

**ILLINOIS the international Congress in Qualitative Inquiry på University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign den 18. maj til 21. maj 2011**

### **Dignity in Schools: How to Frame the Analysis of School Bullying**

The panel addresses both substantive and methodological questions of how to understand school bullying. Looking at issues of social exclusion and abjection, the papers present a new approach to the field. The papers challenge the individualizing, quantitative and experimental paradigm that has dominated research into bullying and taken bullying to be the effect of individual aggression. Researchers in the field have had little reflection on how their interpretative frameworks themselves constitute the field of relations of bullying. With these papers, we seek to contribute to this level of reflection. We call attention to a more complexity-sensitive understanding of the phenomenon by bringing in conceptual frameworks from Karen Barad, Judith Butler, Walter Benjamin, Adele Clarke, together with qualitative data. Papers integrate qualitative and quantitative methods and decompose the opposition between interpretation and counting. The papers originate from eXbus: Exploring Bullying in School, a cross-disciplinary research project 2007-2011 [www.exbus.dk](http://www.exbus.dk) based in Denmark.

### **Violent/Bullying Encounters: Theoretical Perspectives**

*Robin May Schott*

The issues related to school bullying and violence can be a matter of life and death. This is so when youth take their own lives as a result of bullying, or when they resort to violence against others. Yet current research on these topics is conceptually limited. In Europe, research into the relation of bullying and violence focuses on the problem of bullying, whereas in the U.S., it focuses on violence. In this paper, I seek to deepen an understanding of these issues by drawing on philosophical theories of violence. Particularly useful are theories that understand violence as produced by norms, such as in Walter Benjamin's account. Such an approach opens the door to an analysis of the role of normative behavior in belonging to a group in producing a violent encounter with bullying, which is more useful than viewing violence either as innate or as an expression of pathology.

### **Bullying as an effect of intra-active material-discursive forces, anxiety of social exclusion and strategies of soothing by contempt-production**

*Dorte Marie Søndergaard*

Why do bullying practices occur within groups of children (and adults)? Is it because the group happens to be populated with particularly aggressive and squeamish individuals? This paper suggests an alternative approach. Working from Karen Barad's conceptual framework based on intra-active enactment of discursive-material phenomena, and Judith Butler's further development of the concept of abjection, I argue bullying to be an effect of the anxiety about social exclusion. That anxiety follows intra-action among

a variety of social, cultural, psychological and material forces in schools. The mechanisms associated with this anxiety include a longing to soothe the discomfort. The soothing strategy may be realised in a common production of contempt, which builds community for some children who take up abjecting and othering practices. The abject may vary from particular subject positionings, particular kinds of matter (clothes, belongings), interests etc. – but will always involve individuals as representatives for and/or positioned as the abject being.

*Nina Hein*

### **Mapping the Intra-actional Becoming of Subjects and Truths in Cases of Bullying in School**

Framing the phenomenon of bullying as one of complexity and intra-acting forces requires methodological approaches able to grasp complex processes of situational becoming. In this paper, I propose how Adele Clarke's ideas of situational mapping, in combination with Karen Barad's concept of intra-activity, makes it possible to catch sight of how the variety of different elements in a specific, empirical situation intra-acts and produces subject positions, possibilities and truths. Attempting to analyze the situated and entangled meaning-making processes in cases of bullying, this approach makes it apparent how major discursive constructions about e.g. the nature of bullying and of children's psychological development intra-acts with local, situated incidents. The latter, gaining agency from popular or wide-spread cultural discourses, potentially becomes highly performative in the production of subjects and truths in the situation in question.

*Helle Rabøl Hansen & Inge Henningsen*

### **Mixed methods – and beyond – in bullying research**

Are mixed methods, where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study, the answer to the historical, theoretical and pragmatic divide between quantitative and qualitative analysis? Or is it possible to move the demarcation line between quantitative and qualitative research approaches, creating a research methodology integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in ways that decompose the opposition between interpretation and counting? The paper draws on data from the eXbus (Exploring Bullying in Schools) research project comprising questionnaires, qualitative interviews and field observations from staff rooms and classrooms in Danish schools. Examples are given of how research schemes embracing the subjective basis of quantification (as being the counting of non-numerical data), and using numbers qualitatively may increase the sensitivity of the analyses with respect to both generalizations and contradictions in the material.