

Foucault suggests a number of rules that govern the discursive formation. One category of rules controls the fact that something is able to be talked about and governs the appearance of objects of discourse. Rules in this category include, for example, prohibitions against talking about certain things—rules that silence certain dimensions of experience simply by not recognizing them as objects of discourse.²⁵ In the Victorian Age, for example, children's sexuality simply was not an object of discourse, so children's sexuality was not discussed and that aspect of children's experience was repressed.

Some rules that govern objects of discourse concern the function of institutional bodies in creating such objects. Particular institutions may be recognized as the ones with the authority to name and thus distinguish one object from another. One such authority was nineteenth-century medicine, which distinguished madness from other concepts and became the major authority that established madness as an object. Educational experts currently recognize and diagnose children with attention deficit disorder, for example, thus making it a condition that can be perceived and about which individuals are able to speak.

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A second category of rules concerns not what is talked about but who is allowed to speak and write. Such rules dictate that individuals listen to certain people and reject the discourse of others. The discourse of those who are not heard is considered null "and void without truth or significance, worthless as evidence, inadmissible in the authentication of acts or contracts." Their words are "neither heard nor remembered."²⁶ Only those deemed qualified by satisfying certain conditions are heard when they engage in discourse. Among the conditions are legal requirements that give the right to speak in certain ways. Lawyers, for example, must pass the bar examination in order to practice law. Other such rules involve criteria of competence and knowledge. Individuals listen to medical doctors speak about issues involving health because discursive rules attribute competence to them in this area, while the discourse of alternative medicine generally is not heard because its practitioners have not fulfilled the conditions for competence established for speakers of medical discourse.

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Another condition imposed on those whose speech is heard is the production of certain kinds of discourse, formulated in certain ways. Those who wish to speak in the academic world, for example, must produce certain types of statements and use certain forms to be allowed to participate in scholarly discourse. An academic paper or article must evidence particular forms of argument and particular kinds of language, put together in complex ways. It also must contain citations to other scholarly articles, and these citations must follow the form of an established style manual such as that published by the Modern Language Association.

Other rules that govern the nature of the speaker defines the gestures, behaviors, and circumstances, that must accompany speakers as they talk. The wearing of particular clothing and the enactment of behaviors such as genuflection, for example, often must accompany religious discourse of the