

**Summary and brief outline: Remembering and Expecting as Discursive Practices of Memory Constructions: An Ethnographic Study of the Positioning of Subjects in Practices of Differentiation in the Classroom (Mark Schäffer-Trencsényi, Göttingen University Press, 2024)**

**Bibliographic information:**

Schäffer-Trencsényi, Mark (2024): Diskursive Praktiken des Erinnerns und Erwartens. Eine ethnographische Studie zu Subjektpositionierungen in unterrichtlichen Differenzierungspraktiken. Erziehungswissenschaftliche Studien, Band 16. Göttingen: Universitätsverlag.

**Summary**

Following Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, the ethnographic study uses a subject-theoretical perspective to ask how individual students are made into certain students over time during so-called practices of 'getting to know each other' in new fifth-grade classes at secondary schools in Germany. The main focus is on how and from when they and their behaviour are remembered during the first days in the new class and how expectations of the students are constructed. Thus, the core of this educational science study is to ethnographically reconstruct the powerful processes in the execution of the normative-pedagogical differentiation practices of 'getting to know each other' and their effects in the sense of ambivalent regulation and governance of students for their present and future in the new class.

This dissertation builds on existing findings and theoretical-methodological perspectives of ethnographic difference research, which, however, have not yet systematically considered *doing differences* and *doing temporality* together. The study therefore has innovative potential, as existing approaches to *doing differences* and a sociologically derived *doing temporality* following Norbert Elias are combined in order to work out how knowledge about individual students is powerfully produced in discursive practices of remembering and expecting and how they can then be positioned as specific subjects.

In this way, over the course of the classroom practices, changes in the modes of creating differentiation in, for example, practices of distributing name badges or introducing teachers and students to each other come into view. By comparing the practices at different points in time, it became clear how differentiations with specific functions are created in classroom practices. The differentiations can be pedagogically legitimised by the teachers involved, e.g. in the sense of 'getting to know each other', but show the power of these practices in regulating and governing individual students (and in parts the class as a whole), which can lead to individuals finding themselves in contested and difficult positions. The study discusses how, in differentiating modes of remembering and expecting, differentiations are created along desired and undesired behaviours and how individual students are

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positioned precariously and ambivalently in parts. In this way, the author points to the powerful and interrelated construction of difference, subject and temporality as a contingent process in the execution of the pedagogical agenda.

The following three core results show how and from when which memories and expectations of certain students and their behaviour can first be produced via differentiation and how these are further processed and change over time: Firstly, the empirical reconstructions are used to illustrate how remembering and expecting function as discursive practices of differentiation themselves and how temporal constructions take place as differentiations. Secondly, a collective labelling practice primarily used among teachers in the sense of abbreviation strategies of individuals as certain undesirably behaving students is discussed. Thirdly, the functionality of the recursiveness of temporal constructions in remembering and expecting in the present is shown, which is significant for sometimes precarious situations students find themselves in the present and future.

In addition to the empirical findings and the theoretical-methodological perspectives, this work also offers a profound empirical insight into the processes of social construction of knowledge about individual students in classroom practices in the first weeks of new fifth grades, which are often hidden from those involved in teaching. Thus, the (own) teacher's actions in the classroom as well as the resulting powerful effects and the resulting consequences for individual students for their present and future can become the subject of critical reflection.

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**Brief outline**

**Introduction**

- 1 Subject, difference and time in ethnographic school and classroom research**
  - 1.1 Subject positioning in practices of performance and assessment
  - 1.2 Marginalising effects of classroom practices
  - 1.3 Asymmetrical power relations through constructions of (non-)ability
  - 1.4 Ethnographic classroom research and temporality
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- 2 Subject positioning through differentiations as a temporal-relative process**
  - 2.1 Differentiation practices as a place of actualisation of the subject
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  - 2.4 Expected outcome of the theoretical-methodological considerations
  
- 3 Reflection on the ethnographic research process**
  - 3.1 Subjective discovery and understanding as an open process
  - 3.2 Description of my approach in terms of ethnography
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- 4 'Getting to know each other' as practices of difference and knowledge production**
  - 4.1 Orientation for the new classroom and school: the production of memories
  - 4.2 Practices of establishing expectations of individuals and the class
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- 5 Discursive practices of marking and regulating undesirable/unwanted behaviour**
  - 5.1 Praising ease of care as a marker of desired behaviour
  - 5.2 Marking undesirable behaviour – expecting desirable behaviour
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  - 5.4 Interim conclusion
  
- 6 Discursive practices of remembering and expecting undesired/desired behaviour**
  - 6.1 Practices of initial assessment and judgement
  - 6.2 Making judgements about undesirable behaviour by creating knowledge fictions
  - 6.3 Placing students in relation to undesirable behaviour
  - 6.4 Interim conclusion
  
- 7 Conclusion: Doing Differences through Doing Temporality**
  - 7.1 Temporal shifts in differentiation
  - 7.2 Shortcut strategies during the processing of undesirable behaviour
  - 7.3 Remembering and expecting as recursive differentiation practices
  - 7.4 Limitations of the study and connections to (ethnographic) classroom research
  - 7.5 Theoretical-methodological reflection on the research process

**Bibliography and list of sources**