

- Vol. 3, No. 1 • 2026 • (pp. 324–344) •  
<https://tidsskrift.dk/irtp/>

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.7146/irtp.v3i1.167393>

# Participation and Situated Inequality in the Institutions of Children’s Everyday Lives: Development of the Concepts ‘Participation’ and ‘Conflicts’

Maja Røn-Larsen & Charlotte Højholt

Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University  
Roskilde, Denmark.

## Abstract

*This article presents the practice research project “Participation and situated inequality in the institutions of children’s everyday lives” and will serve as a foundation for the two subsequent articles. The aim of the present article is to contribute to conceptual clarification and further development of three key theoretical concepts: participation, conflict, and institutional conditions. Based on the project, it is argued, how these concepts are analytically central to understanding the situated dynamics involved in the production of unequal possibilities of participation in children’s everyday lives in and across institutional contexts. The goal is to pave the way for opening the ‘black box of inequality’ by analysing situated inequality in relation to social situations and connections in complex everyday life.*

**Keywords:** conflict, children, education, institutional conditions, participation, situated inequality

## Introduction

Educational inequality is a persistent, worldwide issue that involves questions of access to the common educational resources of society. Much research on inequality in education concerns issues *outside* societal institutions for children and young people, with a focus on children’s

---

individual dispositions, socioeconomic background and intergenerational transmission or social heritage (e.g. Bird, 2007). However, studied from the perspectives of children, inequality in education appears to relate to their possibilities of participation and unequal access to social resources in their everyday lives across various institutions (Højholt, 2011; 2024). We have been involved in research concerning children experiencing difficulties at school for many years, and unequal possibilities for participation often appear to be part of the problem. This indicates a need for developing the conceptualisation on inequality, which calls for further psychological theorising and engagement. Thus, a fundamental question is: How can we understand the constitution of unequal possibilities of participation *within* and as part of the social practice of educational institutions?

In recent years our research has focused on what we have termed situated inequality in relation to children's access to participation in everyday institutional contexts and what conditions in everyday life seem to promote or hinder children's possibilities of participation. Our previous research shows how unequal conditions of participation are constituted in social situations, and how these situations are organised and shaped through conflictual collaboration between multiple parties in relation to different institutional conditions (Højholt, 2016; 2022; Højholt & Røn-Larsen, 2021; Mardahl-Hansen & Højholt, 2025; Tybjerg, 2023).

In accordance with this line of research, a central aim of the current practice research project, "Participation and situated inequality in the institutions of children's everyday lives",<sup>1</sup> is to expand the focus on inequality to include exploring unequal access to social resources and possibilities of participation in the situated everyday lives in societal institutions. Our project investigates how children and professionals deal with social conflicts and historical contradictions within these institutions as part of their everyday life struggles, and how these struggles form important aspects of the dynamics of inequality. We focus on institutional conditions and social dynamics between various parties in everyday life as inherently related to the unequal distribution of educational resources instead of merely studying inequality as a question of individual or generational shortcomings.

Thus, understanding unequal *possibilities of participation* involves conceptual development that allows us to gain insight into *institutional conditions*, social dynamics, and *conflicts* in the everyday lives of children, young people and various professionals.

Our conceptual focus on conflict is empirically derived from research indicating that social conflicts among parents, professionals and children lie behind processes of marginalisation and singling out of children, which often have unnoticed and restrictive implications for their possibilities of participation (Højholt, 1999; 2011; Morin, 2023; Røn-Larsen, 2011; 2016; Schwartz, 2019). These "unequalizing" processes are related to structural and institutional conditions. Theoretically, this conceptual attention is based on an understanding of institutional practice as historical social practices organised around society's contradictory common matters such as educating children (Axel, 2020; Hedegaard et al., 1999; Lave, 2019; Ollmann, 2003; 2015).

---

<sup>1</sup> The researchers involved in this project, the present article, and two subsequent articles are Maja Røn-Larsen, Charlotte Højholt, Thomas Szulewicz, Sarah Kierkegaard Jensen, Gry Maria Tybjerg, Rebekka Sylvest-Berg, and Tilde Mardahl-Hansen (<https://ruc.dk/forskningsprojekt/deltagelse-og-situert-ulighed-i-boernelivets-institutioner>).

Overall, this indicates that working with possibilities of participation for all children is a key aspect of preventing inequality. In Denmark, the concept of participation has become increasingly prevalent in daycare and school policy and practice-. However, the term is often used with different meanings and remains conceptually undeveloped. It is often used in relation to compensatory educational programmes designed to encourage socially isolated children to participate.

Still, although the concept of participation is often used imprecisely and inconsistently in theory and in practice, it remains essential to changing our understanding of issues concerning inequality and to nuance dominant approaches to inequality in relation to children's socioeconomic background. Moreover, it is vital to clarify and develop the concept further in such a way that the link with, and focus on, the *conditions* for participation are clarified as a crucial aspect of inequality.

In this article we wish to broaden the psychological focus on inequality and conceptualise how those involved deal with social conflicts and historical contradictions within the societal institutions for children's learning and development.

In the following we introduce our joint research project and its theoretical and methodological background before briefly exploring the concept of situated inequality, as it forms the basis of the research project. We then discuss theoretical implications and necessary developments of the concepts of participation and conflicts to further clarify conceptualisations of subjects as participants who all have reasons for doing what they do when coordinating, participating, and contributing to social practice. Finally, we discuss the need for a situated approach to institutions, including concepts of institutional arrangements and conditions for dealing with the common but contradictory social matter of education.

## **Theoretical and methodological background**

The empirical background for the present article and two subsequent articles is a practice research project in which our research group collaborates with various kinds of professionals, including: pedagogues from daycare and leisure time institutions, teachers, and educational psychologists in three Danish municipalities.

These co-researchers are selected due to their experiences of struggling with inequality issues and engagement in developing relevant possibilities of participation for all children (Højholt, 2024). The aim of the overall project is to explore processes of situated inequality and to theoretically qualify the concept of participation to develop knowledge about how professional and interdisciplinary efforts can be brought closer to children's concrete everyday lives in a way that both recognises professional differences and sees them as connected in joint efforts. The practice research project comprises three sub-projects investigating the perspectives of children and professionals in and across different but interlinked institutional practices – daycare, school, and educational psychological counselling. The empirical material of the project is the result of an emergent design and consists of interviews with the professionals and participant observations in the institutional everyday life in daycare, schools, leisure time institutions and educational psychology practices as well as continuous workshops of collective analysis together with the co-researchers during a period of three years.

The research group represents theoretical perspectives related to developing a situated psychology that is rooted in theoretical thinking centred on subjectivity and social practice (Dreier, 2008a; Lave, 2019; Schraube & Osterkamp, 2013).

From this theoretical standpoint, which is based on social practice theory and critical psychology, we relate inequality to unequal access to social resources and possibilities of participation in and across the institutional everyday lives of children. This involves developing a decentred methodological approach that focuses on the processes through which these possibilities of participation are negotiated and shaped by the conflictual institutional practices of different professionals (Dreier, 2011; Lave, 2019). Hence, we focus on children and various professionals as subjects who participate in and contribute to developing their institutional conditions and consequently also contribute to the development of different possibilities of participation for children.

The exploration of situated conditions for participation in societal institutions also implies exploring how the involved (children, parents, and professionals) deal with social conflicts and historical contradictions within these institutions (Axel & Højholt, 2019; Jensen & Szulevicz, 2025). The term contradictions refers to how professionals must deal with contradictory issues, such as concerns relating to inclusion, learning communities, performance, and individual assessment. This is reflected in everyday classroom situations, where teachers must address the simultaneous demands of a predictable structure, flexibility, challenging academic tasks and a safe space for children. Furthermore, professionals must deal with disagreements that arise concerning these issues e.g. among parents, leaders, and politicians. How those involved deal with contradictions and conflicts establishes the conditions for professional work as well as for children's interactions and possibilities of participation.

The current historical situation is characterised by political pressure and conflicts about measurable results, fixed, unambiguous goals, documentation and efficiency, in addition to a widespread preoccupation with individual vulnerability and diagnoses (Farrell et al., 2006; Larsen et al., 2019; Szulevicz & Tanggaard, 2017; Säljö & Hjörne, 2024; Tegtmejer & Säljö, 2023). Although there are local variations in how professionals navigate these challenges, it is striking how some complex processes involving multiple participants across different practices evolve in directions characterised by escalating powerlessness, insurmountable tasks, conflicts, mutual resignation, and polarised perspectives (Røn-Larsen, 2019). These processes may be further complicated by problems being displaced among those involved, and by increasingly one-sided categorisations (Højholt, 2006).

In conflictual processes permeated by powerlessness and increasingly complicated and threatening interactions, the conditions for situated inquiry and being curious about understanding children's participation in relation to their contextual possibilities are restricted. In some processes, understanding tends to become limited to, for example a child's residential area, parental instability, or individual behavioural deficits. Such unambiguous categorisation of some children may lead to situations where these children are understood decontextualised and treated in unequal ways and experience limited access to social resources (Morin, 2008; Røn-Larsen, 2018). Thus, to strengthen our understanding of children's unequal possibilities of participation the term conflict must be conceptualised as related to collaboration on common but still contradictory matters – about and in the everyday life of educational institutions. In the everyday life of educational institutions, a variety of considerations must be reconciled every day through flexible and exploratory conflictual cooperation (Axel, 2011; Mardahl-Hansen, 2019).

Hence, the research focus of our project necessitates developing the key concepts of participation and conflict, as they are analytically central to understanding the situated conflictual processes involved in problems of inequality in children's everyday lives across educational institutions. When we acknowledge how situated inequality is linked with institutional conditions for dealing with the tasks and problems in societal institutions, we furthermore need to develop a dynamic and situated approach to institutions. In the final part of the article, we revisit the discussion of the concept of institutions from a social psychological perspective on inequality. For now, however, we will briefly mention that we theorise institutions as institutional arrangements of social practices in which different people live together and create conditions for each other's conduct of everyday life (Dreier, 2008b). According to this approach institutions represent social practices that are subject to political contestation and conflictual cooperation. The various kinds of professionals involved in children's lives share common tasks in relation to children but have different areas of responsibility and perspectives on the issues surrounding children. As a result, cooperation between professionals is both necessary and conflictual (Axel, 2011; Røn-Larsen, 2019).

Nevertheless, in professional practice – as well as in research on inequality and children in difficulties – these conflicts are rarely addressed explicitly, as an aspect of problematic processes and situations and as conditions for participation in societal institutions.

This is the background for exploring how unequal conditions are constituted in social situations, and how these situations are organised, due to the conflictual collaboration of several parties, as well as the specific institutional conditions of this collaboration. In the next section, we present the discussions behind exploring situated inequality in such a way.

## **Situated inequality**

In both practice and research, inequality is typically understood to be linked to the reproduction of family background, typically addressed with terms like social inheritance or intergenerational transmission (Barnes et al., 2012; Bird 2007; Jonsson, 1969; Jæger et al., 2003; Ploug, 2017; Serbin & Karp, 2003). However, various statistical analyses suggest that such a relationship is far less predictable and automatic than we commonly think. For example, some studies have shown that the number of children who exceed their family background is higher than expected and higher than the number of those who reproduce it (Ejrnæs, 2003; 2019; Ejrnæs et al., 2004; Rockwool Foundation, 2024). Other analyses have also shown that about half of the children who end up in a vulnerable position during their school careers do not come from a family background with so-called risk factors (Benjaminsen et al., 2015). This may suggest that there are other processes generating the inequality in play that cannot be addressed based solely on a child's family background.

Consequently, we must expand our understanding of inequality in children's everyday institutional lives in and around school and other institutional settings for children's everyday life. Inspired by 'the black box of schooling' (Benjaminsen, 2006; Braster et al., 2012), we must analyse and open what we have termed the black box of inequality (Højholt & Røn-Larsen, 2021). However, at the same time, we need to remind ourselves not to apply a perspective on schools as uniform, deterministic systems. As Mehan (1992) stated:

“Schools are not black boxes through which students pass on their way to predetermined slots in the capitalist order; they have a vibrant life, composed of processes and practices that respond to competing demands that often unwittingly contribute to inequality” (p. 1).

Schools are both a highly debated societal institution as well as a context in which everyday life is lived. Moreover, the social dynamics of schools depend on structural, legal, and administrative conditions outside the classroom, as well as conflictual and collaborative processes between children, families, psychologists, social workers, and administrators (Røn-Larsen, 2018; 2019; 2024). This is yet another argument for emphasising our understanding and exploration of institutions and institutional conditions as perceived by participants living their everyday lives in and across institutions.

This project focuses on processes in the vibrant everyday life that, when analysed from children’s perspectives, appear to be central to their experiences of managing their everyday lives in institutions for children and across daycare, school and leisure time settings. This includes their possibilities to combine participation in peer groups and the academic agenda as essential for navigating many-sided demands across life contexts (Højholt, 2022; 2024; Stanek, 2019). By following children’s everyday lives over time and across different institutional contexts, it is clear that their access to possibilities of participation is unequally distributed. This indicates that inequality is also linked to social situations within and across children’s institutional lives. Consequently, we must take an interest in how these situations are organised and how the understandings and interventions of various kinds of professionals interact. Hence, inequality appears to be linked to the institutional organisation and negotiation of children and young people’s access to social resources in and around school life (Højholt & Røn-Larsen, 2021; McDermott & Varenne, 1998; Stetsenko, 2017; 2018).

Based on the above reflections we seek a conceptual shift from exploring inequality as related to socioeconomic background to exploring situated unequal conditions for participation and access to social resources in societal institutions. This approach emphasises the concept of participation, but what is meant by participation and participation possibilities? In our observations and analysis of children’s participation in different institutions, we are confronted with shortcomings in relation to the concept of participation. We lack conceptual possibilities and a language for differentiating between multiple forms of participation in social contexts. As a result, we need to develop the concept further in terms of its content, in addition to relating it to other concepts, to prevent it from reverting to individualistic and abstract understandings of the problems of participation.

## **The concept of participation**

Notably, although the concept of participation has become part of everyday language, especially since its adoption into the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, it is neither unequivocal nor neutral. The word has multiple meanings that are used in a large variety of political and pedagogical practices (e.g. Montà, 2023; Simovska, 2007). The concept is entangled in both theoretical and political struggles on issues related to the position of children in society and in the educational system, which means it is also related to issues of inequality and unequal access in terms of influence and resources (Warming, 2011).

In pedagogical practice and policy documents in Denmark the concept of participation is increasingly used as a goal to strive for in educational settings; but it remains rather unclear what

pedagogical strategies the aim of “developing participation opportunities” suggests for practice (EVA, 2020).

However, different meanings and use of the concept have different methodological and concrete practical consequences – since it makes a substantial difference whether the object for pedagogical intervention is an individual child’s modes of participation understood as ‘behaviour’ related to ‘functional level’ and ‘competencies’ – or whether the pedagogical object is the social situation and the child’s conditions for participating. We therefore consider it necessary to develop concepts that clarify participation and link the concept to other concepts to emphasise the embeddedness of actions in social practice.

In theoretical psychology the concept is widely used to conceptualise the intrinsic cohesion of social conditions and personal actions, drawing on various theoretical traditions (especially central in cultural historical approaches, e.g. Aronsson et al. (2018), Daniels and Hedegaard (2011) and Fler and Hedegaard (2010)). Although the concept shares similar inspiration and theoretical roots, it is used for different theoretical aims and in different ways. For example, Rogoff et al. (2007) links the concept of participation to the development of cultural repertoires through participation in everyday routines and practices. In this article, we explore the concept from an ontological perspective connecting participation to the fundamental point of departure that activities are to be understood as related to a common social world. We analyse problems relating to *how* a person is part of this world, and the possibilities of participation that are offered to a person.

Hence, from a theoretical standpoint in subject-scientific critical psychology and social practice theory, the concept of participation insists that people cannot be understood in isolation from what they participate in, i.e. there is no such thing as a non-participating subject (Dreier, 2008a; Lave, 2019). In everyday school life, some children may appear not to participate. They may be participating in activities that the school staff do not want, or they may be participating in a way that does not seem to allow for involvement or contribution. However, they are still part of something. This indicates that the problem lies in their social position and their restricted possibilities of participating and not whether they participate.

Exploring inequality in new ways requires conceptualisations about the relationship between subjects and their societal and institutional conditions – explored and analysed from personal perspectives anchored in social practice. The shift from behaviour to participation implies a subject that experiences its possibilities in subjective ways and acts substantiated due to the meanings offered by the social situation (Schraube, 2015; 2024).

This is a situated perspective that emphasises a dialectical approach and goes against the abstraction of structure and against the concept of detached behaviour. It involves a completely different examination of problems that go beyond focusing isolated on the individual child – and it changes the strategies and purposes aimed at ‘behaviour change’ – to pedagogical efforts aimed at changing situated conditions of participation.

This implies investigating and working with social situations that involve many different kinds of participants, and their conditions created *across* various interlinked practices – a point that has implications in both research methodology and pedagogical everyday work practices.

Although this theoretical endeavour is well-known to many critical researchers, the conceptual confusion is still at stake in understandings of problems in children’s educational institutions. While it might seem like a banal point that the participation of a person must be understood in the

light of what the person is participating in, this perspective on social practice as *conditions* for human activity is missing in many descriptions of children and their difficulties.

When difficulties escalate in social practice, psychology and psychological concepts seem to play a key role in problem categorisations of singled out children (Hjörne & Säljö, 2004; McDermott & Vossoughi, 2020; Mehan et al., 1986). These perspectives imply that isolated children are studied at the expense of examining their perspectives and of looking with the participants at their situation, not to mention the existing social dynamics. This is why developing a situated psychology continues to be an urgent aspect of gaining the ability to explicitly identify the inner connection between participation and the conditions for participation and to dissolve the either/or dualism that constrains many conflicts concerning problems. For instance, we see conflicts about whether a problem is related to dynamics in the child communities, to the competencies of the professionals, to the social background of some of the children or is a question of individual shortcomings. In the following we present illustrative formulations from professionals in daycare and leisure time institutions. These professionals are in general focused on working with developing possibilities of participation. However, in relation to some children and some situations they formulate problems as related to individual isolated characteristics. The following quotes are related to decisions about *not* letting some children in the educational setting move to the next level with the rest of their group or not letting them participate with the rest of the group in general activities:

“It has something to do with his language ... and also his level of empathy – we don’t see any.”

“Maybe she has some autistic characteristics?”

“There’s something socially [wrong with him] – he seeks children from the other groups [which implies younger children].”

Observations and interviews with professionals illustrate the tendency to let individual categorisations overshadow the problem’s underlying social conditions. Even the social aspects are often described as resulting from individual issues, such as diagnostic symptoms, a language deficit or a lack of social skills, disconnected from relations to the social practice children are participating in, e.g. what are the social dynamics in the group like? What are possible reasons for not joining the group? What are the social conditions like for taking part in the specific community of children in the specific context?

Excluding children from shared activities for shorter or longer periods of time is still used quite often in educational practice to solve problems. The aim is to train the children’s cognitive and social abilities and help them concentrate. Somewhat paradoxically, however, when professionals – and official policies – focus on inclusion and possibilities of participation in child communities.

Such categorisations and educational practices (often grounded in helping and supporting a child) are significant in terms of the children’s access to social resources in the institutions and for what we term situated inequality. The opportunities to take part for the children involved become unstable. Moved in and out of children’s communities, they do not know what just transpired in the flow of social situations, and the professionals meet and understand them differently than other children (Morin, 2008; 2019).

As illustrated this conceptual confusion about participation, where actions are understood and supported separately from social communities, tends to return to the abstract behaviour that it was originally intended to overcome. Exploring inequality issues requires a richer conceptual framework that enables us to discover situations offering access to possibilities of influence and social change, and situations positioning some children as being at the mercy of their conditions.

Stetsenko (2008) links participation with contributions to social change, specifying how persons' actions are related to the development of society's common living conditions. Thus, to understand situated inequality as unequal conditions for taking part, we need additional concepts for ascertaining differences and changes in participation in more nuanced ways that also conceptualise possibilities for contributing to social change. Participation, which can take many different forms, must be analysed linked to a concrete exploration of how social conditions are experienced by the involved subjects. Can this person make a difference? Can this person influence common activities?

To acknowledge unequal possibilities of participation as unequal possibilities to contribute to social change, we emphasise concepts such as being involved, the possibility to contribute, and making a difference in common matters. Jointly, these aspects lead to influence as a central concept for personal development (Højholt & Kousholt, 2018).

Through these conceptualisations, we wish to contribute to develop a language of participation that overcomes categorisations which attribute particular characteristics and roles to children, e.g. popular, weird, introverted, cognitively delayed, dominant, or insecure. Categorisations like this assign the issue of (unequal) conditions to the individual child.

When inequality is understood as something that is internalised in the child, the dilemmas, challenges, contradictions, and conflicts of a particular (historical) social practice dissolve – leading the social conditions for participation, the content of what participants are focused on, and the content of their conflicts to disappear, or at least recede into the background, from the understanding of problems (Røn-Larsen, 2018).

Although problems with isolated individualistic approaches seem well analysed in psychology (e.g. Burman, 1994), unanswered questions remain regarding what the reasons and conditions are for turning to individualised categories when the idea was to do the opposite. How can we understand the restraining social dynamics?

In the next section, we thus return to institutional conflicts and conditions and the processes of powerlessness and resignation that seem to pave the way for this reversion – potentially leading to unequal possibilities of participation. The reflections presented in the following serve two aims: to support linking the concept of participation to social conflicts within and concerning societal institutions, and to explore the conditions for reverting to an individualistic understanding of problems within these institutions.

## **The concept of conflict in relation to situated inequality**

The concept of participation emphasises how humans are understood as part of something but also that participants act as subjects engaged in solving problems in social practice. Participation is related to acting reasoned in relation to what is at stake in a specific social practice. It stresses actions as more than just 'reactions', fulfilling social roles, or the result or effect of an impact. To understand subjective participation, we need to explore what is at stake in a specific social practice,

which is why conceptualising the contradictory matter of societal institutions and the conflicts around and within these institutions is essential. This implies analysing social processes of inequality in the light of historical contradictions that subjects manage through their (collective and conflictual) participation (Axel, 2011; 2020).

In the following we outline the concept of conflict as based on the understanding that people deal with and connect conflicting concerns related to concrete matters as part of their everyday lives in cooperation and in conflict with one another. Our study comprised observations of children's interplay and engagement in their various contexts, e.g. at daycare and in school and afterschool programmes: The children seemed occupied with being together and working together concerning what was at stake within a specific institutional context.

For example, they worked together on how to take part in play during daycare, how to relate together concerning opportunities that arise on the playground, how to deal with the rules and procedures in a specific institutional context, and how to deal with the contradictory aspects of school life, e.g. performing well academically, finding friends, competing and collaborating, and following and challenging guidelines (Højholt & Kousholt, 2020).

Different conflicts are at play in different institutions due to differences regarding the matter at stake. Societal institutions are organised in relation to different societal problems, purposes, and tasks regarding, for example health, education, and social problems. Institutional social practices can be regarded as structured human traditions of interaction centred on particular societal tasks, responsibilities, and objectives (Chaiklin et al., 1999). In this approach, the conditions of the professionals are characterised by political conflicts concerning content, prioritisations, distribution of resources, access, and institutional demands.

In relation to schools, conflicts may be linked to societal objectives concerning social inclusion and the promotion of equal opportunities in education, as opposed to more elitist objectives related to maximising individual skills in order to compete globally (E.g. Larsen et al., 2019). In other institutions for children, contradictions for example include prioritising between care and well-being, or individual testing and early compensatory interventions. Analytically the way participants take part in institutions must be linked to their situated and intersubjective ways of dealing with the societal matters of the institutions. Participants relate to contradictions within and (political) conflicts about these institutions.

This approach to analysing conflicts is based on Ollmann's theory of contradictions in common matters. According to this theory, conflicting considerations are mutually dependent and must be reconciled through the development of practice (Ollman, 2003; Ollman & Smith, 2008 – elaborated on further in Axel & Højholt 2019; Højholt & Kousholt, 2020). This differs from other approaches to conflict in multiple ways. For example, it does not view conflicts as a threat to the reigning order or as being linked to failures in collaboration or a lack of skill. It also differs from an interest-based approach, which contends that individuals have fundamentally different interests (Sargent et al., 2011). Finally, it differs from opposing principles, such as the idea that children need either focus or flexibility. The approach to conflict presented in this article views focus and flexibility as interdependent aspects of social practice. Still, in practice conflicts that involve regulating interplay in the classroom are often stretched between apparently irreconcilable, either/or principles.

In this way different groups of professionals, parents, leaders, and officials have to deal with contradictions and conflicting perspectives on how to prioritise in relation to children's education.

Children, as participating subjects, also have to navigate in relation to these conflicting aspects and concerns in their life contexts and the often contradictory demands placed on them by various adults. In their everyday school lives, children need to collaborate, build friendships, and contribute to the fun and excitement in their communities and simultaneously they need to concentrate, learn, and perform in relation to academic tasks and to contribute to a learning environment that allows many pupils to participate.

Adults often have conflicts concerning how to regulate the children's social life in the classroom and children also sometimes have conflicts about noise and how to follow the rules. They collaborate on academic tasks while communicating about other tasks – often intermingling academic aspects and aspects regarding friendships and common interests like football – but they also have conflicts about how to prioritise, for example in relation to concentrating and collaborating. During conflictual processes some children seem to be categorised as troublesome and are not invited into the collaboration. Children become divided during conflictual processes like these, some losing access to each other's essential social resources (Røn-Larsen & Højholt, 2025).

If we realise how political conflicts on how to organise and prioritise the education of future citizens are situated and part of institutional conditions, we must include these conflicts in our understanding of problems in school.

We emphasise conflictual collaboration on education as a common but many-sided and controversial matter (Axel, 2020; Ollman, 2003). Dealing with these conflictual and many-sided matters requires flexibility, collaboration, ongoing exploration, and continually adjusting conditions. To deal with such demanding tasks the people involved need to have relevant possibilities of action and resources at their disposal. Polarising conflicts, a lack of time, and pressure to achieve measurable results can make it difficult to learn from and develop their practices during conflicts. To open the black box of inequality, additional knowledge about these processes and how they differ in different institutions is required in order to gain a better understanding of the social dynamics behind the individual categories.

To explore these processes, cross-institutional analysis is essential since the way institutions are connected in societal arrangements makes up conditions for the internal, situated interplay. To clarify the conditions for participation, the next two sections discuss institutional conditions and the concept of institutional arrangements.

## **Exploring unequal conditions for participation across institutional arrangements**

Conditions for participation are constituted across contexts. It is not enough to “stay” analytically with the problematic situations. We need to decentre the analytical focus and pursue participants' reasons for doing what they do, i.e. reasons that also point to conditions in other places and social practices (Dreier, 2008a). This leads us to ask questions like: Why do the other children not want to play with a specific child? What are the adults' reasons for constantly scolding that specific child?

An analysis of subjective reasons provides access to conditions and situations elsewhere, e.g. how children's reasons for excluding a child may be related to the risk of the adults putting the spotlight

on them in terms of problems, or how teachers may feel under pressure from parents who request more discipline in the classroom.

Likewise, the adults' reasons for problematising a child may be related to concerns outside the specific situation, such as deadlocked conflicts in the collaboration with parents, colleagues, or other interprofessional partners. Various institutional conditions, such as administrative procedures, the prioritisation of resources, and legislation also play a role. All these conditions influence the various parties' understanding of one another and whether they experience accessibility, flexibility, and the opportunity to act or feel powerless, threatened, or under pressure.

Understanding how these processes develop requires looking beyond the specific situation here and now, and into other social practices across the institutional arrangement to pursue the interconnected conditions. The concept of institutional arrangements refers to the interplay between different social practices – in this case related to the educational system. Daycare, schools, leisure time institutions, and psychological counselling are organised separately but are interlinked and mutually influence each other. The concept of institutional arrangement has been developed to avoid the abstraction of structure and the comprehension of institutions as predefined containers that determine the possibilities of participation (Dreier, 2006; Højholt & Røn-Larsen, 2021; Lave, 2019).

On the one hand institutional practices contain similarities (e.g. schools are generally organised around learning, teaching, assessment and differentiation.). But, on the other hand, always differ in different locations and different collaborative constellations and procedures (Dreier, 2008a; 2008b; Sylvest-Berg, 2025). Institutional arrangements are not fixed constraints but rather the continuous creations of ongoing processes of negotiations and conflicts among subjects with different positions, perspectives, and tasks - related to common matters. Understanding these processes requires examining the institutional settings in which they arise by taking a cross-contextual approach that explores how professionals' perspectives and practices are shaped by institutional conditions and their possibilities of action. Such examination reveals how multiple, sometimes conflicting logics coexist and influence practice (Røn-Larsen, 2018).

Hence, to avoid abstract and coincidental contextualisation of phenomena in practice, we base the analysis on conditions relevant to the involved participants' *reasons* for acting in their everyday lives. Professionals' understandings and possibilities of action are formed within specific institutional arrangements and reflect both shared and conflicting purposes. Methodologically, we have worked with analysing professionals' reasons as a way to access the exploration of professionals' conditions for understanding educational problems in specific ways. We have developed the methodological concept 'chains of reasons' as a conceptual possibility for analysing connections between personal participation and institutional conditions in a concrete historical practice (Røn-Larsen & Højholt, 2025).

In relation to understanding situated inequality and the constitution of unequal possibilities of participation, we involve conditions from other contexts in an analytical understanding of the problems. This involves sometimes moving our research processes from practice to practice across the overall institutional arrangement of education. For example, to understand a powerless situation in the classroom, we might have to examine the distribution of educational resources, the processes of the referral, or the conflicts in, for example the group of parents.

## **A situated approach to the concept of institutions**

This article, attempted to develop a situated practice approach to participation, conflict, and institutions. From a social psychological perspective, this approach emphasises how participants in concrete situations in the everyday life within institutional arrangements engage with contradictory historical matters.

Rather than understanding institutions as a representation of hegemonic norms, we must understand them as arrangements around societal tasks and problems upon which people disagree, and which contain contradictory considerations in themselves. Discussions on institutional conditions are easily caught up in a polarisation between including the institutional and structural aspects in a deterministic way (where participants simply reproduce practice as a footprint of overall structures) versus not systematically including institutional conditions in the analysis when trying to understand problems and inequalities in institutions.

To bridge this dichotomy, an effort must be made to turn our analytical gaze to the situated processes in which participants intersubjectively collaborate and conflict about contradictory tasks – and can constitute more or less inflexible conditions for one another’s participation and contributions. Institutions are not unambiguous. They are related to such situated conflictual processes around historical/societal contradictions. Participants in institutions grapple with, collaborate on, handle conflicts about, and reconcile various considerations and aspects of the contradictory societal tasks of institutions. How should the educational system prioritise? What goals should schools pursue? And who can participate in the negotiations?

This perspective emphasises how educational institutions are not definite abstract entities defined once and for all. Institutional structures are not external to personal participation but are actively shaped through our engagements. Institutional arrangements and conditions are continuously negotiated and transformed through collaborative participation. They are social practices produced and reproduced by the participation of many different parties in the contradictory historical matter of education.

By addressing the meaning of these collaborative processes, we have emphasised how people are conditions for each other, but also that we all have other institutional conditions at stake than the specific “each other”. The involved parties must also constantly manoeuvre in relation to changing legislation, political ideologies, current historical trends, and demands such as those for specialised skills, global competition, abstract standardisation, and documentation. The constant, collaborative management of numerous complex contradictions constitutes what we refer to as everyday political activities. In other words, politics is not just for parliament or the local council to decide on and implement; politics is also something discussed and decided upon through collaborative processes involving various participants (Højholt & Røn-Larsen, 2021; Røn-Larsen, 2024). Hence, institutional arrangements of education are more of a process of conflictual collaboration than a distinct entity determining our actions. Processes leading to unequal conditions for participation are negotiated in social practice and often involve powerlessness and a sense of resignation among many persons involved in institutional processes.

In this way, we can understand processes of situated inequality as related to everyday political activities concerned with the prioritisation and distribution of societal resources in institutions. Who has access to participate? Which modes of participation can be included, and which aspects of complex matters are excluded? Who are the institutions for? And who has access to not only participate but also contribute and influence the development of the institutions?

Analysing these kinds of questions might provide insight into how institutional conditions contribute to restricting collaborative processes, sometimes collapsing them into individualised understandings that create marginalised positions with limited and conflictual possibilities of participation.

## **The connection between situated inequality and conflict within institutions**

The theme of this special issue, Theory as Engagement, emphasises the role of theoretical psychology in actively engaging with the world to address and transform issues of inequality. Conceptual development within theoretical psychology plays a crucial role in contributing to a reconceptualisation and contextualising of inequality issues in schools, moving beyond the psychologisation of unequal participation conditions in learning communities. By developing and applying theoretical concepts that capture the complexity of social interplay and institutional dynamics, researchers can contribute to the creation of more inclusive and equitable educational practices. This engagement involves not only analysis of existing conditions but also research-collaboration with practitioners, children, and other stakeholders to co-create knowledge and strategies for change. It is through close research collaboration with the various parties involved, who struggle to deal with problems in children's everyday lives, that it has been possible to make this contribution to theory development. Thus, the problem of inequality poses methodological as well as theoretical challenges to psychological research.

By emphasising the dynamic and conflictual nature of everyday life within institutional arrangements, we have highlighted the importance of understanding inequality as situated processes, rather than a static condition. These processes are formed through the participation of different parties in conflictual collaboration on historically contradictory matters.

Recognising that opportunities for change lie in the conceptualisation of institutional processes by various parties may help to prevent situated inequality. This recognition paves the way for a development of institutional arrangements in school practices that foster collaboration and create relevant participation opportunities for all children.

To understand the participation of subjects in societal institutions, we need to move beyond homogeneous approaches to institutions and recognise the historical and political contradictions and conflicts that professionals deal with together. A key aspect of this endeavour is the effort to develop concepts for a situated psychological approach to inequality issues. We have suggested that the theoretical development of the concepts of situated inequality, participation, conflict, and institutional conditions provides a potent framework for understanding and addressing the complex dynamics of inequality in educational settings.

## **References**

- Aronsson, K., Hedegaard, M., Højholt, C., & Skjær Ulvik, O. (2018). Rethinking development: Situated studies of children's perspectives. In M. Hedegaard, K. Aronsson, C. Højholt, & O. Skjær Ulvik (Eds.), *Children, Childhood, and Everyday life: Children's perspectives* (2nd ed., pp. 1–13). Information Age Publishing.
- Axel, E. (2011). Conflictual cooperation. *Nordic Psychology*, 63(4), 56–78. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1901-2276/a000045>

- Axel, E. (2020). Distributing resources in a construction project: Conflictual co-operation about a common cause and its theoretical implications. *Theory & Psychology*, 30(3), 329–348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354320919501>
- Axel, E., & Højholt, C. (2019). Subjectivity, conflictuality and generalization in social praxis. In C. Højholt, & E. Schraube (Eds.), *Subjectivity and knowledge: Generalization in the psychological study of everyday life* (pp. 23–40). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29977-4\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29977-4_2)
- Barnes, M., Brown V., Parsons S., Ross A., Schoon I., & Vignoles A. (2012). *Intergenerational transmission of worklessness: Evidence from the millennium cohort and the longitudinal study of young people in England*. National Centre for Social Research, corp creators. <https://doi.org/10.1920/re.ifs.2024.0673>
- Benjaminsen, L. (2006). *Chanceulighed i Danmark i det 20. århundrede. Udviklingen i intergenerationelle uddannelses-og erhvervschancer* (39). [Unequal opportunities in Denmark in the 20th century: Developments in intergenerational education and the chance for employment (39)]. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Copenhagen]. Royal Danish Library. [https://soeg.kb.dk/permalink/45KBDK\\_KGL/i0g9t3/alma99122323685405763](https://soeg.kb.dk/permalink/45KBDK_KGL/i0g9t3/alma99122323685405763)
- Benjaminsen, L., Andrade, S. B., Andersen, D., Enemark, M. H., & Birkelund, J. F. (2015). *Familiebaggrund og social marginalisering i Danmark – en registerbaseret kortlægning* [Family background and social marginalisation in Denmark: A registry-based cohort-analysis]. VIVE. <https://www.vive.dk/media/pure/4xkgrnzzr/393385>
- Bird, K. (2007). *The intergenerational transmission of poverty: An overview* (ODI Working Paper 286, CPRC Working Paper 99). Overseas Development Institute and Chronic Poverty Research Center. <http://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1629262>
- Braster, S., Grosvenor, I., & del Mar del Pozo Andrés, M. (Ed.). (2012). *The black box of schooling: A cultural history of the classroom*. P.I.E. Peter Lang.
- Burman, E. (1994). *Deconstructing developmental psychology*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315727127>
- Daniels, H., & Hedegaard, M. (Eds.). (2011). *Vygotsky and special needs education – rethinking support for children and schools*. Continuum.
- Chaiklin, S., Hedegaard, M., and Jensen, U. J. (Eds.). (1999). *Activity theory and social practice: Cultural-historical approaches*. Aarhus University Press.
- Dreier, O. (2006). Imod abstraktionen af struktur [Against the abstraction of structure]. *Nordiske Udkast*, 34(1), 3–12.
- Dreier, O. (2008a). *Psychotherapy in everyday life*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dreier, O. (2008b). Learning in structures of social practice. In S. Brinkmann, C. Elmholdt, G. Kraft, P. Musaeus, K. Nielsen, & L. Tanggaard (Eds.), *A Qualitative Stance – Essays in Honor of Steinar Kvale* (pp. 85–96). Aarhus University Press.
- Dreier, O. (2011). Personality and the conduct of everyday life. *Nordic Psychology*, 63(2), 4–23. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1901-2276/a000030>

- EVA (2020). *Evaluering af den styrkede pædagogiske læreplan—Lige deltagelsesmuligheder for alle børn i børnefællesskaber* [Evaluation of the strengthened pedagogical curriculum – Equal participation opportunities for all children in children's communities]. EVA – Danish Evaluation Institute. <https://www.eva.dk/dagtilbud-boern/lige-deltagelsesmuligheder-boern-boerneaefaellesskaber>
- Ejrnæs, M. (2003). Social arv — myte eller realitet [Social inheritance — Myth or reality]. *Dansk Pædagogisk Tidsskrift*, 2, 42–51.
- Ejrnæs, M. (2019). *Ulighed, fattigdom og sociale problemer* [Inequality, poverty and social problems]. Dafolo.
- Ejrnæs, M., Gabrielsen, G., & Nørrung, P. (2004). *Social opdrift—Social arv* [Social buoyancy—Social heritage]. Akademisk forlag.
- Farrell, P., Woods K., Lewis S., Rooney S., Squires G. & O'Connor M. (2006). *A review of the functions and contribution of educational psychologists in England and Wales in light of "Every child matters: Change for children"* (Research Report RR792). Department for education and skills. [https://pure.manchester.ac.uk/ws/files/33806264/FULL\\_TEXT.PDF](https://pure.manchester.ac.uk/ws/files/33806264/FULL_TEXT.PDF)
- Fleer, M., & Hedegaard, M. (2010). Children's development as participation in everyday practices across different institutions. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 17(2), 149–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749030903222760>
- Hedegaard, M., Aronsson, K., Højholt, C., & Skær Ulvik, O. (Eds.). (2018). *Children, childhood, and everyday life: Children's perspectives* (2nd ed.). Information Age Publishing.
- Hedegaard, M., Chaiklin, S., & Jensen, U. J. (1999). Activity theory and social practice: An introduction. In M. Hedegaard, S. Chaiklin, & U. J. Jensen (Eds.), *Activity theory and social practice* (pp. 12–30). Aarhus University Press.
- Hjörne, E. & Säljö, R. (2004) “There is something about Julia” — Symptoms, categories, and the process of invoking ADHD in the Swedish school: A case study. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J-A. Dillabough & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Education, globalisation & social change* (pp. 602–616). Oxford University Press.
- Højholt, C. (1999). Child development in trajectories of social practice. In W. Maiers, B. Bayer, & B. D. Esgalhado (Eds.), *Challenges to theoretical psychology* (pp. 278–294). Captus Press.
- Højholt, C. (2006). Knowledge and professionalism – From the perspectives of children? *Critical Psychology*, (19), 81-160.
- Højholt, C. (2011). Cooperation between professionals in educational psychology: Children’s specific problems are connected to general problems in relation to taking part. In H. Daniels & M. Hedegaard (Eds.), *Vygotsky and special needs education: Rethinking support for children and schools* (pp. 67–86). Continuum Press.
- 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/Taylor & Francis Group.

- Højholt, C. (2022). Conflictuality and situated inequality in children's school life. *Children's Geographies*, 20(3), 297-310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2020.1817335>
- Højholt, C. (2024). Collaborative practice research: Inequality in school as an example. I E. Tseliou, C. Demuth, E. Georgaca, & B. Gough (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Innovative Qualitative Psychological Research* (p. 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. Fleeer, & 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](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>
- Jensen, S. K., & Szulevicz, T. (2025). Situating educational psychology practice: Exploring the call for a 'practice turn' in contemporary Danish educational psychology practice. *Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Science*, 59(2), Article 50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-025-09915-6>
- Jonsson, G. (1969). *Det sociala arvet* [The social heritage]. Folksam.
- Jæger, M., Munk, M. & Ploug, N. (2003). *Ulighed og livsforløb – Analyser af betydningen af social baggrund*. [Inequality and life trajectories – Analyses of the meaning of socioeconomic background]. VIVE. <https://www.vive.dk/da/udgivelser/ulighed-og-livsloeb-5733/>
- Larsen, T. C., Holloway, J., & Hamre, B. (2019). How is an inclusive agenda possible in an excluding education system? Revisiting the Danish dilemma. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(10), 1049–1064. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1626497>
- Lave, J. (2019). *Learning and everyday life: Access, participation, and changing practice*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108616416>
- Mardahl-Hansen, T. (2019). Teaching as a social practice. *Nordic Psychology*, 71(1), 3–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19012276.2018.1457451>
- Mardahl-Hansen, T. L., & Højholt, C. (2025). Situated teacher professionalism: Understanding the exploratory and collaborative aspects of teacher's professionalism. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 59(2), Article 51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-025-09914-7>
- McDermott, R. & Varenne, H. (1998). *Successful failure: The school America builds*. Westview Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429497056>
- McDermott, R., & Vossoughi, S. (2020). Beyond 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://www.jstor.org/stable/2112689>
- Mehan, H., Hertweck, A., & Miehl, J. L. (1986). *Handicapping the handicapped: Decision making in student careers*. Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1986.17.3.04x0571y>
- Montà, C. C. (2023). The meanings of ‘child participation’ in international and European policies on children(’s rights): A content analysis. *European Educational Research Journal*, 22(1), 3–19. <https://doi-org/10.1177/14749041211034971>
- Morin, A. (2008). Learning together: A child perspective on educational arrangements of special education. *Australian Research in Early Childhood Education*, 15(1), 27–37.
- Morin, A. (2019). Decentering professional collaboration: Working with diagnosed children [Special Issue]. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 16, 953–868. <https://discourseunit.com/annual-review/arcp-16-kritische-psychologie-2019/>
- Morin, A. (2023). Suppressed voices and lost opportunities in education and the psychiatric healthcare system: A structural analysis of dilemmas in inter-professional collaboration between sectors. *Social Work & Society*, 20(2). <https://ejournals.bib.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/sws/article/view/805>
- Ollman, B. (2003). *Dance of the dialectic: Steps in Marx's method*. University of Illinois Press.
- Ollman, B. (2015). Marxism and the philosophy of internal relations; or, how to replace the mysterious “paradox” with “contradictions” that can be studied and resolved. *Capital & Class*, 39(1), 7–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816814564128>
- Ollman, B., & Smith, T. (2008). *Dialectics for the new century*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ploug, N. (2017). *Social arv og social ulighed* [Social heritage and social inequality]. Hans Reitzel.
- Rockwool Foundation (2024). *Danske børn fra fattige familier bryder ofte med den sociale arv* [Danish children from poor families often break the cycle of social inheritance]. Vidensoverblik – Rockwool Fonden Forskning. <https://en.rockwoolfonden.dk/publications/danish-children-from-poor-families-often-break-the-cycle-of-social-inheritance/>
- Rogoff, B., Moore, L., Najafi, B., Dexter, A., Correa-Chavez, M., & Solis, J. (2007). Children’s development of cultural repertoires through participation in everyday routines and practices. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of socialization: Theory and research* (pp. 490–515). The Guilford Press.
- Røn-Larsen, M. (2011). *Samarbejde og strid om børn i vanskeligheder: Organisering af specialindsatser i skolen* [Cooperation and conflicts about children in difficulties: Organisation of special educational interventions in school]. [Doctoral dissertation, Roskilde University]. Ph.d. series – Doctoral School of People and Technology. [https://rucforsk.ruc.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/34916684/mrl\\_afhandl.pdf](https://rucforsk.ruc.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/34916684/mrl_afhandl.pdf)

- Røn-Larsen, M. (2016). “May I please tell you a little anecdote?” — Inter-professional decision-making about inclusion in the borderland between normal and special schooling. *The International Journal on School Disaffection*, 12(1), 65–84.  
<https://doi.org/10.18546/IJSD.12.1.04>
- Røn-Larsen, M. (2018). Paradoxes of Inclusion: Administrative Procedures and Children’s Everyday Lives. In M. Hedegaard, K. Aronsson, C. Højholt, & O. S. Ulvik (Eds.), *Children, Childhood, and Everyday Life: Children’s perspectives* (2nd ed., pp. 129–148). Information Age Publishing.
- Røn-Larsen, M. (2019). Interdisciplinary collaboration and conflict concerning children in difficulties: Conditions, procedures and politics of everyday life in school [Special Issue]. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 16, 832–848.  
<https://thediscourseunit.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/0832.pdf>
- Røn Larsen, M. (2024). Everyday politics of educational psychologists. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 18, 521–542. [https://discourseunit.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/0521\\_ron\\_larsen.pdf](https://discourseunit.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/0521_ron_larsen.pdf)
- Røn-Larsen, M., & Højholt, C. (2025). Chains of reasons: Exploring structural conditions by analysing subjective reasons. *Theory & Psychology*, 35(3), 271–292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09593543251326506>
- Säljö & Hjörne (2024) Situated action, double dialogicality and the sociogenesis of categorizing in institutional practices: Diversity in schooling from vicious children to neuropsychiatric diagnoses. *Language Sciences*, 103, Article 101623.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2024.101623>
- Sargent, N., Picard, C., & Jull, M. (2011). Rethinking conflict: Perspectives from the insight approach. *Negotiation Journal*, 27(3), 343–366. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1571-9979.2011.00311.x>
- 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>
- Schraube, E. (2024). *Digitalization and learning as a worlding practice: Why dialogue matters*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429031076>
- Schraube, E., & Osterkamp, U. (Eds.). (2013). *Psychology from the standpoint of the subject: Selected writings of Klaus Holzkamp*. (A. Borehain, Trans.). Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature.
- Schwartz, I. (2019). Small children’s movements across residential care and day care: How professionals build common knowledge and practice that matter for children. In M. Hedegaard, & A. Edwards (Eds.), *Supporting difficult transitions.: Children, young people and their carers* (pp. 175–194). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Serbin, L. & Karp, J. (2003). Intergenerational studies of parenting and the transfer of risk from parent to child. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(4), 138–142.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.01249>

- Simovska, V. (2007). The changing meanings of participation in school-based health education and health promotion: The participants' voices. *Health Education Research*, 22(6), 846–879. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cym023>
- Stanek, A. H. (2019). Children's proximal societal conditions: Analysed through a case of an exclusion process in elementary school [Special Issue]. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 16, 849–872. <https://thediscourseunit.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/0849.pdf>
- Stetsenko, A. (2008). From relational ontology to transformative activist stance on development and learning: Expanding Vygotsky's (CHAT) project. *Cultural studies of Science and Education*, 3, 471–491. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-008-9111-3>
- Stetsenko, A. (2017). Putting the radical notion of equality in the service of disrupting inequality in education: Research findings and conceptual advances on the infinity of human potential. *Review of Research in Education*. 41, 12–135. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X16687524>
- 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. (2024). 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>
- Szulevicz, T., & Tanggaard, L. (2017). *Educational psychology practice: A new theoretical framework*. In *Cultural psychology of education* (Vol. 4). Springer International.
- Tegtmejer, T., & Säljö, R. (2023). Paradoxes of using psychiatric diagnoses as organising principles for special educational support. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 39(4), 519–533. <https://doi-org/10.1080/08856257.2023.2242029>
- Tybjerg, G. M. (2023). *Unge og ulige deltagerbetingelser i udskolingen [Young people and unequal possibilities of participation in secondary school]*. [Doctoral dissertation, Roskilde University] Ph.d. series – Doctoral School of People and Technology. [https://rucforsk.ruc.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/96211591/Gry\\_Tybjerg\\_phd.pdf](https://rucforsk.ruc.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/96211591/Gry_Tybjerg_phd.pdf)
- Warming, H. (2011). Children's participation and citizenship in a global age: Empowerment, tokenism or discriminatory disciplining? *Social Work & Society*, 9(1), 119–134. <http://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/11/34>

**Maja Røn-Larsen**, is an associate professor of Social Psychology of Everyday Life at Roskilde University, Denmark. Her research concerns children in difficulties in the grey area between mainstream and special education across early childhood settings, school, and leisure-time institutions. She has a particular focus on children's perspectives, pedagogical work, interprofessional collaboration, and the institutional conditions that influence these practices. In recent years, her projects have focused on developing a situated perspective on inequality and the dynamics through which institutional arrangements contribute to the production of unequal possibilities of participation in children's everyday lives.

Contact: Department of People and Technology, University of Roskilde, Email: [mrl@ruc.dk](mailto:mrl@ruc.dk)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1413-6059>

**Charlotte Højholt** is a professor of Social Psychology of Everyday Life at the Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University. She is engaged in theoretical and methodology development in relation to explore children's everyday lives across contexts of families, schools, kindergartens, institutions for children's leisure time and special help arrangements. This involves analysing children's perspectives and communities, as well as the cooperation between the adults involved. Recently, she has focused on developing a psychological approach to understanding the unequal conditions for participation in social situations in child institutions – conceptualised as situated inequality.

*Contact:* Department of People and Technology, University of Roskilde, Email: [charh@ruc.dk](mailto:charh@ruc.dk)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0601-0456>