it turned out to be terrible after all.

SCORPIUS. Not for me.

ALBUS looks at his friend, shocked.

All I ever wanted to do was go to Hogwarts and have a mate to get up to mayhem with. Just like Harry Potter. And I got his son. How crazily fortunate is that. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 112-113, emphasis in original)

Moreover, Scorpius proves to be objective and unbiased with regards to the underlying hierarchy within the wizarding community as well as the construction of disability in relation to muggles and squibs. He neither uses his family name to position himself as superior nor displays devaluing behavior, which disproves stereotypical assumptions associated with him in relation to his family name. This is enforced by the fact that he has a crush on Rose Granger-Weasley, whose mother is a muggle born wizard, as illustrated in the following scene:

SCORPIUS. Albus! Oh hello Rose, what do you smell of?

ROSE. What do I *smell* of?

SCORPIUS. No, I meant it as a nice thing. You smell like a mixture of fresh flowers and fresh – bread. [...] I mean, nice bread, good bread, bread ... what's wrong with bread?

ROSE *walks away, shaking her head.* (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 55, emphasis in original)

The creation of an alternative reality caused by Albus' and Scorpius' failed attempt to utilize a time-turner strengthens his unprejudiced attitude towards muggles and muggle born witches and wizards. In this reality, his alter ego is popular and perceived as "a highly valued student", a potential "Head Boy", "a natural leader" and "wonderfully athletic" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 179). His peers respectfully refer to him as "Scorpion King" and admire his talent in Quidditch (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 181, 179). While his amorous attempts towards Rose Granger-Weasley have all failed in his own reality, he proves to be desired in this alternative world. However, he soon discovers that Albus is non-existent in this novel reality since his father died in the Battle of Hogwarts, which allowed Voldemort and his daughter Delphi to rule the wizarding world. His alter ego embodies stereotypes associated with his family

name and the House of Slytherin as he highly values blood purity, which can be discerned from comments such as “[o]ur work together, flushing out the more dilettante students has made this school a safer – *purser* – place” uttered by Dolores Umbridge (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 179, emphasis added) or “we are ready to spill some proper Mudblood guts” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 181). Moreover, his alter ego is involved in torturing muggle born wizards “[i]n the dungeons” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 182) and bullying other students to compile his homework, as illustrated in the following conversation:

CRAIG BOWKER JR. It’s not ready yet. I’m working as fast as I can. But Professor Snape sets so much of it, and writing the essay in two different ways, I mean, I’m not complaining... sorry.

SCORPIUS. Start again. From the beginning. What’s not ready?

CRAIG BOWKER JR. Your potion’s homework. And I’m happy to do it – grateful even – and I know you hate homework and books, and I never let you down, you know that.

SCORPIUS. I hate homework?

CRAIG BOWKER JR. You’re the Scorpion King. Of course you hate homework. What are you doing with *A History of Magic*? I could do that assignment too? (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 187-188, emphasis in original)

His alter ego apparently manifests itself as a stereotypical Malfoy whereas the real Scorpius the reader knows from the play risks his life to restore the reality he knows and to bring back Albus Potter and his father, ensuring that Lord Voldemort is defeated in the Battle of Hogwarts. Considering the fact that he proved to be highly popular and renowned in the alternative reality, this appears to be a selfless deed, which reflects his kindness and unbiased attitude towards muggles and muggle born wizards, as he averts their horrifying faith in the alternative reality.

Scorpius proves to be a counter-narrative to the common belief that all Malfoys are evil, mean and arrogant as he neither despises muggles or muggle born wizards nor Hogwarts, the Potters or Hermione Granger’s daughter Rose. Those who actually know him intimately characterize him by exclusively positive values such as kindness, loyalty and wit. Nonetheless, the labels ‘Malfoy’ and ‘Slytherin’ constitute an obstacle for Scorpius as they inhibit the establishment of meaningful friendships besides his only friend Albus. His environment adopts stereotypical assumptions based on their knowledge about his family and his affiliation with the House of Slytherin while lacking crucial data that would challenge their beliefs.

5.3.5.3. Albus – The Disabled Protagonist

Albus Severus Potter is the son of the famous Harry Potter, who is depicted as the embodiment of an able wizard due to his talent, courage and the fact that he saved the wizarding world from the evil Lord Voldemort. Similar to Scorpius Malfoy above, his family name triggers stereotypes that are assumed to be applicable to the entire Potter family. While this might be true for his siblings, for instance James Potter, who displays a similar fascination for Quidditch as ascertainable by the fact that “his trunk combination is the date he got his first broom” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 155) this does not apply to Albus Potter, who is portrayed as an impaired wizard, a failure in Hogwarts and a burden to the family.

At the beginning of his career in Hogwarts, Albus Potter is compared to his eminent father Harry Potter, who is well-known for his affiliation with the House of Gryffindor. At the welcoming ceremony, several students are enthusiastic and impressed by Albus’ presence and do not hesitate to openly compare him to his father:

Initially we’re inside Hogwarts, in the Great Hall, and everyone is dancing around ALBUS.

POLLY CHAPMAN. Albus Potter.

KARL JENKINS. A Potter. In our year.

YANN FREDERICKS. He’s got his hair. He’s got hair just like him. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 19, emphasis in original)

Once he is sorted into the House of Slytherin, however, the shock among the students as well as Albus himself was deeply felt as indicated by the stage directions: “*There’s a silence. A perfect, profound silence. One that sits low, twists a bit and has damage within it*” (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 21, emphasis in original). Resulting from stereotypical depictions such as ‘Potters belong to Gryffindor’, the assignment of Albus into the House of Slytherin is unexpected and perceived as strange and erroneous. It triggers the question why Albus ‘failed’ to be sorted into Gryffindor and engenders presumptions that he might be inept and or even evil considering the fact that he was sorted into ‘the house of the snake’. Reactions by his peers enforce this perception:

POLLY CHAPMAN. Slytherin?

CRAIG BOWKER JR. Woah! A Potter? In Slytherin.

ALBUS *looks out, unsure*. [...]

YANN FREDERICKS. I suppose his hair isn’t that similar.

ROSE. Albus? But this is wrong, Albus. This is not how it’s supposed to be. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 21, emphasis in original).

The last comment uttered by Rose enforces the underlying stereotype that ‘all Potters belong to Gryffindor’ as opposed to ‘all Malfoys belong to Slytherin’. From this moment onwards, it seems that the surname Potter as well as the label Slytherin constitute a burden for Albus Potter, who’s prospective career is corrupted by the attitudinal barriers associated with them as well as his relationship to his father and peers. Scorpius strengthens the common narrative that Potters are naturally associated with the house of Gryffindor once Albus’ younger sister Lily Potter attends the school and is sorted into the house typically associated with her surname:

[T]he SORTING HAT is center stage and we’re back in the Great Hall.

SORTING HAT. Are you afraid of what you’ll hear?

Afraid I’ll speak the name you fear?

Not Slytherin! Not Gryffindor!

Not Hufflepuff! Not Ravenclaw!

Don’t worry, child, I know my job,

You’ll learn to laugh, if first you sob.

Lily Potter. GRYFFINDOR!

LILY. Yes!

ALBUS. Great.

SCORPIUS. Did you really think she’d come to us? Potters don’t belong in Slytherin.

ALBUS. This one does.

As he tries to melt into the background, the other students laugh.

He looks up at them all.

I didn’t choose, you know what? I didn’t choose to be his son. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 29).

In lessons at Hogwarts, Albus fails to meet the expectations of his peers triggered by the stereotypical depiction associated with his father as well since he is unable to fly whereas Harry Potter is famous for his talent on the broomstick; he was even described as “a natural” by his teachers since his “broom jumped into his hand at once” during his first flying lesson (Rowling, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 162, 156). Albus, however, fails to command his broom and is teased by his colleagues as a result:

Brooms sail up, including SCORPIUS’s. Only ALBUS is left with his broom on the floor. [...]

ALBUS. Up. UP. UP.

His broom doesn’t move. Not even a millimeter. He stares at it with disbelieving desperation. There’s giggling from the rest of the class.

POLLY CHAPMAN. Oh Merlin’s beard, how humiliating! He really isn’t like his father at all is he?

KARL JENKINS. Albus Potter, the Slytherin Squib. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 22, emphasis in original)
Polly Chapman's comment "He really isn't like his father at all is he?" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 22) enforces a notion of failure and abnormality, as Albus appears unable to live up to his family name and the expectations associated with it. Subsequently, this inability to comply with the stereotype results in his alienation and exclusion from his peer group in school. This is underlined by Karl Jenkins' demeaning comment in the following scene:

ALBUS. And now we add – is it horn of Bicorn?

KARL JENKINS. Leave him and Voldemort's child to it, I say.

The potion explodes loudly.

SCORPIUS. Okay. What's the counter-ingredient? What do we need to change?

ALBUS. Everything. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 26, emphasis in original)

The scene depicting the flying lesson proves to be particularly noteworthy, as it comprises two significant labels that can be perceived as disabling with regards to Albus Potter, 'the House of Slytherin' and the term 'squib'; they influence his peers' behavior towards him and his own perception of himself, which can be deduced from the statement "Maybe that's my Slytherin side. Maybe that's what the Sorting Hat saw in me" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 328) and the fact that, at the beginning of the play, he already expressed the narrative that "Slytherin is the house of the snake, of Dark Magic... It's not a house of brave wizards" himself, which might continue to inform his perception (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 9).

It might be argued that the unsuccessful attempt to fly on a broomstick revealed a functional impairment that can be, from a medical perspective, located in Albus' body. Enforced by flash-forwards employed in the play, Albus' *inability* to effectively perform magic is illustrated various times, which results in his comparison to squibs and his alienation from his father as well as his peers with the exception of Scorpius Malfoy. While he formerly belonged to the ingroup of popular, able witches and wizards, he is subsequently socially isolated and positioned in the peripheral outgroup resulting from his inability and the established attitudinal barriers associated with the assigned labels. With reference to binary oppositions, he transitions from able to disabled, from normal to abnormal, from functional to dysfunctional, from complete to deficient. He is perceived as an impaired, flawed and abortive wizard, which is strengthened by the comparison to his able, functional and successful

father. Associations with muggles or so-called no-majs and can't-spells are evoked as he is associated with the stigmatized label 'squib', which refers to a wizard born muggle unable to conjure. Commonly, squibs are perceived as a burden to the family (see 5.3.4.2. *Master Narrative: 'Squibs are a Burden to the Family'*). On top of that, he is stigmatized by his affiliation with the House of Slytherin. The phrase "Slytherin squib" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 22), however, proves to be particularly interesting as these two terms are actually mutually exclusive. The fact that Slytherins are commonly associated with an obsession for pure-blooded witches and wizards (see 5.3.4.3. *Master Narrative: 'All Slytherins Are Evil'*) and the reference of Albus as a 'squib' infers that he does neither belongs to Slytherin nor to Hogwarts. He is depicted as an outsider struggling to prove himself and his abilities. In his environment, several characters discriminate him through derogative language use as illustrated in the following examples:

JAMES. Slythering Slytherin, stop with your dithering. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 23)

or

POLLY CHAPMAN. Albus Potter. An irrelevance. Even portraits turn the other way when he comes up the stairs. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 26)

as well as

DELPHI (*laughing*). What. What on earth do you think you can do? A wizardwide disappointment? A sore on your family name? A spare? (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 246, emphasis in original).

Once Albus' impairment is revealed and the labels reiterated, the relationship to his father is complicated by attitudinal barriers. The protagonist Albus seems to alienate himself from his family as the repeated comparisons to Harry expressed by his peers engender a sense of shame and failure in Albus Potter. He commences to depict himself as a "loser" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 157) and his best friend, Scorpius, confirms his belief by stating, "We're not good at this stuff. We'll get it wrong." (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 152). While he asked his parents to send him letters several times a week at the beginning of his first year in Hogwarts, he now distances himself from his father to prevent further comparison with him. In the play, several scenes are included that depict Albus' discomfort in Harry's presence, for instance:

ALBUS. I'm just asking you Dad if you'll – if you'll just stand a little away from me.

HARRY (*amused*). Second-years don't like to be seen with their dads is that it?

An OVER-ATTENTIVE WIZARD begins to circle them.

ALBUS. No. It's just – you're *you* and – and I'm me and –

HARRY. It's just people looking okay? People look. And they're looking at me, not you.

The OVER-ATTENTIVE WIZARD proffers something for HARRY to sign – he signs it.

ALBUS. At Harry Potter and his disappointing son.

HARRY. What does that mean?

ALBUS. At Harry Potter and his Slytherin son. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 23, emphasis in original),

or

ALBUS. You didn't need to bring me to the station, Dad.

ALBUS picks up his case and makes hard away.

HARRY. But I *wanted* to be here...

But ALBUS is gone. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 24, emphasis in original)

Ultimately, it appears that the label 'Slytherin' has developed into a significant burden upon the Potter family, especially on Harry Potter who ceases to understand his own son. Although Harry claims that there is nothing wrong with being in Slytherin in the second scene of act one, his negative attitudes must not be ignored as he himself once argued that "[h]e was so relieved to have been chosen [for Gryffindor] and not put in Slytherin" (Rowling, *Philosopher' Stone* 130). The master narrative that Slytherins are inevitably evil might have been disproved by Severus Snape's selfless work against Voldemort, however, Harry Potter's perception towards the House of Slytherin continues to be prejudiced as he most commonly associates it with Draco Malfoy, his archenemy. Unexpectedly, his son Albus becomes the best friend of his nemesis' son. Harry appears to be in denial and unable to see his son clearly as he cannot remove the attitudinal barriers he has established in his life, which have also been enforced by the wizarding community in general. Instead of accepting his son being in Slytherin and best friends with Scorpius Malfoy, he proposes that Albus should become acquainted with other peers in school:

HARRY. Are the other kids being unkind? Is that it? Maybe if you tried making a few more friends – without Hermione and Ron I wouldn't have survived at all.

ALBUS. But I don't need a Ron and Hermione – I've – I've got a friend, Scorpius, and I know you don't like him but he's all I need. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 24).

The complicated relationship with his father as well as with his peers, who continue to discriminate him, have clearly affected the protagonist, as his "*eyes become darker, his face grows more sallow. He's still an attractive boy, but he's trying not to admit it*" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 27, emphasis in original). It appears that Albus' relationship with his father is strongly compromised by the stigmatized label of

Slytherin as well as his inability to properly conjure, which can be inferred from the following scene:

HARRY. Al-Albus. I've been exchanging owls with Professor McGonagall – she says you're isolating yourself – you're uncooperative in lessons – you're surly – you're –

ALBUS. So what would you like me to do? Magic myself popular? Conjure myself into a new house? Transfigure myself into a better student? Just cast a spell, Dad, and change me into what you want me to be, okay? It'll work better for both of us. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 28)

Albus clearly ascribes their problems to the fact that he was sorted into Slytherin since he is aware of the biased attitude his father displays towards the House of Slytherin.

Attempts to reconnect with his son fail as they all relate to Hogwarts, a school which Albus' commenced to despise since it marked the beginning of his impairment, exclusion from his peers as well as alienation from his father, which can be deduced from his statement that "it turned out to be terrible after all" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 112). When Harry tries to please Albus with the permission form for Hogsmeade, Albus just "*screws up the paper*" and sets it on fire (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 27, emphasis in original). In the following scene, their complex relationship reaches its climax as Harry loses his temper after he repeatedly fails to reach his son emotionally:

HARRY. Do you want a hand? I always loved packing. It meant I was leaving Privet Drive and going back to Hogwarts. Which was... well, I know you don't love it but...

ALBUS. For you, it's the greatest place on earth. I know. The poor orphan, bullied by his Uncle and Aunt Dursley –

HARRY. Albus, please – can we just –

ALBUS. – traumatized by his cousin Dudley, saved by Hogwarts. I know it all, Dad. Blah blah blah.

HARRY. I'm not going to rise to your bait, Albus Potter.

ALBUS. The poor orphan who went on to save us all – so may I say – on behalf of wizarding kind. How grateful we are for your heroism. Should we bow now or will a curtsy do?

HARRY. Albus, please – you know, I've never wanted gratitude.

ALBUS. But right now I'm overflowing with it – it must be the kind of gift of this mouldy blanket that did it ...

HARRY. Mouldy blanket?

ALBUS. What did you think would happen? We hug. I'd tell you I always loved you. What? What?

HARRY (*finally losing his temper*). You know what? I'm done being made responsible for your unhappiness. At least you've got a dad. Because I didn't, okay?

ALBUS. And you think that was unlucky? I don't.

HARRY. You wish me dead?

ALBUS. No! I just wish you weren't my dad.

HARRY (*seeing red*). Well, there are times I wish you weren't my son.

There's a silence. ALBUS nods. Pause. HARRY realizes what he's said.

No, I didn't mean that...

ALBUS. Yes. You did.

HARRY. Albus, you just know how to get under my skin...

ALBUS. You meant it, Dad. And, honestly, I don't blame you. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 43-44, emphasis in original)

After Scorpius and Albus fail in their first attempt to alter the past with the use of a time-turner and consequently cause an alternative reality, Harry's son realizes that the label Slytherin did not constitute the sole problem of their relationship since when he "was suddenly in Gryffindor house, nothing was better" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 219). It might be inferred that, although the stigmatized label *did* impact their complicated relationship, especially with regard's to Harry's attitude towards Scorpius, Albus' corporeality, which is commonly associated with the second stigmatized label 'squib', might actually constitute a more significant problem at it is perceived as a deviation from the norm in a society that favors ability over disability. With reference to the realist theory of disability, Albus is not merely disabled by the barriers associated with his impairment that prevent him from inclusion, especially attitudinal barriers stemming from his comparison to a squib and the non-adherence of stereotypes associated with his parents, but by his functional inability to conjure which triggered these disabling barriers and disabled him in everyday life in the wizarding community.

Albus proves to be disabled by his social loneliness, "the absence of an acceptable social network" as well but more importantly by his emotional loneliness relating to the "absence of an attachment figure" and "someone to turn to" in his life (Dahlberg and McKee 504, qtd. in McDonald et al. 3). Although Scorpius proves to be a valuable friend, Albus is essentially hurt by his father's ignorance and denial of his true character. Even Draco Malfoy recognizes his injured feelings and expresses his concern towards Harry:

DRACO. Tom Riddle didn't emerge from his dark place. And so Tom Riddle became Lord Voldemort. Maybe the black cloud Bane saw was Albus's loneliness. His pain. His hatred. Don't lose the boy. You'll regret it. And

so will he. Because he needs you, and Scorpius, whether or not he now knows it" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 147)

Several instances in the play propose that Harry Potter fails to see his son clearly, for example his conversation with Albus Dumbledore's painting at Hogwarts:

DUMBLEDORE. You're supposed to teach him how to meet life.

HARRY. How? He won't listen.

DUMBLEDORE. Perhaps he's waiting for you to see him clearly. (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 121)

Lily Potter expresses the same concern towards Harry when she argues that her son "wants to see the real you" and that he "can be honest with him" (Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne 51). By that, Dumbledore and Lily suggest that Harry neglected his son's true character and nature, which he failed to see as a result of prejudiced stereotypes associated with Draco Malfoy, hence, also Scorpius Malfoy; the stigmatized labels Slytherin and squib additionally influenced their conduct towards each other. At the end of the play, Delphi refers to Albus as "[t]he unseen child", which seems applicable considering the fact that Harry is unable to look beyond the stereotypical assumptions and stigmatized labels that constitute substantial barriers in Albus' life.

In conclusion, it might be argued that Albus Potter proves to be an impaired wizard in the sense that he is functionally unable to conjure as successfully as anticipated by the normative society of witches and wizards, which results in the stigmatization of the protagonist as 'squib'. In addition to this essentially devaluing label, Albus Potter is further assigned to the House of Slytherin, which ultimately disconfirms the stereotypical depiction associated with the surname Potter. As a result, disabling attitudinal barriers are established by his peers and his father, who are unaware of his true nature. This stems from deauthorization as his environment fails to see beyond the label 'Slytherin squib' and objectifies him accordingly. From the perspective of a realist model of disability, both, his functional impairment to conjure properly, hence, to conform to the norm, as well as the negative value judgments associated with the affiliation with the House of Slytherin and his failure to conform to stereotypical depictions of the Potters, prove to disable the impaired protagonist Albus Potter.

6. CONCLUSION

This diploma thesis tried to present an overview of the most relevant topics associated with disability studies, such as the distinction between the terms impairment and disability that constitutes a substantial aspect in addressing discriminative, disabling behavior. Besides the religious and medical model of disability, the social model proved to be highly informative with respect to realist theory, various forms of disabling barriers and the issues of loneliness and stress commonly faced by people living with disabilities. Conceptions of 'normality' and 'normal' bodies have been addressed and discussed in relation to master narratives that assume that disabilities are inevitably linked to experiences of tragedy, burden and denial. The portrayal of disability in literature highlights these varying conceptions of disability in different periods of time and provides future perspectives for authors addressing the topic of disability. Nevertheless, a number of instructive issues related to disability such as activism and an historical perspective examining freak shows, medical theaters, the study of teratology, the pseudo-science eugenics and racial hygiene could not be approached due to the limitations of this diploma thesis. In relation to stereotypes and Othering, relevant theories have been presented that attempt to outline the establishment of socio-political constructs that inform processes of group formation and are commonly employed as justification for the supremacy of powerful institutions.

The analysis conducted in this diploma thesis approached relevant topics presented in the first novel of the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, which served as a framework for the treatment of the hypothesis that Albus Potter, the main character in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, is disabled on the basis of cultural constructs within the wizarding community such as the stereotypical depiction of his father as well as the stigmatized labels 'squib' and 'Slytherin' which engender attitudinal barriers. In order to arrive at valid results, the relationship between muggles and wizards, the constructed hierarchies within the wizarding community as well as stereotypes associated with the main characters of the Harry Potter cycle have been addressed. Conceptions of disability and impairment in relation to the 'normal' body of a witch or a wizard have been outlined. Furthermore, powerful institutions exerting influence on the perception of 'disabled' individuals and the establishment of barriers have been approached. The consideration of

discriminative language use and binary oppositions as well as prevalent master narratives proved to be essential for the analysis of the play's main characters.

This diploma thesis proved that socio-political constructs enforced through powerful institutions such as the Ministry of Magic and Hogwarts, the School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, significantly influence behavior within the wizarding community as they establish disabling barriers. The objectification of 'unable' muggles results in prejudiced perceptions of inferiority that are commonly employed in the justification of a strict social hierarchy within the magical world, in which pure-bloods position themselves at the center of society whereas muggle born wizards and witches as well as squibs are depicted as deficient and pathological. In accordance with the medical model of disability, individuals unable to conjure are perceived as functionally impaired. Additionally, the establishment of physical and attitudinal barriers constitutes a decisive disabling factor in the lives of the constructed outgroup. The consideration of the master narratives 'squibs are a burden to the family' and 'all Slytherins are evil' proved to be especially fruitful as the impaired Albus Potter is referred to as 'Slytherin squib' in the play. These labels and related attitudinal barriers, stereotypical assumptions made about his 'able' father and his actual corporeal impairment proved to disable Albus Potter.

7. GERMAN ABSTRACT

Die Disability Studies sind ein recht junges Forschungsfeld, welches in Großbritannien und den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika entstand und sich unter anderem mit der Konzeption von Normalität und ‚normalen‘ Körpern beschäftigt, die erheblichen Einfluss auf das Verständnis von Behinderung ausüben. Als besonders relevant für die Betrachtung von Behinderung erwies sich das sogenannte ‚soziale Modell‘, welches durch die Trennung der Begriffe ‚Behinderung‘ und ‚Beeinträchtigung‘ eine neue Perspektive ermöglichte und auf lebensweltliche, strukturelle und sozio-politische Barrieren hinwies, welche Menschen mit Behinderungen diskriminieren und an der Teilnahme am sozialen Alltagsleben hindern. Von diesem Blickwinkel aus betrachtet ist Behinderung nicht im individuellen Körper sondern in der Gesellschaft verankert.

Die Betrachtung von Stereotypen und Othering Prozessen erweist sich in diesem Zusammenhang als aufschlussreich für die Untersuchung von Disablism. Die Hervorbringungen von Stereotypen trägt zur Gruppenformierung bei, welche unter anderem auf Werturteilen und wahrnehmbaren Differenzen basiert und die ‚angesehenere‘, einflussreichere Gruppe als grundsätzlich und von Natur aus überlegen darstellt. ‚Untergeordnete‘ Gruppen erfahren in Othering-Prozessen eine Objektifizierung, welche letztendlich in diskriminierenden Praktiken resultiert.

Die in dieser Diplomarbeit enthaltene Analyse konzentriert sich auf den Roman *Harry Potter und der Stein der Weisen* sowie auf das Theaterstück *Harry Potter und das verwunschene Kind Teil I & II*. Der Roman dient hierbei als Analyserahmen, da er den Leser/die Leserin in die Welt der Zauberer einführt und für die Analyse grundlegende Begriffe wie ‚Muggel‘, ‚Squib‘, ‚Schlammblut‘, ‚Halbblut‘, sowie ‚Reinblütige‘ erläutert. Die Analyse des Theaterstücks versucht entmachtende, objektifizierende und diskriminierende Praktiken innerhalb der Gesellschaft der Zauberer festzustellen, welche den Protagonisten Albus Potter im Theaterstück an der aktiven Teilnahme am Schulalltag sowie im familiären Bereich hindern. Hierbei erwiesen sich, neben der funktionalen Beeinträchtigung des Zauberers, vor allem stereotype Darstellungen und Narrative als ausschlaggebend.

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