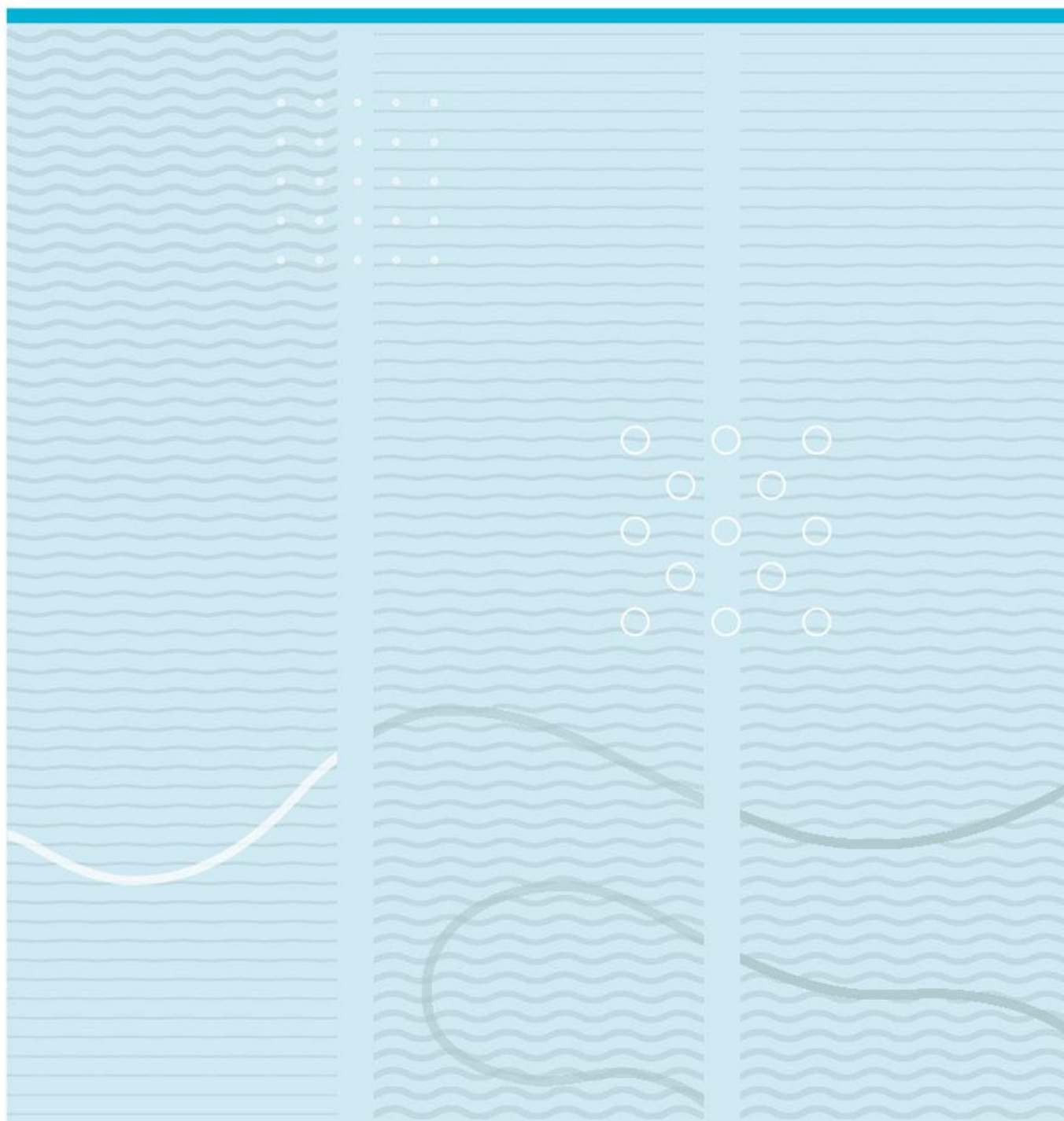Juni Spilling

Norwegian Pupils Access to LGBTQIA+ Representation Through 3 Online Libraries

A quantitative study of the libraries on the learning platforms Salaby, Skolestudio, and Skolen

Summary

This thesis examines the accessibility of LGBTQIA+ representative books primary school pupils have access to on the online learning platforms Salaby, SkoleStudio, and Skolen. The study was done by recording and presenting the English books in the designated libraries for years 1 – 10, as the pupils receive access to the libraries of years above and below them on the platforms. All pupils deserve to receive good and authentic LGBTQIA+ representation to positively affect their self-image, help develop their identity, and to give them good role models and depictions of LGBTQIA+ individuals' experiences.

The representation found in the books got categorized into explicit and implicit representation, where explicit representation is preferred to ensure the pupils are aware of the representation. After that, the books were analyzed thematically to identify different types of representation and which sexualities get depicted. The different types of representation highlighted in the study are authentic vs. sensationalized representation and the main character vs. supporting characters being representative. The thesis also discusses the perceived heteronormativity, queerbaiting, performativity, stereotypical projections, and bisexual erasure. Given LK20's requirements for pupils' ability to discuss their identity, different ways of living, and respect for others, discussing LGBTQIA+ representation in schools becomes crucial, along with assessing whether the learning objectives can be achieved.

The study's results showcased minimal LGBTQIA+ representation, wherein two (2) out of one hundred and eighty-nine (189) books contained LGBTQIA+ representation, *Bi-Normal*, and *The Art of Being Normal*. Both books contain authentic representation, where one book showcases the perspective of two transsexual teenagers, and the other showcases the perspective of a Bisexual teenager. The books also contain characters who are explicitly homosexual, both gay men and one lesbian. However, no characters are expressed as queer/questioning, intersexual, asexual, or other sexualities outside of LGBT. Both books show heteronormative mindsets and victimization of LGBTQIA+ characters. There were also no books aimed towards the younger grades. Both books containing representation were aimed towards secondary school pupils. Additionally, the characters in both books might be too old for pupils in primary school age to relate to them, even if they have the necessary reading comprehension and abilities. This potentially leaves young pupils in Norway without proper access to LGBTQIA+ representation in books.

Contents

Foreword

This thesis assumes knowledge of the term LGBTQIA+, and various sexualities, gender expressions, and what they entail.

1   Introduction

Children in Norwegian primary schools read every day, whether in lessons or in private. When this reading involves books of their choosing, they commonly use a school library or online learning platforms to find and explore them. Therefore, the role of libraries and online learning platforms becomes vital. As a large part of the pupils' input of literature, their repertoire should be varied and encompass much. Should a child not feel seen and represented, it can have an adverse effect on their mental health (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013, p. 2). Self-identified LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual + more) youths in the USA report higher levels of suicide ideation and attempts than same-aged cisgender heterosexuals (The Trevor Project, 2021). These levels become reduced when adolescents report living in an accepting community. LGBTQIA+ youth consistently show a three to four times bigger likelihood of attempting/committing suicide, despite reports of rising positive acceptance of LGBTQIA+ in Norway (Hegna & Wichstrøm, 2007). Statistics Norway (2021) report that one in three LGBTQIA+ people declare themselves unhappy with their mental health. Feeling different and alone can be disconcerting for adults, so why would we believe it would be easier for children (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013, p. 2)? Pupils deserve to feel represented in the literature they read, and the books made available to them through their school should therefore include varied representation.

These times one does not have to look far to find evidence of discrimination towards LGBTQIA+ people. Out of 1600 books banned in the USA, over 40% were banned due to LGBTQIA+ content (Monteil, 2022). On June 25th, 2022, there was a shooting in Norway close to a known gay bar where two were killed, and twenty-one were injured (Sands, 2022). The FIFA world cup was held in Qatar, a famously anti-LGBTQIA+ country, where football players were disallowed to wear rainbow bands to show support for LGBTQIA+ as it was considered a political statement (Grierson, 2022). In light of these instances, along with many more, the discussion of LGBTQIA+ rights and the visibility of those of non-normative sexualities becomes vital to highlight and prioritize. All pupils deserve to learn about the LGBTQIA+ community and the discrimination that takes place against it every day. Pupils may one day discover that they identify with a different sexuality or gender identity than before, and in that case, they disserve to have knowledge, understanding, and empathy with/from their fellow pupils.

Simultaneously, the LGBTQIA+ community showcases massive parades and other markings of support for each other with many participants. Side characters in movies and tv shows are relatively commonly shown as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly in the form of gay and lesbian characters (Baldwin, 2021). Books such as *My Shadow is Purple* (Stuart, 2022)*, And Tango Makes Three* (Parnell, 2015), and *Téo's Tutu* (Macias, 2021), containing explicit LGBTQIA+ representation aimed towards young children and readers, showcases the possibility of creating age appropriate LGBTQIA+ representation. In the face of such staunch protests and firm support, the discussion of LGBTQIA+ is as relevant as ever.

In the modern Norwegian classroom, screens, and electronics have become commonplace. It is common to see schools incorporating PCs or iPads, where every pupil receives their individual device. The University of Oslo (UiO) reported that approximately 81% of pupils received a digital device from their school (Universitetet i Oslo, 2022). Gilje (2021) observed a possible trend of lessons evolving to become "wholly digital" (p. 237), making the demand for updated, well rounded digital platforms vital. In 2019 several publishers received monetary support from the Norwegian government to create online learning platforms tailored to the demands of LK20 (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). Such learning platforms may contain an online library of digitalized books.

Another positive aspect of using books from online learning platforms is the possibility for all the pupils to access the same books simultaneously, should the teacher wish to include them in their lesson plan. The pupils would be able to read individually, as they may do for homework, and remain reading the same as each other. It would, of course, be possible for a teacher to create a lesson plan surrounding a physical book, though it might require the teacher to read and the pupils to listen, taking pictures of the pages so all the pupils can see them on their screens/a big screen, or other possible solutions to ensure accessibility. Unless, of course, the school bought multiple copies of the book in question.

The LK20 curriculum for Norwegian schools include giving pupils a foundation to develop their identity in an inclusive environment in its core curriculum (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017). Additionally, the curriculum for English, in varying degrees depending on the year, includes goals for the pupil's ability to express themselves and their identity through the English language

(Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 5 - 9). Therefore, it stands to reason that schools could be expected to include teaching LGBTQIA+ themes to an appropriate level in the pupil's education.

Every year the number of books with LGBTQIA+ representation expands. Therefore, libraries and book collections accessible to pupils could have a sizeable possible database of LGBTQIA+-inclusive books that librarians and custodians can order. Gyldendal and CappelenDamm could prioritize gaining the rights to LGBTQIA+ books that they can use to expand their libraries. With existing representation, it becomes the job of publishers and schools to ensure pupils' access to said representation. While LGBTQIA+ representation is essential, it is of little consequence if it is unknown or unreachable.

The organization *Skeiv Kunnskap* has created a concept called "*Regnbuefyrtårn*" where Schools can receive a certificate to prove they have an LGBTQIA+ inclusive and safe school (Skeiv Kunnskap, n.d.), which has been successfully achieved by multiple schools. To achieve such a certificate, the school has to go through a thorough process. At least eighty percent of the teachers and a hundred percent of the school's administration must complete a competence course and create an action plan to enforce inclusion in the school. Several schools, including Jar Primary in Bærum and Gamlebyen Primary in Oslo, have dedicated a section of their school libraries to LGBTQIA+ works and books to give the pupils access to such representation (Jar Skole, n.d.)(Gamlebyen Skole, 2022). Gamlebyen Primary specifically references their inclusion of both factual and fictional books to create a well-rounded library of information for the pupils.

With such examples proving it possible for pupils to receive ample LGBTQIA+ representation, this study is based on the availability of books to schoolchildren, with LGBTQIA+ themes and characters through government-ordered learning platforms with their digital devices. While the pupils who have access to iPads and other digital devices also have access to websites containing free books or books to download, I chose to limit the online search to the learning platforms Skolen, Skolestudio, and Salaby, three of the most used platforms within schools who have received support from the government to evolve their websites (CappelenDamm, n.d.)(Uutilsynet, 2019). The recorded libraries may show a picture of whether LGBTQIA+ representation is valued and prioritized in schools. The questions: Do pupils in the modern English classroom have adequate access to books that include LGBTQIA+ themes and characters? What type of LGBTQIA+ representation do the

pupils get access to? To what degree do online libraries contain books with LGBTQIA+ themes and characters relevant to pupils of different ages and levels accessible for the pupils?

I have recorded the books available from the Salaby, Skolen, and Skolestudio libraries. Online libraries entertain a wide audience, must be suitable for all, and are used in multiple schools. As the learning platforms are supposed to be in compliance with LK20 I wondered if the amount of representation in the websites would support the learning objectives and demands of LK20 in relation to identity, respect, learning environment and concrete learning aims (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 4 - 12). Before beginning on the data collection process, I suspected the number of LGBTQIA+ representative works would be limited as I had not come across much representation when using online learning platforms to teach.

2 Theory

The theory chapter aims to deliver a comprehensive explanation of queer theory and queer history and introduce its undisputed impact and relevance in society. With an emphasis on Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality: Volume 1* and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, the chapter showcases intricate subjects such as gender, sexual identity, and LGBTQIA+ history. This chapter then aims to establish a conceptual framework by defining/explaining key terms that will be utilized throughout the thesis. Those terms are queer, heteronormativity, homonormativity, queerbaiting, performativity, stereotyping, and bisexual erasure.

In addition to addressing queer theory, the second section of the theory chapter dives into representation theory and examines what constitutes representation, its authenticity, and its importance. It also explores the importance of receiving said representation in English, as it is taught to every Norwegian pupil. Lastly, the chapter includes various aspects of representation, introducing sensationalized and authentic markers and the differences between explicit and implicit representation. The goal of reviewing the differing aspects of representation is to uncover the effect on educational settings and the implications for attitudes and inclusion. A brief introduction to LGBTQIA+ attitudes in school is included to showcase the need and desire for authentic representation.

2.1 Queer theory

Since before the conceptualization of queer theory in the nineties, there has been staunch debate concerning queer rights and the exploration of the relationship between sexuality and power (Bernini et al., 2020, p. 98 - 99). With works such as *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler (2002) discussing society's demands for rigid gender roles and opening more comprehensive discussions of identities, queer theory became conceptualized in the emerging discussions. Watson (2005) confirmed there being preexisting questions and observations made about non-normativity before the term "Queer theory" was seemingly first used in 1991 when discussing lesbian and gay experiences. Therefore, queer theory became the vehicle to bring attention to discrimination, relations, and experiences of those identifying outside the norm of identities, gender, and sexuality (p.69).

In broad strokes, queer theory entails a non-binary/non-stringent view of gender, and other categorizations of people, demonstrating contextual influences and viewing power relations within society (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 31). Society contains many "boxes" to categorize people into, race, gender, and sexuality among them, where queer theory aims to give voice to people with their experiences. When discussing power relations and injustices in society, that includes anything from legal rights and discrimination to societal judgment and shunning. Bernini et al. (2020) additionally bring forward the relevance of the oppression against queer sexualities led by the church and head of state, which is still ongoing and affecting many people's lives within the LGBTQIA+ community (p. 98 - 99). Introducing the perspective of LGBTQIA+ experiences may help lessen the impact and power preceded by the church and bring attention to the need for fairness and equality.

Queer theory intends to illustrate and validate perspectives of non-normative sexualities and gender conformities (Bernini et al., 2020, p. 99). While the concept of queer theory cannot be condensed into a single ideology as it encompasses massive political and academic discussions, including dealing in both micro and macro levels of sexualities, from individuals to societies, it is widely considered to encompass non-normality and non-normative identities (Bernini et al., 2020, p. 26). Watson's (2005) references to including the relational aspects of identities in queer theory supports Bernini et al.'s explanation (p. 66 - 67).

While queer theory is grounded in academia, it is relevant for explorative research because of queer movements and sexual liberation movements (Bernini et al., 2020, p. 99). Barker and Scheele (2016), the writers of *Queer: a Graphic History* , focus on portraying the paradoxes and contradictions within queer theory, of which there are many. It takes no particular stance while discussing which theorists disagree with each other and creates a relatively unbiased perception. When talking about Butler and Foucault, they denote them as instrumental contributors to queer theory (p. 64 & 73).

Queer theory deviates from LGBTQIA+ movements and communities as the basis of queer theory is an academic discussion of all non-normative minority sexualities (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 12). LGBTQIA+ communities have mainly been represented by homosexual men and lesbians to a lesser extent, rather than all the sexualities encompassed in the acronym (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 12).

Queer theory discusses the possible subjugation of minority sexualities and their quest for equality. Additionally, Barker and Scheele continue on to reference a common conception among queer activists that "equal" and "equally good" is not always synonymous despite appearances (p. 12).

2.1.1 Queer in the Curriculum

There are no explicit references to LGBTQIA+ in the Norwegian curriculum yet. There are, however, several references to identity and culture as well as acceptance, decency, and respect (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 4 - 12). Under the section: 'Human dignity', the core curriculum specifies that equality should be protected as it has been in history (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 4 - 5). It confirms every pupil's right to be treated equally, without discrimination, and states that the schools are responsible for attitude promotions and departing knowledge to continue counteracting discrimination. Under the section on Identity and cultural diversity, the Department for Education clearly states that the school shall provide the pupils with insight that will give them a foundation for developing their identity (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 5). This insight shall be cultural and historical and shall introduce an "inclusive and diverse environment".

Additionally, outside of the core curriculum, the competence aims after year four require the pupils to be able to "… acquire cultural knowledge through English language literature" as well as partake in conversations where one talks about their needs and feelings (Utdanningdirektoratet, 2020, p. 6). After year seven, that goal has become expanded upon such that pupils should be able to express themselves as well as reflect on their identity and cultural belonging (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 7). Despite the lack of explicit referrals to LGBTQIA+ in the curriculum, the specific demands for pupils' ability to express themselves and reflect on their identity imply an understanding and acceptance of different identities and expressions.

2.1.2 Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*

Intending to counter restricted views of gender, wherein society dictated what a woman could and could not do, in the debate of feminism, Judith Butler wrote the book *Gender Trouble* (originally published in 1990), which has since been recognized as an integral foundation of the beginnings of Queer theory (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 75). Before publishing the book, her observations highlighted the use of the category: "women", which generally accepted by those discriminating against them and those fighting for equal rights. Her observations of non-white feminists, however,

showcased that being categorized as a woman was not the most significant identifier for those already facing different forms of oppression (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 74). Butler (2002) argued that a rigid construction of the category "women" would restrict the successes of feminism, as the category itself is restricted by its definitions and views through time (p. 5-7). Therefore, she focused her work on a debate of gender and the presumptions that came with such a strict view and definition. After that, she argued for accepting a less binary understanding of gender.

Within the book, Butler (2002) argues that sex and gender are not the same things, where sex is fixed in biology as the form your body takes (male/female/intersex), whereas she describes gender as the socially constructed phenomenon of "man" and "woman", and politically and societally accepted expressions of said genders (p. 9 - 10). However, the expression "gender is a social construct" demands that society have a common recurrent understanding of what defines the presumptive "binary" gender system, such as expectations of looks, attributes, and jobs. She drew attention to the disparities between males' and females' power in society and how this has become normalized with time. The claim of the world being patriarchal in its entirety does not hold as strong a claim as it used to (p.6 - 7). Despite this, Butler refers to feminist theorists' presentation of women's historical "subjugated experience" (p. 7). Which, while sometimes nearly fictional in its over-representation of gender power disparity, still showcases its views of power disparity between the genders. Because of this power disparity that holds long traditions in history, Butler argues that the insistence on a strict view of the term "women" may counteract the attempts of feminists to create equality. Some definitions of "female/woman", including Beauvior (1949, referenced in Butler, 2002), describe the female sex as lacking that which makes others male, and feminism in its entirety is suddenly restricted by definitions of their terms defining them as lacking, in addition to the opposition (p. 15). Therefore, the categorization of gender, as she saw with women, is widely considered "correct" in its allocation of who is a woman, however damaging to individuals drowned within the big group.

Butler expresses a belief that the normality of heterosexualism helps stabilize the genders, and their part in society, as the simplicity of "man loves woman, woman loves man" creates ample opportunities to categorize by clear distinctions (p. 10). She continues this by arguing that gender is based on our actions and how we present ourselves rather than something fixed. Her theory is that the strict binary understanding of gender must be challenged to evolve toward a fairer society.

Gender Trouble (2002) also comments how some groups receive more representation and visibility than others (p. 18). This representation aligns with the cultural norm of a binary gender system and further excludes those not conforming to normative genders or gender expressions. Butler argues that in an effort to create a more inclusive society, we need to create a more diverse representation that encompasses more of those who are excluded and marginalized in the representation we have today. While Butler wrote the book in 1990, over 30 years ago, her claims remain relevant, as there are still disparities in the rights allowed to different genders, and a binary understanding of the constructed genders is still discernable in today's society.

Additionally, while there exists more inclusive representation now, heteronormality and those portraying normative gender expressions are still given more representation and visibility than any other and continuing a binary understanding of gender (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013, p. 6). It could be argued that *Gender Trouble* is more relevant than ever with the emergence of queer gender identities to be distinguished from sexualities, which are gender identities outside of the binary understanding (WebMD, n.d.). Gender identities such as genderfluid, where an individual's gender identity is not fixed to a single gender, require a broader understanding of gender and dismiss the binary gender system. It is, however, not universally accepted in society.

2.1.3 Foucault's *History of Sexuality: Volume 1*

The book *History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (originally written in 1979) is often drawn upon as another instrumental theorist in the creation of queer theory for his theories of sexuality being constructed by society's conceptions (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 63). In part two of the book (*The Repressive Hypothesis*, p. 15 – 51), Foucault (2020) draws attention to the 18th and 19th centuries, which carried discussions of homosexuality (p. 4). He argued that the inclusion of a non-normative sexuality discussion topic affected people's views on sexuality, including heterosexuality and sexual expression as a whole.

Foucault discouraged the belief that sexuality had been hidden and private at the beginning of the seventeenth century and became a private and practical matter in the Victorian era (p. 3). According to Foucault (p. 5), we are not yet liberated by those repressions, as can be supported by many instances, such as the societal judgment towards some kinks and fetishes and school dress

codes to ensure "decency", among others. Having such a repressed view of sexualities can make it more challenging to challenge preconceived views on sexualities as it is considered crass to talk about.

In the last chapter of *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, "*Right of Death and Power over Life*", Foucault's mentions of non-normative sexualities are emphasized as outside society's expectations and understanding of the norm (2020, p. 144). Foucault argues that the changing societal norm from a "blood is important" society over to a "sex/gender is important" society is still the defining characteristic of society (Foucault, 2020, p. 135). "Blood is important" reigned during times of sovereignty, where the king had the right to execute you, and the king's control of life was the ultimate power. As sovereignty is passed down through familial relation, along with money and positions, the phrase "blood is important" refers to the importance of which family one was born into. The transition towards "sex is important" narrates the biological sex of a person and the normalized characteristics allocated to the two defined sexes. When the societal norm is built upon expectations of different sexes, the power over life no longer resides with the king, and the majority who attains the expectations of society control the power (p. 135 - 139). This has then raised the need for fitting in with the majority to elude repercussions from neighbors and society deciding your worth. Societal demands for normativity and "fitting in" are enforced through many institutions, including family, school, and police, thereby affecting most aspects of everyday inputted in social hierarchies and enforced segregation (p. 141).

Foucault's designations of power are relevant within queer theory, as LGBTQIA+ refers to what is generally non-normative sexualities, and in the minority to heterosexuals and gender-normative individuals who, according to Foucault, hold more power because of their majority. Discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community has been possible because of the majority viewing non-normative sexualities and gender identities as "other".

Where the core curriculum calls for the school to help teach pupils of ethical awareness, such awareness can be grounded in understanding history and former discrimination against certain groups, including LGBTQIA+ (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 7). His book (Foucault, 2020) references the view on sexuality within Christianity became influenced by the central role of the confessions (p. 58 - 61), wherein sexuality became something to "confess" and labeled as a sin (p. 9)

Among others, Foucault looked towards those times to explore power dynamics and discussions taking part in different times through history and views, how discourse affects views, and how sexual oppression affects our view on sex.

In a different book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1995) devoted a chapter to a relevant concept called the Panopticon that builds on his discussions of sexuality and power (p. 195 - 228). The concept of panopticon builds upon being unsure of when one is being watched, with the knowledge that someone has the power to observe others, which developed towards social orchestration for those acting outside social acceptance (p. 216). He argued discipline became self-imposed, and the concept of panopticon ensured stricter societal structures and strengthened sense of individualism. While he showcased prison setups as a "standard" for panopticon he argued the internalization of the fear of being observed is what gave it power (p. 225 – 226). With non-normative sexualities and gender expressions being considered sin and socially unacceptable (Foucault, 2020) the self-policing and fear of societal backlash extended to include sexuality and gender expression (p. 9).

In Norway, as of 2023, the law against discrimination disallow discrimination based on gender identity and expression (Fri., n.d.). However, as of yet, it is not included in the penal code, leaving those with non-normative gender expressions less protected than others. The lack of equal rights could be connected to the repressed view of sexuality and the strict norms surrounding what gender and sex are supposed to be. As such, the historic views Foucault discusses in the book still affect the societal views over sexuality in modern society.

2.2 Definitions

The words defined in this section are relevant in context with this paper and topics relevant when discussing different types of LGBTQIA+ representation. The definition of queer is relevant in the context of what can and cannot be considered queer/LGBTQIA+ representation. Hetero- and homonormativity refer to preconceptions people may inhabit, as well as stereotyping and gender performativity. Bisexual erasure is relevant in the discussion of inhabiting a less binary understanding of gender and sexuality. All the defined terms are relevant in context with the recorded books and the representation expressed there.

2.2.1 Queer

'Queer', as a term, has many definitions, and through time it has carried negative connotations (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 7). One definition of the word would equate with strange, different. Regarding LGBTQIA+ and queer theory, it says more about non-normative people (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 7 – 14). Barker & Scheele (2016) mention the popular definition of queer, referring to anyone not heterosexual or cisgender (p. 7). Additionally, it can be further limited to those whose sexuality lies outside the most commonly referred to categories within LGBTQIA+, namely Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender. The negative connotations of the word queer usually refer to individuals attracted to someone of the same sex or participating in same-sex relations (p.9). In modern media, queer holds a positive or neutral view, much ado because of LGBTQIA+ communities reclaiming the word as a neutral/positive term in the eighties.

Many theorists are against using the word queer in its widest regards, of everyone not straight (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 11). Other people within the LGBTQIA+ community may hold many bad memories of the word, as it was used with negative connotations for many years. Additionally, Barker & Scheele state that many queer theorists believe queer refers to those who belong further away from "normal". They believe queer as an identity term is ill-fitted.

2.2.2 Heteronormality

The prominence of the term heteronormality is credited to Michael Warner from his article *"Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet"* (1991). Barker and Scheele (2016) effectively summarize the meaning of the term, namely how cultural assumptions preclude that an individual applies "conventional gender roles" (p. 84). (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2016) places heteronormality as a term based on the "privileged position" heterosexuality holds in our society (p. 849). Such that when meeting an individual for the first time, most people will naturally assume that individual to be both cisgender and heterosexual until they learn otherwise. Subsequently, Barker and Scheele (2016) connects the colloquialism "coming out" to heteronormality, as individuals of LGBTQIA+ would not have to "come out" if being heterosexual was not assumed to be the norm (p. 92). Foucault (2020) explained that the power associated with the norm being stronger even than the power of the law grew commonplace in the eighteenth century, when capitalism took over for sovereignty, and power turned into Foucault's term "bio-power" (p.138 - 144)

In addition, Louisa Allen (2015) discusses heteronormality as a theoretical tool to be used in bettering educational practices (p. 369). Being aware of the heteronormality projected in schools allows researchers and pedagogies to become aware of the lack of LGBTQIA+ representation in education. Rather than following the traditional route of problematizing the heteronormality typical in society, Allen (2015) uses an example of some collected statistics showing a picture of a single lesbian couple was used 279 times in an educational context (p. 369). Such findings are found when a researcher is questioning the heteronormality they see and looking for LGBTQIA+ representation to search if the heteronormality they suspect is fact or fiction.

2.2.3 Homonormativity

Homonormativity does not refer to someone's sexual identity but rather how someone expresses themselves while living with said identity, should it happen to be non-normative (Lester, 2014, p. 246 - 247). It showcases people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community who choose to live their life in comparison to the heteronormative expectation. Homonormativity refers to individuals who present to the expected gender norms, live exclusively monogamously, etc., and live every aspect of their life as society would expect from heterosexual individuals who portray a normative image of themselves. Lester (2014) refers to the book *Uncle What-Is-It* which showcases many aspects of homosexual and LGBTQIA+ culture as unfavorable in the attempt to prove the main characters' gay uncle is no different from us.

2.2.4 Queerbaiting

The term 'queerbaiting' remains a negative term and is used in modern media to explain LGBTQIA+ suggestive characters and interactions where the suggestiveness did not amount to actions or affect the narrative, usually on television (Brennan, 2018, p. 189). An example of queerbaiting could be from the popularized BBC tv show Sherlock, where there are explicit references to people believing Sherlock and Watson are in a sexual relationship together, which is never adequately addressed, and Watson ends up marrying a woman, with no comment on it.

Fathallah (2015) defines queerbaiting specifically as a **strategy** by writers and networks to receive attention from members of the LGBTQIA+ community by hinting towards LGBTQIA+ relationships/content before discounting the possibility (p. 491). After the definition, Fathallah describes the possible harm done by queerbaiting, as it reinforces heteronormative expectations to

keep from offending viewers with normative sexualities and gender identities at the expense of queer individuals.

2.2.5 Performativity

Butler (2002) argues that gender is how one acts, rather than what one is, and therefore uses the word "performative" when discussing gender. It entails viewing a person for what they express and their actions, rather than their biology or expectations towards them or their gender. Barker and Scheele (2016) point out that gender performativity does not refer to theatrical performances or pretenses but rather the attempt to fit in within the current gender system (p. 79 - 80). This sense of performativity, in an attempt to fit the descriptions of what it means to be "a man" or "a woman," ends up strengthening the accepted gender norms (p. 80). Performativity is not restricted to members of LGBTQIA+, as Butler's (2002) discussion of gender being decided by society leaves all gender expressions as performative in the absence of intrinsic gender biology.

2.2.6 Stereotyping

Nadal et al. (2021) define 'stereotypes' as associations and attributes connected to a specific social identity group that do not specifically have to be negative or positive (p.4). They go on to say that awareness of negative stereotypes, even if an individual does not believe in them, can negatively affect an individual's performance, as such stereotypes are something to be wary about.

Stereotypes shown in books often revolve around gender and gender roles (Hamilton et al., 2006, p. 757). Women are often portrayed in more nurturing jobs, such as teachers and nurses, while men are more often the "breadwinner," and more often than not, the protagonist in a book is male. The stereotypical showcasing of gender roles in the text at school has become so normalized that Zittleman and Sadker (2002) found that the stereotypical gender roles even made an appearance in mathematical textbooks, wherein tasks with text talked about a man building a patio and a woman sewing clothes for a baby (p. 176 – 177). One example of stereotypes within LGBTQIA+ is that of the popularization of portraying gay men as "camp" and more feminine (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 104).

While not a stereotype of people, rather a stereotype of associated representation is the media's proclivity to portray members of LGBTQIA+ as victims in some sense (Crisp, 2018, p. 361). A harmful

stereotypical way to present members of LGBTQIA+ is as victims, without self-determination or agency (Graybill & Proctor, 2016, p. 182). This depiction typically emphasizes "sexual" to showcase people of LGBTQIA+ inefficiency to comply with society's norms.

2.2.7 Bisexual Erasure

In the book, Barker and Scheele (2016) discuss bisexual erasure and those who receive judgment from both heterosexuals and homosexuals based on a binary understanding of sexuality (p. 136 – 137). They wonder over the lack of bisexual representation in queer theory as they comment on the naturality of including bisexuality when discussing sexual expression and sexuality as it supports the discussion of sexuality not being a binary system. They denote the lack of inclusion in queer theory as furthering the bisexual erasure. According to Barker and Scheele (2016), queer theory relegates bisexuality (along with other sexualities that express attraction to more than one gender) towards a utopian future where one does not have to label sexualities, ignoring the current bisexual experience (p. 137). Bernini et al. (2020) define bisexuality as a "sum" of homosexuality and heterosexuality rather than a third individual sexuality (p. 59).

2.3 Representation

2.3.1 What is Considered LGBTQIA+ Representation?

When researching LGBT – representation in schoolbooks, Macgillivray and Jennings (2008) based their coding on whether pages included any references to same-sex sexualities or non – heterosexual sexualities (p. 174). Simoni (1996) looked at definitions of the words "lesbian, gay, and homosexual" as she ascertained that an author's definition of the words could reveal the author's perspective (p. 221). As LGBTQIA+ includes non–normative sexualities and genders, any such reference would be considered representation. Hughes-Hassel et al. (2013) used a different approach where they reviewed headlines for the explicit use of the words: "homosexuality, gay men, lesbians, and transsexuality" (p. 6). Therefore, their methods required explicit representation to be recorded.

Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan (2016) defines LGBTQIA+ representation as works that contain portrayals of characters a part of LGBTQIA+ (p. 846 – 847). Crisp (2018) references a similar definition before acknowledging the important task for educators of choosing what representation

to introduce to the classroom based on whose point of view is presented and the type of representation presented with each book (p.360).

2.3.2 Types of Representation

Hughes-Hassel et al. (2013) showcased a school where 33 pages out of 610 recorded pages explicitly mentioned same-sex sexualities, wherein all of them were mentioned in a negative context, such as sexual abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and prostitution (p. 173). Simoni (1996) references the importance of representing LGBTQIA+ in situations such as parenting and love rather than only in negative contexts (p. 221 – 222). In the effort to provide inclusive representation to comply with LK20 requirements for pupils learning about identity expression etc., the forms of representations must be more well-rounded in their depiction.

In addition to contemplating positive vs. negative representation, it is also relevant to look at the presentation itself, namely, if it positively adds to the contents of the work or if it is superfluous.

2.3.3 Explicit Representation vs. Implicit Representation

2.3.3.1 Explicit Representation

The definition of the word 'explicit' is "*fully revealed or expressed without vagueness, implication or ambiguity*" (Merriam Webster, 2023) in the context relevant to the story. As such, in the divide between explicit and implicit representation, I have included any works with clear depictions, overt LGBTQIA+ characters, words, or themes, such as learning about LGBTQIA+ in class (if that were to happen in a book) as explicit representation. This contains both professional terms (such as homosexual and transgender etc.) as well as collocal terms popularly recognized to reference LGBTQIA+ people (such as gay, bent, or camp, etc.).

Crisp (2018) writes about the importance of including explicit representation for young readers, as implicit representation requires knowledge of what the author is trying to represent (p. 358). As such, implicit representation might not be caught by young readers if they have not learned what to look for to be able to appreciate the representation. He writes about the importance for the author to be aware of who they are writing for. Is the text meant for someone within LGBTQIA+ who has prior knowledge of stereotypes, or are the readers new to the trope? Additionally, Crisp (2018) writes about the pupils disserving to understand the representation that takes place as implicit

representation requires the reader to pay attention to anything that may be suggestive of representation, where they might also end up "queering" characters without there being textual evidence to do so (Abate and Kidd, 2011, referenced by Crisp, 2018, p. 358).

2.3.3.2 Implicit Representation

Counter to explicit is 'implicit', defined as "capable of being understood from something else though unexpressed" (Merriam Webster, 2023). Any implicit LGBTQIA+ representation is, therefore, vaguer in its expression and more demanding/challenging to incorporate in a thematic analysis. In the effort to be impartial, one must consider if a work indeed contains any implicit representation or if your perception of characters and themes is affecting your perception. I, however, felt it necessary to include as implicit representation is able to affect a pupil's perception as explicit can, based on the pupil's retention of the work. This category could include references to LGBTQIA+ paraphernalia, such as a rainbow pin on a backpack, etc. or characters presented in a stereotypically LGBTQIA+ way, etc. Any book cover containing an LGBTQIA+ flag, gender symbols, or similar recognized paraphernalia will, in most cases, be considered explicit unless it is small, somewhat hidden, or similar in some fashion of symbolism. Though there are ways to accomplish good representation for LGBTQIA+ without explicitly stating any non-normalized sexual identities, it is essential to be clear when having children of school age as the primary target group and be aware of their level of understanding and willingness to interpret what they read (Crisp, 2018, p. 365).

2.3.4 Sensationalized vs. Authentic Representation

2.3.4.1 Sensationalized Representation

The definition of the word sensation is as something designed to produce a strong reaction, often based on superficial or exaggerated elements (Dictionary.Com, 2023). Portrayals of LGBTQIA+ that focus solely on stereotypes or harmful depictions are, therefore, often referred to as sensationalized representations, evoking strong reactions and clear depictions (Crisp, 2018, p. 358). Tsai (2010) referenced sensationalized representation of transgender women in commercials, where the focus was placed on the cost of procedures and extra feminized objects, such as high heels, to portray the person's femininity. Tsai also referenced the typically used action in commercials of showcasing transgender women putting on their makeup to enhance their perceived femininity.

2.3.4.2 *Authentic Representation*

Crisp (2018) writes about the need for authentic LGBTQIA+ representation, where he describes authentic representation as portraying depth to characters past their sexuality (p. 365 - 366). Where sensationalized representation is considered harmful, authentic representation is considered its opposite and thereby positive. It is generally considered to contain portrayals of LGBTQIA+ that are authentic in nature and often focus on creating or nurturing understanding and empathy etc. (Crisp, 2018, p. 365 – 366).

Crisp (2018) writes about the importance of there being more depth to a character than only presenting a stereotypical presentation of someone part of LGBTQIA+ (p. 359). Additionally, Crisp writes about the positive for pupils having access to several books containing representation as that may help discourage stereotypes and create a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be LGBTQIA+ (p. 359). This also ties in with Adichie's (Adichie, 2009) concept of "The Danger of a Single Story", showcasing the importance of providing children with more than one perspective to ensure a fair depiction and a deeper understanding of complex situations.

Crisp (2018) writes about the importance of acknowledging that hidden representation is of little consequence, as one would remain unaware of it (p. 365). Therefore, when talking about authentic representation, Crisp aims towards works with explicit representation that portrays full characters with more to them than only their sexuality and their preconceived stereotypes to ensure the best representation possible.

2.3.5 Protagonist vs. Supporting Characters

2.3.5.1 *Protagonist*

Books where the main character is part of the LGBTQIA+ community, can give pupils good representations where they can see themselves as a protagonist in literature, especially if the character is approximately their age (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2016, p. 856). Additionally, books told in first person where the protagonist identifies as part of the LGBTQIA+ may show representation differently than it would otherwise be portrayed, as the main character's perception of events will be affected by their opinion and ideals (Blackburn et al., 2015, p. 17). The main character may also be an unreliable narrator (Blackburn et al., 2015, p. 17), portraying an unrealistic

or one-sided order of events that may affect a pupil's perspective beyond how it might be expected to react to a supporting character exhibiting similar views.

2.3.6 Supporting Characters

In the earlier faces of introducing LGBTQIA+ representation in books and on the big screen, it was more common to see side characters providing the representation, oftentimes as gay men (Baldwin, 2021, p. 2). The effort to ensure side characters representing non-normative sexualities and gender identities is portrayed with depth beyond their sexuality is essential to ensure the quality of the representation (Crisp, 2018, p. 258). The nature of a side character includes less focus than a main character and may, therefore, also showcase less depth and exploration of the character as a whole.

2.3.7 Importance of Representation

Based on a long-term study reported by Martins and Harrison (2012), television influenced children's self-image and negatively impacted white girls, black girls, and black boys, and positively impacted the self-image of white boys (p. 338 – 339). They concluded this could be directly connected to their access to positive representations of their characteristics. Concurrently, Ochman (1996) found that the self-esteem of girls and boys (in grade three) increased when they were exposed to same-sex role models (p. 724 – 725). Additionally, Røthing and Svendsen (2010) refer to the lack of presented LGBTQIA+ "futurescapes" – a concept where pupils imagine their possible futures. They acknowledge that a lack of adults in LGBTQIA+ representation may leave the pupils with uncertainty towards their own future, and devolve towards depression and bad mental health (p. 149).

Ashton (1978, referenced in Hamilton et al., 2006) found that children who read gender-biased books made more stereotypical gender choices when choosing their toys later (p. 757 – 758). As such, there is evidence that pupils/children are directly affected by the representation they are exposed to, and so a lack of representation will affect the pupils as well. In an article researching the diversity in lower-grade classroom libraries, Crisp et al. (2016) stated plainly that we need to do more than we have to encourage books and representation that break the normative typecasting generally found on our bookshelves (p. 29). This is in order to give children a wider representation of the world around them, as well as give them role models they can feel represented in.

Additionally, Simoni (1996) includes the importance for heterosexual [students] to get presented with positive LGBTQIA+ representation, as it may help them expand their worldview and recognize their biases (p. 221).

Additionally, Butler (2002) argues that those not gender typical who receive less access to representation and presentation become more marginalized and less visible as a result (p. 4). There is an argument to be made that LGBTQIA+ youths feel included and have a sense of belonging when they see themselves positively shown in the literature (Vaccaro, August, and Kennedy, 2012, referenced by Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013, p. 4). This ties into Crisp et al. (2016) 's findings about the effects on self-image. While self-image and a sense of belonging are not synonymous, they affect each other, as feeling as if you belong is bound to improve one's self-image (p. 30 – 31).

Gartley (2015) highlighted the fact that homophobic bullying begins at primary school age, and discussions and representation of LGBTQIA+, therefore, must have a place in the school as well (p. 150). LGBTQIA+ representation aimed toward pupils in primary school age is not supposed to be focused on sex and attraction but rather on differences, acceptance, and relationships with others Hall (2010, referenced in Gartley, 2015, p. 150). This, Gartley argues, allows for teachable moments where the pupils can learn about differences and how everyone deserves respect and kindness. Gartley also referenced the importance of including literature showcasing same-sex parents as well as the use of representation in picture books and later argued explicit LGBTQIA+ representation in literature is one of the most straightforward opportunities for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the classroom (p. 151).

An example of what can happen if one lacks good representation for LGBTQIA+ and is surrounded by negative LGBTQIA+ views is comedian Hannah Gadsby (Parry & Olb, 2018). In her performance, Nanette she spoke about her unwillingness to share her sexuality (lesbianism) with her grandmother, which Gadsby believes is because she is ashamed of it. Growing up in a place that held a negative view towards LGBTQIA+ and having little knowledge of it rendered her with internalized homophobia towards herself that she was still fighting against at the age of 40 when she taped the show. While she was also exposed to many negative opinions towards LGBTQIA+, the lack of any positive representation seemed natural until she went somewhere else and saw a pride parade and how much pride people held towards themselves and their sexualities.

2.3.8 Why it is Also Important in English

In an article published in the "*Journal of Language, Identity & Education*" Paiz (2019) argues that including queer, as he defines as creating space to discuss all identities respectfully, in language education, particularly English, is essential to ensure no erasure originates for those who identify within LGBTQIA+ (p. 267). Paiz (2019) references the possibility of pupils' possible fearfulness of expressing their non-normative sexuality or gender to fear repercussions from either the teacher or other pupils, which can occur from a lack of attention being given to LGBTQIA+ in lessons. A lack of representation in the classroom can also contribute towards negative attitudes evolving and creating a detrimental learning environment (p. 267).

The curriculum for English from year four and onwards states that pupils should be able to discuss and explore their identity while using the English language (Utdanningdirektoratet, 2020, p. 6). This is one of the reasons why it is crucial that school libraries and online book repertoires meant for children include literature for minorities and give examples of identity expression, to help make this goal achievable. While there are books in Norwegian with LGBTQIA+ representation, it is there are a considerable larger number of inclusive books written in English, possibly because there exist more books in the English language (Errera, 2022) (Bokhandlerforeningen, 2023). Having LGBTQIA+ representation in both Norwegian and English will mean having more representation than if the schools or publishers limited themselves to only one language and therefore increase the number of representative books accessible. Therefore, introducing pupils to reading LGBTQ+ literature and introducing them to the possibility of it can help them know what to look for to find good representative books from a more extensive English repertoire if they so wish at a later date. When reading literature including LGBTQIA+ characters, a pupil might also, in accordance to feeling seen/represented, learn phrases and words, why they are offensive, or what they mean and why they are essential through exposure.

2.4 LGBTQIA+ Attitudes in Schools

In Norwegian schools, it is generally encouraged to have sympathy with LGBTQIA+ individuals, while bullying based on sexuality and gender identity is actively discouraged (Røthing, 2008, referenced by Røthing & Svendsen, 2010, p. 148). Despite this, Røthing and Svendsen concluded that youth in Norway had been indoctrinated with a sympathetic lens without receiving portrayals showcasing a non-heterosexual future. As such, they found many young Norwegian were supportive of others

being members of LGBTQIA+ but showed homophobic judgments towards themselves (p. 149). They also referenced how LGBTQIA+ is often referenced as "a problem" and showcased as a more difficult life (p. 152). When exposed to such views during educational hours, it should be no surprise if pupils develop views wherein heterosexuality is better and easier than other sexualities.

A lack of LGBTQIA+ representation in the classroom can create an environment where negative associations towards non-normative sexual identities can occur (Paiz, 2019, p. 267). When one has no access to countering knowledge when presented with stereotypes and negative attitudes, it would be difficult for a child/pupil to be aware that their perceptions/attitudes may not be right/healthy. Gartley (2015) referenced that international surveys conveyed an increase in bullying if you were a member of the LGBTQIA+ as opposed to heterosexual (p. 144). She additionally drew attention to the fact that more pupils reported homophobic bullying than reported being part of LGBTQIA+ (p.145).

3   Methods

The initial focus will be on the data collection methods used to record the books in the online libraries. Visits to two physical school libraries will also be introduced to document the need for representation in online libraries. After that, the focus will shift toward the analysis practices, including how I have extrapolated meaningful results from the collected data and ethical considerations that may affect the process and results. Finally, the focus moves to the validity and reliability of the research in an effort to ensure that the integrity of the research is sound.

This study is aimed towards learning the accessibility pupils in primary school have to LGBTQIA+ books. There are multiple ways to study pupils' access to books, among which are interviewing teachers, pupils, or both. A quantitative digital survey could also have worked well to reach a wider array of participants. However, a downside to both those approaches is that the influences of the participant's opinions and experiences might color their view of how much access there truly is.

3.1   Thematic Analysis of Texts

Linguistic analysis takes form of the researcher analyzing texts to determine content and meaning from the textual material (Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021, p. 305). I have focused more on theme and characters and would, therefore, sooner refer to my approach as a thematic analysis, focusing on linguistic works. Many scientists do not believe linguistic analysis, and therefore also thematical analysis, can be divided into qualitative or quantitative approaches as the form the analysis takes demands some form of interpretation, even if the researcher intends it to be quantitative (p. 307). In the context of this paper, this is relevant due to the quantitative form of data collection, while the paper includes thematic analysis, which, while based on explicit representation and portrayed views, might showcase an interpretation of the representation's importance. With that said, the research design I have chosen is quite quantitative as the goal of the research is to quantify the amount of LGBTQIA+ pupils have access to by looking at multiple sources with a collection of books the pupils have easy access to through the school (p. 310 − 311). Contrastingly, the books found to contain relevant representation are further analyzed to ascertain their type of representation, closer to qualitative in form.

The main reason for choosing a thematic analysis of books as the methical approach to ascertain pupils' access to representation was to limit any significant impact of the participants' perception

skewing the results. While the researcher's expectation for results may impact an analysis of a book, an analytic approach limits misconceptions in the search for statistics and numbers to quantify the representation contained within the libraries.

3.2 Process for Determining Representation/Collection Data

LGBTQIA+ representation on the front covers of books could be explicitly showcased in either the title, any depictions, or both. To read any book in any of the libraries, one had to select the cover of the book to read, and as such, the representation found there is relevant to this paper as any pupil reading the books would first see the cover. To determine if the front cover contained LGBTQIA+ representation, I looked for explicit LGBTQIA+ words such as LGBT, Gay, Bi, and Queer. I also viewed the depictions while looking for explicit representation in the form of LGBTQIA+ paraphernalia, symbols used for depicting sexualities or sexes, depiction of same-sex couples kissing, and other such examples. I read every summary to determine if it contained any explicit references to LGBTQIA+ themes or characters, as well as implicit suggestions of LGBTQIA+ representation, such as suggestions of a character having a crush on a same-sex person or uncertainty around gender.

To determine if the rest of the book contained representation, I read through every book, paying extra attention to books with any explicit representation on the front page.

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

I collected data from three (3) online libraries developed in accordance with LK20 through the publishers CappelenDamm and Gyldendal, the biggest and second biggest publishers in Norway, respectively (Steenberg, 2018). To obtain access to the libraries, one has to log in with a Feide user ID provided by the school. Every teacher and pupil have their own login/Feide user ID, which allows them access. In the case of all three online platforms, I have ascertained that the pupils have access to books aimed towards all grades, including both younger and older. Typically, if a school has access to Salaby, they also have access to Skolestudio, as both are products of Gyldendal, but they have no access to Skolen. If they have access to Skolen, they do not typically have access to Gyldendal's websites, as they are two competing publishers.

The original plan for the study was to focus on pupils' access to LGBTQIA+ representation in physical school libraries, viewing online libraries as an addition. However, I quickly realized the

physical libraries would be ineffective in the study, and as the online recourses are becoming greater and more incorporated into lessons and education the pivot towards the online learning platforms made sense (Gilje, 2021, p. 230). Faced with limited access to physical libraries and a larger possible margin of error based on the availability of the books. The pivot of the study, to focus on the libraries on the digital learning platforms, constituted a vast improvement in both the validity of the research, and the relevance of the results. I found the online platforms to have a wider reach and being used much in lessons (Gilje, 2021), so I am pleased with the amendment (p. 230).

Despite the shift, I have completed two (2) visits to physical school libraries in area within Telemark. The visits were conducted to determine if pupils receive adequate representation through physical libraries and would therefore not be reliant upon gaining representation through their digital devices. If I found the physical libraries to contain large amounts of authentic and varied LGBTQIA+ representation, the findings from the online libraries could be less consequential, as one could argue the physical libraries ensured the pupils' need for representation might be met anyways. I would argue digital learning libraries should showcase books with LGBTQIA+ representation regardless of physical libraries contributing towards the pupils' access. However, in the face of lacking representation within the physical libraries the representation in the online libraries become more vital.

3.3.1 Online

To record the books found on the Online School platforms, I visited the Salaby website first, followed by Skolestudio, and finally Skolen. The process for finding the libraries was different for every platform. The setup within the libraries were also different for every platform.

Salaby is an online learning aid made by Gyldendal. It is divided into categories, first by age (kindergarten, years one and two, years three and four, and years five, six, and seven) and then by subjects. Therefore, I started by looking at the English subject for years one and two, and there was no library of English books there. The same was true for years three and four, though here they were provided with short stories. However, years five, six, and seven have a dedicated "library" containing 16 books, some of which are "rewritten" classics, and some are original works.

Skolestudio is also made by Gyldendal. After the pupils use their login to enter Skolestudio, they get presented with the books they have access to that year (i.e., those in fifth grade have access to Explore 5, as that is the English book for fifth graders, and it is unnecessary for them to have access to all books, though the teachers have such access). Along with their schoolbooks, they also have access to an online school library that only contains fiction books, where they can search for specific titles or languages. When I searched for English books, there were none on the "primary school level" and ten (10) under the "secondary school level". The books come with auditory support, which could help pupils at a higher primary school level to read and comprehend the books meant for the secondary level, which is why I felt it prudent to include them even though my focus is on primary school pupils.

Skolen is an online platform belonging to CappelenDamm. After logging in, the viewer is introduced to the main page, where one can scroll down and find the library in the bottom right corner. After entering the library page, it is possible to choose "In more languages" which brings you to a page with books in different languages, with an emphasis on English books. The English books are divided into categories of "year one to four", "year five to seven", and "year eight to ten". In addition to those categories, one can scroll down on the page and be presented with all Skolen's library books, starting with the English books. The books are not sorted by age or "level" in that list and show no apparent order or categorization. Some of the books contain auditory support. I have included the books from years eight to ten even though I am studying accessibility at a primary school level, as the pupils have access to the books even though they are considered at a higher level, such that accomplished readers have access to a more extensive repertoire.

3.3.2 Physical School Libraries

In the physical libraries I recorded the English books physically in the libraries at the time of visitation. The number of books in the libraries were limited, amounting to of one hundred and sixty-four (164) in total.

3.3.3 Requirements of the Works

For a work to be included in the data collection, there were three particular requirements every work had to reach:

- It had to be in English, either entirely or with a second language support (such as books with pictures labeled with both English and Norwegian words)
- The work had to be contained within one of the relevant libraries, and in the physical libraries, it had to clearly belong to the school, marked with a stamp or sticker.
- The work had to be a book ("easily read" paperback books have been included, magazines and audiobooks have been excluded)

I worked with categories to determine what I looked for in each book to ascertain whether they undisputedly included LGBTQIA+ representation. All the aforementioned categories allowed me to write elaborated explanations in the Excel format I recorded them in.

These categories were:
- LGBTQIA+ representation (depiction or text) on the front page
- LGBTQIA+ representation (depiction or text) on the back page
- LGBTQIA+ characters in the book
- Types of representation (i.e., implicit, explicit, sexual identity of characters, discussion of LGBTQIA+ rights, queerbaiting, retroactive sexual identity description, stereotypes)

I also included categories that are typically associated with recording books, such as which books were fiction vs. non-fiction, in case I found any significant differences that could impact the results. Although both fictional and nonfictional books can contain LGBTQIA+ representation, I felt the difference in how such representation would appear was significant enough to be worth recording.

Under the "types of representation" category, I created space for any elaborations, including any retroactive conformations of sexuality by the author, possible virtue signaling, and other types of representation that are not necessarily "representation type", but rather "representation information". During the active collection of data, I left the category open for anything I thought might prove relevant to be looked through at a later date as my time in the libraries had some limitations, based on open hours, used by classes during school time, and found recording everything to research later a more efficient way than attempting to do everything at once. I do not believe the time limitations in the libraries affected the findings.

Authors who have retroactively stated the sexuality of a character are not unheard of, such as the case with the supporting character Albus Dumbledore in the Harry Potter franchise. In any situation I encountered such a retroactive statement by an author, I looked at every situation individually. In the case of Albus Dumbledore, I have not included Harry Potter as a book series with LGBTQIA+ representation as there is no more than negligible textual evidence in the books to support J. K. Rowling's claim of Dumbledore's sexuality.

3.4 Data Organisation

I have collected all the data in Excel on a file with several pages, one for each place/website I have recorded data. Those pages contain a straightforward frequency table, where I have recorded the name of the author, the book titles, any representation on the front page, any representation on the back page, any characters who are a part of LGBTQIA+ as well as the types of representation showed in the books. Every book without LGBTQIA+ representation has been marked no or none in every category. Any book containing said representation has been marked yes, and brief explanations and names of relevant characters have been inputted in the table.

For School A, I additionally recorded a complete APA style source list in Word with numbers matching up to their parallel in Excel in case of any reprints or edition changes that could make the knowledge valuable/necessary for informing of my standpoint. I did this as I would be unable to revisit if I faced a quandary. School B could be revisited, and a complete source list was therefore not required for me to record any findings.

3.5 Ethics

Ethicality within research can be divided into two main groups for consideration (Nyeng, 2012, s. 159). The first part revolves around the relationship between the researcher and the participants. I have not used individuals or direct participants, though I have informed the administration of my wishes, intentions, and goals for the study so they could give informed consent to my visits. Both schools were chosen for convenience based on their location and prior cooperation with their university. The second part revolves around the researcher's internal process of objectivity, transparency and honesty (Nyeng, 2012, p. 159). Throughout the data collection process, I have worked to remain objective in my discoveries. To minimize any accidental falsification of results

from the data interpretation, I have adhered to the strict guidelines of my categories and strategies for data collection.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

CappelenDamm and Gyldendal are the two biggest book publishers in Norway and received the most money from LK20 to create learning platforms, and can therefore be a good representation of what types of English LGBTQIA+ representation is typical for such platforms (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). Many schools adhere to either Gyldendal or CappelenDamm, and this study can be of help in expressing relevant differences in the contents of their libraries. Salaby is recorded to be used in 66% of Norwegian primary and secondary schools in 2017 (Uutilsynet, 2017). A publishing manager in CappelenDamm, Fride Bergem, reported that their learning platform Skolen had received over 300 000 users, which is to say more than half of schools in Norway (CappelenDamm, n.d.).

A weakness in analyzing literature can be the researchers' perspective affecting the results (Johannesen et al., 2021, p. 243). To reduce the possibility of my expectations and biases affecting the results, I differentiated between explicit and implicit representation, placing more value and recognition on explicit representation, which is less affected by bias. Additionally, the data collected is not reliant upon the opinions or perceptions of pupils, teachers, parents, or school administrations and can therefore showcase results more likely to be recreated.

The reliability of any research design is vital to ascertain the validity of the research's findings (Johannesen et al., 2021, p. 27). In a research design dependent on recording answers from individuals, such as in an interview or a survey, one way to test the reliability of the answers could be to reformulate a question to test if the participants' answers align. In the form of collecting data from books, the result will be more reliable the more explicit the data is (p. 27 − 28). As such, books containing explicit references, descriptions, and depictions of LGBTQIA+ characters and events will showcase more reliable results than books containing implicit representation, as it requires less individual interpretation (Crisp, 2018, p. 365). Additionally, I have been critical in my analysis and recording process, which is important to ensure accuracy in the results (Anker, 2021, p. 111). Being honest about strengths and weaknesses of the data collection and analysis processes strengthens the reliability of the study process (Anker, 2021, p. 111)

4 Results

This section contains the relevant findings from recording the physical and online libraries, showcasing the physical libraries first, then the online platforms. Any books found with LGBTQIA+ representation are analyzed and presented in types of representation and sexual expressions found. Additionally, the section contains an explanation of what works have been excluded from the study and any excluded possible results as well. The analysis of the books containing representation encompasses characters, themes, words, and opinions/perspectives. The analysis focuses on the amount of LGBTQIA+ characters and their specific sexuality/gender identity if specified, perceptions and presentations of non-normative gender and sexualities presented within the books, as well as reoccurring themes. The complete collection of results is recorded in appendix one.

4.1 Online Platforms

4.1.1 Salaby

Salaby is divided into categories of age, years one and two, years three and four, and years five to seven. The user can choose a school subject within every yearly division, in this case, English. Once the user has entered the subject English, they can enter the library from there to find English books. However, no English library exists for years one and two or three and four. Every pupil has access to all the year levels; however, the books are aimed at those in higher secondary grades.

Salaby's library page contained eighteen books. Of those, six of the books contain multiple individual stories, amounting to a total of thirty independent stories. Six of the books (ten of the total amount of works) are rewritten works with credits given to both the original and new author. Three of the books are in the category of nonfiction, and the remaining twenty-seven works are fictional in nature. The book in the library is portrayed as miniature front pages of the book along with the book title, ordered in a grid of five books on every row.

Of the eighteen books, none of the front pages contain LGBTQIA+ elements, including both text and picture/illustration. As the Salaby library is digital, every book contains a front page, a table of contents, and the actual textual works. The books do not have a back page. There is also no short text summarizing or enticing the reader to the book, as is customary on physical copies. Therefore, I

could make no observations of said back page or summary. Additionally, none of the works contained either explicit or implicit LGBTQIA+ characters or themes. Thereby the percentage of LGBTQIA+ representation on Salaby amounts to 0%.
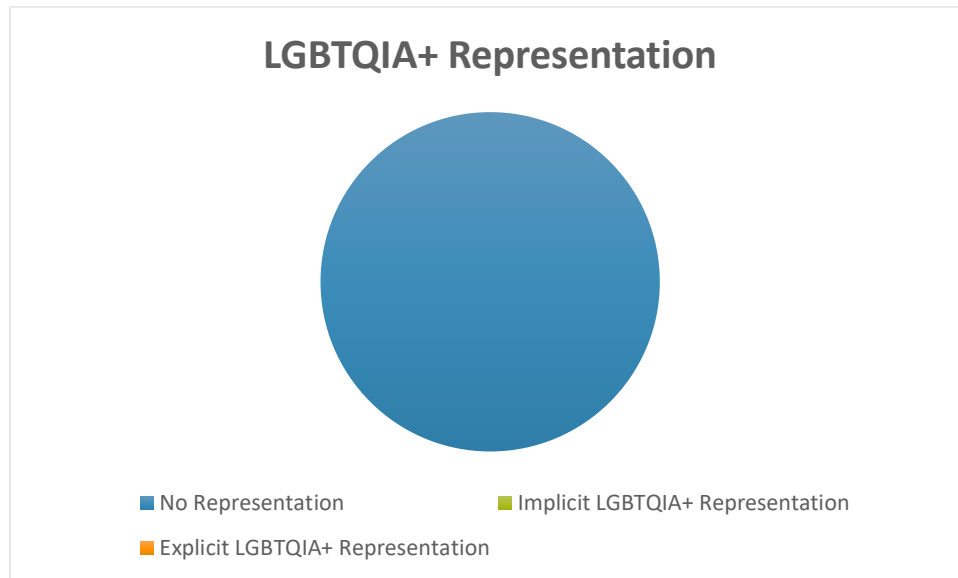

Figure 1: LGBTQIA+ Representation Recorded from Salaby

4.1.2 Skolestudio

Skolestudio is divided into the categories of primary school levels and secondary school levels, where the primary school levels contain zero (0) English books, and the secondary school level contain ten (10). The library shows a similar design to Salaby, as Gyldendal Publishing makes both websites. However, SkoleStudio allows one to choose language and level of reading in an extensive collective library rather than sequestering them away under different subjects.

Of those ten (10) recorded books, none contain explicit LGBTQIA+ characters or themes. Three (3) of the books are adapted from "classic stories", of which one is a collection of some of Edgar Allen Poe's most famous works. None of the books are non-fiction and put together, and the books contain themes from war to surviving the Titanic to immigration. As Others See Us is one of the books provided by the Skolestudio library and a solid example of a book about teenagers that could incorporate one or more characters that are a part of LGBTQIA+ in a tactful manner to increase representation value.
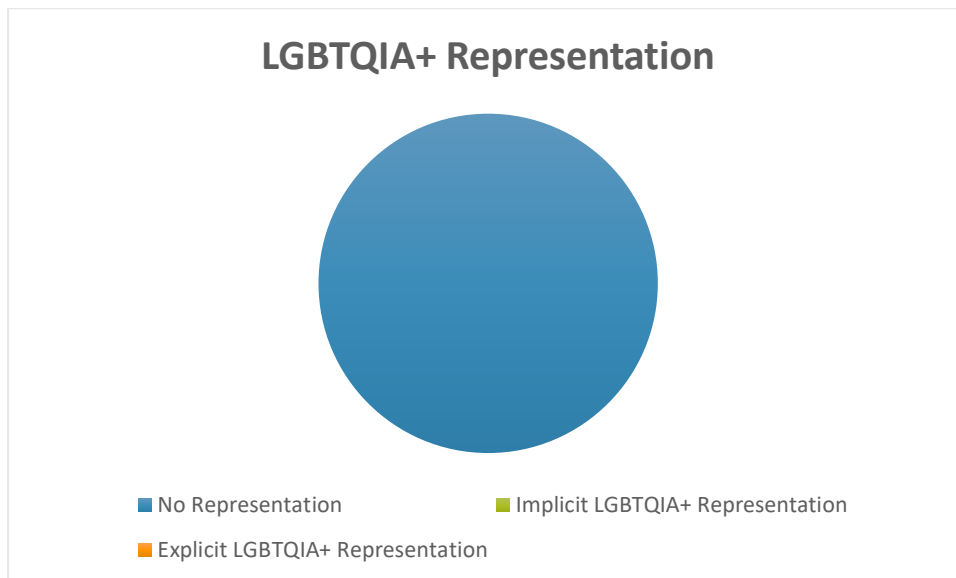
Figure 2: LGBTQIA+ Representation Recorded on SkoleStudio

4.1.3 Skolen

The digital library pupils get access to through CappelenDamm's Skolen website is divided into many subcategories, such as Easily read, new Norwegian, and multiple languages. Additionally, every book is ordered into corresponding categories of school grade, divided into first to fourth grade, fifth to seventh grade, and eighth to tenth grade. I selected the subcategory "Multiple Languages" as that included English and recorded every book in the English category. As with Salaby and Skolestudio, there is no shown back page for the digital showcases. Nevertheless, Skolen has a short text, written as it would be if it were on the back page, to introduce the books. The exception to this is the "easily read" books and those aimed towards the younger years.

CappelenDamm's Skolen held one hundred and sixty-one (161) English books in their library section. As with Salaby and Skolestudio, some of those books contained multiple stories/works concluding in one hundred and sixty-six (166) "independent" stories. Fifteen (15) of the books are non-fictional. Several of the books are repeated in the different age-divided sections. An example of this would be the book *Lemon*, which can be found in both the category year one to four as well as the category years five to seven.

The category of years one to four contained sixty-nine (69) books, of which five (5) were labeled non-fiction, and none were adapted works of famous works generally considered canon in the

literary world. Of these books none contained explicit LGBTQIA+ characters, front pages, or summaries.[1]

The category of years five to seven consisted of ninety (90) books, wherein eight 8 were non-fictional in nature. The books in this category contain more immersive texts, and the fictional works contain more teenagers and main characters with more depth and descriptive words. There were zero (0) books in this age bracket that contained any explicit representation.

The last category is the secondary school age, years eight to ten, containing sixty-four (64) books. With seventeen (17) non-fictional books and sixteen (16) books being adaptations of canonical works, this category is the most complex, as expected, considering it is aimed at older pupils with a more expanded understanding of the world. In this category, there were two (2) books with explicit LGBTQIA+ front pages, characters, themes, and summaries.

Every book also contains a very short note for the teacher, with relevant competence aims relevant to the books. Additionally, some of the books, including both books with LGBTQIA+ representation, include a short "to the teacher" of what the book can be used for. The text to the teacher, when looking at *Bi-Normal*, is summarized in three bullet points, namely: English, School Environment, and Youth/friendship. *The Art of Being Normal* has a sentence that states: "A touching, well written reminder of how brutal, yet still beautiful, the world can be for those who are different". Thus, when opening both books, there is a place the reader could be told the types of representation the books contain, the importance of representation, or a simple tag to show the book contains LGBTQIA+ representation, yet such an explanation or tag are both notably missing.

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[1] One book by Janne Aaseby Johnsen called "*Rainbow*" depicted a rainbow font on the front page, reminiscent of gay paraphernalia, yet was a book on the colors of the rainbow and held no relevance.
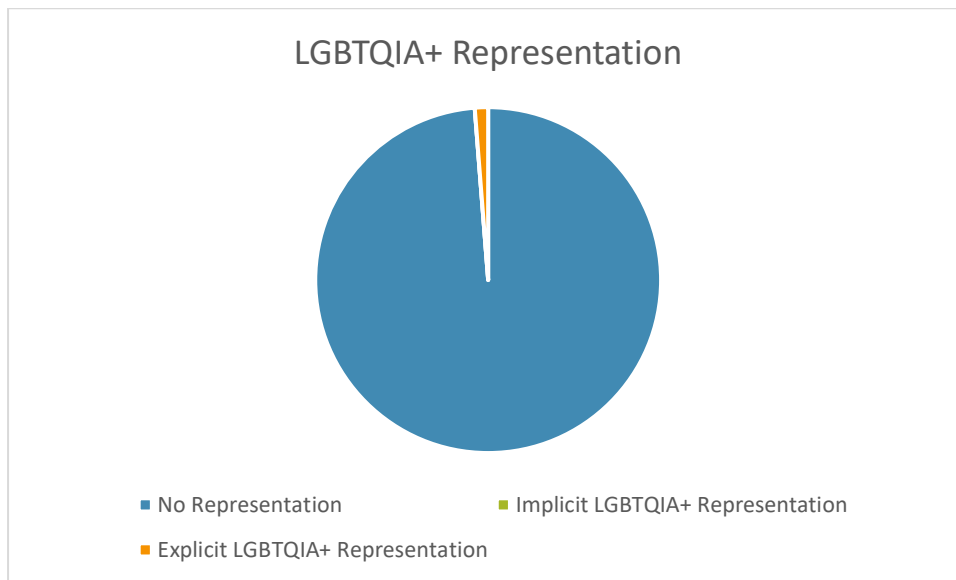
Figure 3: LGBTQIA+ Representation Recorded on Skolen

4.2 Recorded Representation

4.2.1 Bi- Normal

Bi-Normal (2013), written by M. G. Higgins, focuses on characters of high school age, thereby older than pupils in primary school. The book contains simplistic language, a big font, and much space, so it should be manageable for an enthusiastic reader at primary age should they wish. The book's cover showcases the book's representation explicitly by the title containing the word bi, a widespread short form for the term bisexual. The summary contains an implicit suggestion that the main character Brett is bisexual, with context with the title, by stating his love for his girlfriend and a suggestion that Brett meeting a character named Zack makes him uncertain of himself.

The book showcases two bisexual characters, both male. The supporting character who is bisexual is given a "mentor" role, only there to support the main characters sexual realization and references prior suicidal thoughts because of his sexuality. The book also showcases two explicitly stated male gay teenagers and alluding to more through LGBT+ meetings organized by pupils taking place on school grounds. One female is confirmed to be lesbian, while a friend of the main character expressed a belief that another is the same, based on stereotypes, later disproven as a wrong assumption by another supporting character. The character is described with short hair, no make-up, and "walks in a masculine fashion" (p. 42). The book also expresses explicit homophobia

through slurs, bullying based on sexuality, and suggestions of limiting one's expressed sexuality, in an attempt to better fit in within an unwelcome society.

The book contains no characters expressing sexualities outside of straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual. It showcases a parent being supportive of their child when the child comes out as not normative in their sexuality.
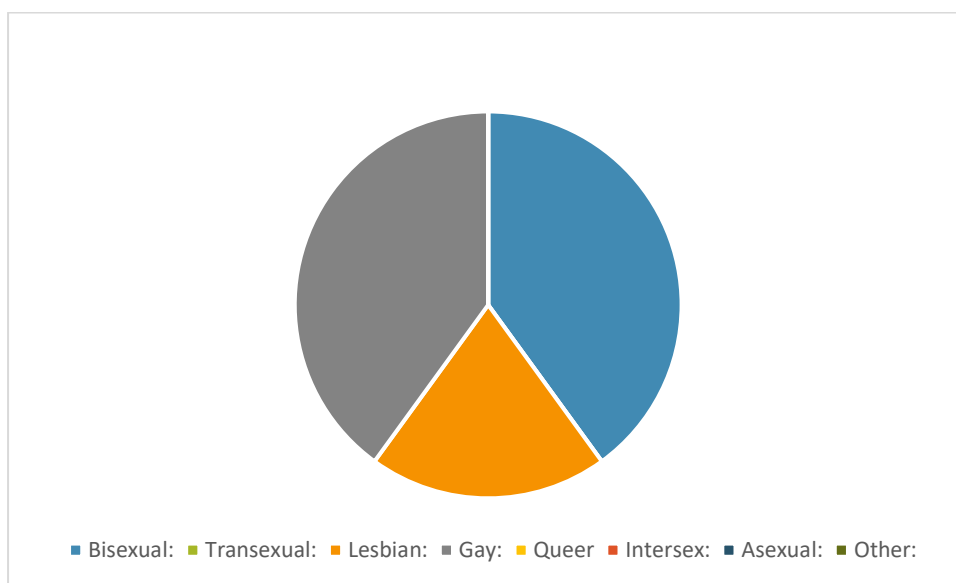

Figure 4: Sexualities Represented in Bi-Normal[2]

4.2.2 The Art of Being Normal

The Art of Being Normal (n.d.), written by Lisa Williamson, is a more challenging read, requiring more reading comprehension of its reader, and is likely to be too demanding for most pupils in primary school age. The pupils can access the book and can therefore read it individually if they wish, but it is doubtful the book could be used for instruction in primary school age in its entirety. If a teacher chooses to use excerpts from the book, this might be more attainable for more pupils, although it will result in a less authentic representation. The front page of *The Art of Being Normal* explicitly showcases a pictographic depiction of a female between two halves of a male, creating a suggested understanding of the female tearing out of the male pictogram.

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[2] The category "heterosexual" is not included as no characters are explicitly confirmed heterosexuals, despite being in/having been in hetero relationships. The main character assumes heterosexuality until something else is confirmed. This is true for every chart about represented sexualities.

The book contains two main characters who are explicitly transgender. One of the characters is female-to-male, and the other is male-to-female. Both households are showcased as supportive, though the estranged father of the female-to-male character refers to the characters as a "freak" when meeting them for the first time in many years. The books portray schools without inclusive environments, where bullying based on pupils being transexual seems expected. The former school of one of the main characters recommended the pupil change schools "for their own safety" after a particular bullying incident, as they allegedly did not have enough recorded misbehavior to expel most of the pupils orchestrating the incident.

The book showcases different stages of transition, from before coming out and the beginning stages to being recognized as the gender one is transitioning to, with a mention of hormone blockers, without particular mention of surgeries.

The book showcases an ideal for being "normal", and one of the main characters idealizes being normal as "fitting in". Throughout the book, there are references and descriptions of David conducting "inspections" on themselves as his/her body is changing because of puberty, and David dislikes it. There are several references to wanting smaller feet and not wishing to be taller (because the character believes it is all right for a boy to be tall, but weird for a girl).

The book shows several examples of David hiding Kate when excusing having borrowed a nightie by blaming it on being better in the warmth, removing the wig and makeup, and covering the dress when answering the door for pizza. David gets to the front as Kate when the main characters take a trip together to find Let's father and spend the whole two days as Kate. When coming home from the trip, David comes out at home to supportive parents.
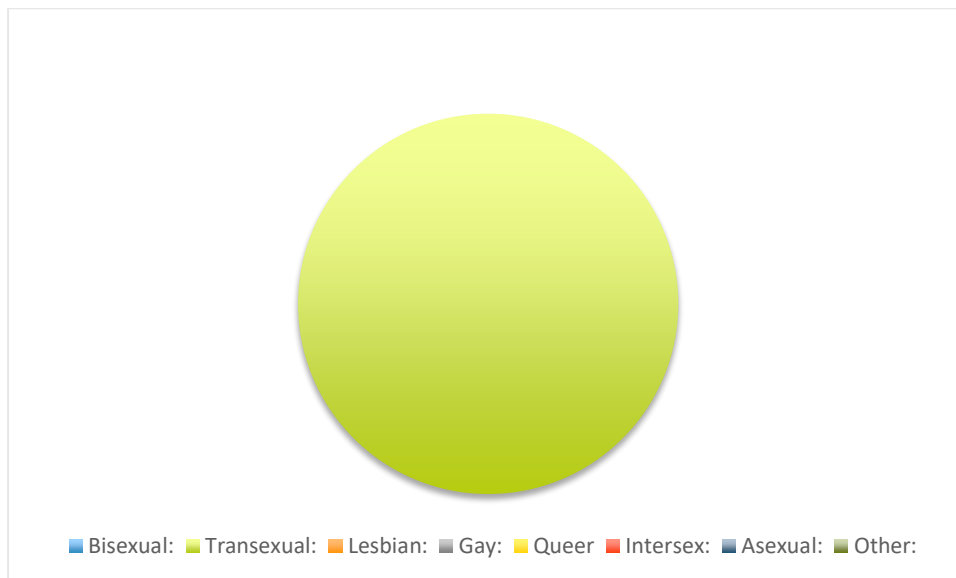
Figure 5: Sexualities Represented in The Art of Being Normal

4.3 Collective Results

Collectively, I recorded a hundred and eighty-nine (189) books from the online libraries, two of which contained explicit representation of LGBTQIA+ themes, giving a percentage of 1,06%. Those two representative books are also explicit in their representation on the cover. Character-wise, the books with representation covers the sexualities and gender expressions: heterosexual, bisexual, gay (homosexual males), lesbianism, and transgender. Thematically, heteronormality, stereotypes, and victimizing LGBTQIA+ individuals are all prominent.

4.4 Excluded Works

I have chosen to exclude Magazines from the study. My contact at School A informed me that they change out magazines on a quicker basis than the books, and therefore my recording of their library might not be representative of their library come summer if I included magazines that might no longer be there. As I did not include magazines in the physical libraries, I chose to subsequently exclude magazines from the online platforms to keep the requirements of relevant works the same, leaving no room for ambiguity. I have also excluded audiobooks, as they are duplicates of books already recorded in the written section of the libraries. Additionally, the CappelenDamm online library, Skolen, were the only library containing audiobooks, and any results would therefore be irresponsible to quantify as they would be recordings of a singular point of reference.

In the case of retroactive representation, I have chosen to include works where the author retroactively defines the sexual identity of a character as an implicit representation so long as there exists textual evidence to support it. Based on a lack of textual evidence in the Harry Potter books, I have chosen to exclude the supporting character Dumbledore, even though J. K. Rowling has retroactively stated that he is gay (Crisp, 2018, p. 363).

5 Discussion/Analysis

This section discusses the results garnered by reviewing the libraries based on the research questions this study set out to answer, which were:

- Do pupils in the modern English classroom have adequate access to books that include LGBTQIA+ themes and characters?
- What type of LGBTQIA+ representation do the pupils get access to?
- To what degree do online libraries contain books with LGBTQIA+ themes and characters relevant to pupils of different ages and levels accessible for the pupils?

The discussion section will also discuss whether the curriculum requires more representation in school or if the need is met.

5.1 Minimal Representation available

5.1.1 Little Representation in Online Libraries

Of the three online libraries only Skolen (by CappelenDamm) contained books with LGBTQIA+ representation. However, Skolen only contained a percentage of 1.24 books with representation out of one hundred and sixty-one (161) recorded books. Of the total recorded one hundred and eighty-nine (189) books, the libraries contained a combined percentage of 1.06% books with LGBTQIA+ representation. Hughes-Hassel et al. (2013) recorded an average of 0.4% books containing LGBTQIA+ representation, and concluded that the libraries were underrepresenting the category as the percentage of books with representation was lower than the registered amount of teens a part of the LGBTQIA+ community (p.10).

Therefore, the amount of representation in the libraries of the online learning platforms does not meet Crisp's (2018) suggestion of giving pupils access to multiple books containing representation of the same sexualities and gender expression to ensure the pupils can get a more authentic and encapsulating more access through representation (p. 355 – 356). If the pupils only gain access to one source for a sexuality they relate with, they may experience "*The Danger of a Single Story*", wherein they would have little opportunity of knowing if the representation shown is accurate or harmful because they only have access to the one perspective (Adichie, 2009).

The lack of adults and parental figures represented within LGBTQIA+ may leave the pupils without a "futerescape", an understanding of the adult lives experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals (Røthing & Svendsen, 2010, p. 149). As Røthing & Svendsen concluded, such a lack of a secure understanding and representations of future possibilities may lead to a feeling of hopelessness, which can develop towards depression and suicidal thoughts. Presenting pupils with examples of LGBTQIA+ adults with similar experiences as heterosexual cisgender adults, where their non-normative sexuality or gender identity is apparent, but not overshadowing the rest of their lives, could present pupils with healthy examples of said "futurescapes".

Both Gyldendal and CappelenDamm inform of their online learning platforms, and their compliance with LK20 (Gyldendal, n.d.)(CappelenDamm, n.d.) . If the goal is for the libraries to contain a wide enough array of literature to meet the pupils need for varied representation, one can argue that the goal has not yet been reached. The curriculum after year 4 contains a competence aim specifying that the pupils should "acquire cultural knowledge through English-language literature" (Utdanningdirektoratet, 2020, p. 6). As neither of the books containing LGBTQIA+ representation are aimed towards pupils in primary school, the recorded representation is not suitable for the younger classes, and the online libraries thereby do not contain the representation needed for this aim to be met through the recorded online libraries.

After year 7, the pupils are supposed to be able to reflect upon their identity and cultural belonging, as well as "investigate ways of living and traditions in different societies" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 7). With identity and cultural belonging being quite wide, encompassing phrases, the pupils would require several perspectives and deeper understanding to reach such a demanding competence aim. At the moment, I would not say the recorded online libraries meet that information demand.

Additionally, (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013) state the need for LGBTQIA+ representation being included in school libraries to make LGBTQIA+ pupils feel included (p. 4). Should they not find role models or characters they can relate to they may feel abnormal or unaccepted. The lack of representation sends a message to the pupils that LGBTQIA+ is not okay, despite the teacher saying differently (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013, p. 4). On the basis that Norwegians se acceptance of

LGBTQIA+ individuals as a virtue (Røthing & Svendsen, 2010) this is decidedly not the message schools should wish to give (p. 150).

5.1.2 Limited Representation in Physical School Libraries

If one wish to argue physical school libraries contain enough LGBTQIA+ representation that representation is unnecessary in the online libraries, that theory has been disproven by my visits to the two (2) physical school libraries. The visits cannot be used as representative of school libraries in any larger area, however they do prove that not **all** school libraries contain enough representation. Representation through online learning platforms would therefore be necessary to bridge the gap. Notice, this is not to say school libraries should abstain from containing LGBTQIA+ representative books if the online libraries contained enough representation. It is rather a depiction of the complete lack of representation some pupils may be met with, and how every platform and library should include representative books to create a diverse and thorough collection of accessible representation.

In the two libraries I recorded a total of a hundred and seventy-six (176) books, of which one book, *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (2006), contained a character implicitly lesbian, based on a stereotypical portrayal. Pupils may not recognize the possible representation because the implicitness of it would require more interpretation from the pupils than the otherwise found explicit representation (Crisp, 2018). It would also require the pupils to recognize the referenced stereotype of lesbians (short hair, unshaven, more masculine) which they may not hold any knowledge of. As such, the representation within the recorded school libraries showcases a lack of, and need for, LGBTQIA+ representation, as it has not been covered by the schools' own collection.

5.2 Aspects of Recorded Representation

5.2.1 Gender Performativity

Bi - Normal shows a teenager's perspective of applied stereotypical gender roles. Softball is considered a girl sport, and football (presumably American) is considered a boy sport. Where many lesbians might play softball, the football players are supposedly all straight/mostly straight. Butler's (2002) observance of constructed genders become relevant here, as this is an example of stereotypes built on expected gender normality (p. 5 – 7). The performativity of gender Butler

discusses is a vital part of the main characters day to day life, as he is fearful of his friends finding out his sexuality and does his best to showcase similar opinions to uphold the image of his masculinity he feels protects him from persecution.

Butler's (2002) arguments towards a less binary understanding of gender also becomes relevant when met with David/Kate's rigid understanding of differences between males and females (p.10). David/Kate's many references to how a woman and man are supposed to look gives way to a thinking process of strict gender rules and expectations of gender. Much of David/Kate's pain comes from the disappointment of developing further towards a male's adult body, as he/she feels further away from his/her ideal female body. Butler's (2002) expressed disparities between the terms sex and gender leaves an allowance for gender to be closer to individual expression rather than biological attributes (p. 10). Additionally, Butler's (2002) argument for gender being how one presents and expresses oneself rather than built on societies expectations might support a transgender's transition period.

The Art of Being Normal follows the stereotype of victimizing members of LGBTQIA+ (Graybill & Proctor, 2016, p. 13). Both schools introduced in the book showcases transphobic behavior such as misgendering, dead-naming (using the old, gendered name a transexual person used before changing it) and harassment, with limited support from teachers or the administration. If the only representation of transsexuality pupils get clear access to through school showcases the perspective of two bullied individuals who struggle with their peers showcasing transphobic attitudes and actions, the lack of a counter perspective may influence a pupils views on being transexual, and how peers may respond (Adichie, 2009). In this case, while the representation may be authentic and showcase a realistic perspective, it showcases an incomplete presentation of experiences for a trans person, and may introduce more fear for a trans pupil who already feel secluded.

5.2.2 Sexual Oppression and Heteronormativity

Foucault's theory of normativity and meeting societies expectations for your sex and gender get enforced in both *The Art of Being Normal* and *Bi-Normal* (Foucault, 2020, p. 135 - 139). Both books have some focus on bullying, with the victims being part of LGBTQIA+ and outside of the accepted societal norm in the high schools. *In The Art of Being Normal* the main characters face

discrimination and marginalization as a result of not fitting into their allocated gender categories. Thereby the book highlights the power others hold for operating and constructing the norms and their enforcement. The book also demonstrates how bullying and preconceived social groups enforce social control to maintain the hierarchies within the school.

Both the main character in *Bi-Normal* and the character David/Kate in *The Art of Being Normal* showcase a heteronormative mindset despite their non-normative sexualities and genders. As such every book with explicit LGBTQIA+ representation in the recorded online libraries promotes a heteronormative mindset as standard. While David/Kate get exposed to the importance of not assuming about others, Brett never does. Towards the end of the book, where he is disappointed to learn his crush has a girlfriend, Brett never considers the possibility of his crush being bisexual, even though he identifies as such himself. The idealization of being "normal" portrayed in both books support Foucault's claims of society holding power through norms and expectations (Foucault, 2020).

Continuing the discussion of Foucault's theories of power, the disclosed instances of bullying based on sexuality and gender identity showcased in *Bi-Normal* presents an example of the self-policing caused by the power of the panoptical concept (Foucault, 1995, p. 201). The main characters of both books show fear of being caught in various non-heteronormative situations. While the main character Brett, in *Bi-Normal,* is bisexual and the book is about him learning to accept himself, the book does showcase several instances of homophobic bullying. Brett becomes worried of being "caught" as non-heterosexual and demonstrate several instances of self-critique for his sexuality. As he is the main character pupils reading the book does never truly get exposed to a different mindset, and can as such carry negative connotations towards non-heterosexual aspects of themselves or others if not corrected.

The altogether limited amount of representation could be argued to continue the oppression of non-normative sexualities and gender identities introduced by Foucault (2020). A lack of representation may limit pupils' ability to construct their own thoughts and values around non-normality, and accept the picture presented by society. Some researchers refer to heterosexuality as "privileged", as it is still the expectation, and the best represented in books (Allen, 2015, p. 368). The acknowledgement of privilege highlights the unfairness LGBTQIA+ people face.

5.2.3 Bisexual Erasure

Bi- Normal is quite interesting when it comes to LGBTQIA+ representation, as its main character discovers his bisexuality. Barker and Scheele (2016) suggest that monosexualities are more commonly referred to in queer theory than bisexuality and other multisexual options, which is more limited in its representation (p. 137). The authors choice to focus on bisexuality rather than the more common homosexualities is therefore interesting, and further the importance of bisexual representation.

Bi- Normal contains characters who are explicitly stated gay, lesbian, and bisexual. Of those bisexuality as showcased the most as the main character is bisexual. In the context of what representation has been found, the focus on bisexuality may work to reduce the bisexual erasure (Barker & Scheele, 2016, p. 137). The book also introduces a second bisexual character to help the main character understand and come to terms with his sexuality. In support of bisexual erasure in the book whenever a character analyzes others based on stereotypes to ascertain someone's sexuality, they never mention bisexuality. As mentioned before, the main character never considers his male crush can be bisexual when he finds out he has a girlfriend, despite being bisexual himself.

5.2.4 Homonormativity

Homonormativity refers to members of LGBTQIA+ portraying as normative in any aspect of their life, not their sexuality (Lester, 2014), the main character, Brett, in *Bi-Normal*, tells a fellow classmate getting bullied for his sexuality, to "be less obvious" and portray himself closer to stereotypically straight (p. 246-247). This implies Brett believes the character would receive less bullying, despite the fact that he was bullied for having a non-normative sexuality, so long as he didn't "flaunt" his difference. This mindset draws upon the dangers Lester (2014) reference of depicting non-normative sexualities as abnormal and bad (p. 245). Leaving pupils in school believing their sexualities are acceptable so long as they don't express them acts against the schools' goal of helping pupils develop and communicate their identity (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 5 - 6). The book, *Bi-Normal,* never showcase Brett expressing regret for telling the character not to showcase his sexuality or come out publicly himself. As such, if *Bi-Normal* were to be some of the only LGBTQIA+ representation the pupils receive it would not necessarily influence the pupils with a healthy, positive view of their non-hetero sexualities or gender expression, despite containing authentic representation.

5.2.5 Stereotypes

The stereotypical view of lesbians being less conventionally feminine, having short hair and no make-up, appears in *Bi-Normal*, at a party the main character visits. The character described is revealed to not be a lesbian, which seems quite surprising to the main character as the stereotype fit so well. Crips (2018) references to sensationalized representation, without depth, causing expectations of others, as individuals without representation create categories and opinions without the support of good representation, as was probably the case with Brett (p. 358).

Another stereotype reappearing in both *The Art of Being Normal* and *Bi-Normal* is the depiction of members of LGBTQIA+ in victimized positions, such as victims of bullying (Graybill & Proctor, 2016). Quite early in the book *Bi-Normal,* the reader is exposed to a bullying incidence, where two male teens get harassed, and there are thrown comments such as "That's what their problem is. They don't know the difference between girls and boys" (p. 17). The bullying based on their sexuality, homosexuality, occurs before their sexuality is confirmed in the book. The same two characters are showed in distressing situations throughout the book receiving little support, and not being of power enough to stop it themselves. In one scene, one of the characters is shown to be skipping class as he feels unsafe in the classroom with some bullies (p. 58 – 59). His lack of power leaves losing parts of his own education as better than leaving himself exposed to further bullying in that class. Such depictions being normalized in works containing representation can lead to creating a shared understanding of LGBTQIA+ always becoming victims, which can negatively affect the pupils' self-esteem (Ochman, 1996, p. 712).

Similarly, *The Art of Being Normal* depicts both main characters struggling with bullying occurring because of their non-normative gender identities. Leo has been victim of a particularly traumatic bullying experience, where it was suggested, he change schools for his own safety because of the seriousness of the bullying (p. 210 - 211). If pupils of a young age repeatedly get exposed to LGBTQIA+ representation that suggest they may face discrimination and bullying of their non – normative sexualities and gender identities that may limit the pupils' confidence in expressing their differences. In the hope of creating a safe and inclusive learning environment the representation pupils have access should therefore include works without such stereotypical portrayals as well. As representation of parental figures would help normalizing non-normative sexualities and gender expressions (Simoni, 1996) such representation may be quite helpful in this endeavor (p. 223).

This is not to say that representation cannot include depictions of bullying or similar situations, as it is unrealistic that someone is never exposed to situations where they are left feeling victimized. On the contrary this is rather a wish for more comprehensive representation to also show examples of safe and happy depictions of LGBTQIA+ characters to create a full image.

5.2.6 Sensationalized vs. Authentic Representation

The book, *Bi-Normal,* houses many depictions and representations of LGBTQIA+ characters of differing sexualities in a generally positive and authentic view, while the homophobic actions are disparaged and viewed as regretful and bad, for the most part. The authenticity comes through by the depth of the characters. Brett could have easily broken up with his girlfriend to date Zack, and the book could be about how happy that made him. Instead, he loves his girlfriend, and is upset at the notion that he is attracted to someone else while in a relationship with her. After his girlfriend breaks up with him, he does not get his "happy ever after" with Zack, but rather, an open ending where he seems nervous and excited about what the future has to bring if he gets involved with a man. Not giving him a happy ending, while depicting being true to one's sexuality as a positive experience contributes to the representation in the book conveying lessons. It does not build upon the belief that it only matters if you are attracted to someone – bisexuals being called either straight or gay depending on whether they're in a straight or gay relationship.

The representation presented through David/Kate and Leo is also authentic in nature. While the book focuses on the difficulties of going through high school as transgender, the characters show more depth than a superficial view of what transgender is, as Crisp (2018) says is key in writing authentic representation (p. 359). Leo faces troubles at home with his mother and her boyfriend, while looking for his father, and trying to improve his mental health. David/Kate struggles with his/her best friends becoming a couple, and therefore sometimes feelings of exclusion. He/She also struggles with feeling unpopular, and realizing the advantages he/she has just from being born in the right family and having more money than others. While them being transgender influences much of their everyday life in high school, and affect their relationships, they also face different problems, where their transgenderism plays little part, ensuring the representation remains authentic, and not sensationalized in its portrayal (Tsai, 2010).

The lack of more books containing LGBTQIA+ representation results in the showcased books at risk for seeming sensationalized in their portrayal, as both books showcases LGBTQIA+ individuals facing controversy, and there are no books showcasing a more positive school experience (or similar) to negate the possibly provoked worry for fitting in (Tsai, 2010). Including different perspectives and characters to diversify the representation and providing several different experiences. Some books could showcase familial support or supportive classmates and friends, and can help diversify the pupils understanding of LGBTQIA+, and diminish the chances of them developing stereotypic and sensationalized understanding of what it is to be a member of LGBTQIA+ (Crisp, 2018, p. 366).

5.2.7 Main Character vs Supporting Characters

While both books contain main characters who are part of LGBTQIA+ they are older than primary age pupils, and may therefore not be entirely successful in making the pupils themselves feel represented (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2016, p. 17). As such, should *The Art of Being Normal* and *Bi-Normal* be the only form of representation primary school pupils have access to there is no grantee they would feel represented. Additionally, Crisp (2018) refer to the importance or recognizing the perspective portrayed in a book with the perspective of a LGBTQIA+ main character (p. 360 – 361). It is particularly relevant in *Bi-Normal,* when the main character showcases homophobic actions, and those actions as presented as regrettable and causing guilt. The depictions of homophobia and bullying might make the pupils feel isolated and afraid of classmates' reactions. The first-person narration of such instances showcases helplessness in the face of adversity, leaving the pupils without representation of supportive teachers or helpful adults.

Bi-Normal also showcases a supporting character, "Trevor", who is introduced as bisexual, and was contacted to explain bisexuality to the main character Brett. Despite his role being showcased as helpful, giving a clear explanation of bisexuality and some of his experiences with his sexuality. His character only appears in one scene because of his sexuality, and the character therefore seems superficial, rather than authentic, in its representation (Crisp, 2018, p. 259). On page 143 of *Bi-Normal* the character Travis explicitly stated he contemplated suicide when he found out he was bisexual. In the scene he seems to have a healthier relationship with his sexuality, and stated he wished to help Brett because he is "paying it forward". His negative reaction to his non-normative sexuality is never questioned, and the main character never references the admittance again. The

reader is left with another stereotypical representation of non-normative sexualities being more dangerous for the individual (Goodman, 1983, refrenced by Crisp, 2018, p. 359).

5.3 Accessibility in Libraries

This study is not set out to discuss the effectiveness of library setups, and online paths for library access. I have however noticed while recording the books that none of the online libraries have a way to categorize the books by themes. Thereby, the pupils would be unable to search for books containing LGBTQIA+ representation and may have to rely on finding it by chance, or instruction from the teacher, if they were unaware of a book's contents. I believe it could be helpful for pupils when choosing books they are interested in, if the books held any clear markers for which themes they contain. In the online libraries that may take shape by introducing tags pupils can search to find themes or collections of books they want to read. One such tag could be LGBTQIA+ or specific sexualities such as gay to introduce the pupils to representative works more easily and explicitly.

5.4 Representation of LGBT, no QIA+

Noticeably, the limited representation found gives no reference to any sexuality or gender expression outside of the most popularized abbreviation, LGBT, wherein the books with found representation includes Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Transsexuality in their characterizations (Baldwin, 2021). No character is explicitly stated to be either queer or questioning or any sexuality not already defined, despite the varied sexualities and the number of characters introduced with non hetero sexualities. *The Art of Being Normal*, focusing on transsexuality, made no reference to intersex or non-normative gender expressions outside of transsexuality.
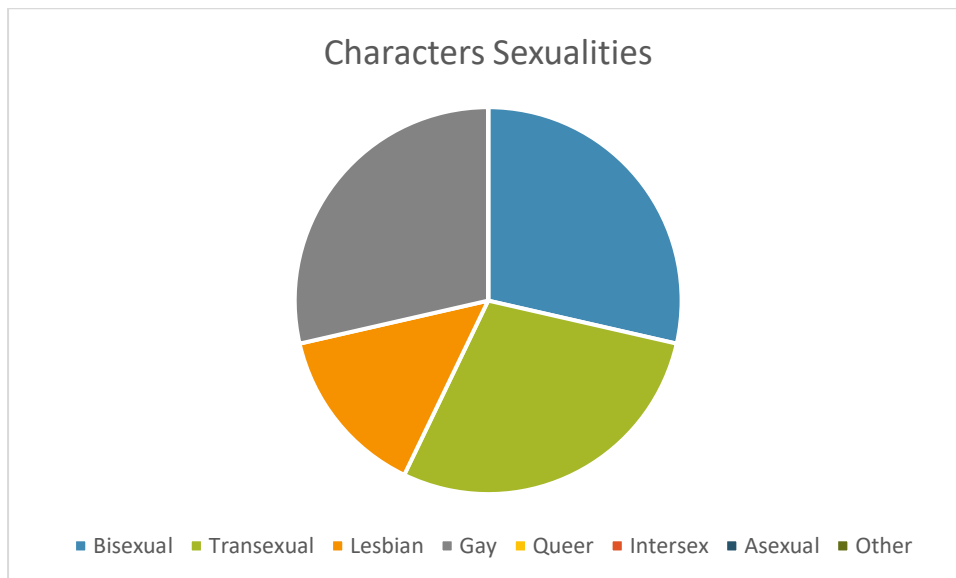
Figure 6: Represented Sexualities combined

The small amount of representation found leaves me unable to state this is a trend, as I do not have a large enough amount of representation to draw such conclusions. It does, however, suggest some sexualities and gender expressions might be given more attention, where others might be even more under-represented. Pupils with either their own non-normative sexualities or family members, friends or other individuals in their lives, with gender expressions outside of heterosexual and LGBT, would receive no representation through Skolen, Salaby and Skolestudio at the time of this study's recordings. As all pupils disserve representation, and a lack of representation can affect pupils mental health and self-image negatively (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013) the lack of representation for QIA+ sexualities and gender identities is problematic (p. 4). To comply with LK20's demands for identity development and expression (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017), a teacher might have to individually find books containing said representation if they do not have access to it through the school library or online resources accessible to the pupils (p. 5 - 6).

5.5 Curriculum

While the recorded books contain representation of different sexualities and gender identities, there are not enough of them to ensure pupils are presented with an authentic representation of LGBTQIA+ as a whole, because there is not enough books to give them several depictions to create a wider understanding and concept of LGBTQIA+. While a lack of varied representation might affect the pupils ability to understand and discuss LGBTQIA+ constructively it also undermines the

curriculums demand for all pupils to be treated equal (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 5). A lack of representation sends the heteronormative message that anything other than cisgender heterosexuality is odd or unfortunate (Gartley, 2015, p. 150). If pupils with normative gender identities and heterosexuality find the selves represented in the books they read, it is no longer equal if pupils part of LGBTQIA+ do not. Additionally, more knowledge of LGBTQIA+ would be beneficial to all pupils, independent of their gender and sexuality, as they may have family members or other people in their life who identify within LGBTQIA (Gartley, 2015, p. 150).

In the schools attempt to reach the curriculums demands for pupils being able to discuss their identities, they may learn the concept of words such as bisexual, and their meaning of being attracted to both men and women. They may not, however, be able to understand that you can be attracted to more gender expressions than just the binary accepted genders. They may not understand that you can define sexualities as it suits you, when trying to explain yourself. When attempting to express themselves, as a learning aim after year 7 requires (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020) pupils may find it difficult, as they have few examples to look towards (p. 7).

5.6 Limited Representation to Young Readers

Both *Bi-Normal* and *The Art of Being Normal* are of a higher reading level than the majority of pupils would find unaccusable until the later years of primary at the earliest, due to the high reading level and English knowledge required to comprehend the books. Both recorded books are within the online library aimed towards secondary schools, and therefore not aimed towards primary ages. The density of the pages, the switching point of views and the length of the book may make *The Art of Being Normal* inaccessible for most pupils in year seven as the reading level required may be too high for most pupils in primary school age.

As mentioned when discussing the representational value of main characters vs. supporting characters, the age of the characters showcasing representation being older than primary school age may leave the representation less impactful (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2016, p. 17). Neither of the recorded books contain representation of LGBTQIA+ characters, or views, of same ages as pupils in primary school age. Both books take place at high school, which in the United States, where the books take place, range from ages thirteen/fourteen to seventeen/eighteen, which in Norway translates to year nine and up. At a primary school age they may not yet conform to

different sexualities, but there are many members of LGBTQIA+ who report feeling different in a younger age, without having known why (Gartley, 2015, p. 150). As such, a lack or limitation of LGBTQIA+ representation they can relate to may send them a message of sexualities and gender identities outside cisgender and heterosexuality being bad, supported by possible homophobic bullying which is reported to begin in primary school ages (Gartley, 2015, p. 150). Gartley argues that the presence of homophobic bullying justifies and warrants the presence of positive LGBTQIA+ representation and inclusiveness.

Neither of the books containing representation would be accessible for pupils in the first years of primary, and as such they may end up with a complete lack of accessible representation. There exists several picture books and short stories, some have even been referenced in this study, that could be suitable for a lower reading level that contains depictions and authentic representation. *My Shadow is Purple* (Stuart, 2022) is an example of a picture book for young children implicitly showcasing a wide range of genders at an age-appropriate level. As books containing representation aimed towards younger pupils and readers exist, publishers such as Gyldendal and CappelenDamm should work to be part of the system to make them accessible.

Giving young pupils no access to representation or references to LGBTQIA+ may allow attitudes to be based on narrow understandings or lack of knowledge and create a detrimental beginning for introducing the pupils to books containing representation in later years. Ashton (1978, refrenced in Hamilton et al. 2006)'s findings showcased how children's choices are affected by what they read/had read to them in as young an age as three to five (p. 757 - 758).

5.7 Implications

The results from this study suggests pupils in primary schools receive limited access to book with LGBTQIA+ representation through their online learning platforms. With only the two books containing representation, the pupils would not receive a complete understanding of sexualities and gender expression and may not find representation that coincides with their own experiences or attractions. Without school libraries or online libraries providing enough representation pupils would either not receive representation through school, or a very big responsibility would be left with individual teachers to bridge the gap.

When gathering further representation for pupils to access, there should be a focus on portrayals of different varieties of sexualities. While it is good to have varying points of views for specific sexualities, to ensure an authentic presentation, some pupils may not feel gay or bisexual representations are relatable, as they unknowingly relate to something else. While representation is good for creating accepting attitudes and safe learning environments, it is also good for making pupils feel seen. Therefore, the effort must be made to make everyone feel represented. Sexualities such as asexuality and gender expressions such as genderfluid has not been represented in any of the works I have recorded.

With the limited amount of representation found it is difficult to imagine the school being able to help pupils reach the curriculums demands for expressing one's identity and being respectful of others (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 5 & 9). Despite the curriculum not expressly mentioning LGBTQIA+, this does not give schools the right to ignore it. Learning aims such learning about "different ways of living" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020), is a prime example where a teacher could introduce a book, or other representations, of a house with homosexual parents, transexual cousins or any other LGBTQIA+ variations (p. 7).

Further inclusion of works containing LGBTQIA+ representation should include works with explicit representation to ensure the pupils obtain as much as they can from it (Crisp, 2018, p. 258). If the pupils are faced with characters who are open about their sexuality, that may affect their view on self-expression, and how we should be free to express who we truly are. That representation should also include non-sensationalized representation of parents and guardians (Simoni, 1996) who can act as both role models and depictions of futures and possibilities for those who identify with non-normative sexualities or/and gender identities (p. 223).

6 Conclusion

6.1 Main Findings

Despite the two books containing explicit LGBTQIA+ representation showcasing some varied sexualities and views, it is not enough to give pupils a varied or authentic showcasing of representation (Crisp, 2018, p. 355 - 356). While the main characters in the books with LGBTQIA+ representation were all members LGBTQIA+ themselves, they were older than primary school age and may therefore be too old to make the pupils perceive themselves in the characters (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2016), and the reading level and comprehension may be too high for primary school levels still (p. 17). There was no explicit representation of adults or parents to represent role models or possible "futurescapes" for the pupils (Røthing & Svendsen, 2010, p. 149).

The LGBTQIA+ representation found in *The Art of Being Normal* and *Bi-Normal* both showcase authentic depictions of LGBTQIA+ experiences, based on the characters showing depth, both in their worries about their gender expressions and sexualities, as well as their considerations for other relatable issues such as worried about friends becoming a couple, an absentee father and money problems (Crisp, 2018, p. 358). While the representation within the books contains authentic representation of gay men, lesbian women, bisexual men, and two transexual characters, they contain no representation of any other sexualities encompassed within the LGBTQIA+ abbreviation, as the main characters showcase a heteronormative mindset, where they expect heterosexuality unless otherwise stated.

The curriculum's demand for pupils to be able to express and discuss their own identity may not be met if the pupils do not receive any other LGBTQIA+ representation through other sources. Without a variety of representation, they may develop an underdeveloped view of LGBTQIA+ based on one-sided or limited perspectives. After year 4, the requirement that the pupils "talk about some aspects of different ways of living" and acquire cultural knowledge through English-language literature" may require the teacher to find alternative works with LGBTQIA+ representation.

To improve moving forwards, the recorded online learning libraries should work to introduce more books containing LGBTQIA+ representation. That representation should contain a variety of sexualities and gender expressions to work towards giving every pupil a chance to feel represented

and provide role models. Additionally, the libraries should include LGBTQIA+ representation aimed towards younger pupils to introduce "different ways of living" as required by the learning aims after year four (Utdanningdirektoratet, 2020, p. 6).

To conclude, the study showed limited representation in the online libraries, with two (2) out of three hundred and sixty-five (365) books containing explicit LGBTQIA+ representation and only one additional book containing a character implicitly implied to be lesbian, based on stereotypes of her appearance. Of the books with representation, there are representations of LGBT and none for QIA+. Most of the representation found is authentic. The two books containing explicit representation are both written with LGBTQIA+ main characters figuring themselves out being the main plot. The minimal amount of representation may lead to the learning aims in LK20 not being reached through a lack of examples, role models, and possible "futurescapes". Should pupils never receive proper representation, their mental health and self-image can be negatively impacted (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013, p. 4).

6.2 Limitations

While Gyldendal and CappelenDamm are the two biggest publishers in Norway (Steenberg, 2018), they are decidedly not the only ones. Aschehoug and Vigmostad & Bjørke are the two other biggest publishers, and Aschehoug, similarly to Gyldendal and CappelenDamm, has an online learning platform developed for Norwegian schools (Aschehoug, n.d.). I was unable to record the library on "Aschehaug Univers" as I did not have access. The same is true for learning platforms made by smaller publishers, such as Almater Publishing and Able Magic AS, as well as additional apps the pupils may have access to on their iPad or PC. Despite this limitation, the reach of Salaby, Skolestuddeo, and Skolen is extensive enough to be relevant on their own.

Another limitation may be my inability to thoroughly read every book, based on time and efficiency, and therefore having to rely on a set of precautions and procedures to catch the possible representation rather than a complete analysis of every page. Despite this, I worked hard to make the data collection process accurate and am confident in my recordings of the books and representation. Additionally, a possible limitation could be that I am working alone and, as such, do not have anyone to double-check my perspective's influence on the data collection. To combat

personal influences affecting the findings, I adhered to the categories for representation and searched for explicit depictions or words such as "gay", "lesbian", "transexual," or others.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

While this study suggests a lack of representation in school libraries, it is not an automatic assumption that this is true for all schools in Telemark. Further research should include collecting data from more schools to construct a more comprehensive picture of LGBTQIA+ representation in school libraries in Telemark and, at a much larger scale, school libraries in all parts of Norway. While this would be a massive overtaking, proper organization and clear instructions of what to look for could allow for a collaborative effort to record pupils' access to representation in physical school libraries. Such a large study should also include the types of representation if LGBTQIA+ is typically depicted in a positive or negative context and if the recorded representation is mainly explicit or implicit.

As mentioned, the recorded books contained no representation of sexualities and gender identities/expressions outside of the "basic" LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transexual. It would be interesting to see further research focusing on which sexualities and gender identities are more widely portrayed in school libraries, whether online or physical. While existing studies, such as (Baldwin, 2021, p. 3), showcases gay and lesbian representation as the most widespread, it would be interesting to see a more comprehensive study finding the statistics for literary representation in Norwegian schools and which sexualities and gender identities gets the least amount of representation.

Further research should also look into teachers', administrators' and pupils' views of the representation the pupils receive access to. Does their perception of the representation match up with reality? Do they understand the significance of lacking representation in such a big area? Is there a noticeable difference between schools that hold a better amount of representation than those with little representation? Are there apparent differences in attitudes or views regarding LGBTQIA?

Additionally, as a thematic analysis study only portrays the books, it would be interesting to see further research to unearth the pupils, administrations, and teachers' perception of their access to

LGBTQIA+ representative works and the importance the school place on providing it. In such studies, it would also be relevant to study the pupil's knowledge and attitudes towards LGBTQIA+. Is there a noticeable difference between attitudes for pupils with ample access to LGBTQIA+ works and pupils without access? Do the pupils take advantage of the books if they have clear access? Answers to such questions can create a deeper understanding of the role LGBTQIA+ representation holds in Norwegian schooling, and how it can be successfully incorporated into future lessons.

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8 List of Tables and Charts

Annexes

Annex 1: <Data Collection.exl>

Annex 2: <Refrence List School A.docxl>