IRTP INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF THEORETICAL PSYCHOLOGIES

• Vol. 3, No. 1 • 2026 • (pp. 303–323) •
https://tidsskrift.dk/irtp/

DOI: http://doi.org/10.7146/irtp.v3i1.167392

Theorizing Situated Inequality in Everyday School Life in a Marginalized Residential Area

Rebekka Sylvest-Berg

Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University

Roskilde, Denmark

Gry Marie Tybjerg

UCL University College

Odense, Denmark

Abstract

In this article, we examine inequality at a school located in a marginalized residential area of a larger Danish city, using the theoretical concept of 'situated inequality'. We argue for theorizing inequality as situated, emerging from how participants collectively manage and navigate coherent, conflictual social situations in their everyday lives. This contrasts with perspectives that view inequality as something predetermined and static that young people "bring with them" to school due to their social backgrounds. Based on fieldwork carried out at the local school, we found that both teachers and young people in the school struggle to develop opportunities of participation under contradictory conditions. This often manifests as conflicts within the classroom. To explore how dynamics of inequality develop, we follow processes of conflicts at the local school, and they become a lens to explore unequal conditions for the young people. Here, we analyze how broader political and societal conflicts are connected to – and in different and shifting ways – matters in the conflicts situated in the everyday school life. When conflicts escalate, the exploration of the conditions for the young people's participation sometimes disappears due to what we term a 'strategy of avoidance'. This strategy can, against its intention, become trapped in a circularity of conflicts, where young people in school are singled out as problem carriers due to the marginalized residential area in which they live. We conceptualized such processes of problem placement as a form of 'collective area categorization'.

Keywords: situated inequality, conditions of participation, coherent conflicts, everyday school life, marginalized residential area.

Introduction

Research has shown that growing up in marginalized residential areas influences young people's educational attainment, choices, and life opportunities (Metzner et al., 2022; Graversen, 2013; Petersen et al., 2019). Studies reveal various ways to explore and understand what seems to create unequal opportunities. For instance, inequality can be viewed through the lens of territorial stigmatization (Sernhede, 2018; Wacquant, 2020; Sand et al., 2020), whereas other research argues that inequality in marginalized residential areas must be understood in the context of national policies (Bach & Schneidermann, 2022; Birk & Fallov, 2021). Additional research highlights that children and young people with ethnic minority backgrounds in these areas are particularly vulnerable to marginalization, which affects their social inclusion in society (Annamma et al., 2016; Gilliam, 2017; Gillborn, 2015; Rytter, 2019). This body of research draws on different positions of inquiry, employing various lenses to understand inequality in marginalized areas by focusing on social inequality as linked to politics, stigma, locality, or ethnicity.

In this article, we depart from investigating inequality from the perspective of young people's everyday life in school in a marginalized residential area in Denmark. We are particularly concerned with exploring processes of situated inequality through *young people's conditions of participation* in school. Examining the dynamics and interactions between teachers and young people, along with their reasoning for acting as they do, brings attention to the everyday contexts in order to examine inequality. To understand young people's conditions of participation in school, we investigate how conflicts and contradictions manifest in teachers' dilemmas. We recognize this as a crucial entry point for analyzing young people's unequal conditions of participation. Through this lens, we aim to uncover what appears to contribute to inequality developing in these areas, potentially in ways not previously highlighted by other research.

The object of our analysis is the conditions of participation for young people aged 12 to 16 (grade 6.-8.). The marginalized residential area in Denmark where the school is located is often referred to as a "ghetto" and is marked by significant political conflict. Here, we examine how inequality plays out *from within the school* and the everyday lives of the young people and teachers. This does not mean that we ignore how school conditions are connected to broader societal conflicts *outside* the local school, such as conflicts about the local residential area. Rather, we aim to understand how these conflicts interact and gain situated meanings within the everyday life at school. Here, we unfold how historical, societal, and political conflicts *about the area* – and fears that problems may escalate – contribute to the development of a collective position of inequality for the participants in the local school in varying ways.

Background and Aim

The article is based on the research project "*Participation and Situated Inequality in Children's Institutional Everyday Lives"* (2023–2026), a nationwide project in partnership with municipalities from rural, metropolitan, and provincial areas (See Røn-Larsen et al., 2023 for

further details about the research project). The project examines and integrates different perspectives from nurseries, kindergartens, schools, youth clubs, and educational psychology practice. The aim is to collaborate with practitioners to develop a concept of participation that strengthens interdisciplinary work on creating meaningful opportunities for all children by exploring how conditions in practice play out in the collaboration between many participants – and through this subjective interplay, promote or hinder possibilities of participation (Røn-Larsen et al., 2023).

Here, we focus on when conditions of participation develop unequal and how situated inequality in schools within marginalized residential areas can be understood. To address this, we utilize the theoretical concept of 'situated inequality', which emphasizes the conditions of participation created through complex relational dynamics in specific contexts (Højholt, 2016; Røn-Larsen, & Højholt, 2026; Sylvest-Berg, 2025; Tybjerg, 2023). Using this theoretical concept, we discuss how it allows us to identify and understand aspects of everyday school life that contribute to dynamics of inequality when addressing issues in marginalized residential areas. Our aim is to nuance understandings of inequality in young people's institutional lives in such areas and to discuss the conceptual tools needed to analyze these dynamics.

In the following section, we will focus on understandings within the research area of inequality in education, which, in our case, unfolds at a school located in a marginalized residential area. This focus enables us to argue for our theoretical approach to exploring inequality as situated in young people's everyday school lives in such contexts. After providing an overview of our methodology and analytical strategy, we analyze how local, political, and societal conflicts converge to create conditions for school participants that take on different meanings in the social practices of the school. Our analysis highlights how inequality develops through the ways interconnected conflicts are managed locally. While conflicts are a common condition in many schools, why have they developed in such a specific way here? What are these conflicts really about?

We argue that answers to these questions cannot be found by looking at the pupils, their parents, or even the competencies of the professionals. Instead, this article shifts the focus outward, examining the broader world that the school – and its pupils and teachers – are part of to understand how these dynamics shape young people's opportunities of participation. For instance, when teachers are under pressure and experience disruptions or conflicts, these conflicts can, in frustration, be interpreted in terms of external factors – such as the fact that the young people live in a marginalized residential area. Over time, as conflicts escalate, teachers may react by tightening pedagogical control in an effort to avoid further disruptions and conflicts. However, this does not always resonate with young people, which risk leading to the development of new conflicts. When teachers, out of frustration, resort to stricter pedagogical measures, some young people may face unequal conditions for participating and orienting themselves within the school communities they are expected to be part of. Throughout the article, we analyze how teachers work hard to develop opportunities of participation for all pupils Simultaneously, we examine how the collaboration between teachers and the young people can become restricted when teachers feel powerless when dealing with difficult conditions. The ability to create opportunities of participation depends on how they collaborate and how the young people's contributions are integrated into the specific social practices of the school. Finally, we argue that inequality is not solely determined by what the young people "bring with them" to school, but rather as something that develops – and can be

addressed and possibly transcended – within the everyday life of schools in marginalized residential areas.

How to understand inequality in school?

In Denmark, research indicates that educational inequality is a growing problem (see, for example, Thomsen & Andrade, 2023). However, to understand inequality in education, research often approaches it by examining factors related to the individual young people in the classroom: What is their socioeconomic background? What about their ethnicity or their parent's income level? Are they raised in educationally disadvantaged homes? Do they live in marginalized residential areas? Or what are their internal psychological prerequisites? (Bourdieu 1977, Easterhook & Hedden, 2021, Ottesen et al., 2022; McDermott & Vossoughi, 2020). In these questions, explanations are often associated with young people's individual characteristics, such as their particular social backgrounds or the residential area in which they live. Within research, broader societal explanations are often highlighted, such as socioeconomic resources and structural inequality linked to factors like social background. Inequality in education is therefore frequently explained in terms of families' socioeconomic background and educational levels as determinants of children and young people's opportunities in school. Research points to an intergenerational transmission of social problems, often referred to as "social inheritance" (Landersø, 2023; Lareau, 2002). Consequently, schools are increasingly tasked with identifying, at an early stage, so-called educationally disadvantaged homes or families with difficulties, which schools must compensate for.

As a counterpoint to the intergenerational understanding, research based on statistical analyses argues that there is no evidence to support maintaining a linear causal explanation of "social inheritance" as they statistically point to that more children and young people break rather than reproduce their socioeconomic background (Ejrnæs, 2010; Ejrnæs et al. 2005). Anyhow, the overall idea of intergenerational transmission of problems between young people and their parents is often used as a model to understand and intervene in relation to inequality. However, even though the statistical analyses might indicate patterns of convergences, they do not, in themselves, help us understand *how* and *why* inequality matters in the everyday school life of young people: "*Although it may be easy to measure inequality, for example, in relation to education, it is not simple to gain knowledge about which conditions and how conditions impact inequality*" (Ploug, 2017, p. 9 – our translation). This suggests that despite research discusses how to conceptualize inequality, multiple models of understanding may still be at play in how inequality develops from within school life. The scope of interest in this article to discuss and offer alternative ways of understanding inequalities.

Complex and Dynamic Institutional Life

Another problem is that inequality arising through the education system is identified as inherent to the individual as a form of 'biological determinism'. This has been criticized by, among others, Anna Stetsenko (2018), who argues that inequality cannot be understood in the light of neuro-social- or bioessentialism, as she emphasizes that: "[...] *educational success is correlative with access to social resources* […]" (Stetsenko, 2018, p. 44). Instead of linking inequality to individual prerequisites, it is linked with possibilities of access to social resources which in Stetsenko's

approach can be understood as socio-culturel support in situated activities, e.g., access to teacher skills and tools in schools. Billet et al. (2020) writes about this in relation to 'personal failing':

> Yet, the conditions which lead young people to perform badly or disengage from school are seldom acknowledged. Instead, the failure to perform in school is explained in terms of a young person's lack of future aspiration or other personal 'failing' (Billet et al., 2020, p. 5).

Researching inequality within this 'personal failing' approach makes everyday school life irrelevant because 'personal failing' is linked to deterministic individualistic aspects and understood as a consequence for children's and young people's opportunities in school. However, an isolated focus on young people's 'personal failing' does not consider the structural and institutional conditions of participation for young people and their access to social resources within school. This causes research to overlook how complex and dynamic institutional life in local contexts matters:

> […] vulnerability in youth is far from a static size, but rather is greatly created, shaped, and changed throughout life – and especially in youth. Vulnerability is thus also largely shaped through complex and dynamic encounters and interactions between young people and the societal, institutional, and personal contexts they are part of (Katznelson et al., 2021, p. 87 – our translation).

This points to how social background cannot be solely understood as a framework for explaining problems that arise and develop in school. Also, Mehan (1992) highlights the importance of institutional conditions in relation to deterministic problems: "*The difference in educational opportunities was not a function of genetically endowed intelligence, cognitive styles, or social backgrounds. It was rather, an unintended consequence of institutional arrangements*" (Mehan, 1992, p. 14).

All this together calls for the importance of examining *how* institutional practices constitute conditions in young people's everyday life which in the interplay at school both open up young people's opportunities for influence and restrict their opportunities of participation. On this basis, we explore inequality in education as a phenomenon that also must be understood as related to social contextualized conditions of everyday life. This does not mean that growing up in marginalized residential areas or being born into, for instance, poverty is irrelevant in school. Rather, we suggest understanding individual prerequisites such as social background in less static ways and as something that can gain *situated matters* depending on how it is ascribed meaning in the everyday life of school. We build further on research arguing that exploring the everyday contexts in which young people conduct their everyday life is a crucial starting point for understanding and exploring inequality in education (Højholt, 2016; Højholt & Røn-Larsen, 2021; Tybjerg, 2023). To gain insight into what happens in children and young people's everyday lives in school, it is necessary from within the school to open "*the black box of inequality*" (Højholt & Røn-Larsen, 2021, p. 605).

We also argue that there is a need for contributions of new perspectives on inequality in young people's everyday lives, which challenge isolated understandings of inequality as something that can be predicted, for example, based on the residential areas in which young people grow up. Theorizing about inequality as *situated* in everyday school life has until now not been developed and applied in marginalized residential areas. Our article provides a new perspective on how to understand inequality in such areas where other traditions and concepts, as described earlier, are dominant.

Theorizing and exploring inequality as *situated* in everyday life

The article is grounded within a tradition of everyday life research, which broadly concerns how everyday life can form the basis for empirical exploration by analytically understanding the participants lived experiences in everyday life. The article's everyday life approach is grounded in critical psychology, characterized by a social psychological shift toward understanding subjects embedded in a societal context (Holzkamp, 1998; 2013; Schraube, 2015). Critical psychology emerged as a critique of presenting the subject abstractly and objectifying them through a third-person perspective (Holzkamp, 2013). An objectifying representation can occur, for example, when young people from a marginalized residential area are characterized as being a certain way simply because they live in a certain residential area. The problem with this deterministic understanding is that it overlooks how societal conditions constitute different opportunities for participation in everyday school life,e as mentioned in the section above. Critical psychology, therefore, develops the theoretical point that knowledge about subjects should be explored from a first-person perspective and analyzed in a societal and historical context (Dreier, 2008).

Understanding inequality in *situated* ways from within everyday school life has implications for a particular mode of inquiry. As Højholt (2016) points out, this requires theoretical concepts that can 'open up' everyday school life:

> Still, this remains more than an empirical matter involving fieldwork on the everyday life in schools, it also includes theoretical and conceptual development to pave the way for concretely analyzing societal, historical and cultural issues from the perspectives of subjects and related to their interplay in everyday life (Højholt, 2016, p. 4).

The theoretical concept of 'situated inequality' (Højholt 2016; Røn-Larsen & Højholt, 2026; Tybjerg, 2023) invites analyses of how conditions of participation are socially constituted and can develop unequally for participants over time. From this perspective, the concept of *conditions* is therefore essential for grasping how society and subjects are dialectically connected to each other, which can be analyzed through the ways in which they participate in everyday life. This means that we, in this article, address issues of inequality in relation to young people's conditions of participation within a school context and how they – in different ways – act on common societal conditions and conflicts in their everyday lives. Situated inequality builds on the fundamental assumption that understanding the social dynamics of communities and their embedding in a societal context is crucial for grasping how aspects of inequality processes can develop – and be transcended – in everyday school life.

Societal conflicts and inequality in social practices

However, it is important to be analytically aware that unequal conditions of participation are not understood as something that arises solely in dynamic situations between teachers and pupils. Lave (2019) points out that historical and societal conditions are situated in subjects' participation in social practices as specific everyday life conditions. These conditions manifest as contradictions and conflicts about the 'common matter' that teachers and pupils are supposed to collaborate on in school. The common matter of learning and developing in school often has different meanings in the specific social practice, and the development of young people's opportunities for participation depends on how their subjective contributions to the common matter are addressed in the dynamic interplay. The concept of situated, therefore, relates to conditions of participation in situations that are here-and-now, which are simultaneously connected to societal, conflictual conditions of teachers, children, and young people's common everyday lives.

When we focus on understanding how historical and societal aspects manifest as conflictual contradictions in everyday school life and how conflicts acquire situated significance in the development of inequality, the concept of '*conflicts*' itself becomes central to our investigation. Here, Højholt & Kousholt (2018) point out how conflicts arising in class must be understood as connected to broader social conflicts, for instance, ongoing political discussions on the purpose of schooling. That means, in order to analyze inequality as situated processes, we can understand the conflicts in class as coherent to broader contexts, which makes them essential to explore as a lens for analyzing inequality. Focusing on how conflicts in class develop and are at stake from the perspectives of the participants at the school, we aim to gain insights into coherent understandings of the conflicts in order to move our gaze from the participants themselves and into how their conditions evolve. Therefore, the conflicts in themselves become essential for understanding how they are related to common conditions developed on the basis of historical and societal conflict. Broader conflicts are played out *situated* but are connected to conflicts of the dynamic interplay. The collaboration about handling coherent conflicts between teachers and the young people therefore becomes the focus of our exploration of inequality in order to understand the participants' *reasons* for participation. By analyzing the participants' reasons for acting from within the social practice, we are able to understand how conflicts and inequality are interrelated. According to following the participants' conditions of handling these conflicts and their subjective reasons for doing so, we can analyze the connections of reasons in order to analyze processes of inequality (Røn-Larsen & Højholt, 2025).

Methods and Analytical Strategy

The project is grounded in a Danish practice research tradition, where context-sensitive designs are developed to contribute to ways of reflecting on and highlighting possibilities, contradictions, and dilemmas within the field (Holzkamp 1998, 2013; Højholt, 2023; Mørck & Nissen, 2005). We examine processes of inequality by following the everyday life at school of young people in two classes and conducting *ongoing conversations* with the young people and professionals about their conditions of participation through *participant observations* for around one year (Kousholt & Højholt, 2022). Additionally, we arrange *local research communities* (Røn Larsen et al., 2023) together with the professionals at the school and other professionals across other contexts of youth

life. In this way, we invite co-researchers to engage in understanding how conflicts and difficult conditions of participation arise and develop within everyday life.

Within this tradition, it is a methodological point that the researcher explores together with those involved in the specific social practices and that the research comprises issues concerning young people's conditions of participation (Tybjerg, 2023). By studying young people's conditions of participation, research aims to exceed individualistic understandings of that either focus on the young people themselves or the residential area in which they live, in order to understand inequality *from* and *with* the young people in relation to the world they take part in. To be able to view *from* and *with* young people, research must participate in their everyday life over time and be curious about what the young people and their teachers are concerned with. In this way, it becomes essential to follow difficult processes in which situated inequality may develop depending on how young people and teachers together navigate coherent conflicts over time.

Based on this understanding, the tradition of practice research develops a decentralized thinking and approach to 'circling around a conflictual issue' from multiple perspectives in exploring a problem to understand the connectedness of conflicts as common conditions. Conflictual subjective perspectives constitute sides of the same issue in this understanding, so a decentralized exploration of a complex issue can analyze the contradictory connections between the conflicts (Højholt & Kousholt, 2018; 2020).

Throughout the article, we use an analytical approach that takes its starting point in '*zooming in*' on the young people's opportunities to participate in their everyday life in school. In order to understand unequal possibilities of participation as a consequence of difficult conflicts in class, we also '*zoom out*' and include structural, historical, and political conflicts connected to the local school (Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019). The essential point here is that what is relevant to zoom out and shed light on in order to analyze situated inequality must be understood from within the specific practice. Broader conflicts get situated meaning in the local context and must be followed from the perspectives of the teachers and young people, and their reasons for acting in the specific contexts. In our empirical work, conducted in collaboration with young people and teachers, we find it essential to understand Danish education politics and legislation in the marginalized residential area in order to comprehend the situated meanings of these complex conflicts within the local school. In other words, it is not given what to zoom out to, but a matter of relevance analyzed from within the local practice and explored together with the co-researchers in the ongoing joint explorations. With this, we aim to get closer to an understanding of the participant's reasons for action by analyzing how conditions from different contexts are interconnected and grasped in various ways in the local practice (Røn-Larsen & Højholt, 2025).

Conflicts and Inflexible Rules at the Local School

When looking across fieldnotes, what is very noticeable at the local school is a lot of conflicts – both between the young people and between the teachers and the young people. Also, we notice how the local school is geographically located in an area with a lot of conflicts *about* rather than just *in*. Historically, there has been a lot of political tension and conflicts about the residential area – and the local school has a reputation of being a "ghetto school" in one of the "roughest" residential areas in Denmark. In the following analysis, we will begin by zooming in on everyday life at the local school and the conflicts unfolding here. After that, we will move the analytical

gaze by zooming out and connecting the local conflicts with broader societal conflicts to understand the reasons for their institutional conditions.

When conducting our research at the local school, we often experience a strong focus on avoiding conflicts. Many *inflexible* rules are set up in order to do so. However, what seems to happen is, against the intention, that the inflexible rules contribute to creating more conflicts. In the following, we present an example of a conflict unfolding in the classroom, which seems to escalate because of the inflexible rules:

> As the break approaches, all the young people wait to be allowed to go outside, but they cannot leave until the bell rings in four minutes. Until then, the doors remain locked. A lot happens in those four minutes, and the teacher is busy trying to maintain order in class. The wait feels like an eternity. The young people are supposed to sit quietly, but this is a difficult task, and across the desks, there are exchanges of remarks and teasing, which the teacher tries to stop. The noise level in the classroom rises, and the conflicts escalate as they all wait for the bell to ring. Most of the boys have already got up and put on their jackets, even though the teacher has told them to wait. "*This time, you are allowed to go out at 11:44*", the teacher says, who seems unsatisfied with breaking the rules by one minute. When the doors are finally unlocked, the young people rush out. With the empty classroom, the teacher locks the door again, seeming both stressed and relieved that it is over.

In this example, we observe a lot of noise and conflict about when the young people are allowed to go outside while waiting for the bell to ring. Having a rule about when to leave the classroom is quite common for many schools, but what we experience as different is the low flexibility in relation to managing and changing the rules locally due to the specific situation for the local teacher. Often, as a teacher, you would be able to bend the rules to handle and de-escalate conflicts, which this teacher feels unable to do. A lot happens in these few minutes from the field note while the teacher tries to manage the conflicts and noise spreading in class. With this example, we see how the teachers seem to push the conflicts in front of them with a kind of 'strategy of avoidance' with the intention of using rules to avoid conflicts. However, against their intention, the inflexible rules, made as part of their 'strategy of avoidance', often seem to trigger and contribute to creating more conflicts. In relation to this, we might be curious to ask: What is this conflict about? What is it connected to – and how can we explain what is happening? What are the reasons behind these inflexible rules? And why does the teacher not feel able to be flexible concerning the rules about when the young people can leave class?

A Collective Area Categorization

To understand some of the teacher's reasons for acting as described in the field note above, we ask if the teacher feels challenged by the fixed and inflexible rules regarding when they are allowed to let the young people out for a break. The teacher explains:

> "Well, a bit, but we cannot change it because the pupils here have no internal control over themselves. If we let them out earlier, they would disturb others who are still in the middle of the lesson". The teacher then mentions one of the boys in the class and says: "Yes, as you have seen Khaled, he is a big part of the problem of noise and disruption".

Other teachers formulate it as: "*It is children who lack so much*" – who need: "*Clear and strict rules and regulation*". When it comes to helping these young people, fixed and inflexible rules are set up. Here, the argumentation of the teachers is based on avoiding what could go wrong – so because of this particular area, they need special regulation so conflicts can be avoided – even though the quite opposite seems to unfold in the classroom.

Conflicts arising in everyday life are often understood with reference to the individualized factors of young people, such as where they live or grow up. These negative "expectations" of the young people could be viewed in light of Loïc Wacquant's work on territorial stigma, by which he analyzes how stigma and its negative consequences are related to space and neighborhoods (Wacquant, 2007). When analyzing the teacher's argumentation, there seems to be something important at stake concerning this geographical dimension regarding where the school is located and where most of the young people live. The problems are often pointed *out* of the everyday life in school and *into* the local residential area as some kind of '*collective area categorization*' that seems to apply to most of the young people at the school, referring to the marginalized residential area in which they live.

The circularity of conflicts

As described, the fixed and inflexible rules often seem to trigger conflicts in the classrooms and, therefore, contribute to creating new conflicts. This could be described as a kind of 'circularity', where conflicts move around in the school. Ofer Sharone (2024) has, in his work about unemployment, described how a process of circularity concerning the negative evaluation of stigma produces a "stigma trap":

> The stigma trap is cruel and circular. You are stigmatized for being unemployed and then stigmatized again for your reaction to the stigma. The circularity of the trap captures the essence of Goffman's observation that one's response to stigma, such as feelings of shame or loss of confidence, are perceived by others as a "direct expression of [their] defect" (Sharone, 2024; p. 188).

In the field note presented earlier, we see this process of how the strict rules develop into a conflict. Still, when conflicts escalate, the difficulties are often related to this 'collective area categorization', which usually leads to further restrictions for the young people in the class. Fixed and inflexible rules are set up through this 'strategy of avoidance', which is based on a need for this *because* of where the young people live. However, when they react to the rules, which often trigger noise or conflicts, the teachers argue that the reason for the conflicts is because of their pupils living in this particular area – and not because of the many fixed and inflexible rules – which makes the conflicts become trapped in circularity.

However, what remains unclear is how this 'collective area categorization' is handled as part of the conduct of the participants' everyday lives, which is what the following section focuses on.

Following processes from the everyday life

One way this is handled is through the establishment of fixed rules to address conflicts understood by the 'collective area categorization'. Tybjerg (2023) shows in her research how processes of powerlessness, resignation, and social categorization can develop when conflicts are locked under contradictory conditions of participation. Here, categorizations can involve relating the problems to social factors other than those within the everyday life in school. By following processes at this local school, we see how the 'collective area categorization' contributes to creating unequal opportunities for participating in the communities for the young people. This limited categorization takes away the curiosity for the young people's perspectives; what are they concerned about, and which common things, when viewed in light of a youth life, are also at stake in the classroom?

When following these processes from the everyday life in class, it seems that the young people's reasons for acting often disappear from the understanding of the conflicts, as there appears to be an underlying fear of problems getting out of control. But when we get closer to the conflicts by looking *with* the young people, we see that their engagement of getting outside, as shown in the previous example, is a problem of who gets to the football field first. Suppose they are allowed to go out one minute earlier. In that case, they have a higher chance of conquering the football field before the other pupils, which is actually a very common agenda for children and young people within school life (see Højholt, 2016; Testmann, 2021).

With this, we see how the rules are made *because* of this special place, but the conflict in the classroom also seems to be a more *general* conflict. But this *special* attention to managing and avoiding conflicts makes us overlook the general conflicts about what the young people are concerned about participating in. This occurs when the occupation of finding more *causal relationships* to understand and *explain* problems overshadows the curiosity to investigate and understand common aspects of youth life. For the young people, their conditions of participation are related to gaining influence on the common matter of the everyday school life (Røn-Larsen & Højholt, 2026). By setting up fixed and inflexible rules, the young people do not have the possibility to gain influence and contribute to this common matter, which is also in itself connected to creating unequal possibilities of participation in this specific context.

Unequal conditions of participation

With this 'collective area categorization', we also see how this matters in different ways for the young people. With the theoretical lens of 'situated inequality' it appears that historically developed 'strategies of avoidance' through fixed rules overshadow the subjectivity and the perspectives of young people. Take Khaled from the fieldnote presented, for instance. The teacher points towards him and his behavior in regard to explaining the problems related to noise in class. This could be an example of how individuals are pointed out to be the reason behind these conflicts and how their conditions of participation develop unequally by being pointed out as the problem themselves.

However, during our fieldwork, we have observed the class over time, and during this process, we see how the blame seems to shift among the young people. Later, during the school year, Khaled is transferred to another school. After this, another boy in the class, Amir, is pointed out to be the one making noise. And when talking to one of the other teachers, it is a third boy, Abaas, who is

the problem. What we see here is how the three boys are all pointed out to as *the* problem in different ways and by different teachers. In different situations, their opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways to the common school life are restricted. Additionally, we aim to illustrate how this 'collective area categorization' get situated meanings as it develops depending on the social processes of the participants in the everyday school life.

From the teachers' perspective, it may appear that the young people are just swapping places in terms of making noise and creating conflicts in class, but here, it is important to be curious about the teachers' reasons behind this, as there seems to be more at stake.

Contradictory dilemmas and pressure

Concerning the young people at the local school, we notice that they are very concerned with grades and exams. Often, when teachers attempt to incorporate elements of informal tests into their teaching, the young people become overly concerned about avoiding a poor result, which can lead to conflicts and noise, ultimately leaving the teachers dissatisfied and powerless.

In a survey conducted by the local municipality[1], they asked pupils from all schools how important it is for them to perform well at school. Here we see a difference between the average from the schools in the municipality and pupils from this particular school, where they report being more concerned with their performance at school:

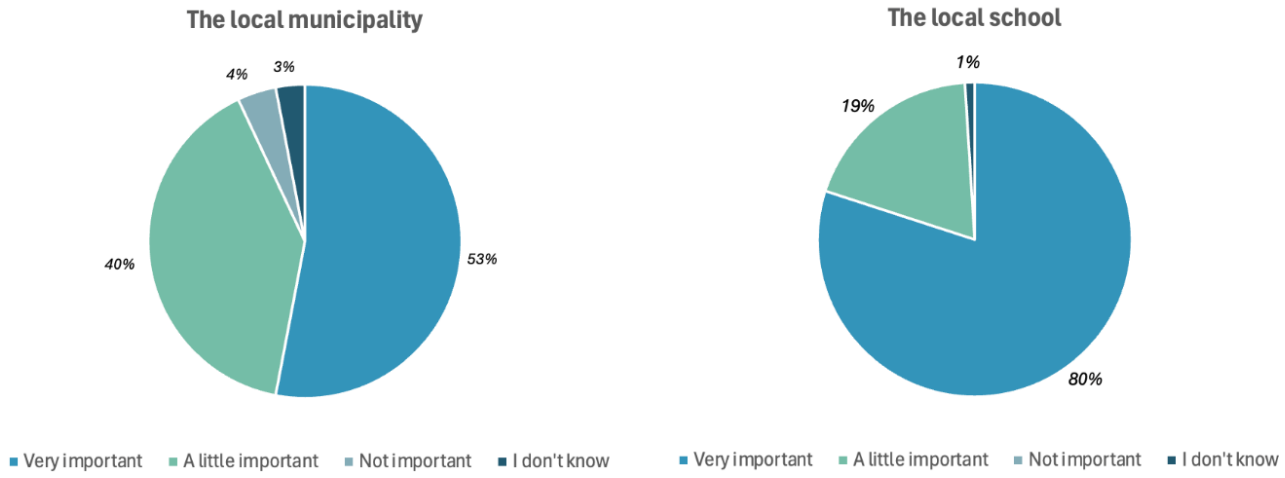


Figure 1: The local municipality's survey data showing distributions of students' answers to question about personal importance of school performance

[1] The data underlying the illustration presented here arises from a survey distributed to us as part of our fieldwork at the local school. The survey has been developed by the local municipality and aims to evaluate health and well-being among pupils. The aim of including this is not to provide any "general" conclusions, rather than it serves as an indicator of aspects that are significant to pupils in this school context. The questionnaire is conducted annually by the municipality for pupils in grades 0, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10. The data presented here concerns young people from grades 7 to 9 during the 2023/2024 school year. N for the local school = 113 and N for the local municipality = 3969. The original survey is not included here due to reasons of anonymization. For an unfolded discussion of how quantitative data can be used in a practice research tradition see Sylvest-Berg (In Prep).

There is a difference between pupils answering ”*very important*” of 80% at the local school and 53% in schools from the local municipality. The point with this is not to suggest a causal explanation for these differences, but rather to highlight the fact that, with these numbers, we see something special at play in relation to their relationship to school performance.

When speaking with the teachers, they also discuss this special concern related to grades and school performance. They experience this as something that often makes it difficult to complete their teaching agenda. Additionally, the teachers express that it seems to escalate when they are being pressured by an increased readiness task for this specific school. The teachers express this dilemma by explaining: “*It is difficult. We measure what is easy to measure. It is not easy to measure communities and democracy, so our focus is on measurable performance”.* This means that their focus mainly needs to be on how their pupils perform in their tests. During our collaboration with the teachers, we share our observations and preliminary analyses with them in meetings. Here, the teachers express certain and very difficult dilemmas regarding their desire to develop possibilities of participating by teaching in a more “democratic ways” without a fixed and strict rule-bound approach. Yet, at the same time they find it challenging:

> “If you are impatient, you teach in a way that makes them be quiet, but then they do not learn what they should about talking together and collaborating in groups and communities – we need to have more patience, but we lack time – and they need to learn it”

As the quote indicates, certain aspects can hinder a form of teaching, where a focus on community, inclusion of student perspectives, and group work is sometimes deprioritized in favor of the focus on performance and tests, as the teachers feel pressured by. Similarly, the quote reflects a fear that they may not cover everything the young people need and perhaps also a concern that things could get out of control – if they let go of their control – A ‘strategy of avoidance’ as described earlier. As much as their desire to avoid conflict is understandable, sometimes it ends up being the cause of conflict itself.

In order to delve further into the teacher’s reasons for actions, we will now ‘zoom out’ and connect this to broader social conflicts (Højholt & Kousholt, 2018; Lave, 2019). We do this because in order to understand the young people’s possibilities of participation, we also need to include the teachers' conditions for teaching and how it is connected with broader societal conflicts.

The focus on “readiness” in a marginalized residential area

In Denmark, there have been many political conflicts about the school system for many years, especially after the “PISA-shock” and the school reform from 2014 (Madsen, 2023). This has led to a prioritization of academization in schools to secure international competitiveness, which, for example, means that all Danish pupils must have a certain average grade to be admitted to upper secondary school (The Danish Ministry of Children and Education, 2014) Simultaneously, the agenda of inclusion has gotten an increased focus in Denmark, where schools are expected to qualify all pupils to transcend with social inequalities through what Tybjerg (2023) has analyzed as a readiness-task in lower secondary school in Denmark.

Besides the more general political conflicts concerning the Danish school system, the conflicts at the local school also seem to be connected to conflicts about the local residential area. The area is currently facing a lot of changes due to the latest "ghetto package" in Denmark called "*A Denmark without parallel societies – No ghettos in 2030*" (The Danish Government, 2018) – (See Sylvest-Berg (2025) for an unfolded analysis of changes related to this). In relation to schools in these areas, there is an initiative managed by the government called the list of "Monitoring Parallel Societies". The goal of this list is to secure an increased focus on educational institutions within these types of marginalized residential areas (The Danish Ministry of Children and Education, 2020). The monitoring list focuses on and measures the following indicators: a) pupils from disadvantaged neighborhood, b) pupils from non-western backgrounds, c) pupils where both parents are not attached to the labor market or in education, d) pupils who do not pass the lower secondary school leaving exam in Danish (The Danish Ministry of Children and Education, 2020, p. 2). This means that the indicator the teachers seem to have the best chance of affecting is related to grades and passing the Danish exam. The specific school has previously been part of this list, and the school leader and teachers now fear becoming a part of this list again, as it involves extra demands, control, and pressure regarding the academic level of their pupils.

When connecting these two societal conflicts of the school system and the marginalized residential area, we see how this seems to unfold, a kind of opposing (and also reinforcing) "pressure" becomes a part of the conditions of everyday life at the local school. The fear of being appointed to the list of "Monitoring Parallel Societies" combined with the increasing expectation of the pupils' performance, constitutes conditions for the teachers working at the school and for the pupils enrolled there. When analyzing their tasks at the school together with the teachers, it appears that at this school, and for these teachers, there exists a particularly intensified version of the general readiness-task in the last years of the Danish public school system. By focusing on the concept of conflicts, we see how conflicts that arise in everyday life should be understood as connected to broader political and social conflicts (Højholt & Kousholt, 2018; 2020). The concept of 'collective area categorization' has been historically developed through these educational policies, historical conflicts over the residential area, and problems related to the local school. When the young people struggle to be part of communities and also to succeed in school, these social and personal conflicts must be understood in relation to larger societal conflicts. By seeing conflicts and contexts in children's everyday lives as connected, we argue that it becomes possible to investigate and analyze when conditions for participating in the school's social practices can develop unequally.

As part of their conduct of everyday life, the teachers and young people are negotiating and transforming their local actions and also struggle for changes – which will be the focus of the following section.

Situated struggles for changes in conflictual conditions

By following the everyday life at the local school over time, we see that teaching is far from being solely structured by fixed rules; teachers also create opportunities for group participation, such as project work with other possibilities of participation. Additionally, the teachers are sometimes more curious about the young people's perspectives. In an example from our fieldwork, it seems to be a challenge for the teachers to engage the young people during the last hours of the day, where there is a lot of noise in class:

> While the young people are outside on a break, the professionals discuss what could be the reasons for this. They say: "*This class is very special and hard to teach*" and "*the pupils are 'unteachable' at the end of the school day*". After the break, the young people are back in class, and one of the teachers asks the young people: "*Tell me, what is going on today?",* and very quickly, one of them answer: "*It is because of a new update for our game "Fortnite" will be released this afternoon, so we really want to go home and be ready*".

This example illustrates how the teacher is attempting to examine the situation from the student's perspective, aiming to understand what is happening in this specific situation. What this example also highlights is how to approach conflicts differently, making it possible for young people to participate in the class in alternative ways. Importantly, the conflict does not disappear, *but* it is handled without the former 'strategy of avoidance', where they seem to push the conflict ahead of them.

Another example is that, after some time, the teachers establish rules for the football field, as they observe both how disruptive it is during class and how frustrating it is for the young people to compete for the field during recess. This means that they respond to more general conflicts in youth life, and their view of the young people is not solely determined by the area they live in. This can, however, become 'locked' in situations where handling the conflicts is difficult and can seem almost impossible to solve, which is what we have focused on during the previous part of the analysis.

All of this emphasizes that, although the teachers experience restricted agency and sometimes feel trapped, they strive to create new ways of teaching with a higher degree of involvement for the young people. At the same time, this is precisely the dilemma they may end up abandoning when they are pressed and lack patience, as they describe it. When conflicts become entrenched and intensified, teachers can feel powerless and give up, leading them to repeat the very same approaches they are simultaneously trying to change. The 'strategy of avoidance' then obstructs the pedagogical development work they are attempting to explore in various ways. When efforts fail, teachers, out of frustration, may reframe the problems as tied to the area despite their continuous efforts to move beyond this 'collective area categorization' by striving through their struggles for something different.

Summarizing: Coherent conflicts in everyday life as a lens of analyzing inequality as situated

At the local school, we observe how historical, societal, and political conflicts about the area, as well as the fear that problems will escalate, unfolds as the development of a collective position of inequality within the school. When conflicts arise in school, the complexities of the common and coherent conflicts quickly lead to feelings of powerlessness. In this analysis, we analyze how the 'collective area categorization' matters in the everyday life at the local school and how this shared – and historically developed – understanding gets different, situated meanings in the class for the young people.

The explorations of the conditions of participation insight school often disappear from the professional's understanding of the problems, as they are pressured to keep focus on the academic

progression of the pupils. This shifts focus away from the specific conditions for the young people's possibilities of participation and their reasons for acting as they do. By looking at what the teachers in many ways do to avoid conflicts, it becomes a means to analyze inequality as *situated*. As we aim to illustrate, the young people's conditions of participation are linked both to their social interactions, collaborative processes about them, and how their lives *outside* of school gain situated meanings depending on how common conflicts are handled *within* the school. This means that the young people and teachers' actions in the everyday life of school are mediated by the societal conflicts they are part of regarding both the school system and the local marginalized residential area. It is, therefore, crucial to explore inequality from the perspectives of the young people and teachers in their everyday lives in relation to societal, historical, and political conflicts and how they get a variety of meanings in the specific social practice.

When we explore young people and the professionals' actions in the school, they may initially appear to be in opposition to each other and have very different expressions. Simultaneously, the teachers are negotiating and transforming these conflicts through their actions as part of their everyday life. When following the efforts of the professionals over time, we see that they are constantly negotiating and managing these conflicts to create the best possible conditions for the young people's possibilities of participation. Through this, all participants in school contribute to moving the conflicts and working to transform them in order to pedagogical developmental work. This appears to be filled with contradictions and dilemmas, where the teachers' efforts simultaneously reproduce restrictions and create new opportunities for participation.

With the concept of situated inequality, we see how the complexity of coherent conflicts in different ways matters for the young people's access to their shared school life. This illustrates how we can gain a deeper understanding of inequality by analyzing the conflicts and how they are handled in contradictory ways within social practice. The development of unequal conditions of participation cannot be understood as a systematic process, nor as random, but as something that develops in a local context with specific everyday life conditions. Such a focus points to understanding problems as part of their social context, for example, by not shifting conflicts elsewhere, such as into young people's individual prerequisites, their family background, or geography.

References

Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D. & Morrison, D. (2016). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: Using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, *19*(2), 300–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248837

Bach, J. S. & Schneidermann, N. (2022). Moral urban citizenship and the youth problem in a danish ghetto. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, *11*(1), 20–34. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOE-12-2020-0055

Billet, P., Martin, D. & Hart, M. (2019). *Complexities of researching with young people*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429424489

Birk, R. H., & Fallov, M. A. (2021). Between a rock and a hard place: State-led territorial stigmatization and informal care practices amongst local community workers in Denmark. *Community Development Journal*, *56*(2), 266–282. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsaa039

Bourdieu, P. (1977). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and Ideology in Education* (pp. 71–112). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351018142-3

Busch-Jensen, P. & Schraube, E. (2019). Zooming in zooming out: Analytical strategies of situated generalization in psychological research. In C. Højholt & E. Schraube (Eds.), *Subjectivity and Knowledge* (pp. 221–241). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29977-4_12

Dreier, O. (2008). *Psychotherapy in everyday life.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619519

Easterbrook, M. J. & Hadden, I. R. (2021). tackling educational inequalities with social psychology: Identities, contexts, and interventions. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, *15*(1), 180–236. https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12070

Ejrnæs M., Gabrielsen G. & Nørrung P. (2005). *Social opdrift – social arv* [Social uplift – social inheritance]. Akademisk Forlag.

Ejrnæs, M. (2010). *Det ved vi om social arv* [What we know about social heritage]. Dafolo.

Gillborn, D. (2015). Intersectionality, critical race theory, and the primacy of racism: Race, class, gender, and disability in education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21*(3), 277–287. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414557827

Gilliam, L. (2017). The impossible bilingual boys: Civilizing efforts and oppositional forms in a multi-ethnic class. In L. Gilliam & E. Gulløv (Eds.), *Children of the Welfare State: Civilising Practices in Schools, Childcare, and Families* (pp. 138-164). Pluto Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1jktscx.11

Graversen, D. T. (2013). Fra sted til sted: Om boligkvarteret betydning for unges uddannelsespositioneringer [From place to place: The significance of residential neighborhoods for young people's educational positioning; Doctoral dissertation, University of Copenhagen]. http://curis.ku.dk/ws/files/45421341/Ph.d._2013_Gravesen.pdf

Holzkamp, K. (1998). Daglig livsførelse som subjektvidenskabeligt grundkoncept [Conduct of everyday life as a basic concept in subject science]. *Nordiske Udkast*, *2*, 3–31.

Holzkamp, K. (2013). Basic concepts of critical psychology. In E. Schraube & U. Osterkamp (Eds.), *Psychology from the Standpoint of the Subject: Selected Writings of Klaus Holzkamp* (pp. 19–27). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137296436_2

Højholt, C. (2016). Situated inequality and the conflictuality of children's conduct of life. In E. Schraube & C. Højholt (Eds.), *Psychology and the Conduct of Everyday Life* (pp. 145–163). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315746890-8

Højholt, C. (2023). Collaborative practice research: Inequality in school as an example. In E. Tseliou, C. Demuth, E. Georgaca & B. Gough (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Innovative Qualitative Psychological Research* (pp. 343–355). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003132721-32

Højholt, C. & Kousholt, D. (2018). Children participating and developing agency in and across various social practices. In M. Fleer, & B. van Oers (Eds.), *International Handbook of Early Childhood Education* (pp. 1581–1598). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-0927-7_82

Højholt, C. & Kousholt, D. (2020). Contradictions and conflicts: Researching school as conflictual social practice. *Theory & Psychology*, *30*(1), 36–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354319884129

Højholt, C. & Røn-Larsen, M. (2021). Conflicts, situated inequality, and politics of everyday life. *Culture & Psychology*, *27*(4), 591–611. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X21989950

Katznelson, N., Pless, M., Görlich, A., Graversen, L. & Sørensen, N. B. (2021). Ny udsathed: nuancer i forståelser af psykisk mistrivsel [new forms of marginalization: Understanding mental health among young people]. *Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, *2(*2), 83–103. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-8162-2021-02-01

Kousholt, D. & Højholt, C. (2022). Transgressing theory/practice divides through collaboration: Building research communities with professionals [Special issue]. *Outlines*, 22, 379-418. https://tidsskrift.dk/outlines/article/view/134899

Landersø, (2023). Social arv og offentlige udgifter til uddannelse [Social inheritance and public spending on education]. Samfundsøkonomen. https://doi.org/10.7146/samfundsokonomen.v2023i2.136921

Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. *American Sociological Review*, *67*(5), 747–776. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088916.

Lave, J. (2019). *Learning and everyday life: Access, participation, and changing practice.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108616416

Madsen, C. (2023). *Anderledes end de andre? - en analyse af skolevanskeligheder og betingelser for at håndtere forskellighed i skolens hverdagsliv* [Different from the others? - An analysis of school difficulties and conditions for dealing with difference in everyday school life; Doctoral dissertation, Aarhus University]. https://pure.au.dk/portal/en/publications/anderledes-end-de-andre-en-analyse-af-skolevanskeligheder-og-beti/

McDermott, R. & Vossoughi, S. (2020). The culture of poverty, Again. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, *14*(2), 60–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2020.1733960

Mehan, H. (1992). Understanding inequality in schools: The contribution of interpretive studies. *Sociology of Education, 65*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.2307/2112689

Metzner, F., Adedeji, A., Wichmann, M. L.-Y., Zaheer, Z., Schneider, L., Schlachzig, L., Richters, J., Heumann, S. & Mays, D. (2022). Experiences of discrimination and everyday

racism among children and adolescents with an immigrant background. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, Article 805941. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.805941

Mørck, L. L., & Nissen, M. (2005). Praksisforskning: Deltagende kritik mellem mikrofonholderi og akademisk bedreviden [Practice research: Participatory critique between microphone and academic know-it-all]. In T. Bechmann Jensen, & G. Christensen (Eds.), *Psykologiske & pædagogiske metoder: Kvalitative og kvantitative forskningsmetoder i praksis* (pp. 123–154). Roskilde University Press.

Ottosen, M.H., Andreasen, A.G., Dahl, K.M., Lausten, M., Rayce, S.B. & Tagmose, B.B. (2022). *Børn og unge i Danmark: Velfærd og trivsel 2022 [Children and young people in denmark: Welfare and well-being 2022.* VIVE – Det Nationale Forsknings- og Analysecenter for Velfærd. https://www.vive.dk/media/pure/0xgg53xk/14872861

Petersen, K. E., Hedegaard-Sørensen, L., Sørensen, T. E. M. & Ladefoged, L. (2019). *Fritids- og ungdomsklubbers betydning for børn og unges hverdagsliv og fællesskaber i udsatte boligområder* [The importance of youth clubs for children and young people's everyday life and communities in marginalized residential areas]. Aarhus University. https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2021.v10.x.010

Ploug, N. (2017). *Social arv og social ulighed* [Social inheritance and social inequality]. Hans Reitzel.

Rytter, M. (2019). Writing against integration: Danish imaginaries of culture, race, and belonging. *Ethnos*, *84*(4), 678–695. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2018.1458745

Røn-Larsen, M., Højholt, C., Mardahl-Hansen, T., Sylvest-Berg, R., Szulevicz, T., Jensen, S. K. & Tybjerg, G. (2023). *Participation and Situated Inequality in Children's Institutional Everyday Lives*. Aalborg University. https://forskning.ruc.dk/en/projects/deltagelse-og-situeret-ulighed-i-børnelivets-institutioner

Røn-Larsen, M. & Højholt, C. (2025). Chains of reasons: exploring structural conditions by analyzing subjective reasons. *Theory & Psychology, 35*(3), 271–292. https://doi.org/10.1177/09593543251326506

Røn Larsen, M., & Højholt, C. (2026). Participation and Situated Inequality in the Institutions of Children's *Everyday Lives : Development of the Concepts 'Participation' and 'Conflicts'. International Review of Theoretical Psychologies*, *3*(1), 324–344. https://doi.org/10.7146/irtp.v3i1.167393

Sand, A., L., Jacobsen, G. H., & Elf, N. F. (2020). Fra 'ghetto' til GAME-zone – territorial stigmatisering og stedslige taktikker for selvudtryk blandt unge [From 'Ghetto' to GAME Zone - Territorial Stigmatisation and Spatial Tactics of Self-Expression Among Youth]. *Nordisk tidsskrift for pedagogikk og kritikk*, *6*, 69-87. https://doi.org/10.23865/ntpk.v6.1642

Schraube, E. (2015). Why theory matters: Analytical strategies of critical psychology. *Estudos de Psicologia, 32*(3), 533–545. https://doi.org/10.1590/0103-166X2015000300018

Sernhede, O. (2018). Urban marginality, social mobilisation and youth work in the shadow of neoliberalism and segregation. In M. Kamali & J. H. Jönsson (Eds.), *Neoliberalism, Nordic Welfare States and Social Work* (pp. 238–248). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315111834-21

Sharone, O. (2024). *The stigma trap: College-educated, experienced, and long-term unemployed*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190239244.001.0001

Stetsenko, A. (2018). Confronting biological reductionism from a social justice agenda: Transformative agency and activist stance. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, *67*(1), 44–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/2381336918787531

Sylvest-Berg, R. (2025). The everyday life in a 'waiting room': Connecting situated inequality to institutional conditions of societal and political change. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, *31*(3-4), 294–309. https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2025.2547675

Sylvest-Berg, R. (In Prep). *Institutional conditions of participation – A study on the social processes of situated inequality in children and young people's institutional everyday life* [Doctoral Dissertation, Roskilde University].

Testmann, L. (2021). *Konflikter og fællesskaber blandt børn i* skolen [Conflicts and Communities Among Children in School; Doctoral dissertation, Aarhus Universitet]. https://pure.au.dk/portal/da/publications/konflikter-og-fællesskaber-blandt-børn-i-skolen-perspektiver-på-i/

The Danish Government (2018). *Ét Danmark uden parallelsamfund – ingen ghettoer i 2030* [One Denmark without parallel societies – No ghettos in 2030]. https://www.regeringen.dk/media/4937/publikation_ét-danmark-uden-parallelsamfund.pdf

The Danish Ministry of Children and Education (2014). *Aftale om Bedre og mere attraktive erhvervsuddannelser* [Agreement on better and more attractive vocational education]. https://www.uvm.dk/-/media/filer/uvm/udd/erhverv/pdf19/190220-aftale-om-bedre-og-mere-attraktive-erhvervsuddannelser.pdf

The Danish Ministry of Children and Education (2020). *Det risikobaserede kvalitetstilsyn med folkeskoler og ungdomsuddannelser* udvides [The risk-based quality supervision of primary and secondary schools is expanded]. https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2020/okt/201009-det-risikobaserede-kvalitetstilsyn-med-folkeskoler-og-ungdomsuddannelser-udvides

Thomsen, J.-P. & Andrade, S. (2023). Uddannelse og ulighed i Danmark 1991-2020 [Education and Inequality in Denmark 1991-2020], *Samfundsøkonomen,* (2), 54–63. https://doi.org/10.7146/samfundsokonomen.v2023i2.136920

Tybjerg, G. M. (2023). *Unge og ulige deltagerbetingelser i udskolingen* [Young people and unequal participation conditions in lower secondary education; Doctoral dissertation, Roskilde University]. https://forskning.ruc.dk/en/publications/unge-og-ulige-deltagerbetingelser-i-udskolingen/

Wacquant, L. (2007). Territorial stigmatization in the age of advantaged marginality. *Thesis Eleven*, *91*(1), 66–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513607082003

Wacquant, L. (2020). Revisiting territories of relegation: Class, ethnicity, and state in the making of advanced marginality. In L. Wacquant (Ed.), *Urban Change and Citizenship in Times of Crisis* (pp. 17–29). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429262289-3

About the author

Rebekka Sylvest-Berg is a PhD Fellow at the Department of People and Technology at Roskilde University in Denmark. She holds a BA and MA in Psychology and Social Science. She is part of the research group 'Social Psychology of Everyday Life'. Her main research interest covers the institutional everyday life of children and young people, focusing on how processes of situated inequality develop and can be transcended. Her research combines methods from a critical perspective of qualitative and quantitative traditions to connect social processes of situated inequality with institutional conditions of societal and political change in local contexts.

Contact: rekn@ruc.dk

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4958-9361

Gry Tybjerg is an Associate Professor, PhD, employed in Applied Welfare Research at UCL University College in Denmark. She is the leader of the Research Program Inclusion and Everyday Life, has a background as a teacher, and holds an MA in Educational Psychology. Gry is exploring youth perspectives on conduct of everyday life, social marginalization and inequality through practice research. In close collaboration with young people, diverse professionals and actors across young people's everyday life contexts, she researches how bridge-building collaboration can support conditions for young people's possibilities of participation in school, education, day care institutions and leisure time.

Contact: gmth@ucl.dk

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6100-3583