

Open issue: Introduction

*Eleonor Bredlöv, Camilla Forsberg,
Lina Rahm and Sara Vestergren*

In this volume, which is an open issue, we present five papers that in various ways relate to issues on education, philosophy and politics, all imbued with social criticism and contributing to Confero's interdisciplinary focus and encouragement to essayistic writing. Two of the papers directly deal with heteronormativity and heterosexism in school contexts, where one empirically scrutinizes the normative production of pupil sexuality, and the other discusses the possibilities for straight teacher allies involved in LGBTQ activism in an essay of self-disclosure. Both acknowledge the importance of shaping school environments into safe spaces. A third essay, also with a focus on the school context and its (un)safe spaces, unfolds research on bullying, highlighting the importance of taking socio-cultural power structures and norms into account in this field of research, also acknowledging the damaging forces of homophobia. In the writing of this essay, the argument is presented quite playfully, hence making the argument more accessible. This is also the case of the fourth paper, where a well-known children's book character is taken up and discussed in relation to Nietzsche's writings, presenting his ideas in an exciting way. Appropriately, this issue ends with an essay that explores the emotion of love in the search for knowledge in our universities. We are hopeful that these essays will inspire you as readers in writing more freely and more creatively than what is usually accepted in the larger realm

of scholarly writing, making use of the possibilities of the written word and partaking in the ongoing debate concerning education and social criticism. The papers in this volume are presented more thoroughly in the following.

In the essay “Radical heterosexuality: straight teacher activism in schools”, Leigh Potvin sets out to understand the efficacy of straight teacher allies, the importance of understanding straight privilege, and the significance of radical heterosexuality for straight people doing LGBTQ activism, where the discussion is laid out on the basis of queer theory and decolonizing/Indigenous queer theory. Potvin highlights the need for teachers to understand the privileges that comes with straightness. Heterosexuality becomes radical when straight people, allies, contest and become aware of the innate privilege of being heterosexual through heteropatriarchy. As the title indicates, “radical heterosexuality” is significant to the straight people involved in LGBTQ activism. Further, Potvin discusses the importance of radical heterosexuality in challenging two big foes of LGBTQ, namely, heterosexism and heteronormativity. Radical heterosexuality involves challenging and facing up to the normalized forms of sexuality in different contexts.

In “Gay as classroom practice”, Angelica Simonsson and Petra Angervall discuss and problematize the production of normativity and subjectivity in language education. Through the use of discourse analysis, pupil and teacher interaction in a Swedish 8 grade English class is analysed, focusing on how sexual pupil subjectivity is produced. The pupils perform a drama assignment, where gay men are dramatized and constructed as something funny. Humour can contribute to a positive and permitting classroom climate, making pupils feel secure enough to speak the language that they are learning. However, the authors show how the pupils in their joking practices simultaneously get caught up in reproducing heteronormativity, where the discursive production of male homosexuality includes being non-natural, hyper-sexual and

rendering ridicule, reproducing straight male pupil subjectivity as normative. Further, the authors discuss the refusal of homosexuality in the analysed interaction in terms of producing openings for gay male pupil subjectivity – openings that otherwise would have remained within the realm of drama. In conclusion, the authors show how processes around gender and sexuality informs language instruction and learning, and vice versa, highlighting the importance of the meaning making aspects of language instruction and learning.

In 2015 Confero published a special issue (3.2) on bullying; *Essays on school bullying: theoretical perspectives on a contemporary problem*. For this special issue Paul Horton participated as a guest editor. In this issue, he contributes with an essay discussing different paradigmatic levels of approaches to bullying, using a Russian nesting doll to highlight these levels. The doll consists of five different size dolls that each represent a different level; individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. On background of letting this doll symbolize the field of research on bullying, the author constructs an imaginative conversation with scholars, discussing the pros and cons of the different levels and highlighting areas in need of future research. This essay can be seen as a compliment to the previously published special issue as it stems from and discusses issues raised through the essays included here.

In the playful essay “Pippi Longstocking as Friedrich Nietzsche’s overhuman”, Michael Tholander reads Nietzsche’s figuration of the “übermensch” in parallel to the fictitious (children’s book) character Pippi Longstocking, created by Astrid Lindgren. By drawing out a series of ideals from Nietzsche’s writings, and comparing these to segments and traits from the Pippi books (including Pippi herself, as well as other prominent characters), a series of striking (and provocative?) similarities emerge. This stimulating superimposition across issues such as forgetfulness, passion, creativity, acceptance and pluralism, concludes in an appeal or invitation to treat the overhuman as “a liberating

tool”, which specific content will need to be created by the reader her/himself.

What role does love play in higher education? In the last essay of this open issue, “On emotions, knowledge and educational institutions”, Tomas Karlsohn proposes that historical studies of emotions in education can provide a different and important trajectory that does not only problematize assumptions of today, but also opens up the often dichotomized discussions between what is frequently described as therapeutic or affective ‘fuzzy’ educational governance and classic scientific norms such as organised scepticism, disinterestedness and discipline. Karlsohn convincingly argues not only that educational institutions are impregnated with feelings but also present us with the thrilling argument that feelings of love in higher education might be spurred by the norm of disinterestedness. That is—norms, rules, principles and codes can provide the necessary frame that make love for research visible and perhaps even possible.

The long-term aim of *Confero* is to provide a space for critical inquiries on topics related to education broadly defined. The journal came to life from a critical standpoint regarding the emerging regime of the scientific economy and the mainstream reliance of form and structure. We therefore invite you to submit essays at the crossroads between education, philosophy and politics – essays that do not stay faithful to the hemonic format of a ‘scientific article’, and in doing so take up new themes and challenges in need of exploration.