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Titel of the dissertation: Attitudes Toward Disability in the Context of a Voluntary Social Year. Theoretical and Empirical Analyses from an Educational Science Perspective.

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Abstract: The goal of this dissertation project is to gain insights into a field that has yet to be empirically explored in German-language educational research: young adults' subjective conceptions of disability and their attitudes toward disability at the beginning and end of their Voluntary Social Year (FSJ).

In paper 1 of this cumulative dissertation, a systematic literature review is used to conduct a theoretical analysis of how disability is conceptualized in (education-related) attitude research.

The analysis reveals that, in the relevant standardized measurement instruments, disability is predominantly operationalized as an individual, deficit-based, and stable characteristic. Social contexts and complex interactions are not taken into account.

The data for the empirical analyses come from the project "*Attitudes of FSJ Participants Toward Disability and Inclusion*" (EFBI). The first empirical research question is addressed in paper 2: Using qualitative content analysis, the study examines how FSJ participants subjectively define the term "disability" and to what extent they themselves perceive changes in their attitudes (n = 255). The results indicate that the perception of disability as a stable, negatively connoted personal characteristic dominates both at the beginning and at the end of the FSJ. However, other aspects that more strongly reflect current discourses on the complexity and context-dependence of the phenomenon are also addressed. Furthermore, while there are hardly any visible changes over the course of the year in the frequency with which various aspects of the definition of disability are mentioned, the majority of the volunteers themselves report that their attitudes have changed.

Paper 3 addresses the second empirical research question: Changes in the attitudinal aspects "perception of people with disabilities as an asset" and "perception of equality between people with and without disabilities" are quantitatively analyzed by evaluating data from a standardized questionnaire (n = 538) using latent growth curve models. The results show no significant changes in attitudes over the course of the year. However, two groups can be identified that differ in the level of their attitudes as well as in various person- and context-related factors. It is particularly revealing that those who perceive people with disabilities more strongly as equals and as an asset not only rate their contact with people with disabilities more positively but also volunteer more frequently in educational institutions where people with disabilities are the target group. In addition, they engage more frequently with disability-related topics in educational seminars.

Taken together, the empirical analyses reveal a multifaceted picture of young volunteers' attitudes toward disability. Neither the qualitative nor the quantitative analyses can objectively demonstrate changes in attitudes, which contradicts the volunteers' self-perception. This has implications for the theoretical understanding of attitude changes—particularly regarding the relationship between objectively measurable and subjectively perceived attitude changes—and provides concrete starting points for further research on the conditions and possibilities for attitude changes. Furthermore, the findings have practical implications for the design and support of volunteer activities: Completing a FSJ does not appear to automatically lead to objectively measurable changes in attitudes. However, certain work experiences and aspects of

educational support are associated with more positive attitudes, suggesting that targeted interventions in these areas may be effective in fostering changes in attitudes.