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# Counting Past Two: A Comparative Analysis of Representations of Trans People in Contemporary Fiction and EFL Textbooks for Lower Secondary School in Norway

Master's thesis in Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education for Years 5-10

Supervisor: Eir-Anne E. Edgar

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Department of Teacher Education



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# Abstract

The purpose of this master's thesis is to contribute to inclusive teaching practices about trans experiences in the lower secondary EFL classroom. First, I present a narrative analysis and comparative analysis of two contemporary fictional texts and two EFL textbook texts focusing on trans representations. In doing so, I draw on the critical trans framework developed by Eli Kean (2021), to examine trans representations in the materials teachers use and may utilize in their teaching. I have also employed the theoretical frameworks of critical literacy, affect and recognition. Through these, I discuss how critical literacy should be included alongside narratives when teaching about trans experiences. The analysis was conducted through narrative analysis, which consisted of structural narrative analysis and critical visual method. The comparison was conducted by doing a qualitative comparative analysis. Through the application of these methods, the narratives were examined based on form, content, and context, first individually and then in comparison. Comparatively, the findings reveal how the textbook texts can reproduce gender norms based on the different aspects that were examined. In comparison, the contemporary fictional texts challenge gender norms. Consequently, these findings argue for the need to implement other source material than textbook texts in the classroom when teaching about trans experiences. The findings also claim that it is vital to utilize critical literacy no matter the text being taught, because of trans people's experiences with marginalization and oppression. By teaching students to become critical of texts and teachers being critical towards the material they implement, the teaching of trans experiences can be more inclusive.

Keywords: critical literacy; trans studies; critical trans framework; contemporary fiction; EFL textbooks; narrative analysis; comparative analysis

# Sammendrag

Hensikten med denne masteroppgaven er å bidra til en mer inkluderende undervisningspraksis om transpersoners erfaringer i engelskfaget på ungdomsskolen. Først presenterer jeg en narrativ analyse og en komparativ analyse av to samtids skjønnlitterære tekster og to engelske læreboktekster for ungdomstrinnet med fokus på transrepresentasjon. Jeg fokuserer på det kritiske transrammeverket utviklet av Eli Kean (2021) for å undersøke transrepresentasjonen i materialene lærere bruker og kan bruke i undervisningen. Jeg har også brukt de teoretiske rammeverkene kritisk literacy, affekt og anerkjennelse. Gjennom disse diskuterer jeg hvordan kritisk literacy bør inkluderes i tillegg til tekstene når det undervises om transerfaringer. Analysen ble utført ved å bruke narrativ analyse, som besto av strukturell narrativ analyse og kritisk visuell metode. Sammenligningen ble utført ved å gjøre en kvalitativ komparativ analyse. Ved å bruke disse metodene ble tekstene analysert basert på form, innhold og kontekst, først individuelt og deretter ved å sammenligne. Funnene avdekker at læreboktekstene kan reprodusere kjønnsnormer basert på de ulike aspektene som ble undersøkt. Til sammenligning utfordrer samtidens skjønnlitterære tekster kjønnsnormer. Disse funnene indikerer derfor at det er et behov for å implementere andre materialer enn læreboktekster i klasserommet ved undervisning om transerfaringer. Funnene hevder også at det er viktig å bruke kritisk literacy uansett hvilken tekst det undervises i, på grunn av transpersoners erfaringer med marginalisering og undertrykkelse. Ved å lære elevene å bli tekstkritikere og at lærere er kritiske til materialet de implementerer, kan man oppnå en mer inkluderende undervisning av transerfaringer.

Nøkkelord: kritisk literacy; transstudier; kritisk transrammeverk; samtidsfiksjon; engelske lærebøker; narrativ analyse; komparativ analyse

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# List of Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and the broader spectrum
LK20	Norwegian national curriculum of 2020
NTNU	The Norwegian University of Science and Technology
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis

# 1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an introduction to the thesis. I begin with an explanation and background for choosing the topic of inclusive teaching about trans experiences. In relation to the background, I provide context to emphasize the importance of this research. I then introduce my research questions and discuss the purpose of this study. Further, I review previous research relevant to my study and situate my thesis within the research already conducted. I end the introduction with an overview of the thesis.

## 1.1 Background and Context

As a privileged White, cisgender and heterosexual woman, people have always confirmed my identity. The privilege of identifying as a cis person, which means that my anatomical sex corresponds with my gender identity, is not something everyone possesses. Trans people's gender identity does not correspond with their anatomical sex, and trans, short for transgender, is the umbrella term describing people who do not identify with their sex assigned at birth (Adelson, 2012). Therefore, trans people do not have the privilege I have. As a consequence of peoples' internalized beliefs about gender, trans people experience marginalization and discrimination because of their gender identities. This internalized belief sees gender as undisputable, fixed and connected to reproduction (Van Dijk, 2015 in Kean, 2021, p. 266). I refer to this belief as gender norms throughout this thesis as this understanding about gender is socially constructed. I use gender spectrum to refer to a view where all gender identities are included.

The gender spectrum is not something I have paid much attention to until the last years of my teacher education. In literature courses we have read texts about people who do not identify with their assigned sex at birth. The process of reading texts with protagonists identifying as trans people, specifically *Melissa* (2020), made me aware of how much within society and education is based on gender. It is easy to classify people based on their perceived gender and assume that people identify with their sex assigned at birth. After reading I started to think about the multiple times I have addressed someone based on my assumptions and divided students between girls and boys. It also made me think about the lack of knowledge I possessed about gender identity, and that the education throughout my years in primary and secondary school never discussed the gender spectrum, only touching upon LGB people.

Trans people are now more visible in the media, for example through TV-programs where trans people themselves talk about their experiences (Izadpanah, 2022). People are therefore becoming more aware of the oppression and marginalization that affect trans people's everyday life. However, there is a long way to go before trans people have the same opportunities to live a life equal to cis people. The conversation about gender is ongoing and the discussion in the media is also characterized by people who do not believe that it is possible to choose gender identity. Kaveh Rashidi, a widely recognized doctor in Norway, wrote about the importance of acknowledging the diversity of gender identities we have, and that people should be able to decide for themselves how they identify. He was met with criticism by a parliamentary politician, who stated that Rashidi expressed "gender confusion" and specified that there only exist two biological genders, and that changing gender is not possible. The politician therefore questioned his

authority as a doctor (Ismail & Johnsen, 2022). The amount of feedback Rashidi received was mostly supportive, but the comments from a privileged person in a possession of power underscore a conservative view on gender that is still very intertwined within society. A similar point of view can be found in a signature petition created by two parents with children in school. They wish to stop “gender confused teaching”, as they believe one cannot choose one’s gender, and that it is assigned and fixed at birth. Therefore, they want other parents to sign the petition so that they together can stop “gender confused teaching” (Helgaas & Risholm, 2022). Regardless of the visibility and learning more about the gender spectrum, people still possess conservative and harmful views about gender. This is partly why I wanted to examine inclusive teaching about trans people and their experiences.

Most research on sexuality and gender in education has focused on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and the broader spectrum (LGBTQ+). However, it is also necessary to include trans people because they are often erased in situations focusing on LGBTQ+ (Kean, 2021, p. 279). When trans people are erased, misunderstandings and misconceptions about gender and sexuality are reinforced (Keenan & Suárez, 2022). For the first time in 2021, trans people in Norway were included in a survey on their life satisfaction alongside LGB people. That it is the first time they were included, underscores the lack of research there is about trans people specifically, and the results demonstrate lower life satisfaction for trans people compared to all other participants (Anderssen et al., 2021). The results on life satisfaction reflect what is presented in an international context, where trans people experience hostile school environments (Kosciw et al., 2020). Luca Espseth, an open trans man in the media in Norway, stated in relation to the Norwegian survey that he was not shocked about the results. He emphasizes how the constant doubt they experience in connection to their identity is a great strain. He further states that people—who do not accept or understand trans people—are people such as their doctors, teachers, and colleagues (Aasmundsen, 2021).

It is problematic that teachers are part of the group of people who do not accept or understand trans people, as trans people are a part of the diverse student group. According to the core curriculum, “School shall develop an inclusive learning environment that promotes health, well-being and learning for all.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 18). In relation to the description of an inclusive learning environment, it is pointed out that diversity must be seen as a resource, but this diversity is not specified. Inclusion is further described in a parliamentary notice that came in 2019-2020. The notice states that all students should feel like they have a place in the community, they should feel safe, experience significance, and participate in shaping their learning (Meld. St. 6 (2019-2020)). How teachers can create an inclusive learning environment is not explicitly stated, but if students are not accepted or understood by their teachers, students will not feel included, and diversity is not seen as a resource. Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2018) state that schools are microcosms of our world, and therefore, teachers have a responsibility in giving students examples of the world around them. This includes representations of people who are similar and different to themselves. Schools and teachers help to shape how students see themselves and who they can be (p. 114). The emphasis on creating an inclusive learning environment and the responsibility teachers and schools have in shaping their students, underscores schools and teachers' responsibility in including trans people. As such, it is necessary to focus on inclusive teaching about trans experiences.

One important resource teachers utilize is textbooks. This resource is seen as more authoritative and neutral compared to the teacher (Smestad, 2018, p. 5). Røthing (2017) analyzed sexual orientation as depicted in Norwegian science textbooks, and the findings show that trans people were mentioned once and were described as a part of varying sexualities. This is misinformation because it is a gender identity and not connected to sexuality. Lesbian and gay people were discussed several times, but this representation was mainly othering, presenting them as unnormal (p. 147). Røthing's findings are close to what Smestad found in his study on 129 textbooks in Norway: "*Heteronormativity* is still a problem, and bisexual and transgendered people are far less visible than lesbian and gay people are." (Smestad, 2018, p. 4). Heteronormativity positions students as straight, and gender norms and heterosexuality are therefore promoted, whilst LGBTQ+ people are marginalized (Dinkins & Englert, 2015, p. 394). Out of 129 textbooks, LGBT people are mentioned on 246 pages, and trans people are mentioned on four of these pages, wherein two of them have an incorrect definition of what it means to be a trans person (Smestad, 2018, p. 14). Lesbian and gay people are therefore privileged in textbooks, but the representation is othering, and trans people are barely mentioned at all. Additionally, most of the information is false regarding what it means to be a trans person, and I therefore argue that we must question the authority textbooks have. An erasure of gender diversity will deprive trans students of role models. On the contrary, the erasure will prevent cis students from learning about histories and cultures and deprive those who represent the dominant culture from counternarratives (Meyer et al., 2022).

Since textbooks lack information about trans people, I look at two textbooks in this thesis, particularly English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks. According to Smestad (2018), textbooks for language subjects have not been analyzed in previous research on LGBT content in Norway, and he found that these textbooks represent a substantial amount of the content on LGBT through fictional texts (p. 17). However, Neto (2018) argues that language textbooks usually begin from an assumption of heteronormativity, and gender identities are therefore mostly not considered. There is usually a focus on the students' self, and this focus often leaves out the gender spectrum (p. 595). With the curriculum renewal LK20, textbooks have been updated to fit the new competence aims, and it is therefore relevant to look at trans representations in those textbooks specifically. Additionally, as the previous studies on textbooks reveal a lack of information and false information about trans people, I also look at two contemporary fictional texts. The textbooks may present information similar to what Smestad found in his study, and I therefore analyze and compare EFL textbook texts and contemporary fiction. Looking at contemporary fiction in addition to textbooks allows me to examine how trans people are represented in the material teachers use and material they can use in their teaching. Such an analysis and comparison can help teachers understand more about what inclusive representations of trans people look like.

## 1.2 Research Questions and Purpose

I have created two research questions for this study. As I look at inclusive teaching of trans experiences, I compare EFL textbook texts with contemporary fictional texts. Thus, my first research question is: *How are trans people represented in specific examples of contemporary fiction compared to EFL textbooks for the lower secondary school in Norway?* Even though some of the texts I look at may be representative of trans people, they do not instantly lead to an inclusive teaching, because: "Merely including LGBTQ texts in the curriculum does not systematically address the pervading heteronormative

environment in the classroom.” (Dinkins & Englert, 2015, p. 403). I have therefore created a second research question: *How can critical literacy contribute to inclusive teaching of trans experiences in lower secondary EFL classrooms?* In relation to the texts, I therefore focus on the aspect of critical literacy and how teachers can utilize critical literacy for a more inclusive teaching about the trans experience.

The reason for creating these research questions is that I want to raise awareness about the representations of trans people. By doing so, teachers can understand the importance of teaching about the trans experience and what they must consider when choosing materials. At the same time, with the aspect of critical literacy, teachers can be made aware of how they can make this teaching inclusive. As I am conducting a qualitative study about trans people, I must be aware of and bear in mind how trans people’s experiences are affected by Eurocentric ideas about gender that have been justified through scholarship and research. These ideas have pathologized trans people’s existence, which means that they have been presented as abnormal (Keenan & Suárez, 2022). One of the choices I made because of my positionality, was therefore to engage in theory written by trans people. Particularly, I utilize a critical trans framework created by Eli Kean (2021), which focuses on centering trans people's experiences and celebrating gender diversity in learning, researching, and teaching (p. 262). I used this framework to create questions that guide the analysis and comparison of the texts, to be able to approach the texts with the knowledge of a trans person. My positionality and the ethical considerations of this study are discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter. My motivation is that I want to learn more about how I can attend to and include students on the gender spectrum in the classroom. I want to be able to create an inclusive environment grounded in respect among students. I want students to be critical towards the representations they encounter and challenge those in a position of power. This is important as gender norms are preserved through a hierarchy of power structures that marginalizes trans people in our schools and society.

### 1.3 Previous Research

There is no previous research to be found on trans representation alone in textbooks, but as previously mentioned, research has been conducted focusing on LGBTQ+ experiences. Harald Alexander Gåsvær (2022), an NTNU graduate last year, wrote a master’s thesis looking at LGBTQ+ representation in textbooks through an intersectional lens. The findings reveal a lack of intersectional identities in EFL textbooks for 9th grade, where whiteness dominates LGBTQ+ representations. This is an aspect I elaborate on in my study, as one of the questions guiding my analysis focuses on intersectional identities. In addition to Gåsvær, another NTNU graduate Jostein Sævik Litlere (2022) wrote a thesis last year looking at risks for trans people in the Norwegian school and the potential school has for ensuring inclusion. Litlere interviewed trans students about the situation in school, what they experience as risks, and the potential for inclusion. The findings reveal a school with gender segregation and marginalizing factors, and the students report several instances of harassment by other students. Assumptions in relation to students’ gender and pronouns are a problem, and students want a more open dialogue. The students also report a lack of teaching about the topic of sexuality and gender overall, and gender is barely mentioned because of a focus on LGB. Based on the findings in EFL textbooks and students’ reports about their experiences with school, I hope that this study can contribute towards more inclusive teaching about trans experiences.

## 1.4 Thesis Overview

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The second chapter in this thesis is the theoretical background. To further emphasize the importance of teaching about trans people, I present surveys about trans people's life satisfaction together with statistics presenting people's attitudes towards trans people. I also present my interpretation of the curriculum and how it connects to teaching about trans experiences. I then move on to discuss critical literacy. As a part of critical literacy, I discuss affect and recognition. Lastly, I present the focus of trans studies and the critical trans framework in detail. Chapter three presents my methodological framework. I discuss why I chose a qualitative study to answer my research questions and describe why and how I have applied narrative analysis, structural narrative analysis, critical visual method, and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) in my thesis. I also provide an explanation of the chosen materials, how I collect data, and then end the chapter with a discussion about my positionality and ethical considerations. Chapter four presents the analysis of the four texts. I analyze the texts separately focusing on the questions I created based on the critical trans framework. In chapter five, I compare the texts based on my findings from the analysis. I move on to discuss how teachers can teach critical literacy and how it can contribute to a more inclusive teaching of trans people. When discussing critical literacy, I incorporate the findings from the analysis and comparison as examples to show how the texts can be taught in relation to critical literacy. I also discuss why this work is important to engage with based on what is stated in the curriculum, and then touch upon what must change in addition to the teaching to create an inclusive school for trans people. I end this thesis with chapter six, where I present my conclusions, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## 2 Theoretical background

This chapter provides the theoretical background of this thesis. I present a theoretical chapter to be able to discuss and answer my research questions concerning representations and teaching of trans experiences. In the first section, I present studies on the living conditions for trans people in Norway and how education affects their living conditions, in addition to people's attitudes towards trans people. Drawing on trans people's experiences with education and the need for change, I present parts of the Education Act to emphasize the need to create an inclusive environment for trans people. Then I move on to the curriculum to see how trans people are situated within it and how the teaching of gender identities can be incorporated in the English subject. The next section looks at critical literacy, affect, and recognition to explain why and how critical literacy can contribute to an inclusive teaching of trans experiences. Finally, I provide a brief overview of the core of trans studies and then explain the critical trans framework that focuses on vital elements for an inclusive education for trans people. The framework provides the basis for analyzing and comparing the contemporary fiction and textbook texts, and I therefore describe it in detail.

### 2.1 Norwegian Context and LK20

The importance of differentiating between sexual orientation and gender, compared to looking at the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, is proven in a study on the living conditions of people based on their sexuality and gender identity. The surveys prove that trans people in Norway, both binary and non-binary, experience substantial challenges connected to their living conditions in areas looking at mental health and discrimination compared to cis people. There are, however, many that have experienced support, who were proud of their gender identity and many of them were part of organizations supporting them (Anderssen et al., 2021, p. 124). In relation to education, there is a lack of statistics related to experiences of bullying and discrimination concerning LGBTQ+ people in schools, even though, especially bullying, is a known problem and connected to people's sexual orientation and gender identity (Bufdir, 2023b). Anderssen et al. (2021) examined bullying in their study and found that trans people reported the highest percentage of bullying, which were 20% higher compared to cis people. As a total, 69% for binary trans people and 67% for non-binary trans people (pp. 79-80). The study also shows that trans people report the highest numbers of harassment, from both teachers and fellow students, and the numbers are substantially higher compared to all the other participants (Anderssen et al., 2021, p. 61). As the numbers differ significantly between lesbian, gay and bisexual people compared to trans people, their experiences vary and therefore it is necessary to look at the experiences of trans people specifically.

Anderssen et al. (2020) investigated life satisfaction and mental health among trans students in Norway. The findings present similar results to the previous study, but as it is among students, the findings say something about the needs in education. The researchers state that trans students report increased burdens that can be associated with the existing gender norms, and they permeate all aspects of our society, including teachers and schools as institutions. The researchers emphasize that regarding education, trans people report a lack of information concerning different gender identities



(p. 8). Even though this is reported by students in higher education, there are most likely similar experiences in lower secondary school based on what Anderssen et al. (2021) presented about bullying in primary- and lower secondary school. The harassment, bullying and discrimination are related to gender norms present in society. Even though people's attitudes are less negative than 15 years ago, people still have negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people, and especially trans people. Regarding trans people, 18% had negative attitudes towards non-binary people compared to 6% towards gay people. It is clear that there are fewer negative attitudes towards people who have transitioned compared to those who identify with both genders or none, but overall, trans people are the group in which people have the most negative attitudes towards (Bufdir, 2023a). These attitudes underscore peoples' withholding of gender norms, and consequently it affects trans people through a lack of information about gender identities, bullying and marginalization, and this permeates their experiences with school.

These numbers testify to the fact that schools are part of society that maintains attitudes and gender norms, which in turn results in marginalization and discrimination of trans people, and a lack of information about the topic in education. In the Education Act it is stated that: "All pupils are entitled to a good physical and psychosocial environment conducive to health, well-being and learning" (The Education Act, 1998, § 9A-2). Furthermore, it is stated that: "The school must have zero tolerance for violations such as bullying, violence, discrimination and harassment." (The Education Act, 1998, § 9A-3). The surveys report a situation in which these laws are not complied with, because trans students experience bullying and discrimination. Teachers and administrators are therefore not doing enough to ensure a good physical and psychosocial environment for all students. As a preservice English teacher, I know that creating an inclusive environment and promoting inclusion in my teaching will be an important aspect of my job. Inclusion is important to comply with the law as presented here and based on the core curriculum as presented in the introduction. In the core curriculum, section 2.1 states the importance of social learning and development. It describes how the school shall contribute to and support social learning and development of the students through everyday affairs and working with subjects. It further states that: "A pupils identity and self-image, opinions and attitudes grow in interaction with others." (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 12). Personal growth is therefore a part of education, and an inclusive environment is further impacted by: "The ability to understand what others think, feel and experience is the basis for empathy and friendship between pupils." (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017 p. 12). Learning about people different from oneself is hence a necessary aspect in creating an inclusive environment, and this is where students' attitudes, opinions, and self-image grow. The findings from the studies underscore that students do not learn about the gender spectrum, and thus most students are deprived of counternarratives that can give them insight into other people. This will in turn deprive students from developing awareness of their own attitudes that may contribute to an exclusive environment. An exclusive learning environment will affect trans students' well-being, but it will also affect learning, because learning can be undermined. This is stated in the core curriculum, which highlights how diversity must be recognized as a resource to develop an inclusive learning environment (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 18).

Social learning must therefore be a part of the English subject, and the curriculum for English outlines what must be taught through the competence aims. There are three competence aims where teaching of trans experiences can be incorporated, even though there are no direct descriptions towards teaching LGBTQ+ as a whole or trans people

specifically. These competence aims are: "Explore and describe ways of living, ways of thinking, communication patterns and diversity in the English-speaking world", "read, interpret and reflect on English-language fiction, including young people's literature" and "read, discuss and present content from various types of texts, including self-chosen texts" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 9). Even though various sexualities and gender identities are not mentioned specifically in the competence aims, it is stated as a relevant area within the interdisciplinary topic of health and life skills (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 15). Health and life skills connected to the English subject states that the students shall learn about their own way of life in addition to that of others (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3). It is explicitly stated in the core elements of the English subject that when working with texts "They shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context." (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3). Hence, the English subject should incorporate the gender spectrum when working with texts, and social learning must be included to develop an inclusive learning environment that complies with the law. Based on the information presented in the studies, educators are not doing enough to ensure an inclusive learning environment, and the interpretations of the open curriculum by other teachers may not include trans people as suggested here. In the English subject, trans people can be included through the teaching of texts, and this can be included in relation to social learning. I therefore move on to discuss the concepts of critical literacy, affect, and recognition, which I argue is important for working with texts and social learning to develop an environment that is inclusive of all.

## 2.2 Critical Literacy, Affect, and Recognition

As stated in the curriculum, students' attitudes and opinions, identities, and self-images grow as they interact with others. Since the development of an inclusive learning environment is dependent upon recognizing diversity as a resource, critical literacy can be crucial. Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2018) emphasize how people need to see themselves in stories. Additionally, if people are unable to see identities and ways of living that are unlike their own, their knowledge will be limited to what they already know (p. 10). However, representations in texts vary, so to develop attitudes and opinions about people which are grounded in empathy and equality, critical literacy can play an important role in the English subject.

Allan Luke (2012) explains literacy as the reading and writing of texts, whilst critical literacy is concerned with critiquing, analyzing, and transforming norms, systems, and practices that govern our everyday life. In education, the goal of critical literacy is to analyze how texts work. This implies engagement in the political, social, and cultural debates and discussions the analysis provides, in addition to questions of the consequences and interests conveyed. Furthermore, critical literacy concerns working towards social justice for marginalized people and communities (p. 5). Critical literacy is therefore the analysis of text by questioning the various perspectives it conveys. This is important, because according to Thevenin (2022), texts do not necessarily cause social progress. Dominant narratives can lead readers to interfere with the perspectives they convey, rather than encouraging the reader to critically reflect on the biases and contribute to positive changes. The choice of narratives is therefore an important aspect of the work on critical literacy, as some narratives may cover up experiences and perspectives that confront issues within society (p. 95). Thevenin (2022) further emphasizes how privileging a single superficial story reduces multi-faceted and

complicated realities, and hence it privileges the same perspectives continuously, which in turn encourage the audience to accept the present with its challenges (pp. 97-98). Working towards justice is therefore possible with critical literacy, because critical literacy can make students aware of injustices that are based on socially constructed knowledge. The work is dependent on the teacher's choice of material and the teacher's focus on teaching students to be critical when analyzing the texts. Only then, with the knowledge they gain through teaching and by working with texts, can the students understand what must be changed in relation to trans people for justice to be accomplished.

Learning to utilize critical literacy takes time and requires well planned teaching. According to White and Cooper (2015), critical literacy is instructional and works to embrace a critical position towards text. Text, here, means anything bearing a message, and the goal is to question and be critical towards the text (p. 29). The teacher must mobilize various resources to be able to teach students to become text-critics (Ahmed, 2016, p. 384). In other words, teaching students what to look for and giving them strategies to be able to be critical towards texts. Motivation is an important step of this process. This includes motivations to read but also to think more deeply about the text, and students are motivated by texts relevant to the real world, their interests, and experiences (Lloyd & Wertsch, 2016; Johnson et al., 2017). Motivation must therefore be considered, but it is also important to think about what must be taught in relation to the text. Johnson et al. (2017) argues for the importance of a rich context of inquiry and experiences to be able to think critically about a text. This means that the teacher must consider how much knowledge students need before reading the text to be able to be critical towards it. Additionally, if they are looking for specific elements or exploring certain questions, students may need several texts to see and understand how one text can be biased compared to another. Analytical tools should be provided based on theories relevant to the topic and the teacher can support students in framing questions that can guide their reading and analysis (pp. 187-189). Students also need reading strategies that can help them question authority (Lloyd & Wertsch, 2016 p. 25). These can be strategies such as questioning an author based on what interests the author may have in conveying one perspective and leaving another out. After being given these strategies and taught relevant information, students can find the various meanings in a text and think about what they mean. Consequently, students can uncover underlying messages, themes and positions, and explore biases (White & Cooper, 2015, p. 29).

Relevant information and strategies are important, especially when teaching topics that students may be unfamiliar with. An approach the teacher could use, according to White and Cooper (2015) who present Dr. Willinsky's point from a video, is to select texts that are either incongruent or complement the text being read. This can deepen students' understanding about perspectives presented and information left out, or a text in which can provide new perspectives altogether. This will help them to learn how to be critical thinkers (p. 33). White and Cooper (2015) also refer to a video by Dr. McKinney who tries to deconstruct binaries. The focus is on the binary of Black and White, but the approach can be seen in relation to gender norms as well, and how critical literacy can be essential for equality. The goal of de-materializing binaries is that we can move from seeing each other as a sum of attributes, and instead see each other as people. Creating a community where people can be together and learn together is crucial for inclusiveness (p. 32). Critical literacy should therefore be a part of teachers' curriculum to work with both the subject and social learning, and especially when working with trans people, as gender norms affect trans people tremendously.

Important for working with gender identities is the notion of equity. White and Cooper (2015) underscore the importance of social justice which centers the need of hearing all voices. It is therefore necessary to look at equity which is one of the central goals of critical literacy. Equity focuses on giving people opportunities to access advantages others enjoy in order to gain equality. Within democratic societies there is still a lack of equality due to the imbalance between the less powerful and the more powerful, leaving people deprived of the opportunity to access advantages that the privileged have (pp. 3-4). In relation to trans people, this deprivation is for example present in the lack of opportunities to learn in an inclusive learning environment, as clarified through the surveys discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Reading with a focus on critical literacy gives students the opportunity to learn about trans people and examine the injustices they experience, and this could be trans people's experiences with school. Through developing students' knowledge both on the topic and on critical literacy, with the help from the teacher, students can see what must be done to enact change. Critical literacy can therefore guide the students in being critical towards texts and give insight into injustice that exists in real life, motivating them to work towards an equal society.

Even though critical literacy is crucial when working to deconstruct binaries and challenges within the society, Ahmed (2016) argues that on its own, critical literacy relies too much on rationalism. He therefore argues for an affective turn within critical literacy, which means that he implements the aspect of emotion, especially when dealing with human suffering (p. 381). As presented in the core curriculum, empathy is an important aspect of creating an inclusive learning environment, and affect brings in the emotional aspect of learning. Ahmed (2016) states that without the affective turn it may be impossible to cope with the suffering present in society and our ethical responsiveness to that suffering (p. 394). Since trans people experience bullying and discrimination because of their gender identity, affect will be relevant when teaching about trans experiences. Ahmed (2016) argues that there are four pedagogical principles that can contribute to this turn. I argue that the first two are relevant in this context. The first principle is concerned with emotion, and that we should focus on why we feel the things we feel, rather than only focusing on feelings in particular situations (p. 390). The focus is therefore on what emotions do (Ahmed, 2004 as cited in Ahmed, 2016, p. 390). This can be related to emotions connected to reading about sufferings for trans people, and that the emotions are linked to the injustice of gender norms and how these norms affect trans people. The second principle focuses on entering a relation of affective equivalence and can be linked to standing in the shoes of others. Here it is important to "[...] encourage students to recognize frames of recognition as well as conditions of recognizability." (Ahmed, 2016, p. 391). I elaborate on recognition in the next paragraphs, but it is connected to misrecognition, the ability to identify the injustice in recognition, and standing in trans people's shoes to understand their experiences. Additionally, instead of feeling sad about others' suffering, the goal is to encourage students to enter a relation of equivalence based on being a caring individual (Ahmed, 2016, p. 392). How people are presented and what we feel about the representation is therefore relevant to implement when teaching critical literacy, and I believe that these two principles are crucial when working with trans people based on their experiences.

In the work on affect, Ahmed (2016) emphasizes how recognition is of central concern. This is present through the disruption of frames that see certain lives as non-livable and non-grievable, because only some are seen as livable and consequently their losses as grievable (p. 394). Recognition is a central concept in trans studies, as Juang (2006) explains, to be recognized within democracy means that one is valued, that dignity is

protected, and that one possesses a degree of access to self-expression publicly. Recognition is hard to quantify, but the importance can be explained in the consequences of an absence of recognition. People who are marginalized easily become scapegoats or targets for hatred by others, and consequently sees themselves through the lens of hatred. Such an existence restricts people, and it becomes destructive (p. 706). The complexity of such a situation for marginalized people in society is described by Juang who quotes John Rawls, and he explains that justice denies people's loss of freedom due to the greater good of others. In other words, some people's sacrifices are outweighed by the rest's advantages (Rawls, 1999 as cited in Juang, 2006, p. 707). Recognition is therefore connected to justice and further equality for all. Consequently, recognition is an essential aspect for marginalized people in society and for the work on critical literacy. The goal of recognition is, according to Juang (2006), not a single idealized norm through the elimination of difference, but to make the difference illegitimate as a ground for inequality and stigmatization, such as racism, genderism, and cultural difference (pp. 707-708).

Markell (2003) argues that through recognition, we locate others and ourselves in society, and observe and reproduce relations of difference and identity. Even though it gives our lives continuity and depth, many relationships of recognition are unfair. This consequently leaves some in a position of privilege and others subordinated. This misrecognition is an injustice, stemming from either ignorance or resentment, and fails to grant people respect based on who they are. Identity-based inequality then leaves marginalized people in a place where they do not feel like full members of society (pp. 1-3). To grasp misrecognition is not easy:

They are more like blind spots built into the 'grammar' of a theory or a practice; and as such, they are not immediately visible from within the terms in which the theory operates, or from the perspective made available by the practice. (Markell, 2003, p. 9)

Gender norms permeate all aspects of society and are thus so intertwined in society that it is hard to notice without knowledge about injustice, and therefore, it is helpful to connect recognition to the aspect of critical literacy. As critical literacy works to uncover biases in texts, it can contribute to examining gender norms as blind spots in texts. Identity as the base for distinguishing misrecognition from successful recognition, underscores why knowing who we are and being recognized matter (Markell, 2003, pp. 12-13). Critical literacy can therefore help to distinguish misrecognition from successful recognition by being critical towards the texts. Markell (2003) states that understanding where injustice stems from, what it is and why it is unacceptable then is important to understand how to respond to it (p. 21). Understanding these blind spots in the first place is therefore necessary to combat misrecognition, and critical literacy is crucial to create awareness of injustice to be able to oppose it. When students learn to recognize injustice, they can speak up against it using their knowledge, share their views and create change (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018, p. 11). If this misrecognition is not grappled with in education, people may recognize themselves as someone who is subject to identity-based inequality, and if this is left unnoticed, they may feel the marginalization to a greater extent. As Butler (2004) states: "I may feel that without some recognizability I cannot live. But I may also feel that the terms by which I am recognized make life unlivable." (p. 4). Trans studies are crucial when working with texts about trans people because the theory provides necessary knowledge to be able to utilize critical literacy and understanding the aspects of recognition. I therefore move on to discuss trans studies and the critical trans framework for education.

## 2.3 Trans Studies and The Critical Trans Framework

Susan Stryker (2006) is one of the founders of trans studies and the one known for 'counting past two' used in the title of this thesis. Stryker explains that transgender studies is a field concerned with everything that denaturalizes, rearticulates, disrupts, and makes clear the normativity existing in the assumed. Trans studies discuss why it matters that people express and experience their gender in various ways (p. 3). Disrupting gender norms existing in society is therefore at the heart of this field, working towards a society in which trans people do not experience injustice based on their gender identity. Stryker (2006) emphasizes how the field critiques what makes trans people stand out in the first place, and that also allows gender norms to disappear unnoticed and unanalyzed (p. 3). This critique is closely linked to the focus of critical literacy, working towards equality and discovering and challenging the biases preserving gender norms. The importance of differing between sexual identity and gender identity, as previously presented through the surveys on trans people's living conditions, is further explained in the difference between queer studies and trans studies. Even though they are not mutually exclusive, queer studies can maintain homonormativity, which is a "[...] privileging of homosexual ways of differing from heterosocial norms, and an antipathy (or at least an unthinking blindness) toward other modes of queer difference." (Stryker, 2006, p. 7). Stryker (2006) argues that rather than focusing on sexuality and desire like queer studies, trans studies focus more on questions of identity and embodiment, in addition to the salience of intersecting issues such as class, disability, and race within identity-based communities and movements (p. 7). Trans studies are therefore necessary to consider in education if teaching is going to be inclusive of everyone within the LGBTQ+ community. Clark et al. (2022) argues that one key approach to demonstrate support for trans people is through the inclusion of content and representation in the curriculum, because it sends a message about the teacher being a source of support, and it signals that students are valued members of the society and school community (n.p.). I therefore move on to the critical trans framework. As the framework presents the notions of trans studies that are important to consider in education, I believe that this in relation to critical literacy and recognition can lead the way to an inclusive practice in the subject of English, working with texts about trans experiences.

### 2.3.1 Critical Trans Framework

Kean (2021), a White, non-binary and trans professor and researcher, proposes a critical trans framework including three principles for research, learning and teaching about gender. These three principles are presented to center transgender experiences and celebrate gender diversity, and they provide a foundational structure important for an analysis of gendered power (p. 262). The framework rests on critical contributions from several fields; social work, education, disability studies, gender studies, sociology, and philosophy. Queer and trans studies in their foundational work on disrupting long-held assumptions and challenging binaries about gender and sexuality are important. The framework also builds on racial justice, in addition to the ways that gender intersects with other forms of oppression and identity, such as race, disability, and poverty. Historically, the work of trans people and especially Black trans women, who have been fighting for gender justice, is an important recognition within the framework. Recognizing connections and shared struggles for liberation is therefore at the heart of the framework (Kean, 2021, p. 262).

The first principle discusses how gender functions on the individual, institutional and sociocultural level, and how trans people are oppressed on these levels. According to Kean (2021) the description of gender is inevitably insufficient, as there is no single accurate representation or portrayal of all trans people, and there are no right or wrong ways of being or knowing gender. The intention therefore lies in celebrating and acknowledging all the ways individuals challenge dominant understandings of gender (p. 263). Individually, gender operates as expression and identity, and Kean (2021) argues that there must be room for infinite possibilities of how people understand themselves to achieve gender justice. Sex assigned at birth and terms describing gender identities must be differentiated based on a person's personal understanding. How people relate to their gender and/or their body can therefore not be defined by an archetype. Further, this also means that there is nothing like being *trans enough* because a person's understanding of themselves cannot be more correct than another, and this multiplicity must be acknowledged. How a person is, looks, or expresses themselves as trans is therefore individual and a combination of gender identity and gender expression (pp. 263-264).

According to Kean (2021), institutionally, gender is embodied in various practices and policies that uphold and reinforce the biological norm, where sex is linked to gender, and this norm sees gender as binary. Gender and sex are connected in social institutions like media, government, family, schools, and prisons, which is where regulation of identity and socialization of behavior happens. Institutionally, trans people are oppressed through gender classification, and cis people are structurally privileged by this uphold of the gender binary. Marginalizing structures exist for all within the LGBTQ+ community, but for trans people there are distinctive institutional challenges, such as healthcare, representation in demographic data, restrooms and locker rooms, and pronoun and name changes. In education, these marginalizing structures based on gender norms leave trans people unrecognized, and the problem also lies in the deeply rooted bias and fear against trans people (pp. 264-265).

Kean (2021) emphasizes that at the sociocultural level “[...] gender consists of a complex collection of ideologies and norms, including patriarchal dominance, strict policing of gender conformity, monogamous couples and nuclear family households, and heteronormative familial relationships.” (p. 266). In many countries, what gender is and the possibilities it provides is based on a White, Christian, colonial view. This view assumes gender to be undisputable, fixed and connected to reproduction (Van Dijk, 2015 in Kean, 2021, p. 266). Kean (2021) argues that these dominant understandings are usually hierarchical, categorical, and dichotomous, and gender norms are so intertwined within society that any other option becomes difficult to conceptualize. This will only continue to deny the existence of identities disrupting the norm if not challenged. Kean states that as a dominating ideology, the gender binary was first spread by European colonizers. They used race and gender to assert dominance, both socially and culturally, over enslaved Africans, Indigenous communities, and generally people of color. Through time, this has been embedded into institutions, policies, media, and education (pp. 265-266). The sociocultural aspect shows how people’s understanding of gender is a consequence of history and how this is continuously preserved in society. People’s beliefs based on this history therefore shape their expectations of gender, which in turn influences the individual and institutional levels.

The second principle discusses how genderism intersects with other forms of oppression. Kean (2021) emphasizes that oppression related to gender is often understood based on sexism, and therefore fails to incorporate what is necessary to understand how

oppression works for trans people, because it does not concern and trouble the gender binary. The usual “women vs men” problematized by sexism do not fit the experiences of trans people. Genderism, however, highlights the number of marginalizing structures that sexism does not, that for example continuously oppresses trans men in various ways that do not apply to cisgender men. Sexuality and constructs of gender are connected, but it is vital to understand the different ways in which oppression operates for the individuals. Genderism categorizes all individuals into one out of two categories, men and women, and the oppressive structures preserves the hegemonic gender norms (pp. 267-268). As with other systems of oppression, such as sexism and racism, genderism operates within social institutions and on multiple levels. Practices and policies uphold beliefs and values within institutions, continuing to oppress trans people. Interdependently, genderism also works together with oppressive systems, which then create distinct forms of marginalization. This means that trans people of color experience oppression differently to White trans people. Systems of oppression, such as economy, religion and ethnicity can therefore affect how some people are marginalized based on several aspects of their identity, which intersect. An example of the intersection is the critical ideas provided by Black feminist theorists, as Black women face one struggle, and that is being a Black woman, not Black and woman as two independent struggles (Kean, 2021, p. 268). Thus, the oppression they experience is made up of multiple factors, which means that some may experience oppression much more comprehensively and differently than others.

The third principle discusses epistemic injustice and the necessity of trans experiential knowledge. As Kean (2021) argues, no matter the age, gender norms are embedded into people's perceptions and assumptions, and this leaves trans people unable to be safely understood and showing up authentically. Kean discusses how trans epistemologies can be useful to understand society, each other, and the world in ways that are more creative, fluid, and expansive. Trans people experience epistemic injustice, meaning that they are unheard or unseen, which can be defined as being unintelligible. When people's identities are unintelligible, it is difficult for them to be recognized as someone who deserves basic human rights. Within education, being unintelligible has severe consequences for trans people. One of the issues can be sharing pronouns, because people's reactions can make it very unsafe or challenging, rather than inclusive (pp. 272-273). Important in the field is therefore the speaking subject's knowledge (Stryker, 2006, p. 12). According to Kean (2021), experiential trans knowledge challenges dominant ideological narratives, and it is a source of power and agency created through trans experiences. Trans epistemologies therefore rely on the experiential trans knowledge, which is important to destabilize discourses that create knowledge about gender (p. 274). This could for example be that gender is a constant process of becoming, instead of being something binary or fixed (Meadow, 2016 as cited in Kean, 2021). What is presented in the framework is therefore an example of trans epistemology. This knowledge is crucial to center in education to expand what we know about gender and its possibilities (Kean, 2021, p. 275).

Trans experiential knowledge must therefore be at the center of education. Kean (2021) argues that understanding genderism within education is crucial to improve pedagogical and curricular practices, school climate, research, and policy (p. 275). The framework addresses various elements to consider when developing an inclusive education for trans people. This means that it has not been created for analysis specifically. I have, however, developed questions based on the various principles to be able to evaluate the representations of trans people in the textbook texts and contemporary fictional texts.



These questions and my choice of materials are presented in the next chapter. Even though I focus specifically on these questions based on the principles in the framework, it is not necessarily essential that the texts cover all the different principles. I consider the first principle to be important, because it concerns challenging gender norms that continue to oppress trans people in school and society. If gender norms are not challenged, they will be preserved. The second principle concerns how genderism and other forms of identity-based oppression intersect. That all texts should discuss this is therefore not necessary, because trans people are different. However, it gives an indication of how representations should vary. This means that if a teacher includes trans people in their teaching, but principle two is never part of this representation, it will not be representative. This does not only concern how the characters are oppressed, but that different representations should be present because of the diversity among trans people. The third principle focuses on the importance of representation and being recognized as an equal human being. The knowledge created by trans people themselves is important because it is based on their experiences of being a trans person. This can be linked to the history of trans people being oppressed through research, and consequently they have been regarded as abnormal. Creating specific questions based on the framework is important to be able to base the analysis on a trans person's understanding of what can lead to an inclusive practice. I argue that an analysis based on this framework will give insight into the representations existing that teachers both use and can use in their teaching, and it can be a guideline for choosing materials and working with critical literacy to move towards gender justice in education.

## 3 Research Methodology

In the following chapter, I present and explain the methodology and methods I apply for this thesis. To answer the research questions, I decided to do a qualitative comparative narrative analysis, as I analyze and compare trans representations and discuss critical literacy for inclusive teaching and learning of trans experiences. First, I explain why I chose to conduct qualitative research. Then, I discuss the approaches within qualitative research that I use as methods to collect the data, which are narrative analysis, structural narrative analysis, critical visual method, and qualitative comparative analysis. Furthermore, I explain the selection of texts that I analyze in this thesis. I then explain how I collect the data and introduce the questions I have developed based on the critical trans framework and how they guide my analysis. Finally, I address ethical considerations, including positionality, validity, and reliability.

### 3.1 Qualitative Methodology

In this section, I explain the methodology of this research. According to Howell (2013), methodology is the strategy of the research project which outlines how the researcher is doing the research, whilst methods identify the way in which data is collected (p. ix). I conduct qualitative research, which differs from quantitative research in that it depends on words rather than numbers, and asks open-ended questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 3). Since I am analyzing textbook texts and contemporary fiction, a qualitative methodology allows me to gain an in-depth perspective into the narratives rather than to generalize my findings to a population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 219). An in-depth perspective is crucial as I am examining the narratives' representations of trans people. Qualitative methodology allows for several approaches and methods that aid me to get a close look into the representations of trans people through analysis and visual methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 41). Qualitative research is therefore essential as it allows for narrative analysis and comparative analysis.

### 3.2 Narrative Analysis

As I analyze contemporary fiction and EFL textbooks texts, which includes both written and visual materials, I have chosen narrative analysis as a method for this thesis. Josselson (2010) defines narrative as a story that contains sequences of events, organized in a way to place meaning on events, and these are described based on what the narrator wants to convey (p. 870). Chase (2018) also includes objects, thoughts, and feelings in addition to events, and explains that narrative is a way of seeing and connecting the consequences of these elements over time. It is a way of understanding your own and others' actions (p. 951). A narrative therefore offers complex information through written and visual materials, and a narrative analysis allows me to analyze the texts in-depth to understand what they convey in relation to the trans experience.

When analyzing narratives, Riessman (2008) states that analyzers are interested in how the narrator sequences or assembles events and how meaning is communicated through language and/or visuals. In addition to how, the analyzer focuses on the intention behind the narrative, asking why it is produced (p. 11). Josselson (2010) explains narrative research as aiming to conceptualize and explore human experience in text and people's

experiences in-depth (p. 869). Narrative analysis therefore allows me to explore how trans people are represented in the texts, looking at how the narrator sequences the events and communicates meaning, in addition to considering why it was produced. I must be aware of the trans experience when analyzing the narratives, as my understanding and interpretation is based on my worldview and cultural preconditions, and the author's construction of the story is based on the author's choices regarding the purpose and craft (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 579). There are underlying elements in the construction of stories which need to be considered when doing narrative analysis, and I argue that this is very important concerning trans experiences. This is critical because of trans peoples' experiences with oppression and marginalization. I have therefore chosen structural narrative analysis and critical visual method to analyze trans representations in the chosen narratives.

### 3.3 Structural Narrative Analysis

As explained in the previous section, narratives offer complex information based on the narrator's choices and point of view. Thus, it is vital to consider all the elements that affect what a narrative conveys. Riessman (2008) argues that structural approaches are interested in content like in a thematic analysis, but in structural approaches, narrative form is also of interest to add insight beyond the content itself. Therefore, I focus on how the story is told, and rather than focusing on the narrator's experience alone, there is a focus on the narrative itself (p. 77). This method of analysis allows me to analyze structural aspects, such as how form affects the narrative based on the narrators' choices in conjunction with the content. Specifically, this means that I consider how the inclusion of excerpts retrieved from original texts affect the representations of trans people in textbooks. On the other hand, I examine representations of trans people in contemporary fictional texts on their own terms. To consider the structural aspects is, as Phoenix et al. (2010) point out, important since the structural aspects also express the values, identities, perceptions, and moral dilemmas of the narrator (p. 5). These aspects are essential when analyzing representations of trans experiences. The focus on structural aspects is further emphasized by Larty and Hamilton (2011), who emphasize that it is important to focus on the multiple contexts of a narrative in addition to the traditional focus points like plot, the narrator's role, characters' role, the function or purpose of the text, and how the events are put together. This additional focus on context will contribute to finding and identifying interesting aspects to expand the critical analysis, which again is important for addressing embedded relations of identity, power, and gender (pp. 230-231). Trans studies in general, and the critical trans framework I utilize, are concerned with challenging gender norms that marginalize and oppress trans people. Structural narrative analysis therefore allows me to examine embedded relations of identity, power, and gender, to understand whether gender norms are challenged or reinforced. An understanding about the narrative's representations of trans people in relation to these aspects will in turn emphasize the necessity of teaching critical literacy alongside the narratives. This is important as critical literacy is concerned with equity and social change, in addition to teaching students to become critical towards texts to uncover underlying themes and messages themselves.

### 3.4 Critical Visual Method

The textbook texts I have chosen to analyze include visuals, and therefore I have decided to utilize a critical visual method in addition to structural narrative analysis. Skulstad (2018) argues that no texts are monomodal, meaning that they only consist of

written words, because of elements such as layout and colors (p. 257). I do, however, only apply critical visual method to the textbook texts because they include illustrations. The analysis of the visuals is therefore necessary to understand the representations of trans people in the textbook texts. Rose (2016) argues that images interpret the world and display it in specific ways. Vision is therefore used to describe what the eye is capable of seeing, whereas *visuality* relates to how vision is constructed, concerned with what and how we see being culturally constructed (pp. 2-3). Visuals and written text intersect with each other, but images can be seductive and powerful on their own as well (Rose, 2001, p. 10). Hence, it is important to analyze the visual material to obtain the composite representations of trans people in the narratives. The importance is further emphasized in the context of social difference, where Rose (2016) discusses 'visual culture', concerned with how social difference is visualized through images. To look carefully at images therefore implies to look and think about how social categories are visualized, such as gender, class, race, and sexuality (pp. 17-18). Critical visual method allows me to conduct an analysis focusing on the representations of trans people. By looking carefully at the visuals, I can examine how gender norms are reinforced or challenged through the complexity of the texts.

Rose (2016) explains what is crucial to consider when applying a critical visual methodology focusing on visual culture. First, she argues that images must be taken seriously because of their individual effects. Secondly, she argues for thinking about the effects and social conditions of visuals. One needs to address how visual representations produce and depend on social exclusions and inclusions, in addition to the cultural meanings. Last, there is a need to consider how one looks at images (p. 22). Within the framework Rose has developed, there are four sites to consider when looking at visuals, which includes production, the image itself, circulation, and audiencing. The sites have three different modalities that are important for a critical understanding of visuals, and these are technological, compositional, and social (Rose, 2016, pp. 24-26). I focus on the compositional and social modalities in my analysis of the textbook texts. The compositional refers to "[...] the specific material qualities of an image or visual object." (Rose, 2016, p. 25). This means that I examine what characterizes the illustrations based on the strategies that were used to create it, including elements such as colors and content. The social focuses on "[...] the range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used." (Rose, 2016, p. 26). This means that I focus on the factors influencing how we see and use the visual. I therefore examine the illustrations in relation to the written texts, and how they influence each other and consequently the representations of trans people. These modalities allow me to critically examine how trans people are represented in the textbook texts, based on the characteristics of the image and how it is seen and used in relation to the social and cultural meanings the visuals convey.

### 3.5 Qualitative Comparative Analysis

I utilize qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to compare the textbook texts and contemporary fiction. Rihoux (2006) argues that QCA is a holistic approach, where each case is seen as a complex entity. When using QCA, the researcher should determine the character and number of the various causal models existing among the cases (p. 682). In my research, this is determined by a set of questions based on the critical trans framework, which I present in the section on data collection. Analyzing the cases in-depth is important for this approach, and QCA is therefore an addition to the former analysis (Legewie, 2013). I therefore analyze each narrative individually using the

questions as criteria for the analysis. Truth-tables with contradictory configurations are usually created to compare the cases in QCA. I do not create a table when comparing the narratives, but as the theoretical perspective is an important aspect within this method, I engage with the questions that are based on the theory specifically, both within the analysis and later when comparing the narratives (Rihoux, 2006, p. 684). Since I look at each narrative individually, it allows me to see each case as a complex entity, in addition to analyzing them on equal grounds. The findings in the analysis will then be the material I use to compare the narratives, focusing on similarities and differences between them concerning trans representations. Doing a QCA gives insight into the representations existing in textbook texts compared to contemporary fiction, which is important to get an understanding about what texts can contribute to inclusive teaching of trans experiences. The comparison also engages the discussion about critical literacy because the representations of trans people will determine the necessity of critical literacy.

### 3.6 Choice of Materials

The texts I have chosen to analyze in this thesis were selected based on several factors. Regarding the contemporary fictional texts, the most important factors were trans representation, including a trans protagonist and an author with lived experience. First, I decided on *Melissa* (2022) by Alex Gino, which is about a trans girl. Gino identifies as genderqueer or nonbinary, uses the singular they pronoun, and is an author of children's books (Gino, 2022, p. 206). *Melissa*, previously published as *George* (2015), has won several awards, and is marketed as middle grade contemporary fiction. I chose this book even though I am focusing on lower secondary school, because I think the story is relevant and appropriate for EFL student's language proficiency. Since the language proficiency among students varies, I decided on a middle grade book with simpler language than the next book I present, which is a young adult (YA) novel. The second book, *Felix Ever After* (2020), is an award-winning book about a trans and queer boy called Felix. The book is written by Kacen Callender, who is Black, nonbinary and transmasculine, and uses they/them and he/him pronouns. Callender is an author of children's and YA books (Callender, 2020, pp. 355-356). I chose this book because I wanted a different perspective from a trans protagonist than what is offered in *Melissa*. It was important for me to choose books based on the authors identity, as I am a white cisgender woman and approaching this topic with humility. This is explained further in my ethical considerations and discussion about positionality. Furthermore, representations of intersecting identities are an important aspect of the critical trans framework, and that was also a contributing factor for choosing *Felix Ever After*.

In addition to contemporary fiction, I am analyzing two EFL textbook texts. The textbooks I have chosen are both from the same publisher. Since I am looking at textbooks that are created for the curriculum renewal LK20, there were not many options available. Out of the ones I looked at, I decided on *Engelsk 8* (2020) and *Engelsk 9* (2020) published by Cappelen Damm. I decided on these books because they both include a text with a trans protagonist. In *Engelsk 8*, the text I am analyzing is called "Coy Mathis" and it is about a trans girl. The text is retrieved from the book *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* written by Francesca Cavallo and Elena Favili. I could not find any information about the authors' gender identity, but Cavallo states in an interview that she is lesbian (Mendez, 2020). The original book consists of 100 short tales, which are biographies about women written as fairytales (Rebelgirls, n.d). In *Engelsk 9*, the text I am analyzing is called *The Art of Being Normal*. It is written by Lisa Williamson, and the textbook authors have included three excerpts from the original novel. Lisa Williamson

worked at a clinic for children struggling with their gender identity, and the people there inspired her to write a story from a trans person's perspective (Williamson, n.d.). Her own gender identity is not stated. According to the description of the original novel, it is about two transgender teens (Macmillan, n.d.). Even though it may have been more representative to choose textbooks from different publishers, I did not find any texts with a trans protagonist in the other textbooks I had available created for LK20. I therefore decided to include two from the same publisher and focus on the representations of trans people in both year eight and nine, instead of one year specifically. Looking at years eight and nine offers another interesting aspect to the comparison and discussion. Since many teachers use the same set of textbooks from the same publishers over three years, it provides an indication of the trans representations those students will receive throughout lower secondary school. I did look at the book for year ten in addition, but I could not find a text in relation to trans people or with a trans protagonist.

### 3.7 Data Collection

This section explains how I collect the data through the analysis and the comparison of the narratives. The chosen methods and theoretical framework guide my data collection process concerning trans representations in the texts. To be able to systematically collect the data, I have developed questions that guide the analysis of both textbook texts and contemporary fiction. These questions are based on the critical trans framework created by Kean (2021) which I presented in the theory section. This allows me to analyze the texts using the same set of questions, and they are based on theory created by trans people. This is important because of my positionality and what trans people themselves emphasize as important for an inclusive teaching, in addition to the importance of comparing the texts on equal grounds.

I have created three questions based on the critical trans framework:

1. Do the texts challenge gender norms on multiple levels through the individual, institutional and sociocultural levels, in addition to challenge how trans people are oppressed on these different levels?

This question concerns the first principle in Kean's (2021) framework. I therefore examine what levels are present in the texts and whether gender norms are challenged in the different levels. This means that I look at the individual level focusing on the individual's identity and if they challenge gender norms, and whether the text opens for infinite possibilities of doing gender and challenges oppression on the individual level. On the institutional level, I focus on the institutions present in the text and whether they present some of the distinctive institutional challenges trans people face within them, and in turn if the institutional oppression trans people experience is challenged. On the sociocultural level, I look at characters representing gender norms who see gender as undisputable, fixed and connected to reproduction, and whether their view is challenged.

2. Do the texts represent intersectional identities and address how genderism and other forms of injustice, like racism, interact?

This question relates to the second principle in Kean's (2021) framework, which is based on how trans people's experiences are affected by their intersecting identities. I therefore look for intersecting identities in the texts and the injustice they may experience. This could mean that a person experiences marginalization because of their identity as a Black and trans person.

3. Do the texts promote trans experiential knowledge?

This question concerns the third principle in Kean's (2021) framework. Here, I focus on whether the text is written by a trans person, because of the importance of lived experience in creating knowledge about trans people. It also relates to the two previous questions, as they focus on the framework's goal of challenging gender norms, inclusion of intersecting identities, and the framework itself is created by a trans person.

These questions allow me to systematically analyze the texts using the same criteria. As I focus on gender and other intersecting identities, structural narrative analysis and critical visual method are crucial because they aim to examine embedded relations of identity and gender, and how social categories are visualized. Thus, analysis and comparison based on these questions are critical to answering my first research question, but the findings are also important for discussing my second research question on critical literacy, which is concerned about equity and social change.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations: Positionality, Validity, and Reliability

As a white cisgender woman, I am approaching this topic with humility. Cariou (2020) emphasizes the importance of humility through being a good listener, because that is when we learn what gives our lives meaning and direction (p. 5). Being a good listener is therefore an essential aspect of this research to access the knowledge of those who have lived experience. As a pre-service teacher, I aim to learn how to best teach the topic of trans experiences and represent the diversity of students in my material. Now as a researcher, I am therefore analyzing representations of trans people in contemporary fiction and EFL textbooks for lower secondary students, striving to raise awareness of the representations existing in material that can be used, and the textbooks teachers use every day. Based on my position, it is vital for me to engage with trans studies and theory in my analysis and comparison of the material. I have therefore decided to follow the critical trans framework to answer the first research question concerning trans representations. The findings are also important for discussing my second question about critical literacy for an inclusive teaching of trans experiences. The sources behind the framework and theory about trans people specifically, are trans people themselves, which is an important aspect of my thesis because I am researching a group with which I do not identify myself. I therefore strive to be a good listener throughout my thesis engaging with this topic.

There are some ethical considerations to think about when doing qualitative research, and my position is an essential part of this consideration. As qualitative researchers interpret the data, reflexivity must be identified concerning values, biases, and personal background, which shape the interpretations and understandings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I am writing in a position of power as a researcher about identities I do not identify with. Trans people's experiences are affected by ideas about gender that have presented them as abnormal, and this has been justified through research and scholarship (Keenan & Suárez, 2022). As Canella and Lincoln (2018) argue, those writing from a position of privilege must learn from and join with the researched, rather than speak for and intervene into. This is important to not reinforce the power that I seek to challenge in this study, and the perspectives, knowledges, ways of being, and languages of the researched should therefore be foundational (p. 176). The theory I have chosen is therefore essential for my study. Merriam & Grenier (2019) discuss validity, noting that it is vital to understand the perspectives of the individuals being studied and

involved. Furthermore, it is important to present a holistic interpretation and uncover the complexity of people's behavior given the circumstances and context. Thus, in addition to the aspect of positionality, validity is concerned about the theoretical orientation of the research (pp. 25- 27). In narrative projects, what is told by the researcher and what is told by the research participants in relation to the analysis is important for validity (Riessman, 2008, p. 184). The validity of this thesis, therefore, rests on the establishment of a solid theoretical framework to guide the analysis and comparison of the narratives, with reflexivity regarding the potential impact on interpretations throughout the analysis, comparison, and discussion.

Validity is closely linked to reliability, which "[...] refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated." (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 27). There is always the possibility of multiple readings, and therefore there is no correct way of reading a written text or an image (Riessman, 2008, p. 179). What is important to consider is therefore that the results of the study are consistent with what is collected of data from the narratives, that it is dependable and consistent (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 28). I will strive to be objective throughout this thesis, but my position may influence my interpretation of the texts and consequently the comparison. In qualitative research, the researcher seeks to understand what is being researched in-depth, and therefore there are typically small samples, which in turn means that the goal is not to find out what is usually true about the researched (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 29). Therefore, the goal is not to create generalizations, but try to raise awareness about representations of trans people in the materials that teachers employ and can engage with in their teaching, and discuss why critical literacy is an important implementation for an inclusive teaching about trans experiences.



## 4 Analysis

In this chapter I present my analysis of the textbook texts and the contemporary fictional texts. I analyze the texts separately utilizing structural narrative analysis, and with the textbook texts I also utilize critical visual method. I analyze the texts focusing on the questions created based on the critical trans framework: 1. Do the texts challenge gender norms on the individual, institutional and sociocultural levels, in addition to challenge how trans people are oppressed on these different levels?, 2. Do the texts represent intersectional identities and address how genderism and other forms of injustice, like racism, interact?, and 3. Do the texts promote trans experiential knowledge? For each text, I begin with a short summary before moving on to analyze the texts based on the questions.

### 4.1 Felix Ever After

*Felix Ever After* is a young adult novel about Felix, who is a seventeen-year-old Black, trans and queer boy. He is studying art and trying to prepare his college application. The story is set during pride month and follows Felix on various experiences of his life where he tries to figure out his identity, while also dealing with friendships, love, school and being a teenager. His goal is to go to Brown University to study, but he lives alone with his dad who can barely make ends meet, and therefore Felix needs a scholarship. Regarding his gender identity, we follow his experiences going to the LGBT Community Centre and his transitioning process. He questions his identity after transitioning to a male. He knows he does not want to be a girl, the sex he was assigned at birth, but being a boy is not necessarily right either. His life is affected by the transphobia he experiences which manifests itself on multiple levels. All he wants is to find a label that explains how he feels and to fall in love, which he eventually does.

*Felix Ever After* is narrated in the first-person, which gives the readers insight into Felix's perspective. The reader experiences his journey figuring out his gender identity, his feelings towards others, the experiences of transphobia and general teenage life. Regarding the first question from the framework that focuses on challenging gender norms and oppression on the different levels, the individual level is presented through Felix and the people at the LGBT Community Centre. Felix represents how gender is not fixed and that there is no right or wrong way of doing gender or being trans (Kean, 2021). Felix therefore challenges gender norms by being queer and trans, but also by questioning his identity. In an email to his distant mother, he explains:

[...] - I'm not sure if I'm actually a guy. It's a hard feeling to describe. It's like ... just this sense, this feeling, in my gut that something isn't totally right. I know that I'm definitely not a girl. But that's all I know. (Callender, 2020, p. 58)

That there is no wrong or right way of doing gender is conveyed through his feelings about his identity, questioning how he wants to define himself. The complexity of gender and how it affects Felix is highlighted in a conversation with his friend Ezra: "I feel guilty - ashamed, that I've been questioning my identity all over again [...]" (Callender, 2020, p. 106). Felix questioning his gender identity challenges the notion of gender being fixed, but the guilt simultaneously portrays how gender norms are internalized into society and peoples' expectations of gender.

For Felix it is important to identify based on his own personal understanding and finding a label that defines him. This is presented in another email to his mom: “[...] I’d feel anchorless - drifting with no one to say if what I’m feeling is real - if this emotion is something that I’ve made up in my mind, or if it’s something that others have felt, too.” (Callender, 2020, p. 178). This explains how gender norms are internalized in people’s expectations, and consequently Felix questions his own feelings regarding his gender identity. After searching online for labels, he finds one that instantly gives him the feeling they were talking about at the LGBT Community Centre:

*Demiboy.* A person who identifies as mostly or partly male - I sit up, moving my computer to my lap - but may also identify as nonbinary some of the time, or even as a girl. The niggling in me spreads from the back of my head, down my neck, and into my chest (Callender, 2020, p. 278).

The description of his feelings emphasizes the importance of identifying based on his own personal understanding, and therefore how people should be able to decide their gender identity for themselves, not based on the expectations of gender norms.

Felix experiences oppression because of his gender identity on several occasions. Felix’s father is struggling with his son’s identity: “My dad points at the roll of paper towels in my hands and says my name to get my attention - but not my real name. He says my old name.” (Callender, 2020, p. 22). Similar events like these keep occurring throughout the book, giving a sense of gray morals towards his father as a character, portraying how gender norms are internalized and therefore hard to adjust to, as he really wants to support his son. In addition to instances with his father, Felix experiences oppression on a completely different level. The book is built around an instance at the beginning, when someone in his school puts up a gallery consisting of photos of him pre-transition. Every student could see it, revealing Felix’s deadname that no one had heard and old photos that no one had seen: “Photos blown up to about 16 x 16. Photos from my Instagram. Photos of who I used to be. Long hair. Dresses. Pictures of me with these forced smiles. Expressions showing just how uncomfortable I always felt.” (Callender, 2020, p. 31). In addition to the harmful instance, Felix also receives anonymous hatred from *grandequeen69* on Instagram: “Why’re you pretending to be a boy?” (Callender, 2020, p. 124). The book’s instances of transphobia portray a reality of oppression and harassment because of Felix’s gender identity. By standing up for himself and having support from his friends, they outweigh the single person’s harassment by challenging oppression based on gender norms.

The first question focuses on challenging gender norms and oppression on the institutional level. This level is presented when Felix talks about the top surgery process for his transition and that it took a lot of convincing, help from the doctor, and his father. He talks about being lucky because:

Not everyone who wants surgery can afford it. My dad had to do a lot of paperwork with letters and providers and everything, and he had to figure out my health insurance to make it happen. Even then, he still had to pay some money out of pocket. (Callender, 2020, p. 25)

In addition to surgery, he emphasizes the need to take t-shots (hormones) every two weeks (Callender, 2020, p. 143). Starting with hormones was, however, not a given opportunity, and he talks about the clinic specifically for LGBTQIA+ people:

[...] there are so many people desperate for good health care that Callen-Lorde even reached capacity and had to close its doors to new patients. I was one of the lucky last few who managed to get an appointment two years back. (Callender, 2020, p. 145)

The description of the healthcare system depicts the reality presented in the framework with healthcare being one of trans people's distinctive institutional challenges (Kean, 2021). To emphasize the importance of healthcare, Felix says: "It's strange, to feel so grateful to some yellow fluid, but I kind of feel like it's my elixir. I know it's going to give me the changes I want to see - the changes I need others to see, too." (Callender, 2020, p. 147). Even though Felix received help, he elaborates on the challenges trans people face through social institutions, which in contrast to his gratefulness challenges the privileging of cis people in social institutions and the lack of support for trans people. The institutional challenges trans people experience are further challenged by Bex at the LGBT Community Centre. Bex discusses their nonbinary identity by emphasizing how much easier it would be if they could choose female or male. Then they would not have to explain themselves at airports or deal with there not being any gender-neutral public bathrooms. But their identity is not one or the other (Callender, 2020, p. 276). Again, the importance of identifying with the personal understanding of gender challenges how gender norms oppress trans people on the institutional level.

The first question focuses on challenging gender norms and oppression on the sociocultural level. This level concerns society's expectations presented through a view on gender that is undisputable, fixed and connected to reproduction (Van Dijk, 2015 as cited in Kean, 2021). Felix challenges these expectations of gender and their presence from the date of birth. He talks about how it took him a while to figure out his identity, and the real issue for him was:

[...] me realising that these were things society had assigned to girls, and while I didn't even know what *trans* was, something about being forced into the role of *girl* has always upset the hell out of me. I'd always tried to line up with the other boys whenever teachers split us up. (Callender, 2020, p. 23)

Felix was expected to adhere to the norms related to his sex assigned at birth, and in addition he did not know any other possibilities. Here, it is reflected through the school that classified students based on their gender. In addition to Felix talking about his experiences, his group of friends discuss how: "There're still people who're afraid to come out to their parents. People being abused, kicked out of their homes." (Callender, 2020, p. 202). This is portrayed through Declan, Felix's friend, who says that his father disowned him for being gay, and consequently he was kicked out of home (Callender, 2020, p. 202). Gender norms are so intertwined within society and people that it causes severe harm, such as being abandoned by the family because of your sexuality or gender identity.

The second question based on the framework concerns intersecting identities and how genderism intersects with other forms of oppression such as racism. This question is present through Felix, as a Black, trans, and queer boy who does not have many resources economically, and consequently it marginalizes him on multiple levels. He talks about this aspect of himself: "It's like it's too much for other people - me having brown skin, and being queer, and being trans on top of that [...]" (Callender, 2020, p. 74). Here, several parts of his identity are discussed as a combined marginalization and how they intersect. In addition to him feeling like he is too much, Leach discusses marginalization based on Felix's intersecting identities when confronting Austin, who was the one behind the gallery and Instagram messages:

The real issue is that you're used to having everything. You're used to being a white guy in Brooklyn, used to always getting your way - no, fuck, I don't care that you're fucking gay, because people like Felix are queer *and* trans *and* Black, and they have to deal with so

much more bullshit than you or me. And, okay, yes, you *are* marginalised for being gay, but instead of being a fucking *ally* to other marginalised people, people even more marginalised than you, you buy into the racist and patriarchal bullshit and act like you're above them because you're a white guy [...]. (Callender, 2020, p. 322)

The distinct forms of marginalization Felix experiences because of various systems of oppression are here challenged by Leah and Felix. Felix discusses how he can feel like he is too much for people, and Leah challenges Austin's harassment of Felix by discussing Austin's privileged position compared to Felix. These instances portray how multiple factors contribute to oppression, and therefore some individuals experience oppression much more comprehensively than others.

As Kean (2021) describes in the framework, trans experiential knowledge aims to destabilize discourses that create knowledge about gender, and this is the focus of the third question. Regarding the third question, I argue that *Felix Ever After* is a source of trans experiential knowledge. The text itself can be defined as trans experiential knowledge as it is written by Kacen Callender, who has lived experience and identifies as nonbinary and transmasculine. Individually, the book challenges gender norms and opens for infinite ways of doing gender through Felix himself and his questions about his identity, but also through other characters like Bex, who identifies as nonbinary. Felix and his friends challenge the oppression he experiences because of his gender identity. The book also challenges institutional oppression by discussing the healthcare system, public bathrooms, school, and airports where trans people are marginalized, and how the institutional oppression affects trans people. Gender norms at the sociocultural level are challenged by problematizing how society expects people to adhere to gender and sexual norms. The book also illustrates how genderism interacts with other forms of injustice, as Felix is Black, trans, and queer, in addition to being in an economic situation where he cannot attend college without a scholarship. By challenging gender norms and being written by a trans person, the book is a source of trans experiential knowledge (Kean, 2021).

## 4.2 Melissa

*Melissa* is a middle-grade novel about a ten-year-old girl who was assigned male at birth. The book is about Melissa and her experience with telling people about her gender identity. Everything in her life, at school and at home, is a constant reminder of who everyone else sees her as, which is George. Since no one knows about her gender identity, she is misgendered because of people's expectations, and consequently she feels abnormal. The school play where she wants to play Charlotte, a female character, seems like a destroyed opportunity when the teacher denies her the girl's part. It is not until she is able to explain to her best friend Kelly that she wants to be a girl in real life that the school play becomes an opportunity. Her friend Kelly has been given the role as Charlotte, and she is willing to give up one of the performances so her best friend can show who she is in front of her mom and everyone else. There are a few people who question her appearance on stage, but the positive response is overwhelming. Although people still harass her for being who she is, the most important people in her life, like her mother and brother, eventually accept and understand her for who she is. The book ends with a trip to the zoo where Kelly and Melissa are on their first trip as girlfriends together.

The first question based on the framework concerns challenging gender norms and oppression at the individual level. The narrator challenges gender norms at the individual

level using pronouns: “[...] George had to steady herself [...]” and “Sure that she was alone, George went into the third bedroom [...]” (Gino, 2022, pp. 1-2). The third person narrative is important because it portrays a combination of using the protagonist's name that is associated with a boy and explains what everyone else perceives her as. However, the narrator uses the pronouns she/her for female when talking about Melissa herself, which gives the reader the opportunity to experience Melissa’s secret about her gender identity with her. This combination challenges how gender norms are internalized beliefs based on society's expectations of gender and underscores the importance of differentiating between sex assigned at birth and a person's personal understanding of gender identity (Kean, 2021). In addition to emphasizing Melissa’s gender identity using pronouns, her feelings about herself are illustrated when she is taking a bath:

She took off her shirt while the tub filled, waiting until the last possible moment to take off her pants and underwear. She immersed her body in the warm water and tried not to think about what was between her legs, but there it was, blobbing in front of her. (Gino, 2022, pp. 44-45)

The emphasis on Melissa’s feelings towards her sex assigned at birth challenges norms about gender and underscores that a person's gender identity must be their own choice and personal understanding.

The individual level is also presented through the harassment she experiences for not acting like a stereotypical boy and how classification based on gender affects her. Jeff and Rick, two of her classmates, comment on Melissa's feelings after reading the play: ““Heh, some girl is crying over a dead spider.”” (Gino, 2022, p. 12). The harassment portrays people’s expectations of how a boy should behave compared to a girl, and that it is more likely a girl will cry and not a boy. Jeff and Rick continue with: ““I’ll bet he read the stupid spider’s part by mistake!” Jeff smirked. ‘He’s such a freaking girl anyway.’” (Gino, 2022, p. 89). As Melissa is perceived as a boy and does not act according to peoples’ expectations of gender, she is continuously experiencing harassment and bullying. In contrast to her own definition of herself, this challenges society's expectations of gender norms. The author emphasizes gender classification in a conversation with Melissa’s teacher, when she talks about Melissa’s compassion for the story: ““Don’t ever lose that, George, and I know you’ll turn into a fine young man.”” (Gino, 2022, p. 15). After the teacher’s comment, the narrator describes Melissa’s feelings: “The word *man* hit like a pile of rocks falling on George’s skull. It was a hundred times worse than boy, and she couldn’t breathe.” (Gino, 2022, p. 16). Since the teacher does not know about her gender identity, Melissa experiences misgendering because the teacher uses gender classification in most activities. In addition to the teacher, her mom misgenders her. Melissa thinks about the process of transitioning and the need for parents' permission, wanting to explain to her mom how she feels, but hesitating. Her mom says:

Whatever happens in your life, you can share it, and I will love you. You will always be my little boy, and that will never change. Even when you grow up to be an old man, I will still love you as my son. (Gino, 2022, p. 47)

The repetition underscores the harm of misgendering when the reader knows what Melissa wants her mom to know and how she feels about herself, and it challenges people’s use of classification that is based on their expectations of gender.

The first question concerns the challenging of gender norms and oppression at the institutional level. This level is presented through the privileging of cis people at Melissa’s school, and one of the issues, which is often a distinctive institutional challenge for trans

people, is the public bathroom (Kean, 2021). At school when Melissa needs to use the bathroom: "Ms. Udell returned with the bathroom pass. It was a worn wooden block from a kindergarten class and read BOYS in thick green permanent marker on one side." (Gino, 2022, p. 16). Her experience with the bathroom is explicitly described: "George hated the boy's bathroom. It was the worst room in the school." (Gino, 2022, p. 16). The colors and urinals reminded her of who she is not, and to resist having to use the bathroom: "She never drank from the water fountains at school, even if she was thirsty, and some days, she could make it through the school day without having to go once." (Gino, 2022, p. 17). The way in which her health is affected portrays how limiting gender norms are for trans people. This challenges the lack of gender-neutral options for trans people in institutions. Through the classification, the book portrays how the gender norms are limiting and present obstacles for people by assuming their gender based on their assigned sex at birth, and therefore they have to choose one or the other, which in this case is challenging for Melissa because no one knows about her gender identity.

Gender classification is present within the activities they do at school, and most prominently the school play. Melissa was thinking about the school play where: "She wanted to be Charlotte, the kind of wise spider, even if it was a girl's part." (Gino, 2022, pp. 21-22). Kelly, her best friend, replies to her wish about being Charlotte: "'Who cares if you're not really a girl?'" (Gino, 2022, p. 23). Kelly tries to be supportive but is still unaware of Melissa's gender identity. Ms. Udell, on the other hand, continues to classify her students based on gender. For those who wanted to try out for the play, she handed out blue cards for Wilbur to the boys and pink cards for Charlotte to the girls (Gino, 2022, p. 65). When it was Melissa's turn to try out, she started reading Charlotte's lines, and when she opened her eyes after finishing: "Ms. Udell was frowning, and a thick crease had formed across her forehead. 'George, what was that?' she asked." (Gino, 2022, p. 70). Ms. Udell continues: "'Was that supposed to be some kind of joke? Because it wasn't very funny.'" (Gino, 2022, p. 70). Ms. Udell argues that there are too many girls who want the part, and that people would be very confused if Melissa had a girl's part. Instead of giving them roles based on their performance or own choices, the teacher classifies them based on gender. Melissa ends up doing the play regardless, and with the help from her friend Kelly after explaining her gender identity, and the support from the principal who understands Melissa's secret, Melissa challenges the institutionalized gender norms. She shows how she was perfectly able to play Charlotte, even better than her friend Kelly, regardless of her assigned sex at birth.

The first question focuses on the challenging of gender norms and oppression at the sociocultural level. This level concerns the view on gender that is undisputable, fixed, and connected to reproduction (Van Dijk, 2015 as cited in Kean, 2021). Melissa's family represents this understanding about gender by refusing to believe Melissa's understanding about herself. Her mother's response when she says she is a girl is: "Oh, Gee, I was there when you were born. I changed your diapers, and I promise you, you are one hundred percent boy. Besides, you're only ten years old." (Gino, 2022, p. 129). In addition to her mother not recognizing her personal understanding about gender, Melissa later tells her brother Scott, and he replies: "'That's more than just being gay. No wonder she's freaking out.'" (Gino, 2022, p. 139). It is depicted as a huge problem, but her brother is supportive and for the first time he understands his sibling. Melissa keeps pushing her mom, who at the end understands that her feeling is legitimate. Melissa's awareness of people's expectations of gender and the consequences this has for trans people is presented through her search for information: "'Sometimes transgender people don't get rights.' George had read on the Internet about transgender people being

treated unfairly.” (Gino, 2022, p. 105). Regardless of her awareness of the marginalization and oppression people experience for challenging gender norms, and her not being understood, she does not feel different about her gender identity. Melissa therefore challenges people’s understanding of gender based on gender norms by proving the importance of her personal understanding about her identity.

I argue that the book, being written by a genderqueer author and challenging gender norms, makes it a source of trans experiential knowledge through most of the principles in the framework. Individually, the book challenges gender norms and conveys how people should be able to decide their own gender identity through Melissa in comparison to what the world sees her as. Institutionally, Melissa experiences classification based on gender norms at school. This is challenged by her performance in the play and the support she receives afterwards. The sociocultural level is presented through characters who see gender based on gender norms. Melissa’s courage to stand up for herself alongside the support she receives challenges the characters who withhold gender norms and their reactions to Melissa telling them who she is. This also challenges the misgendering she experiences. Intersectional identities are not included, and consequently her identity is not considered in relation to other forms of oppression.

### 4.3 Engelsk 8 – Coy Mathis

The textbook authors Madsen and Mohammad-Roe begin with an introduction where they talk about there being people who dare to be different in every culture, and sometimes children are those who are brave. They explain how the readers will be introduced to two children who were brave enough to speak up in order to make a difference. I am analyzing the first text about Coy Mathis who identifies as a girl but was assigned male at birth. The short text, consisting of 236 words, is about Coy’s experience with telling her parents that she is a girl and that she wants to transition. It further tells how her parents took her to the doctor and helped her by telling others to treat her like a girl. The text then addresses her situation at school with the public bathroom, and how Coy and her parents discuss it with a judge, as she was not allowed to use the girl’s bathroom. They succeed with the judge, who decides that she should be allowed to use the bathroom she prefers. The text includes an illustration of Coy by Marta Lorenzon, retrieved from the original novel (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020, pp. 150-151).

The story is told from a third person narrative, and therefore through the perspective of an outsider, but it focuses on Coy as the protagonist. The text is a biography written as a fairytale: “Once upon a time, a boy named Coy was born. Coy loved dresses, the color pink, and shiny shoes.” (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). The characteristics of a fairytale are connected to something unreal and made up, and it is therefore not clear that the text is based on a real person’s life. The first question from the framework focuses on challenging gender norms and oppression at the individual level. This level is presented through Coy, who is clear about her gender identity and that it does not fit with her assigned sex at birth: “Coy wanted his parents to address him as ‘she’ and didn’t like wearing boys’ clothes.” (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). She therefore challenges gender norms through her pronouns and her gender identity based on her own personal understanding (Kean, 2021). Marginalization at the individual level is, however, present through the use of pronouns: “His parents let him wear whatever he liked” (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). Even after explaining the pronoun she wants her parents to address her with, the text keeps referring to her as “he” instead of “she”. This portrays how others oppress trans people based on their own understanding

of gender and not respecting peoples' personal understanding about their gender identity. This text is therefore varied in terms of challenging gender norms because there is no cohesion between what pronouns the narrator uses and when, and Coy should be addressed with the pronoun she wishes after explicitly stating it. The correct pronoun is not used until the doctor refers to her as "she" later in the text, which conveys that someone with authority should allow her to identify as she wants before it is valid. Simultaneously, it depicts the support she has from her parents about her gender identity and expression, as she could wear whatever she liked, and the text therefore challenges gender norms to a certain degree.

Coy would like to transition and approaches her mom for help: "One night, Coy asked his mom, 'When are we going to the doctor to have me fixed into a girl-girl?'" (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150). The process, although told from a child's perspective, is presented as an easy fix based on what she says to her mom. The simplification is present throughout the story, and especially with the doctor explaining what transgender means. What the process requires, how many ways of transitioning there are, or that there is often, for many people, not possible to get help are not discussed:

The doctor explained: 'Usually, boys feel OK with being boys, and girls are fine with being girls. But there are some boys who feel female, and girls who feel male. They're called transgender, and Coy is a transgender girl. She was born in a boy's body but, deep inside, she feels that she's a girl and she should be allowed to be one.' From then on, Coy's mom and dad asked everyone to treat Coy as a girl (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150).

This section takes up almost one fourth of the story, making it very pedagogical in the sense that the doctor is explaining what it means to be transgender. Coy identifies as a girl, so for her this statement may not be problematic, but I argue that it is problematic because the doctor does not speak of the multiple ways in which people can do gender. The doctor explains trans people as either wanting to be female or male, not either or a combination of both. Furthermore, the doctor does not explain what it means to transition, which was the reason she wanted to go to the doctor. However, the doctor states that she should be able to define her gender identity based on her own feelings. The first question focuses on challenging gender norms and oppression on three different levels. I argue that on the sociocultural and individual levels, dominant understandings of gender are not challenged because the text does not open for infinite possibilities of doing gender as stated in the framework. The institutional level is not authentically presented based on how difficult it might be to get help and that the process can vary from person to person and be very time-consuming. It is not necessary that this should be included, as trans experiences vary, but when they are talking about the process of transitioning and what transgender means, I argue it should have been addressed to include more than just binary conceptions of gender.

The institutional level is, however, challenged through her experience with the public bathroom at school:

But when school started, they had an unexpected problem. 'Coy has to either use the boy's bathroom, or the bathroom for disabled children,' the teachers said. 'But I'm not a boy!' Coy wailed. 'And I'm not disabled! I'm a girl.' (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150)

Coy is marginalized by the teachers who deny her gender identity, asking her to use the boy's bathroom or the bathroom for disabled children. The message conveys that if you cannot use the bathroom corresponding with your biological sex, you must use the room for disabled children. I argue that this message marginalizes disabled people as well, because the teachers separate people who do not conform to the norm from those who



do. The second question regarding genderism and how it intersects with other forms of injustice is not present. The message from the teachers does, however, consider trans people and disabled people as abnormal. Coy does challenge gender classification through her response, explaining that she is a girl which is her personal understanding of her gender identity. Oppression on the institutional level is challenged by her parents talking to a judge about the situation, and the judge decides that Coy should be allowed to go to her preferred bathroom (Madsen & Mohammad-Roe, 2020, p. 150).

In the portrait illustration accompanied with the text (p. 151. see Appendix 1), Coy is sitting by a desk painting. By paying attention to the colors in the illustration, Coy is not wearing clothes with the colors she likes to wear as addressed in the text. Her smile expresses her happiness, but the colors she is drawn in are gray and brown, making her appear sad and happy at the same time. The colors Coy is drawn in and the background are very similar, almost making her fade into the background, whilst what stands out and is drawn with strong colors are the pencils in front of her. This takes some of the attention away from her. I think the illustration can be interpreted in very different ways. The colors she is drawn in whilst also fading into the background make her appear unrealistic. In relation to the text's characteristics as a fairytale, this could cause an interpretation of trans people as unreal. At the same time, it could be intentional that she is neutral because she should be able to color herself according to her own personal understanding of her gender identity. The colors of the pencils could represent the pride flag and the transgender flag, but not all the colors from the flags are included. At the same time, it also seems like the colors are chosen so that we are not supposed to define her ourselves. This would, however, be contradictory based on her understanding about her gender identity in the text and the colors she likes. The illustration in relation to the characteristics of a fairytale, I argue, makes the text seem unrealistic. Compared to other texts in the textbook about real people, who are mostly accompanied with pictures, this depicts a representation of trans people as unreal.

The text promotes trans experiential knowledge to some extent. The authors do not openly identify as trans people, and even though it is a biography and they have written about Coy's life, their understanding or simplifying may have hindered them from portraying Coy authentically. This is probably related to the intended audience of the original book. As the book is set to six plus and intended for a very young audience, it may not necessarily be appropriate for an 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. On the individual level, the text challenges gender norms through Coy, who is a girl but was assigned male at birth. Her wanting to be addressed with another pronoun and transitioning depicts how gender identity varies from person to person, and cannot be destined by biology (Kean, 2021). However, the text does not consistently address her by the right pronouns. Institutionally, transitioning is portrayed as an easy process, while at the same time, healthcare is one of the most distinctive institutional challenges trans people face (Kean, 2021). Institutionally, Coy is oppressed when being told not to use the girl's bathroom, and her fight for her rights challenges how trans people should be allowed to use the bathroom they prefer. Socioculturally, the doctor does not talk about the many possibilities of doing gender with the description of what it means to be a trans person, and binary conceptions of gender can therefore be reproduced. Intersectional identities are not present in the text.

## 4.4 Engelsk 9 – The Art of Being Normal

The authors of the textbook, Haegi, Madsen and Mohammad-Roe, start by introducing the characters of the novel: "David Piper is an outsider with a big secret. His classmates call him a freak. His parents think he is gay while his two best friends know the truth." (Haegi et al., 2020, p. 36). They further introduce Leo Denton, the other main character, who is new at the school and wishes to be invisible. He also has a big secret. There are three excerpts included from the original book, the first two about David and the last one about Leo. It begins with an event from David's past, about him wanting to be a girl, and then moves on to the present. It is currently the end of the summer holiday and one of the things on David's list for the summer is to tell his mom and dad. The story then moves on to Leo who is home alone with his sister. They are out of food, and he must therefore find money to go grocery shopping in order to feed his sister and himself. His mother comes home late at night with a strange man and Leo is not happy with the situation (Haegi et al., 2020, p. 36). Both characters are addressed with male pronouns, which I also use because they have not stated otherwise.

The novel is written in the first-person narrative from the two characters' point of view, so the excerpts are written from David's and Leo's perspective. Regarding the representation of trans people, David is the one explicitly stating that he wants to be a girl, whilst the secret of Leo is not introduced. The individual level within the first question based on the framework is therefore presented through David and his wish to be a girl. The first excerpt presents a past episode at school, where the students were going to write about what they wanted to be when they grew up. The other students wrote about jobs and famous characters: "But I didn't want to be any of these things. This is what I wrote: *I want to be a girl.*" (Haegi et al., 2020, p. 36). The contrast makes David's dream stand out in that his wish is something different to the others. His dream emphasizes his longing feeling of wanting to be a girl and how much it means to him. David therefore challenges gender norms at the individual level by being assigned male at birth but wanting to be a girl.

The first question focuses on challenging gender norms and oppression at the sociocultural level. This level is present in David's fear of telling his family who he is. He is on the sofa watching TV in his mother's nightie, and when his mom comes back, he hides under the blanket. They discuss how he should be doing other things during the summer holiday than only watching TV, and suddenly, the phone rings. David tries to grab the phone and the blanket falls over: "[...] she's already looking down at me, a quizzical expression on her face. 'David, are you wearing my nightie?'" (Haegi et al., 2020, pp. 38-39). He explains that it is to keep him cool, referring to the dresses Arab men wear, but his mom is suspicious, and he decides to wear it for dinner to make it less suspicious. The fact that he tries to hide the nightie and refer to Arab men's dresses, underscores his fear about telling his family who he is. Socioculturally, the hierarchical and dominant understandings about gender is seen as undisputable, fixed, and connected to reproduction (Van Dijk, 2015 as cited in Kean, 2021). His mom does not express with words how she feels about him wearing her nightie, but she is clearly not happy about it based on her expression and suspicious "'hmmmm,' [...]" (Haegi et al., 2020, p. 39). His sister also comments during dinner: "'You look like such a weirdo,' Livvy says, her eyes narrowing with vague disgust." (Haegi et al., 2020, p. 39). The reaction from his family is probably the reason for holding back and not telling them who he is, but without David's feelings about the situation, it may seem like he is content with them questioning his clothing, and the reader could therefore interpret the situation as if

it is not affecting him. At the end of the excerpt, David presents his list of things to achieve during the summer, which in addition to playing games, finishing coursework and dancing, consists of: "1. Grow my hair long enough to tie back in a ponytail." and "6. Tell Mum and Dad." (Haegi et al., 2020, p. 39). The excerpts therefore implies that all he wants to do is tell his family and show them who he is, but he does not explain how he feels about the situation. The lack of depth about his feelings and the situation as a whole limits the text from challenging gender norms. Even though the text is written in the first-person narrative, it feels like the text is written from an outsider's perspective only observing what is happening.

Leo is presented as having a big secret just like David. What he hides is uncertain, but one clue is presented when he hides from a group of boys from his old school going grocery shopping: "[...] so I pull my hood up, fastening the zip to the top so all you can see are my eyes." (Haegi et al., 2020, p. 41). This instance can be interpreted as him hiding because of his gender identity, and challenges how many individuals must stay invisible due to the risks of visibly showing their trans identity (Kean, 2021). In addition, the illustration accompanied by the text is based on colors from the transgender flag. Apart from this instance and the illustration, the excerpt about Leo mainly focuses on him and his sister being home alone, without any food and trying to find some money to buy food themselves. His mother is presented as a very distant and uncaring mother, leaving Leo to take care of his sister, and therefore the excerpt about Leo focuses more on familial relationships than gender identity. Leo's big secret can therefore be interpreted as hiding his situation at home, and that he hides from the boys because he is going grocery shopping with a tiny amount of money. Question two regarding intersecting identities is therefore not explicitly included, because Leo's gender identity is not explicitly stated.

The illustrations accompanied by the excerpts are not originally in the novel but inserted by the authors of the textbook. The illustration accompanying the excerpts about David (p. 37. see Appendix 2) is called *Trampoline* by Charlotte Evans. The illustration portrays a person jumping on a trampoline, with vague lines making the person somewhat unclear. The blurred lines and what seems to be either a shadow or trying to capture a person moving, gives the illusion of two people jumping because of the different colors. It can therefore be interpreted to portray David and that he is trying to show the person he wants to be, which is slightly sticking out behind him. The colors are dark, and together with the blurred lines it depicts some sort of sadness, which may be because of the fear of telling his parents. The colors the person is painted in can be related to the LGBTQ+ Flag, and the most prominent colors on the person represents harmony, sunlight, life, and health (Ung.no, 2021). In the text, David's life is not in harmony with who he wants to be, and the sunlight and healthiness is therefore contradictory as well. The illustration accompanying the excerpt about Leo (p. 40. see Appendix 3) is called *Brick Wall* by Charlotte Evans. It depicts a person trying to get over a brick wall as it is an escape. The colors can be related to the Transgender Flag, and it is not possible to tell whether the clothing is a skirt or a pair of shorts. Hence, there are no indications towards the gender identity of the person. However, it may not be interpreted as representing someone with another gender identity than assumed, but rather as an escape from the situation at home as presented in the excerpt.

The excerpts promote trans experiential knowledge to some extent. The author of the book is inspired by the people she met whilst working with children questioning their gender identity, but Lisa Williamson does not openly identify as a trans person herself.

This problematizes the authenticity and could be limiting her from portraying trans people authentically. However, with only a couple of excerpts from the original text it is problematic to state. The excerpts the authors of the textbook have included seem to focus on portraying different familial relationships more than aiming at focusing on the characters gender identity, even though this is an important aspect of David's experience. The individual perspective is therefore only present through David challenging gender norms explicitly. Socioculturally, David's family represents an internalization of gender norms. Without David's feelings and a lack of descriptions it is not easy to interpret the text as challenging gender norms on this level. There are no descriptions towards genderism intersecting with other forms of injustice, as we cannot explicitly state Leo's gender identity, and it therefore focuses on their economic situation specifically. The institutional level is not discussed in the text.

## 5 Comparative Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter I aim to answer my research questions based on the findings from the analysis together with the theory presented. I begin with a QCA of the contemporary fictional texts and the textbook texts to answer the first research question. I compare the texts based on the findings from the analysis to examine the representations of trans people in the different formats, using the questions based on the framework. Then I discuss how critical literacy can contribute to more inclusive teaching of trans experiences and the importance of recognition. I discuss the main goals of critical literacy and the affective turn, focusing on the potential teaching has in utilizing these in relation to the texts. I include the comparison in the discussion through examples stating how teachers could work with the texts in relation to critical literacy. These discussions are then linked to the experiences of trans people in today's society and its relevance to the curriculum. I also discuss what must be done in school as an institution alongside teaching to create an inclusive environment for trans people.

### 5.1 Comparative Analysis

Both *Felix Ever After* and *Melissa* challenge gender norms through the three levels presented in the first question: *Do the texts challenge gender norms on multiple levels through the individual, institutional and sociocultural levels, in addition to challenge how trans people are oppressed on these different levels?* The two novels vary in how they challenge the different levels. *Felix* shows how there is no archetype of being a trans person as he questions his identity and identifies as a demiboy. *Melissa* is clear in that she identifies as a girl, but her process of telling people and involving her family is just starting. Institutionally, *Felix Ever After* discusses several different institutions affecting trans people, whilst *Melissa* mainly concerns school, but they both challenge how the gender norms affect trans people through these institutions. The sociocultural aspect is challenged by both books as they challenge people's expectations based on the assumption that gender is undisputable and fixed. *Felix Ever After* has several elements included that are not present in *Melissa*, but they both challenge gender norms through the three levels. The textbook texts vary in terms of challenging these perspectives overall. Both texts challenge gender norms on an individual level, because Coy and David do not identify with the sex they are assigned at birth. It is however problematic that the text about Coy refers to Coy as he, after pointing out her preferred pronouns. Institutionally, the story about Coy challenges gender norms to a certain degree. The healthcare system is not problematized, but she does challenge gender norms at school when she is not allowed to use her preferred bathroom. *The Art of Being Normal* does not present any distinctive institutional challenges. Coy challenges gender norms, but the explanation of trans people presented by the doctor does not open for infinite possibilities of doing gender. The sociocultural aspect is therefore not challenged, and consequently the text can reproduce gender norms and give the impression that trans people only transition from one gender to another. David's family in *The Art of Being Normal* is representative of upholding gender norms. David challenges his family to a certain degree by wearing the nightie, but he does not respond to them in a way that challenges gender norms. Since there also is a lack of insight into David's feelings, it is up to the reader to imagine how the experiences affect David. In this excerpt, there is therefore

not enough information to challenge the sociocultural perspective represented in the family's conservative view on gender.

The protagonists challenge gender norms individually but differ in terms of their individual situations. The textbook texts present two main characters who do not identify as male which was the sex they were assigned at birth. The two contemporary fictional texts present two different individual perspectives. That Felix also identifies as a demiboy conveys a more diverse way of doing gender without choosing between just male or female. Both the textbook texts and the contemporary fictional texts present one story in which the character transitions or is going to transition, as Coy and Felix do, whilst the other character, Melissa or David, is at a place where they are only beginning to talk about their gender identity. With Melissa and David, it is not specified if they end up transitioning or not, which is an important representation since many people do not transition at all. This could be because they do not wish to do so, which is the case for many people, however, it is often connected to the lack of resources and offers, fear, and economic barriers which hinders them in transitioning even though they want to (Anderssen et al., 2021, p. 125). No representation can represent all trans people, as there are multiple ways of doing gender. It is therefore necessary to bear in mind and try to think about the varieties in which people identify and whether they transition or not. Based on the first question that concerns challenging gender norms and oppression on three different levels, I argue that the textbooks can preserve gender norms compared to the contemporary fictional texts. This is problematic, as challenging gender norms and the assumptions people have towards gender is the focus of trans studies. All levels do not need to be included, but that the texts challenge gender norms within the levels that are incorporated is essential, and that is not the case for the textbook texts.

The second question is: *Do the texts represent intersectional identities and address how genderism and other forms of injustice, like racism, interact?* As I explained in the theory section, I do not believe that this principle is necessary in every representation of trans people. However, if a teacher includes representations that never incorporate this principle, it will be a limiting representation of trans people overall. Out of the two contemporary fictional texts, *Felix Ever After* is the only text incorporating this principle. As Felix is Black, trans, and queer, and in an economic situation where he and his dad are barely making ends meet, the text portrays the complexity of intersecting forms of oppression and how this affects Felix. *Melissa* only includes White characters with no other explicit forms of oppression affecting them. The textbook texts are similar to *Melissa*. However, in *The Art of Being Normal*, Leo is struggling economically, but then again, he is not explicitly presented as a trans person in the excerpts, as he is in the original text. It is therefore difficult to identify how these forms of oppression intersect, as the character may not be perceived as a trans person. I therefore argue that the textbook texts would convey a narrow representation of trans people if taught to a class, compared to the contemporary fictional texts, with the proviso that only these were taught and no other materials.

The last question focuses on whether the texts promote trans experiential knowledge, which centers knowledge created by trans people, and concerns challenging gender norms and a focus on intersecting identities as the two questions discussed above. The two contemporary fictional texts compared to the textbook texts represent trans experiential knowledge based on the findings concerning question one and two, and they are created by authors identifying as transmasculine and nonbinary, and genderqueer. In addition to what is presented above, and the fact that the textbook texts are written by

people who do not openly identify as trans people, I argue that the textbook texts do not promote trans experiential knowledge on all aspects. It is not necessarily essential that a text about a trans person is written by a person identifying as such, but the importance of lived experience in trans studies emphasizes trans people's voices in creating knowledge. Furthermore, the authors of the textbook have decided on which excerpts to include, which I argue has made *The Art of Being Normal* concerning familial relationships more than focusing on gender identity, which could have been their intention in the first place. That the textbook texts do not promote trans experiential knowledge on all aspects can therefore preserve gender norms.

The comparison shows how the representations of trans people in the examples of contemporary fiction is challenging gender norms and promotes trans experiential knowledge. The textbook texts do not challenge gender norms at all times when this is present in the texts, and consequently they do not promote trans experiential knowledge as the contemporary fictional texts. Teachers must therefore be critical towards texts in textbooks about gender identity, to not preserve gender norms, and as I will discuss further, implement critical literacy and consider recognition when they teach about trans people. The comparison is limited in that it only compares two contemporary fictional texts and two textbook texts, and *The Art of Being Normal* is originally a book and just a couple of excerpts are included in the textbook, and therefore the analysis is not representative for the book itself. I am therefore not going to generalize the findings. I do however believe that the comparison can make teachers aware of and more critical towards the representations existing in textbooks, and hence the potential inherent in implementing other sources in the classroom.

## 5.2 Inclusive teaching

As both textbooks are derived from the same publisher, only differentiating in the year level they are meant for, the two texts can potentially be the only trans representation many students receive throughout lower secondary school in the English subject. Books compared to excerpts and short texts automatically have the ability to include more information and hence elaborate on the elements from the questions to a higher degree. However, that does not mean that short texts cannot challenge gender norms. The problem is that the textbook texts do not always challenge gender norms. Students need to see themselves in the material taught at school, but misrecognition is a potential problem if texts do not challenge gender norms. I therefore argue that critical literacy is essential when teaching about trans experiences, and I will now discuss recognition, affect and critical literacy in relation to the comparison.

Everyone needs to see themselves in texts, and as pointed out in the theory section, recognition is important to feel valued (Juang, 2006). Teachers must therefore be critical towards texts because students can be misrecognized through the material they are supposed to recognize with. Misrecognition can be misinformation about what it means to be a trans person or characters preserving gender norms. Concerning the textbooks, the statement provided by the doctor in the story about Coy on what it means to be a trans person, could lead nonbinary students to feel misrecognized. That David's family in *The Art of Being Normal* are not challenged in their view about gender, may leave students with an understanding that gender expression should concur with the sex assigned at birth. There is never the possibility of representing all trans people in one text, but with misinformation or not challenging gender norms, trans people may feel misrecognized even though the character itself does not match their own identity exactly. Hence, what

is intended as an inclusive practice could end up as an exclusive practice in that the students feel misrecognized. Teachers must therefore be critical towards the texts they teach. However, it is also important that students learn how to be critical towards texts, and teachers must therefore think about what they teach in relation to texts about trans people to not reinforce gender norms that marginalizes trans people and misrecognizes them.

Trans people experience marginalization and oppression through the individual, institutional and sociocultural levels, and critical literacy can therefore be helpful for students to recognize inequality, and this work can in turn benefit from the affective turn. As I presented in the theory section, Ahmed (2016) explains that the concept of affect concerns standing in the shoes of others to try to understand what people unlike us experience and feel, in addition to recognizing frames of recognition based on how people are represented in a text and how they are recognized in society. Furthermore, affect focuses on understanding emotions and why we feel what we feel. Hence, students could try to stand in the shoes of trans people in the texts and examine how trans people are recognized, whether that is positive or negative. Teachers can help students understand their emotions regarding the injustice trans people experience because of gender norms and its consequences with marginalization and oppression. Students understanding their feelings in relation to how they read the world is therefore a necessary part of this work, as they may not feel for the characters in a text at all. If affect is considered, as Ahmed (2016) explains, it will be easier for students to cope with suffering in texts and hence the ethical responsiveness to it. This is not to feel sad for others' suffering but to become caring individuals.

I am unable to say how a student will be affected by or engage with a text, because a teacher cannot decide how a student will emotionally engage with texts, but the amount of information and the challenging of gender norms within the contemporary fictional texts is essential in how the students get affected by and engage with it. Short texts can be engaging, but in this instance the textbooks alone have limited information and misinformation that can limit the engagement towards challenging gender norms. As the contemporary fictional texts present a view in which gender norms are challenged throughout the whole text, this is a better opportunity for engaging with the notions of affect. As the characters constantly work towards challenging gender norms and those who preserve them, students can engage in that challenging. The engagement will be dependent upon the teacher's engagement with the text, and it will depend upon the work both before and after reading the text. With the help from the teacher, students can recognize how the characters are identified by those who preserve gender norms and those who support them in challenging it, and then better understand how trans people are affected by oppression and marginalization. This implies understanding the impact people's view on gender can have on trans people, and how this view leads to discrimination inflicted upon trans people because of their gender identity, or the marginalization within institutions. An example is how Melissa struggles with bathroom facilities at her school because of her gender identity, and how that affects her health and therefore her experience with school. This can in turn lead to an understanding of the importance of supporting trans people and enacting change. Empathy does not, however, lead to equity on its own, and affect is therefore only a part of the work on critical literacy. It can be helpful to make students aware of their emotions and cope with the suffering of others, but critical literacy is essential to provide students with tools to be able to discover misrecognition and biases within texts.



Critical literacy can contribute to an inclusive teaching of gender identities through analyzing texts with a critical stance to uncover underlying themes, messages, and positions, and exploring biases (White & Cooper, 2015). This involves both how a text can omit important information or other biased elements, and on raising students' awareness of unjust conditions and what they look like in real life to motivate them to advocate for equality. As previously explained when presenting the critical trans framework, no single individual can create an accurate portrayal or representation of all trans experiences (Kean, 2021). Therefore, I argue that critical literacy is elemental regardless of the text and whether it challenges the gender binary, and even though the contemporary fictional texts promote trans experiential knowledge, they do not represent all trans people and they do not instantly enact social change. I argue that enacting social change is one of the goals when teaching about people in a marginalized position, who experience oppression in school and society, and especially when the marginalization is present within the texts.

Critical literacy must be learned, and the teacher is therefore vital, because teachers can mobilize various resources to teach students to become text-critics (Ahmed, 2016, p. 384). These resources can be strategies to help students engage critically with texts as presented in the theory section. One of the strategies, as explained by Lloyd and Wertsch (2016), is that the teacher chooses texts based on students' interests. If students enjoy school plays, it would be beneficial to choose *Melissa* for students' engagement. Furthermore, it is vital that the teacher considers students' knowledge about the topic, which here would be trans experiences, and teach students necessary information to be able to be critical towards the text. Another important aspect is the number of texts that must be taught to get the perspectives needed to explore biases and misrecognition. The teacher could therefore implement *The Art of Being Normal* in relation to *Melissa*, to get a different perspective on family reactions. Johnson et al. (2017) argues for analytical tools and strategies relevant to the topic, and students need support from the teacher to frame questions that can guide their reading and analysis. If a teacher chose any of the texts presented in this thesis, the critical questions could be based on the ones used for the analysis and comparison, and then be adjusted to match students' levels. One question could therefore be "Do the characters in the text challenge gender norms?". Students would, however, need background information to understand what they are looking for, and the theory provided in this thesis is an example of necessary information to understand what the question implies. This would be information regarding gender norms and how they can be challenged. The example provided here underscores the teacher's responsibility with the work on critical literacy, both based on the material and what is taught in relation to it.

Since the textbook texts do not promote trans experiential knowledge on all perspectives in the questions, it is crucial to engage with critical literacy if these texts are being taught. This could for example mean, as presented by White and Cooper (2015), that the teacher could give students two incongruent or complementing texts to deepen their understanding. If a teacher taught the story about Coy to a class, they could discuss the institutional problem regarding the bathroom. However, if the teacher then taught *Felix Ever After*, the students could for example question the doctor's statement in the story about Coy when they learn about Felix's gender identity. This would help them to understand misrecognition in texts. *Felix Ever After* would also emphasize the importance of addressing people with the right pronouns, which is not the case in the story about Coy. Teaching *Melissa* in relation to *The Art of Being Normal* could emphasize how David's parents should be challenged in their view about gender just like Melissa's

mother. By doing so, students can become critical thinkers towards text, because they experience how a text can leave information out or provide a perspective that is not representative. If a teacher teaches the textbook texts without any additional information about gender identity or implementing other texts that presents a different perspective, it will be difficult to utilize critical literacy, because the students would not know what to look for. Therefore, teaching two complementing texts can enhance their understanding and deepen their critical thinking. The different texts can also be taught in relation to other source material, such as factual texts presenting accurate information, as a way of learning to utilize critical literacy. This could mean that the teacher focuses on a specific part of the framework as presented in the previous paragraph, and chooses texts based on the focus point. As the textbook texts do not challenge gender norms on all the aspects they should, a consequence could be that students may interpret the texts in a way that does not challenge gender norms. Therefore, teachers must be aware of the potential harm they could do, and instead utilize critical literacy and teach texts with other source material, which will allow students to learn how to be critical towards texts on their own.

When teachers teach strategies that give students the chance to be critical towards texts, by for example teaching two complementary texts as the examples above portrays, students can start to see how they can use their knowledge to enact social change based on equity. The concept of equity focuses on giving people the resources they need to access advantages or options most people automatically have, to then be able to gain equality (White & Cooper, 2015). Through learning about how injustices affect trans people, students can understand what resources or changes are needed for trans people to have the same opportunities as others. Students could then enact change based on their knowledge about injustices. Teachers could, together with the students, discuss what they can do to help, or what others in a position of power need to do for change to happen. As Johnson et al. (2017) explains, literature alone cannot enact social change, but together with critical literacy, it can enhance students' reading and help them to think beyond the texts through a diversity of insights and perspectives. The goal is that this knowledge can create more conscious global citizens (p. 198). The diversity of perspectives students encounter through reading texts about the gender spectrum will give them a better understanding about the world, and by utilizing critical literacy, it can contribute to change. This work may be difficult within society, but they can contribute to changing practices within schools based on equity.

Without learning about various identities and perspectives, we will be limited in our knowledge about the world and the society we live in. Students would not be able to enact change without knowledge about trans people, because they would not be aware of the injustice trans people experience, and how gender norms affect trans people's lives. This, I argue, can be taught using literature as presented in this study. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of recognition alongside social learning. In the core curriculum, it says that students shall recognize diversity as a resource within the classroom. I argue that this would not be possible without representations challenging gender norms, as students with various gender identities are part of this diversity. Social learning is important in that students' attitudes, opinions and self-image grow in interaction, and critical literacy can be a part of this learning. Understanding others is crucial for empathy and friendship between pupils, and learning about people different to oneself as demonstrated in this discussion will therefore be necessary (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). Working with texts in the English subject is an opportunity to work with texts and critical literacy that concerns gender identities

challenging biological sex, and the students can develop through the social learning opportunities it provides. Students shall see their own identity and other's identities in a multicultural context (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). As these are descriptions for working with texts in the English subject, it further demonstrates the importance of including various identities and their experiences.

With this discussion, I argue that teachers must be critical towards the material they teach in the classroom when discussing the gender spectrum. Focusing on what teachers must think about when teaching about trans people could be naive because students report a lack of information about gender overall, which indicates that teachers may not teach about the whole gender spectrum. Assuming that students identify with their biological sex may be one of the reasons teachers do not teach the topic, which is problematic as many fear being visibly trans or being open about their gender identity. Another reason may be the attitudes people have towards trans people, because even though they are less negative than 15 years ago, trans people are the group people have the most negative attitudes towards (Bufdir, 2023a). If the gender spectrum is not taught, heteronormativity and homonormativity will continue to permeate education and the school as an institution. Another important point to make is how materials are positioned. If teachers only include trans representations once throughout a school year, the hierarchy will be reproduced, because that can mean that all other materials represent people identifying with their biological sex, thus leaving trans people in a position as nonnormative (Clark & Blackburn, 2009). If schools do not change their practice to include gender identities challenging gender norms, and do this occasionally, the statistics as presented in the surveys will not take a positive turn, and the law would not be complied with.

As pointed out in studies portraying trans people's living conditions, it is not only within the classroom and through teaching that oppression and marginalization is present. Even though I believe that teaching material promoting trans experiential knowledge and utilizing critical literacy is important, this alone cannot change society and trans people's living conditions. According to Stryker and Aizura (2013), teaching, here focusing on higher education but relevant to education as a whole, must be accompanied with an infrastructural change. This incorporates changes such as gender-neutral bathrooms, trans-friendly dorms, being able to change one's gender and name in databases at schools, and staff and faculty that take trans students seriously (pp. 6-7). Even though this study only provides insight into representations in texts and how to teach about gender and challenge gender norms, this alone cannot lead to a complete inclusiveness of trans people in education, as society still sees the gender binary as the norm and the school as an institution itself holds on to this binary. Changes outside the classroom are therefore vital to create an inclusive environment. What this study can do is to give trans students recognition through being included in the curricula and demonstrate how using critical literacy can educate students to challenge gender norms, which in turn can lead to a greater opposition towards institutions and other marginalizing spaces and practices that perpetuate gender norms. Additionally, I argue that this study can make teachers aware of their responsibility to include various gender identities and reconsider their practice of teaching. Teachers can consider gender identities as proposed in the critical trans framework and how that applies to the choice of material in the classroom. Hopefully cisgender students can be made aware and conscious of their own unawareness just like I was when I read *Melissa* the first time. They can expand their knowledge about others to see the society and world through a more inclusive lens, develop attitudes grounded in empathy and equality, and understand what is needed to

enact change. In line with the curriculum, students who do not identify with the sex assigned at birth will hopefully feel recognized and valued, both through representations and a more inclusive environment.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter presents a conclusion of the study. I start by giving a summary of the main findings and answer my two research questions. I then move on to discuss the implications, providing suggestions for both teachers and textbook authors based on the findings of this study. Last, I discuss the limitations of this study and provide suggestions for future research.

### 6.1 Summary of Main Findings

In the introduction, I described how the purpose of the study was to analyze and compare contemporary fictional texts and EFL textbook texts for secondary school in Norway. Additionally, I wanted to discuss critical literacy to see how critical literacy can contribute to more inclusive teaching of trans experiences. Consequently, I created two research questions to address these aspects, and the first one is: *How are trans people represented in specific examples of contemporary fiction compared to EFL textbooks for lower secondary school in Norway?* The second question concerns critical literacy: *How can critical literacy contribute to inclusive teaching of trans experiences in lower secondary EFL classrooms?* The questions were created because I wanted to analyze materials teachers use and materials they can engage with in their teaching, and additionally what they can teach in relation to representations of trans people for a more inclusive teaching.

To answer the first research question, I started with a structural narrative analysis of the four texts, and employed a critical visual method for the textbook texts as they included illustrations. I utilized the critical trans framework by Kean (2021) to create questions that guided the analysis, and which formed the criteria for the comparison. My engagement with the framework was an important step because of my positionality, as a White, hetero, and cis person. It was also necessary to engage with the framework because of the importance of comparing the narratives on equal grounds. The comparison shows how the textbooks can reproduce gender norms compared to the contemporary fictional texts. The reason is the textbooks lack of challenging gender norms, which is present through several perspectives in the texts, especially within the individual, institutional and sociocultural levels. It is vital that gender norms are challenged when present in a text, otherwise these norms will continue to be preserved. Gender identity is not defined by the sex assigned at birth, and texts must therefore promote multiple ways of doing gender as explained in the framework. Texts with institutions preserving gender norms and characters that represent peoples' assumptions about gender as undisputable, fixed, and focused on reproduction, must be challenged. The analysis and comparison show how the textbook texts, to varying degrees, do not always challenge these perspectives, and can therefore present a view where gender norms are reinforced. The contemporary fictional texts challenge gender norms, present different ways of doing gender, in addition to including intersectional identities. I therefore argue that teachers must be critical towards texts they teach in the classroom, and choose texts based on trans experiential knowledge to get a diversity of representations that challenge gender norms. The questions created based on the critical

trans framework can therefore work as a guide for teachers when choosing their materials.

The second research question was answered by engaging in theory on recognition, affect and critical literacy. I used examples from the analysis and comparison to show how critical literacy can help students uncover underlying themes, messages, biases, and misrecognitions. When students learn how to be critical themselves, the teaching can become more inclusive. Recognition is essential as all students should see themselves in the material, and the teacher must therefore implement texts about trans people and consider potential misrecognitions. Affect focuses on emotion and that students can learn about their feelings, why they feel what they feel, and trying to stand in the shoes of others. This work can help students become more caring individuals. Affect and recognition are important, but they do not cause social change. Critical literacy is therefore essential, but the work with critical literacy requires practice over time and a teacher who teaches students how to utilize critical literacy. I think critical literacy is important no matter the text being taught, because it can contribute to social change, which is fundamental when working with the trans experience. However, it is necessary if texts like the textbook texts are being taught, as they do not always challenge the present gender norms. As presented in the discussion, texts like the textbook texts can be used to teach critical literacy, because they portray how, for example, characters can preserve gender norms. Students must therefore learn how to be critical towards texts so they can discover these biases and potential misrecognitions. In turn they can develop their knowledge to understand what they must do to enact change, or what others in a position of power must do for change to happen. The teacher must therefore teach them reading strategies, knowledge about the topic, and help them understand what to look for. Motivation is a vital aspect for student engagement. With their knowledge and a critical stance, students can challenge misrecognitions and biases to show that they support trans people for a more inclusive learning environment. Working towards an inclusive learning environment is necessary, because otherwise teachers do not comply with the Norwegian law. Surveys on life satisfaction show that trans people struggle, and school is one of the places where trans people experience marginalization, bullying, and discrimination. Additionally, trans people report a lack of information about gender in school. This indicates that teachers do not teach enough about the gender spectrum. According to the curriculum, the gender spectrum should be included in the curricula, and social learning is a part of this teaching. I argue that an inclusive learning environment will not be possible without a diversity of gender identities in the curricula. Students represent a gender spectrum that goes beyond biological sex, and the English subject is responsible for providing a diversity of texts where students can find themselves and others recognized.

## 6.2 Implications

Teaching about the trans experience requires a teacher with knowledge about the topic to not reproduce gender norms, but also to find representations trans students can identify with. Furthermore, teachers must be critical towards texts about trans people in textbooks, as they can reproduce gender norms. Without knowledge on the topic, teachers may not notice the potential harm within these representations, even though it comes from a position with good intentions to include a diversity of representations. Throughout this thesis I have continuously referred to trans studies and its focus on trans experiential knowledge created by trans people themselves. I argue, as the knowledge about trans people may be limited among teachers, that teaching about trans people

should be based on trans experiential knowledge. This will lower the risk of misinformation and the risk in preserving gender norms as the textbook texts in this thesis can do. Authors and editors of textbooks should also engage in trans experiential knowledge when creating EFL textbooks, because it will offer a more diverse and accurate portrayal of trans people compared to what I found in this study.

### 6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis has examined and compared representations of trans people in contemporary fiction and EFL textbook texts, and discussed how critical literacy can contribute to a more inclusive teaching of trans people. The scope of this thesis and limited timeframe restricts the research to the inclusion of four texts. With a qualitative approach and the comparison of two different formats, I was only able to include two textbook texts from the same series and two contemporary fictional texts. I can therefore not generalize the findings as explained in the methodology chapter. I have been able to get insight into what sort of representations might be present in textbooks compared to what contemporary fictional texts have to offer. My findings may not be representative for other EFL textbooks, and the contemporary fictional texts are not representative for all contemporary fiction. As I included textbook texts, it would have been valuable to look at the teacher's guides and the following tasks accompanying the texts.

Future research could therefore examine trans representations in several other EFL textbooks, for secondary school and younger grades, with the teacher's guides alongside. Based on the theoretical background I have made assumptions of how students may interpret the texts. It would be interesting to look specifically at how students interpret texts and how critical literacy could benefit the work with trans experiences in practice. The methods chosen for this study allowed me to analyze narratives, but future studies could focus on the work in the classroom, and interview students about their interpretations. Furthermore, it would be interesting to interview teachers about their knowledge on trans people, if they feel prepared to teach such topics, and how they teach about trans people if they do so. Based on the analysis and comparison, I argue that textbooks do not challenge the gender norms as they should, and it could therefore be interesting to research how textbook authors decide on texts and visuals to include. There are many opportunities for future research, and I hope this study has emphasized the importance of trans representations and therefore encouraged other researchers to want to continue the work.

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# Appendices

**Appendix 1:** Illustration of Coy

**Appendix 2:** Illustration of David

**Appendix 3:** Illustration of Leo

## Appendix 1: Pages 150-151 in Engelsk 8

### Before reading

What rebels do you know about? What do they rebel against? Freewrite for a couple of minutes.

### Rebel stories

In every culture, there are people who dare to be different. Sometimes children are the ones brave enough to rebel. Read about two children who raised their voices to make a difference. You can find more stories about people like them in *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, and *Stories for Boys Who Dare to be Different*.

### Before reading

Are there activities, clothes or toys that you think are specifically for boys or girls? Explain your thinking using examples.

### Coy Mathis

#### Elementary school student

by Francesca Cavallo and Elena Favilli

Once upon a time, a boy named Coy was born. Coy loved dresses, the color pink, and shiny shoes.

Coy wanted his parents to address him as "she" and didn't like wearing boys' clothes. His parents let him wear whatever he liked.

One night, Coy asked his mom, "When are we going to the doctor to have me fixed into a girl-girl?"

The doctor explained: "Usually, boys feel OK with being boys, and girls are fine with being girls. But there are some boys who feel female, and girls who feel male. They're called transgender, and Coy is a transgender girl. She was born in a boy's body but, deep inside, she feels that she's a girl and she should be allowed to be one."

From then on, Coy's mom and dad asked everyone to treat Coy as a girl.

But when school started, they had an unexpected problem. "Coy has to either use the boy's bathroom, or the bathroom for disabled children," the teachers said.

"But I'm not a boy!" Coy wailed. "And I'm not disabled! I'm a girl."

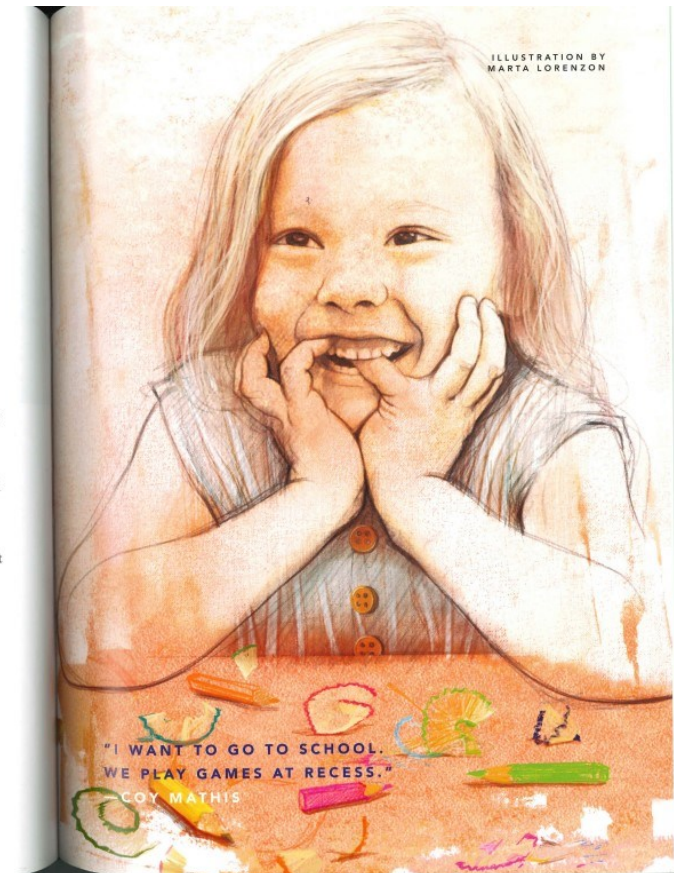
Coy's parents talked to a judge about the situation.

The judge thought about it and decided: "Coy should be allowed to use whichever bathroom she wants."

Coy and her parents threw a big party to celebrate.

They ate pink cake, and Coy wore a sparkly pink dress and beautiful pink shoes.

shiny - skinnende  
to address - her. å henvende seg (til)  
to explain - å forklare  
female - her. kvinnelig  
male - her. mannlig  
to be allowed - å få lov  
unexpected - uventet  
disabled - funksjonshemmet  
a judge - en dommer  
to throw a party - å holde en fest



## Appendix 2: Pages 36-37 in Engelsk 9

### Before reading

Read the introduction to the excerpt. What do you think David is hiding? Why do you think Leo wants to be invisible? Discuss with a partner.

## The Art of Being Normal

by Lisa Williamson

David Piper is an outsider with a big secret. His classmates call him a freak. His parents think he is gay while his two best friends know the truth. Leo Denton is the new student in school. His only wish is to be invisible. It turns out that David is not the only one with a secret.

For Isla

1  
One afternoon, when I was eight years old, my class was told to write about what we wanted to be when we grew up. Miss Box went round the class, asking each one of us to stand up and share what we had written. Zachary Olsen wanted to play in the Premier League. Lexi Taylor wanted to be an actress. Harry Beaumont planned on being Prime Minister. Simon Allen wanted to be Harry Potter, so badly that the previous term he had scratched a lightning bolt on to his forehead with a pair of craft scissors.

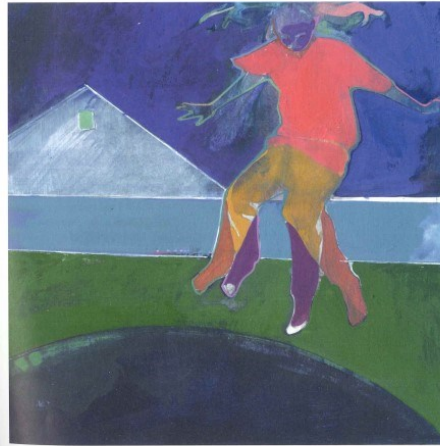
But I didn't want to be any of these things.  
This is what I wrote:

*I want to be a girl.*  
[...]

3

It's the last Friday of the summer holidays. On Monday I go back to school. I have been fourteen years old for exactly nine days.

I'm lying on the sofa with the curtains closed. Mum and Dad are at work. Livvy is at her best friend Cressy's house. I'm watching an old episode of *America's Next Top Model* with a packet of Maryland double-chocolate-chip cookies balanced on my stomach. Tyra Banks has just told Ashley she is not going to be America's Next Top Model. Ashley



Trampoline (2016),  
Charlotte Evans

is in floods of tears and all the other girls are hugging her even though they spent almost the entire episode going on about how much they hated Ashley and wanted her to leave. The *America's Next Top Model* house is nothing if not brutal.

Ashley's tears are interrupted by the sound of a key turning in the front door. I sit up, carefully placing the packet of cookies on the coffee table beside me.

"David, I'm home," Mum calls.

to interrupt - å avbryte

### During reading

Ask: How old is the narrator? What kind of program is he watching? How does he react when he hears a key turning in the front door?

Lisa Williamson (1980-) comes from Nottingham, England. At the age of 19, she moved to London to study drama at Middlesex University. Between acting jobs on stage and TV, she worked at the Gender Identity Development Service. Encountering teenagers who struggled with gender identity inspired her to start writing. *The Art of Being Normal* (2015) is her debut novel.

## Appendix 3: Pages 40-41 in Engelsk 9

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4

'Leo' my little sister Tia calls up the stairs. I close my eyes and try to block her out. It's hot. It's been hot for days now. The thermometer that hangs in the kitchen says it's thirty-three degrees. I've got all the windows and doors open and I'm still dying. I'm lying on my twin sister Amber's bunk sucking on a raspberry ice pop. It has turned my tongue bright blue. Dunno why. The last time I checked raspberries were red.

a bunk - en kave(seng)  
an ice pop - en saftis

Brick Wall (2015),  
Charlotte Evans



ENGLESK 9 FRA CARPELLEN DAMM

[...]

'Leo!' Tia yells again.

I sigh and sit up. Tia is my little sister. She's seven and a complete pain in the neck. Mam let her have a pair of high heels for her last birthday and when she's not watching telly she clomps round the house in them, talking in an American accent.

Tia's dad is called Tony. He's in prison, doing time for handling stolen goods.

My dad is called Jimmy. I miss him.

'Leo, I'm hungry!' Tia wails.

'Then eat something!'

'We've got nothing in!'

'Tough!'

She starts to cry. It's ear splitting. I sigh and heave myself off the bunk.

I find Tia at the bottom of the stairs, fat tears rolling down her face. She's short for a seven-year-old and paperclip-skinny. As soon as she sees me her tears stop and she breaks into this big dopey smile.

She follows me into the kitchen, which is a mess; the sink piled high with dishes. I search the cupboards and fridge. Tia's right, the kitchen is bare and God knows what time Mam's going to be back. She left just before lunch, saying she was off to the bingo hall with Auntie Kerry. There's no money in the tin so I take all the cushions off the settee and check the inside of the washing machine and the pockets of all the coats hanging in the hallway. We line up the coins on the coffee table. It's not a bad haul - £4.82.

'Stay here and don't answer the door,' I tell Tia. She'll only slow me down if I take her with me.

I put my hoodie on and walk fast, my head down, sweat trickling down my back and sides.

Outside the shop there's a bunch of lads from my old school. Luckily they're distracted, mucking around on their bikes, so I pull my hood up, fastening the zip to the top so all you can see are my eyes. I buy crumpets, Tizer, washing-up liquid and a chocolate Swiss roll that's past its best-before date.

dopey - læpelig  
a cushion - en pute  
a settee - en sofa  
a haul - et utbytte  
to muck around - å henge rundt  
a crumpet - et mykt tebrød  
Tizer - engelsk radbrus  
a Swiss roll - en rullekake





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