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The Stigma of Stress and the Absence of Agency¹

Zusammenfassung: Seit mehr als 15 Jahren ist Stress ein zentrales Thema und Motiv innerhalb der dänischen Diskurse zum Verhältnis von Arbeit und Leben. Täglich melden sich bis zu 35.000 Beschäftigte aufgrund von stressbedingten Symptomen am Arbeitsplatz krank. Darüber hinaus wird geschätzt, dass stressbedingte Ausfälle und Behandlungen die dänische Gesellschaft ca. 1,9 Mrd. Euro jährlich kosten. Stress ist insofern eine ernste Bedrohung sowohl für die körperliche als auch für die geistige Gesundheit der Einzelnen auf der einen, sowie für das allgemeine Wohl der Bevölkerung auf der anderen Seite. Auffällig an den untersuchten Stress-Diskursen ist die weitgehende Abwesenheit von Handlungsmacht und/oder konkreten Handlungsempfehlungen zur Bewältigung von arbeitsbedingtem Stress innerhalb der Phänomenkonstitution dieser Diskurse. Der folgende Artikel untersucht die Formierung der dominanten dänischen Stress-Diskurse, die sich durch eine Stigmatisierung von stressbedingter Arbeitsunfähigkeit bei gleichzeitiger Ausblendung von Handlungsmacht bzw. -optionen auszeichnen anhand einer Analyse dänischer Management- und Führungszeitschriften.

Schlagwörter: Stress, Stigma, Agens, SKAD, Foucault, Globalisierung, Lebenslanges Lernen.

Summary: For more than 15 years, stress has set the agenda in the Danish work-life discourses. Every day 35,000 employees are reportedly absent from work due to stress-related illnesses, and stress is estimated to cost the Danish society approx. 1,9 billion Euro per year. Stress is a serious threat to both physical and mental health as well as to the general well-being of the population. Compared to other discourses, the discourse on stress is characterized by a notable lack of agency or policies for how to act or, in this case, ways to deal with stress. This article describes how a substantial discourse on stress in Danish journals on leadership and management and in newspapers over a decade has contributed to creating an intricate stress stigma and an absence of agency.

Keywords: Stress, Stigma, Agency, SKAD, Foucault, Globalization, Life-long Learning.

Stress Research and Stress Policy in Europe, 1981–2014

Work-related stress, burnout, and depression are some of the most prevalent and severe challenges facing Western societies, and they have been so for more than three decades. In 2000, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)² stated the following in their report »Research on Work-Related Stress«:

- 1 The authors of this article would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for helpful comments.
- 2 EU-OSHA is the European Union information agency for occupational safety and health. EU-OSHA's mission is to »develop, gather and provide reliable and relevant information, analysis and tools to advance knowledge, raise awareness and exchange occupational safety and health information« (<https://osha.europa.eu/en/about-eu-osha/what-we-do/mission-and-vision>).

»It is clear that stress-related ill-health is a major cause for concern in terms of its impact on both individuals' lives and the productivity of organizations and countries. [...] even within a life perspective, work-related stress is a significant problem and represents a major challenge to occupational health in Europe.« (EU-OSHA 2000, S. 10)

According to EU-OSHA (2000), stress is one of the most prevalent causes of work-related diseases, second only to musculoskeletal complaints (S. 27) or loud noise (S. 29). To substantiate the scope of the problem, the report refers to surveys going as far back as 1981, giving evidence that stress is not a new problem, but has been a reason for concern for more than three decades in Europe and the United States. The »National Survey of the Changing Workforce« (NSCW) conducted in the US in 1997 showed that »about one quarter (23.7% of men and 28.9% of women) reported feeling burned out or stressed by work often or very often« (Jacobs/Gerson 2004, S. 86).

In 2002, EU-OSHA stated: »In the European Union, work-related stress (WRS) is the second most common work-related health problem, after back pain, affecting 28% of EU workers« (EU-OSHA 2002, S. 1). The same year the European Commission (2002) released a report in which they wrote the following:

»It is a known fact today that »emerging« illnesses such as stress, depression, anxiety, [...] are responsible for 18% of all problems associated with health at work, with a quarter of them resulting in two weeks or more absence from work.« (EU-OSHA 2002, S. 8)

The European Commission proposes in the report that stress-related complaints and illnesses are integrated into the employment guidelines for 2003 (EU-OSHA 2002, S. 14), thereby highlighting the level of importance the Commission gives to this particular health and safety problem.

Nevertheless, close to ten years later the situation seems to have worsened. In a communication staff working paper from 2011, the Commission notes that »stress is one of a group of so-called psychosocial risks that are an increasing occupational health concern,« adding that »national surveys (where they exist) indicate that over the last 10 years, work-related stress levels have increased in six Member States (Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Austria, Slovakia, Finland), remained stable in two (Netherlands, UK) and fallen in one (Sweden)« (The European Commission 2011, S. 5 f.). In October 2014, the director of EU-OSHA, Dr. Christa Sedlatschek, said the following in a press release:

»This is an issue, which can have enormous costs for both the health of employees and of businesses. With work-related stress being the second most frequently reported health problem in Europe and with costs to businesses of mental health disorders estimated at around 240 billion euros per year³, this is something that we simply cannot afford to ignore.« (EU-OSHA 2014)

3 The total number of citizens in EU's 27 member states was by January 1st, 2015 (provi-

In various reports (e.g., EU-OSHA 2014a, 2007), the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work points to »the general acceleration of the pace of life, contributing to work intensification, constant time pressure, multitasking, and the need to learn new things just to maintain the status quo« (EU-OSHA 2014a, S. 4), in addition to »technical and organizational changes, as well as [...] the phenomenon of globalization« (EU-OSHA 2007, S. 4) as important conditions affecting the working life.

As a discourse, globalization has long defined the axioms necessary to it and passed the *threshold of formalization* (Foucault 1969, S. 206). Globalization and ›the nature‹ of it is an unquestionable phenomenon, and the consequences and ramifications are equally unavoidable and inevitable. As the U.S. Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat said in a 1999 speech, it is »an inevitable element of our lives. We cannot stop it any more than we can stop the waves from crashing on the shore« (Fairclough 2009, S. 324).

Globalization is a crucial driver behind changes in technology, management and organization, pace, intensification, time pressure, and demand for lifelong learning, to which the individual worker either accommodates or succumbs, adapts, or perishes (Mølholm 2013, S. 247, 334 ff.). It seems that those who are not willing to adapt to the changing demands and expectations are met with an expectation to ›wake up and face the music‹ and develop themselves both professionally and personally if they are to keep a position in the labor force (The Week-letter A4⁴ 2004, vol. 40, S. 19). Globalization puts a constant pressure on companies, employers, and employees, who are constantly looking for new ways to generate ideas through creativity and innovation (Monday Morning 2005, vol. 30, S. 22), further amplifying the need for each individual worker to constantly search for new and probably also unknown potential and resources, which can not only benefit the company but also the individual and his team.

In short, globalization has put the individual employee and employer at the center of attention. When handled and managed well, these changes represent a positive chance for development. However, when poorly managed, they »may increase psychosocial risks and result in negative health and safety outcomes« (EU-OSHA 2014a, S. 4).

A large Danish study from 2013 (Mølholm 2013) came to a similar conclusion. In the wake of new types of management and organization, new norms such as flexibility, enterprise, lifelong learning, personal development, job commitment, job dedication, positive thinking, and constant availability have followed. One of the consequences is that, for

sional and estimated) nearly 504 million (Eurostat 2015). At the same time, the number of residents in Denmark approximately 5,7 million. Measured by the number of citizens in Europe, mental health disorders cost businesses €476 per citizen per year. The Danish population being 1.123% of the total population in the EU, mental health disorders cost Danish businesses (assuming that the costs in Europe are equally divided) 2,7 billion €/20,1 billion DKK per year. In a 2014 report by EU-OSHA, the total cost to Europe at the societal level »from work-related depression was estimated to be €617 billion annually. The total was made up of costs to employers resulting from absenteeism and presenteeism (€272 billion), loss of productivity (€242 billion), health care costs of €63 billion and social welfare costs in the form of disability benefit payments (€39 billion). [...] Work-related stress has been established as an important determinant of depressive disorders« (EU-OSHA 2014a, S. 7, 18).

4 All translation of Danish texts to English has been done by the authors.

many people, the boundaries between work, family, and leisure time have deteriorated and the work-life balance tipped (ebd., S. 389 ff.), causing an increase in the number of people who develop work-related, psychological conditions.

As the examples above demonstrate, it is well documented that work-related stress is an increasing problem to a rising number of people in the workforce. This is by no means »new news«. While new principles of management and organization have resulted in better, more meaningful, and dignified working conditions to many people, allowing them flexibility, influence on their job and the tasks they perform, responsibility, and continuous, lifelong learning and development, the same changes have resulted in an increased intensity of work (Jacobs/Gerson 2004, S. 80), in work spilling over into the other spheres of life, and in raising expectations and demands to such a degree that more and more people succumb to the pressure and are diagnosed with stress, burnout, and depression. This is »old news« as well. That the problem is immanent, and has been so for several decades, is not something new either; it has been accentuated repeatedly, not only by research, but also by political institutions, the labor market, health care organizations, work-environment organizations, among others, leading to declarations stating that it is time to take action in order to contain and eliminate the problem. Yet, as some of the latest reports show, the problem only seems to have become worse. That is a paradox. The question is, how are we to understand this paradox.

To answer this question, we will describe the formation of the discourse on stress to establish what attitudes, norms, knowledge, and perceptions the individual human being is being subjectified with, and how the stress discourse, as a type of knowledge, is thereby supporting the strategies of relations of forces (Foucault 1977, S. 194 ff.), which in sum constitute a *stress-dispositif*. We will show what kind of actions – or absence hereof – the discourse on stress incites, induces, and makes easier or more difficult (Foucault 1982, S. 789) and examine how the strategies of relations of forces act upon the actions of the individual, rendering certain actions likely and others unlikely.

Furthermore, based on the analysis of the antagonistic relation between the discourses on globalization and stress (Mølholm 2013), we will examine if and how the absence of actions upon actions of stress can be understood as the manifestation of the final moment of confrontation in the relation between the two discourses, where »stable mechanisms replace the free play of antagonistic reactions« (Foucault 1982, S. 794), and thereby the victory of one, the globalization, of the two adversaries. It is our hypothesis that a »reciprocal competition« (Keller 2011, S. 52) between these discourses has taken place over the past couple of decades and that the discourse on globalization has »won«.

Finally, we will discuss the potentially stigmatizing effect of stress. Recent British and Danish surveys have showed that many workers »felt there was a stigma to being stressed and that it may impact their career prospects and chances for promotion« (Slater/Gordon 2014), causing them to lie about the reason for their absence from work and instead report physical conditions or other non-mental illnesses as the cause, because they are afraid that they will otherwise be considered weak and unable to cope (Slater/Gordon 2014; Ritzau 2013).

Agency and the Actions upon the Actions of Others

Agency is critical to any discourse, as agency can be understood as a conductive element of the discourse. It conveys to the subject how he is to understand the world he lives in, what he has to do to be able to manage his – and eventually his family's – life, and what is expected of him from those with whom he lives, interacts, and depends upon. Without agency, the discourse is deprived of its most important feature: the institutionalization of »a binding context of meaning, values and actions/agency within social collectives« (Keller 2011, S. 51). In the absence of agency, the individual may have an understanding of the problem, which needs to be solved, and the urgent necessity that calls for a response. But at the same time it is unclear, ambiguous, and/or blurry what can actually be done and how the individual has to act.

When we thus talk about agency we are addressing how specific social mechanisms – dispositifs (see below) – promote certain acts before others. Or, more specifically, how the subject is positioned within specific power/knowledge-relations and here imbued certain opinions, ways of understanding, and rationalities before others.⁵ Such *Action Markers*, which are parallel to what the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse calls *instructions* (ebd., S. 54), are a common trait of discourses. And as is the case with instructions, Action Markers do not *determine* the agents' actions, but can only act upon his actions as a power, which can »only be exercised over free subjects [...] who are faced with a field of possibilities« (Foucault 1982, S. 790). But when, however, the subject is faced with a field of possibility, but ambiguous or vague instructions on how to act, an absence of agency arises, and the consequence can be significant.

When, for example, a leading Danish occupational medical-doctor and expert on stress draw the conclusion that we are stressed because the claims of efficiency and productivity are constantly increasing and thus tipping the work-life balance, and that we at the same time are incredibly good at stressing ourselves (The Week-letter A4 2002, vol. 21, S. 16), or when another professor in sociology says, that it is primarily the high work-motivation and because our job is the pivotal point in our existence that we get in trouble (The Week-letter A4 2006, vol. 07, S. 17), we are left with only a vague understanding of the nature of stress and with no directions or instructions to guide our actions. Instead of agency to guide our actions in the social collective, the stress discourse generates a variety of what we call *anti-objectives*: Attitudes, behavior, actions, norms, perspectives and understandings that the individual, to an undefined degree, should give a less dominating position in life. In the examples above, the individual should *not* be (too) focused on being efficient and productive, *not* let the line between work and family obliterate (too much), *not* be (too) motivated to work, and *not* allow work to be the (primary) cornerstone of his existence. The individual is, in other words, left with no or, in best case, an

5 While it could be relevant to elaborate further on the notion of agency, we instead refer to, for example, Caldwell (2007).

ambiguous agency. It is evident that action is needed, but it is by no means evident which actions are relevant or rational.

A second characteristic feature of the anti-objectives is that they are invalidated by the agency of comprehensive, agential discourses. It follows from the heterogeneous nature of the discursive formation and the constitution of the either/or crossroad of the strategy's diffraction point (Foucault 1969, S. 73) that antagonistic reactions between conflicting discourses will take place. Strategy is a key element of the formation. It is the theme or theory of the individual discourse and thus functions as its paradigmatic bollard. In the formation of discourses (e.g., the work-life discourses), two conflicting theories or thematic points of departure inevitably mean that the formation of each, individual discourse must go its own way. Thus, the formation of discourses is heterogeneous, and with a number of possible points of diffraction, characterized – among other things – by their points of incompatibility:

»Two objects, or two types of enunciation, or two concepts may appear, in the same discursive formation, without being able to enter – under pain of manifest contradiction or inconsequence – the same series of statements.« (Foucault 1969, S. 73)

Finally, the function of any discourse is to answer a current problem that needs to be resolved (Foucault 1969, S. 105, 116); thus, the strategy of the discourse can be understood and defined »by the choice of winning solutions« (Foucault 1982, S. 793) – by its capacity to support and enhance a process that is commonly understood to be necessary, meaningful, and desirable. In a formation of up to several discourses, a number of problems and necessities present themselves as such.

As types of knowledge, discourses support and are supported by »the strategies of relations of forces that at any given time constitute the *dispositif*« (Foucault 1977, S. 196), which subjectify the individual human being with a specific set of norms, attitudes, perceptions, and ways of talking about and understanding the world and his place, role, and responsibility in it. In other words, the agency of the discourse *conducts* conduct: it weaves the »structures of actions brought to bear upon possible actions« (Foucault 1982, S. 789) by inciting, seducing, and inducing the individual with specific ways of understanding and perceiving his world so that a certain number of actions become more likely than others.

In the following, we will establish that such a relation of victory and defeat, abidance, and acknowledgement exists between the discourses on globalization and (lifelong) learning/personal development (in the following: the learning-development discourse) on the one side and work-related and work-generated stress and depression on the other. Furthermore, we will show how anti-objectives are a common feature of the non-agential stress-discourse, thereby allowing it a central and notable, but impotent, position within the formation of discourses, where it does not contradict and undermine the necessary, productive drive (Foucault 1975, S. 194, 1977a, S. 119) of the globalization and learning-development discourses.

Abundance of Agency: Globalization and the Compulsive Lifelong Learning and Education

In a globalized world, the problems that are in urgent need⁶ for solutions vary from cross-border environmental and climate problems (see for example Beck 1986) to global competition between companies, shareholders, employees, and local communities, who previously only had to concern themselves with other local actors (see, for example, Bourdieu 1997; Beck 1999; Bauman 2004), causing a large variety of heterogeneous discourses, with many different strategies, to emerge. In relation to the latter, a particularly potent example of such a strategy is the one that we in this article will call the globalization discourse. Here globalization is described as an opportunity and promise of further prosperity, and as an imminent threat and importunate problem that has to be resolved if we are to protect, preserve, and continuously develop the democratic welfare society as we know it today (Mølholm 2013). The globalization discourse is potent in the sense that it, in confrontation with the contemporary, conflicting, and incompatible discourse on stress, has managed to clip the wings of the latter to such a degree that hardly any conflicting and contradicting agency enters what Foucault calls »the free play of antagonistic reactions« (Foucault 1982, S. 794) between the two, and thus brings a confrontation that never really started to »its term, its final moment« (ebd.). The conflict between the discourse on globalization and others can be viewed as an example of »conflicting social knowledge relationships and competing politics of knowledge« (Keller 2011, S. 48), where each discursive actor is »an interested producer of statements« (ebd., S. 52), who is engaged in the dialectic interplay with the various other discursive actors of the formation of discourses, but where each actor abides by the rules of the formation in which the dominance of one discourse over the other has been tacitly accepted and acknowledged.

Advances in technology have, alongside the spreading of a free market economy and free trade, paved the way to an increasingly globalized market of selling and buying of goods and labor. At the beginning of the third millennium, this led to a discourse, which depicts globalization as both a threat and an opportunity. The increased global competitive situation within the private sector, and the restructuring within the public sector consequently mean that the labor market has come under pressure, and that the working population must be brought to understand that flexibility and a potential to learn and develop is a requirement if they are to keep their job (The Week-letter A4 2002, vol. 22, S. 12; The Week-letter A4 2004, vol. 41, S. 21). An OECD survey from 2002 showed that Denmark was about to lose the battle, coming to a halt in the discipline of developing the human capital (The Week-letter Monday Morning 2002, vol. 13, S. 3), and hitting the unskilled workers and those with only little education the hardest. In the accelerating globalization, hundreds of thousands of jobs were at risk of disappearing, yet the overall perspective was that the globalization would benefit the country (Jyllandsposten 2002/1008;

6 Foucault describes »that of responding to an urgent need« (Foucault 1977, S. 195) as a feature of the *dispositif*, which is just as much the said (discourses) as the un-said (e.g., institutions, architectural forms, administrative measures).

Berlingske Tidende 2004/0921). Nevertheless, according to the Head of Market, Lars Goldschmidt, from Danish Trade and Service, people were »in need of reality therapy«. It had to be made clear to each and every one that they would fall out, if they were not doing anything »to move themselves out of the red zone« (The Week-letter A4 2004, vol. 40, S. 19). The globalization and the transition from an industrial to a knowledge society demanded completely new competencies, which also complied with the skilled workers (The Week-letter A4 2007, vol. 21, S. 13). Accordingly, the Danish Prime Minister was urged by the chief editor of one of the leading business magazines in Denmark, *The Week-letter Monday Morning*, to set himself to develop a new culture of competence to challenge the ingrained and conventional wisdom that competent is something you are until you are reach the age of 40, after which it gradually vaporizes (The Week-letter Monday Morning 2005, vol. 10, S. 21). By now, more or less all of us have

»bought into the premise, that the globalization came and threatened our lives. It is, according to Professor in Political Science at the University of Copenhagen, Lars Bo Kaspersen, a governing narrative about the globalization that puts pressure on the economic actors and the Danish state [...] It has become an obsession that we have to act fast because we will otherwise be threatened (in our lives as we know it, own interpretation).« (The Week-letter A4 2015/0924)

It is »well documented that the globalization has caused radical changes in the content and organization of work. The complexity demands have escalated, and more has to get done in a shorter period of time« (Politiken 2014/1218). »We must achieve more and perform better if Denmark is to make it in the global competition« (Information 2015/0622). As these examples demonstrate, the discourse on globalization is clear and precise in the description of the threats and problems stemming from the development of a global economy, trade, and labor market, and the opportunities that it holds are equally clear. The discourse has an abundance of agency. Political leaders, business owners, employers, and leaders have a responsibility to make people understand that the situation is grave and the threat clear and present. Those in charge are required to make the population and the workers realize that a global transformation from an industrial to a knowledge society is taking place, help them to understand this transformation, and ensure they know what attitudes and behavior to adapt in order to manage it. In this context, the individual is required and expected to be able and willing to adapt by learning new skills and developing new competencies to maintain a position in the labor market and ensure the society is able to withstand the pressure from other societies around the world. By talking about the threat of the globalization as clear and present, responding to it becomes an urgent need. It makes the globalization a reality that we all, from the political leaders of the country and the business owners and leaders, to every present and future employee, have to act upon today and every day following. It is an ongoing, non-stopping lifelong process. Every minute counts and not a moment can be wasted.

Absence of Agency: The Paralysis of Stress

A PhD dissertation from 2013 (Mølholm 2013) document that the (work related) stress discourse is one of the most notable and dominating discourses in the formation of discourses on working life, from the years 2002–2010. In this dissertation, a careful mapping and analysis of the regularities of statements shows, what turned out to be the three most dominating discourses from that period: Stress; Globalization and Learning & Development. Going through and reading every Danish national newspaper article and every article from two of the most dominating business- and labor market magazines in Denmark (measured by quotes in other medias), *The Week-letter A4* (Da: Ugebrevet A4) and *The Week-letter Monday Morning* (Da: Ugebrevet Mandag Morgen) published in that nine year period and dealing with the issue of the late-modern working life, the first indexing of the articles identified 169 different terms (e.g. globalization, international, competition, education, flexibility, innovation, learning, cooperation, creativity, stress, depression, burn-out, health-promotion, bullying, dialogue) distributed among 14 *micro-strategies* (e.g. The Global Working Human Being, The Social WHB, The Empathetic WHB, The Suffering WHB, The Learning WHB) in the more than 53.000 articles in total. In the subsequent second indexing of the articles, four main discursive strategies were identified: Globalization, Learning & Development, Stress and Welfare. This led to a careful demonstration of the dynamic relation between the first three discourses: Firstly, the discourse on globalization causes an enhanced focus on the need for lifelong and life-wide learning and organizational, professional and personal development with the consequence, that a rising number of late-modern working human beings become ill with stress, burn-out and depression. Secondly: due to the urgent need for the development of the individual as well as the organization caused by the globalization, an antagonistic relation plays out between the discourses on globalization and learning/development on one side, and the discourse on stress on the other and marks an either-or between the two discursive strategies: the late-modern society either deals with the threats and challenges of a globalized world *or* it deals with the problems stemming from stress. In the following we will show how the discourse on stress is further characterized by an *absence of agency* and thus, a weak dispositif.

In this article we have, as was the case with the PhD dissertation, applied a ›classical‹ four-step research strategy based on Edmund Husserl's phenomenology: 1) Epoché: the endeavoring to ›put brackets round‹ the experiences and knowledge that we already had (retention) and that we would be inclined to ›bring back‹ in a pre-emptive expectation of the phenomenon – the discourse on stress – we were about to examine and describe. As the analysis was a continuation of previous work it was of paramount importance to pay specific attention to our knowledge and understanding of the discourse and our expectation to its continuing development in order to make sure, to not just ›look for‹ and thus ›see‹ what we hoped and expected to find. 2) Reduction: which literally means ›leading back to the essential‹, is the process of putting forward and actualizing something, while at the same time potentialize everything else by putting it in the background. In this study, our focus was on the discourse on stress, which we had previously found stood out

when compared to the other working life discourses, and more specifically on the agency of that discourse. 3) Eidetic Variation is referred to by Husserl as an ›imaginative variation‹ or ›free fantasy‹: what is the essence of the phenomenon that we are studying. To what extent can we reduce it and still leave it to be the same phenomenon? What is the essence of the phenomenon? In this part of the process we used the definition on psychological stress by the Danish professor Bobby Zachariae: »a process in which changes, threats and demands from the surrounding world challenges or exceeds our immediate psychological, psychical and behavioral ability to adapt« (Zachariae 2004, S. 33) to determine, which utterances could be considered to be part of the discourse on stress. In all the utterances that we have analyzed in our study (and that includes, of course, also the examples that are given in this article) this is the case: In various ways, they point to demands in the late modern human being's lives that challenges and/or exceeds the individual's ability to cope and adapt. 4) Ideation. The result of the epoché, reduction and eidetic variation done meticulously, is ideation: the beholding of the pure essence of the phenomenon. The essence of the discourse on stress and the absence of agency which characterizes it, is thematized in the categories which make up the headings of the following analysis: Work-Life Imbalance, The Boundless Working Life, Time-Efficiency and The Normative and Structural Claim of Flexibility.

The archive of the more than 53.000 articles was partly collected through the online database *Infomedia* – a database consisting of every newspaper article, national and regional, in Denmark published from 1990 onwards, and partly through the collection of every issue (e-version) of the two business- and labor market magazines from 2002 and forward. In 2002–2010, work-related stress as a strategic theme occurs in 11,679 Danish national newspaper articles, 17,839 regional newspaper articles, and in 4,237 articles in the business- and labor market magazines *A4* and *Monday Morning*. Work-related stress occurs in 252 out of the 376 (67%) issues of *A4* from that period (with less than 20 issues of *Monday Morning*). As a strategic, discursive theme, work-related stress is in that period only surpassed by the discourse on health (30,863 Danish national newspaper articles, 68,214 regional newspaper articles, 11,027 trade journal articles), and matched by globalization (18,470 Danish national newspaper articles, 11,727 regional newspaper articles, 4,236 trade journal articles).

In the period between January 1st, 2011 and December 31st, 2015⁷, work-related stress occurs in 5,996 national newspaper articles, 15,365 regional newspaper articles, and 8,383 journal and magazine articles showing that stress in relation to work still has a dominant position in the formation of work-life discourses. In total, this article is based on an archive of more than 29.000 articles from this period, and the more than 53.000 articles from the PhD dissertation. Put together this comprise an archive of more than 80.000 articles. We have applied the same analytical strategy in the collection, indexing

7 The following numbers have been retrieved from the national media-database *Infomedia*, the latest covering the period between January 2011 and January 2016 on April 12th, 2016, searching for the keywords *stress* and *work* and only retrieving the articles where both keywords appeared in the text in order to avoid articles dealing with for example the stress-testing of banks.

and selection of articles, terms, micro-strategies and strategies on the data from 2011–2016, as in the PhD dissertation by Mølholm (Mølholm 2013) in order to ensure that the analysis in this article is compatible to, and comparable with, the analysis of the dissertation.

Recent Danish research on the discourse of work-related stress documents that the absence of agency and the presence of anti-objectives are significant features to the regularity of the stress discourse (Mølholm 2013). In previous research covering the years 2002–2010 (9 years), we have established that it is a characteristic feature of the stress discourse that the discursive objects (e.g., work-related stress, depression, and burn-out) by and large appear only in relation to a number of various other discursive objects, originating from other work-life discourses such as the globalization discourse and the learning and development discourse: New management principles, strategies, and concepts; new forms of organization (e.g., LEAN, The Learning Organization), flexibility, and readiness to embrace changes; Work-Life Balance; 24/7 availability and dedication, commitment and personal involvement, thus constituting a *field of concomitance* (Foucault 1969, S. 64), which dominates the stress discourse. The cause of stress is linked to the increased expectations of the individual to be flexible, dedicated, enterprising, creative, and continue lifelong learning – all of which are highly valued qualities and competences in most organizations in the 21st century.

Furthermore, researchers and professionals are, in this period, in majority of the modality of the stress discourse, occupying subject positions that are situated in the discursive practice of a scientific institution or scientifically based organizations (e.g., survey institutes and therapeutic organizations), thereby ascribing validity and truth to the statements (Foucault 1969, S. 55 ff., 1977a, S. 112), while at the same time, there is a significant absence of statements by the *Regime of Appropriation* as to how to invest the discourse on stress in decisions, institutions, and practices (Foucault 1969, S. 75), and a distinct lack of Action Markers, and thus an absence of agency in the stress discourse. The result is that the individual (the agent) is left with no beacons to help him navigate when he is to decide the direction and orientation of his actions on stress and determine whether this is how to cope with stress or how to help co-workers or employees etc. deal with stress. The propositional structures whose function is to dispose the individual to act in certain more or less predictable ways to solve a problem – work-related stress – are lacking, preventing the formation of the stress discourse from crossing the *threshold of formalization* (Foucault 1969, S. 206).

The level of maturation of the stress discourse has not changed significantly in the years between 2011 and 2015. If anything, it seems as if there has been an antagonistic relation – and a hegemonic and ideological battle between the discourse on stress on one side and the discourses on globalization and learning/development on the other – meaning this battle has reached its term.

As we will show in the following, the axioms of the discourse on stress (that the norms, values and perceptions of the late-modern working life is disposing the individual to act in ways that can cause stress) are well defined, as are the elements (of knowledge) it uses and the transformations (in working life) it accepts. Yet, they seem to have little – if any

– social effect in reconstructing the way the individual make sense of himself in relation to the late-modern working life (Keller 2011, S. 49). The adoption of, and adaption to, the discourse and dispositif on globalization and learning/development by the social actors result though, not in a rejection of the stress dispositif (because there hardly is not one), but in a simultaneous yielding by the stress-discourse from ›weaving‹ Action Markers into the formation of the stress discourse, from which the development of a dispositif – laws, regulatory decisions, (electronic) infrastructure, etc. – can take off.

The examples presented in the following are representative of the archive of almost 30,000 articles from the five-year period between January 2011 and January 2016. Each example represents the various different perspectives that the collected archive gives on stress, for example that stress has become a condition of life and that flexibility and 24/7 accessibility as a norm has eroded the boundaries between work, family and leisure.

The examples are originally in Danish. The authors of this article have performed all translations. In the following we will present the selected, representative examples of the stress discourse, before we present the analysis of them.

Stress as a Consequence of Work-Life Imbalance and the Boundless Working Life

The boundless working life, where the proportions between work and family life are out of balance, is a recurring object of the stress discourse. It is described as an escalating problem made possible by the structural conditions such as increased availability and accessibility of Information and Communication Technology and the growing number of different technological platforms (apart from e-mail systems, various social media platforms), devices (e.g., computers, smartphones, tablets), and networks (e.g., WiFi, 4G), and the normative claim of flexibility from employers and employees alike, but nonetheless treated and handled as a problem that is entirely of an individual nature and thus to be dealt with by the individual employee him- or herself. Examples from the archive could thus be the following:

»Five years ago, the crisis had not yet become a part of everyday life. Now it is, and that has added fuel to the fire. The feeling that your job is where you are rooted has been growing. Now the fear of becoming superfluous and fired has been added to it. On top of that, the advancement of smartphones has made it so that we have our job lying in our pockets all the time.« (The Week-letter A4 2013/0704)

»Stress has become a condition of life in the modern labor market.« (The Week-letter A4 2013/0705)

»There is never a time of the day where you are not accessible, and therefore, there is always the possibility that flexibility leads to an increase in the level of stress.« (The Week-letter A4 2014/0311)

»Structural conditions, such as the boundless work [...], cause stress. Yet it is treated through advice and treatment directed at the individual, and if the employee expresses criticism, he is told to put on his yes-hat.« (Information 2014/1008)

»The development of the knowledge and technology of the globalization, with contradictory management requirements, increases the complexity and the boundlessness of work. Therefore, it is marveling that stress is perceived as something that can be caused by private matters.« (Politiken 2014/1218)

»Our employees are competent and dedicated members of staff, and work takes up a large part of our lives and a big part of our identity. It is, therefore, not strange that you have work-related thoughts during a three-week vacation. [...]. It is an expression of the huge influence that staff members have on their job today, and the organizing of it, and that a relatively small percentage finds that they are being disturbed does not, in our point of view, show that there is something wrong with the balance between work and vacation.« (The Week-letter A4 2013/0705)

One of the most striking characteristics of the stress discourse is that it is not always obvious that ›stress‹ is the object. As is the case in the examples presented above, the dominant objects are often the concomitant ones: work-life imbalance, the boundless working life, flexibility, dedication, work identity, etc. Rather than describing, displaying, and putting forward a set of actions, norms, or attitudes (in the same way as we know it from the discourses on for example globalization, health, safety, or learning), the statements of the stress discourse points to *the cause and source* of the consolidation of the scale of stress in the labor market instead: the instant availability of work, due – but not limited – to smart-phones; the lack of responsibility for employees from the leaders of today's organizations; work being a still more central element of our life to which we are highly dedicated, and as an integrated part of our identity; flexibility as both an opportunity to navigate between multiple spheres simultaneously and a constant pressure to be present both at work and at home at the same time. All within the frame of a financial crisis, adding job insecurity to the equation, stress is verbalized as an integrated *condition* of the modern working life: as something that has been ›built in‹ as an unsociable component, and which is therefore not an isolated health-and-safety problem that it is possible to eradicate, without causing harm to the rest of the body of the modern society. That work life is perceived as a significant part of the late modern workers' life to such a degree that many people adapt a pattern of behavior, which constitutes a health and safety risk, is considered to be of human nature. Influence, commitment, and competence seem to lead to more stress, because the structures allow for the individual to operate with a higher degree of freedom to organize his work as he sees fit, but with the risk of losing himself in the solving of the work-related challenges to which he is highly motivated and completely dedicated.

Through the description of the mechanisms driving and supporting the potential for stress to develop, but not verbalizing the norms necessary to hold and the actions that

need to be taken, the statements addressing the problem of a working life spilling over into life outside work offer no direction for the individual to take, whether it is the employee or leader, to avoid stress. Nomothetic knowledge structures applying general explanations to the understanding of globalization at the same time supply structural solutions (technological, as well as organizational) to guide our decisions, actions, attitudes, understandings, and conversations related to the late modern working life seem to confine the ideographic knowledge development to focus on stress as an individual problem.

For the few to be able to conduct the conduct of the many, it is crucial that such ›agreements‹ exist in order to dispose the behavior of the individual in likely and predictable ways. Contemporary traces of alternative actions occur as vague anti-objectives, which, for example, suggest that employers and leaders take more responsibility by *reminding the employees* (but not prevent, prohibit, or require them) *to slow down*. We are all brought to remember and be aware that work is often all too easily at hand and that we should try to resist the temptation of ›going back to work‹ all the time, just because it is right there at the end of our fingertips and only a few touches away. However, we are not being guided in the direction of alternative actions that will ensure our endurance and position in the global fight for a leading position in the market. Stress is described as a structural problem to which we apply individually oriented solutions, but which hold no imperative for future actions to handle the problem. Statements with an absence of agency are significant, since agency is not only absent in the statements deriving from positions within the discursive practice, but it is also lacking from non-discursive practice positions.

Time-Efficiency, Stress, and the Normative and Structural Claim of Flexibility

More than anything else, the normative and structural claims of flexibility are seen as crucial traits of character and necessary concepts on which the edifice of the late modern working life in a globalized world is built (Hochschild 1997; Sennett 1998; Jacobs/Gerson 2004; Mølholm 2013). »Flexibility is a virtue« (Salamon 2007, S. 16) that often causes work-family conflict when work is spilling over into family and leisure time and the workers feel under pressure to work, »even while not ›officially‹ at the workplace« (Jacobs/Gerson 2004, S. 94). In 2007, The Commission on Family and Working Life appointed by the Danish government came out with a report in which they established that »we have never been working as much as we are today. The collected working hours of the families are high, and the demand of reorganization-readiness, flexibility, speed and commitment when at work is escalating« (Commission on Family and Working Life 2007, S. 24). Thus, flexibility has become an integrated element of the late modern work-culture; an unquestionable axiom of a natural givenness, which logically stems from globalization as its causal effect. Examples from the archive include the following:

»To a greater extent than before, Danish people are making the decisions regarding their workday themselves, but even though there are certain benefits to work from

home and have flexible working hours, it also causes new problems in the fight against work-related stress.« (Jyllandsposten 2013/1110)

»The possibility of having your employees present and working at the time when the customers put in their demand for the products of the company is much bigger.« (The Week-letter A4 2014/0311)

»She knows that she is not normal because she cannot work, cannot achieve. She suffers from sleeping problems, palpitations, and concentration problems. She has, as many other Danes who are suffering from stress, not been able to live up to the claims from the society and working life of self-actualization, competence development, independence, and flexibility. Of growth. [...] The suggestions as to what to do about the problem are many. The problem is that they are all biased in their individualized viewpoint on mental health. The individual human being is herself responsible for the handling of her stress.« (Information 2015/0622)

»The employers have learned that people cannot always cope with the changes that are constantly happening. As I always say to new employees: one thing you can count on is restructurings [...]. The stability that once was, is no more.« (The Week-letter A4 2015/1002)

As these examples demonstrate and confirm, it is not so much the object of stress that dominates the discourse on stress, but rather a set of concomitant ones. In the case of flexibility as a causing factor, concomitant objects such as (individual) freedom, globalization, appreciation, efficiency, and competitiveness (the ability for the companies to utilize their resources, including humans, as effectively as possible to compete in a globalized market), and growth has ›colonized‹ the stress discourse, not as objects of reference to a problem or a necessity that has to be solved or handled, but rather as objects of comprehension and acceptance; as an unfortunate, inevitable – and maybe even indispensable – side effect, stemming from an inevitable and desirable advance in welfare, prosperity, and possibilities. We are brought to understand that flexible employees with the freedom to independently arrange his or her working life is *necessary* in a globalized market; that praising, rewarding, and appreciating your staff, despite the best of intentions and the desire to treat your employees in accordance with the moral imperative of respect *may* lead to a behavior that runs out of control and causes stress; that placing self-actualization, competence development, independence, and flexibility at the disposal of the employees, *may* lead some of them to experience themselves as deviant – as ›not normal‹⁸.

8 The ontology of the humanistic psychology is that the human being has ›an innate strive towards growth‹ (Korsgaard 1999, S. 145). By accepting that all people are born with an inner desire to learn and develop as an ontic condition of the human life, independent of whether we accept that as true or not, those who do not sense that inner thrive to grow are de facto not ›normal‹, and their experience of being deviant therefore not erroneous.

Flexibility is, in other words, a structural necessity, as well as an ontological givenness and thus, stress is not labeled as a problem that we need to address collectively, but as a challenge that each of us has to face individually. It is a term of classification and identification in the *grid of specification* (Foucault 1969, S. 46) that applies to the stress-discourse, while at the same time it is a normative Action Marker, which produces agency to the discourses on globalization and on growth (i.e., in this specific context, individual and organizational learning and development). It is verbalized as an unfortunate, but inevitable, side effect to otherwise desirable arrangements and necessary steps: individual freedom, influence, responsibility, personal and professional development, self-actualization, and solicitude through appreciation, all of which are Action Markers that produce agency by guiding the actions of employees and employers alike and in such a way that a certain behavior and a range of actions within a social collective becomes more meaningful than others. Their guidance capacity is meaningful, simply because they contain a surplus of possibilities for further experience and action (Luhmann 1984, S. 93). Flexibility has to do with time and space: the ability to dedicate ourselves to working when it is needed the most and we are able to put as much vigor, competence, and dedication into it as possible, and to do so without the constraints of spatial and/or (infra)structural inability. Time is a capital resource that the late modern working society is constantly aiming at accumulating *and* making more efficient to exploit it to the maximum. The anti-objectives of the discourse on stress have to do with this perception and understanding of time and flexibility.

It is an anti-objective that we are *not* to be available to everyone, everywhere, and all of the time, yet still be flexibly available and accessible around the clock; *not* to become too excited about the appreciative appraisals of work, yet still be dedicated to perform at the best of our ability; *not* to explore and exploit our potential too vigorously, yet still have a positive attitude towards personal and professional growth. It is a structural paradox: indirectly we are encouraged to be less of what we are expected to be and rewarded for being more of. It places the late-modern human being in a dilemma in which, as an editorial in *The Week-letter A4* puts it, »the natural solution to the stress-problem – that we work less hours – stands in contrast to the solution to the welfare-problem: that we work more. How can we work less – and more – at the same time?« (The Week-letter A4 2006, vol. 36, S. 6). Unceasing instability is the new stability, affecting our sense of time and space dramatically.

As flexibility and commitment among other traits become a virtue, having ›opposite‹ values (e.g. valuing a more permanent structure in life and the commitment to the life at home with the family) or being unable to show enough of it, is increasingly perceived as a vice or incompetence and thus, he or she is regarded socially and/or morally inferior. In the following we will show, how stress has become the tell-tale sign – a *stigma* – that divulge the inferiority of those who, for whatever reason are unable to keep up and adapt to the norms of the labor market of today.

The Stigma of Stress

The individualization of working life and the confining of the problem of stress to the individual effectively makes stress a question of personal inadequacy: a lack of competence, endurance, motivation, sturdiness, robustness, commitment, will power, positive attitude, etc. Correspondingly, working life has become an arena of self-management in which the individual is expected to take full responsibility, not only for the successes and failures of his performances, but also for the conditions (adequate or not) under which he is to perform.

According to Goffman (1963), a stigma is identifiable as physical, social, or personal characteristics that lead one or more social groups to perceive those attributed with it as having tainted, inferior, or discredited identities. Stigmatized identities are often seen as the results of various social dynamics and disciplinary relations, such as intrinsic group behavior, but also correctional measures, surveillance etc., which structure subjects and conducts and thereby form the social order. In turn, this is often seen practiced in various instances such as in a confession, where the individual confesses upon a specific characteristic and thus possibly obtains absolution. One important note in this regard is, however, that agency is crucial in relation to how we attribute and regulate meaning (e.g., in case of a confession), and as shown above, an absence of agency in relation to stress also creates a lack of meaning in relation to stress. It does not attribute the systems (e.g., the organizations and/or teams) with further possibilities of actions and/or experiences. As the statements »part with the common discourse of men«, they become null and void – the nonsense of a mad man (Foucault 1971, S. 216 f.). Being sick with stress is thus meaningless; it is stigmatizing because of its meaninglessness – because it is not attributed with possibilities to act or ways of navigating or coping with it. It is meaningful as meaningless: we can make sense of it as something we without further regard can disregard, as something that is meaningless to the organization or team, but possibly meaningful to other systems; for example, the individual human being suffering from stress or the members of a group to which stress is a common object of reference. To the organization or team, though, it is meaningless nonsense. The individual is instead caught in a double bind (Bateson 1972, S. 210 f.) of not being able to act and having no means of doing so; caught in limbo with no possibility to speak, nor an opportunity to escape. The individual is caught between the primary injunctions of keeping silent and adhering to the expectations and claims of society, the labor market, and organizations or facing the consequences of stigmatization and the secondary injunctions (often tacitly conveyed) not to perceive the consequences as a punishment or as anything but the careful consideration of what is in his best interest, by those imposing the primary injunctions. As Bateson puts it, he is caught in a »situation in which no matter what he (the person) does, he can't win« (Bateson 1972, S. 205).

According to the Danish Ethnologist and PhD Kirsten Marie Bovbjerg, being unable to manage your own working life is stigmatizing (Kristeligt Dagblad 2012/0203): a disgracing and blemishing of the individual who is not able to »keep up«, and thus »quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak, [...] reduced in our minds from a whole and usual

person to a tainted one« who is »ritually polluted, to be avoided« (Goffman 1963, S. 10 ff.). It is a tell-tale sign, a stigma, which reveals that the individual in question on a personal level is unwilling to put the team first and himself second and do whatever it takes to ensure the successful outcome of the endeavors of the team and retain a positive attitude when doing so. It raises the question whether it is possible for the individual to continue as a member of the team and organization when it is obvious that »the relation is not that of one characterized by love and commitment« (Andersen/Born 2002, S. 150). Furthermore, to add fuel to the fire, taking a critical perspective on the constant demand for change and flexibility, the all-positive attitude and the putting on of the yes-hat, and the celebration of the opportunities of the enhanced competitive market is taken as a sign of a poor moral habitus. The critical utterances do not »form part of the common discourse of men« and are therefore »considered null and void, without truth or significance, worthless as evidence, inadmissible in the authentication of acts or contracts« (Foucault 1971, S. 217). As the Danish sociologist Rasmus Willig puts it,

»Those who are not confident about the latest organizational change are considered to be reactionary; as someone who can only see the limitations and not the opportunities. They are not forward-looking and proactive, but negative, not positive. [...] The Competition State does not tolerate criticism, and it therefore displays and stigmatizes all forms of critique. [...] I am convinced that an exorbitant number of employees in the public sector [...] feel that they cannot express criticism because it will display them as competition-weak or as those who are unable to keep up.« (Politiken 2014/1024)

But even *these* statements by Willig and Bovbjerg, however ›critical‹ they appear to be with regard to the norms and attitudes of the late-modern working life, abide by the rules of the discursive formation and avoid taking on a direct confrontation with the discourses on globalization and learning and development by adding agency to them. Reading between the lines of Willig and Bovbjerg, we can get a glimpse of anti-objectives, which indirectly suggest to the reader *not* to stay quiet but to speak up instead; *not* to accept the automatic labeling as competitive-weak and unable to keep up if and when he finds that something is not all perfect; *not* to perceive himself and others as tainted, deviant, and defect when self-management becomes an unbearable burden and the constant re-organization and change does not feel so promising. However, explicitly encouraging him to be critical, ›negative‹, and pointing to the limitations of the late-modern society and self-organizing working life would be pointless in the sense that it would not point him in a direction where he would be able to survive and maintain his living conditions. The globalization discourse has effectively established that ›standing still‹, looking backwards, and hesitating to flow with the current of changing times will more or less lead to the apocalypse. Accordingly, Occupational Psychologist, Signe Groth-Brodersen, states the following:

»It is therefore easier [if not the only option] to tell your closest leader that you have problems at home, rather than saying that you are unable to handle your tasks, at least

when you are vulnerable. Holding a critical perspective on the limitations to your own productivity has become a modern taboo, and that is unfortunate because it is precisely the limits that are an important precondition for the individual's capability to lead himself.« (Politiken 2014/1218)

A survey from 2009 carried out by YouGov/Zapera for *The Week-letter A4* supports her hypothesis in that it showed that less than 50% talked to their closest leader about their stress and that only one in two talked to their colleagues about it.

Caught between the stigma and the taboo, the late-modern employee is in every sense of the word left to handle his working life on his own recognizance. He is free to manage his own working life, but it is a ›lonely‹ freedom in that it comes at the price of muteness, when the working life becomes too difficult and he needs help to handle his freedom: when to work, when all hours of the day are potential working hours; what tasks to prioritize, when they are all the result of his doing, are equally important and urgent, and he has the sole responsibility for solving them; what standard of quality to observe, when the individual possibilities of *dedicated* time and performance exceed the organizational resources of *allocated* time and money, etc. The moment he chooses to break the silence and point to the negative aspects of the flexible, self-managed, deeply involving, and existentially satisfying working life, he threatens to lift the enchantment of a working life, which seems so promising, combining the urgent and necessary with the desirable and greatly fulfilling. Stigmatizing and expulsion, labeling the ›critical‹ individual as someone who is unable or unwilling to live up to the claims of self-actualization, learning and development, and independence and flexibility are shielding the discourses on globalization and learning and development and preserving the enchantment, thus creating a defensive-mechanism against the discourses of globalization and learning and development.

Closing Remarks

In the exordium of this article, we presented the paradox that on the one hand we see an enhanced focus on the problem of work-related stress. Governments and governmental agencies, NGO's, and public and private companies express their dedication to the fight against work-related stress, and researchers from a broad range of expertise are increasingly warning us that we are headed for a public health disaster. On the other hand, the number of people in the labor market who get ill with work-related stress and depression is climbing. How then is it possible that a discursive object such as stress can be the center of attention of such a dominating discourse as the discourse on stress and yet have such an insignificant impact on the problem it addresses? The simple answer seems to be that when two or more themes and/or theories appear within the same formation of discourses and they diffract at the point of either/or, one has to give way, and that, in this case, is the discourse on stress.

This inevitably leads to the question of whether we are then just to accept that a growing number of resourceful and healthy people in the labor force will become ill with work-related stress and write it off as ›collateral damage‹ due to the globalization war. That human beings *are* in fact ›just‹ a resource to be utilized and, as such, are expendable? The discourse on globalization suggests that this is – unwittingly most likely – the case. Globalization has expanded the battlefield from being a local and/or national to a global arena, and the competitors from being the corporate organizations now include each and every one of us: the skilled as well as the unskilled, young as well as old, leaders as well as staff. No one is safe from anyone, neither the companies, nor those working in them. While the companies are competing on a global scale with every other company in the world, the staff and leaders are competing with every other individual in the world who can do the same job. It is a fight for life, both literally and in the sense of ›life as we know and like it‹. It is an imminent, clear, and present threat that has left the late-modern human being in a constant state of alert and emergency that is calling for an urgent response. In a state like that, a *potential* problem such as work-related stress, which *might* hit one or more individuals somewhere in the future, becomes difficult (not to say impossible) to pay attention to and take preventive actions against, since it will not for sure affect him or them, contrary to the globalization where the mantra is: »Either you are developing or else you are dismantling« (Information 2002/0111; The Week-letter Monday Morning 2004, vol. 39, S. 10; Politiken 2010/0320).

It is difficult to see how the problem of work-related stress can be accentuated more than it already is. It therefore seems to be a hopeless endeavor to try and ›win‹ the battle between the discourses on globalization and work-related stress by further intensifying the latter. Instead, we may hope and work for an *impairment* of the discourse on globalization and a weakening of its power to subjectify the late-modern human being with norms, attitudes, and behaviors that are causing many people to end up in the all too long line of stress-infected individuals.

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