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“I don’t even know what gender means”:

Exploring Norwegian 9th grade EFL learners
understanding of Gender Identity

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the use of process drama as an innovative pedagogical approach to foster 9th-grade EFL students' reflections and understandings of gender identity. The study involves a small-scale classroom intervention conducted with 17 students, utilizing activities such as free listing, four corners, tableaux, and thought-tracking, followed by focus group interviews. The reflections and discussions captured during these activities were meticulously analyzed using thematic analysis, aiming to uncover the nuances in students' perceptions of gender identity.

The research is anchored in the principles of promoting critical reflection and understanding within the classroom, aligning with the LK20 curriculum's emphasis on inclusion, diversity, critical thinking, and ethical reflection. Thus, this study aims to answer:

What understanding of gender identity do Norwegian EFL 9th graders express through their participation in a process drama?

By conducting a thematic analysis, the researcher was able to identify common themes based on the collected data, such as: 1) discussions on gender and sexuality and 2) questioning gender stereotypes, including sub-themes: 1a) binary gender versus gender identity, and 2a) visual appearances and 2b) gender and school performance.

The results indicate that process drama activities and focus group interviews reveal common attitudes as the participants mostly adhered to a binary understanding of gender: male and female. Additionally, the participants discussed visual characteristics such as appearance, in the sense of clothing and hairstyle, behavior, and societal expectations, noting that gender is often viewed through a stereotypical lens.

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Abbreviations:

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

QCL – Queer Critical Literacies

ELT – English Language Teaching

TA – Thematic Analysis

LGBTQIA – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual

1 Introduction

1.1 The study

This master thesis is a small-scale qualitative participatory study with a focus on 9th-grade English Foreign Language (EFL) learners' reflections about and understandings of gender identity. This research aims to explore student reflections and observations when discussing gender identity and to explore the different viewpoints around the controversial topics of gender identity in the English classroom. The study, therefore, addresses the following research question:

What reflections and understanding of gender identity do Norwegian EFL 9th graders express through participation in a process drama?

In this study, 17 ninth-grade students participated in a process drama designed to delve into their perceptions of gender identity. The process drama included activities such as free listing and four corners, which aimed at prompting spontaneous reflections and capturing diverse viewpoints among the participants. Furthermore, a tableaux activity with thought-tracking provided a creative platform for the student groups to collectively express their understanding of gender identity. Following these sessions, the researcher conducted focus group interviews with three groups to further explore the reflections and statements that emerged during the process drama activities.

1.2 Study motivation and background

One aim of the Norwegian school system is to enable children and young people to tolerate and handle diversity of opinions. Education should focus on teaching respect for different viewpoints while also ensuring students' rights to express their own opinions. However, studies show that teachers avoid certain topics because they find them uncomfortable and challenging to talk about (Johannessen & Røthing, 2022, p. 4).

Lately, in [social] media, there has been a complex discussion about whether and to what degree teachers should incorporate LGBTQ topics into education. An example of this is former elementary school teacher Katherine Rinderle from Georgia USA, who was fired after using the

picture book *My Shadow is Purple* by Scott Stuart. The school district came to this conclusion after they accused her of bringing a “one-sided viewpoint on political, religious or social beliefs that does not belong in our classrooms” (Suliman, 2023). As a young adult in today’s society, a researcher, and a teacher, this sparked a deeper interest in exploring LGBTQ topics for this MA thesis. After reading and researching about teachers’ thoughts on incorporating gender and sexuality into their classrooms, the researcher became more interested in doing just this. However, the researcher is also particularly drawn to fostering understanding and reflection on gender identity from a youth perspective. The researcher believes that by understanding how young people perceive and engage with these topics, we can better equip teachers to approach such subjects to create a “safe space” for both teachers and students when talking about sensitive topics.

Referring specifically to English language teaching, Pawelczyk (2022) argues that “English language teaching (ELT) materials explicitly and implicitly promote dominant gender roles and heterosexuality and concurrently symbolically annihilate people who do not conform to traditionally prescribed gender roles and conservative gender relations and non-heterosexual people by leaving them out” (p. 212). This means that materials in English language education often reinforce traditional ideas about gender and sexuality, favoring heterosexual relationships and typical gender roles. This can make people who do not fit into these norms feel excluded or invisible. However, there are those challenging the official ELT materials designed for education by experimenting and offering new more “inclusive” reading (Pawelczyk, 2022, pp. 212-213).

Incorporating LGBTQ topics into the classroom - just like with other diversity topics, can help validate and foster acceptance of LGBTQ youths’ experiences, allowing them to see themselves represented in what they read. Including literature with LGBTQ characters or themes is one possible way to make LGBTQ students’ identities more visible because it addresses the lack of representation and offers support for young readers. This approach also encourages critical thinking (Dodge & Crutcher, 2015, pp. 95-96). Dodge and Crutcher (2015) state that it is often a challenge to find LGBTQ representations in schools, libraries, bookstores, or movie theaters, but by integrating LGBTQ themes, students can explore and discuss the various experiences of people in our society (p. 97). This creates a curriculum that promotes empathy and social justice.

As teachers, we have a unique role, and it is important to have conversations about LGBTQ diversity early and often.

Despite Dodge and Crutcher's (2015) viewpoint on incorporating LGBTQ-related topics into the classroom, there has, especially locally, been a rise in debates and news articles this past year encouraging teachers and schools to tread with wariness in regard to incorporating gender into education and consider how gender is taught. Bruset's (2024) article presents the Cass Report, which reviews gender-affirming treatments at a London clinic and argues that they lack scientific support. The report suggests that treatment for gender distress should be integrated into general psychiatric services instead of specialized clinics, highlighting the need for a more evidence-based approach. This shift could influence treatment practices globally.

In regard to the Cass Report, Jørgensen (2024) talks about the debate on how gender (identity) is taught in Norwegian schools. She argues that political decisions have pushed schools to adopt a new approach to the topic, emphasizing gender as a personal feeling rather than tied to biological sex. New teaching materials based on the new curriculum (LK20), now includes stories from transgender individuals. Jørgensen (2024) mentioned the social science book *Arena 5*, which introduces Luca Espseth, a transgender man, who in the book, introduced hormone therapy to 5th-grade students. Examples like these are what some critics believe might confuse young children.

Contrarily, in an online debate in Stavanger Aftenblad, Espseth (2024) discusses the importance of including diverse representations of gender identity in educational materials, whilst responding to Jørgensen's (2024) criticism regarding the inclusion of transgender individuals in textbooks. Espseth (2024), also a teacher, argues that "children do not become transgender by reading about the existence of transgender people" (Espseth, 2024, author's translation). He states that it is crucial for all children, including those with transgender family members or classmates, to see themselves represented in educational materials. Both discussions call for a reevaluation of how gender identity is presented in schools to ensure that it is both accurate and considerate of the diverse experiences of students.

This study is also motivated by the researcher's engagement in the exploration of perceptions and understanding regarding LGBTQ representations in children's literature and drama, with the

goal of encouraging reflection among learners. During their teacher education studies, the researcher attended a drama course where, through practice, the researcher conducted a process drama with 6th graders on the topic of fairytales and identity. Three years later, the researcher is going back to these learners, now in 9th grade. By revisiting these learners and engaging them in another process drama, I aim to build upon our previous exploration while also expanding the conversation to include LGBTQ representations. Through this research, I hope to further understand how process drama can be utilized as a tool for prompt reflection and understanding whilst promoting an arena for voicing opinion and showing understanding and empathy towards others' opinions.

Additionally, motivation for this study and research is built on the researcher's experiences gained during a prior practice period at a "religious" school with a predominantly Christian demographic, where topics of sexuality and identity were sensitive subjects. The challenges encountered in navigating these delicate subjects during the previous practice period serve as both motivation and a foundational background for the upcoming study. As a result of this, this study is driven by the motivation to uncover teenagers' immediate and raw perceptions and perspectives of gender identity and to explore ways to foster diverse perspectives on gender identity.

1.3 Curricular relevance

For the researcher, a key principle of the study is to avoid imposing their own ideas of gender identity on the students' pre-existing ideas and prejudices regarding the topic. The students will be given a chance to self-express and discuss with their peers, which can "open for new ways to interpret [...] and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices" (MER, 2019, p. 3). The study offers students opportunities to enhance their spoken communication skills through participation in group discussions and focus group interviews. Working with gender identity in 9th-grade education aligns with the principles of LK20 by promoting inclusion, diversity, critical thinking, and ethical reflection, while also addressing democratic values and human rights. It helps create a more inclusive and respectful educational environment that prepares students to engage with the complexities of the modern world.

This study, which explores 9th graders' reflections on and perceptions of gender identity through process drama, holds a distinct relevance to the LK20 curriculum. Working with such perceptions can engage students in critical discussions about controversial and sensitive topics. Gender identity is considered a controversial topic as it may “arouse strong emotions, generate conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative beliefs or values” (COE, 2016, p. 13). The Council of Europe's training pack for teachers, *Living with Controversy: Teaching Controversial Issues Through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights*, calls discussion of controversial topics in the classroom “subject-related”. The goal is to understand

that controversy is not to be feared but part of life in a democracy, the ability to discuss contentious issues in civil and productive ways, strategies for engaging in such discussions, realizing that one's views matter as do all in a democracy. (COE, 2016, p. 15)

Subject-related competencies (COE, 2016) in the context of this study on gender identity are closely tied to the specific skills and knowledge that students develop through the exploration of this topic. These competencies aim to foster awareness and understanding of other people's views on the matter, resulting in an enhanced cultural and social awareness.

By covering the topic of gender identity, the students will explore societal norms, stereotypes and considerations related to respecting individual choices and identities. This aligns with the interdisciplinary topic health and life skills stating that students should have the opportunity to “express their feelings, experiences and opinions” and that this “can provide new perspectives on different ways of thinking [...] as well as on the pupils' own way of life and that of others” (MER, 2017, p. 3).

In the context of the English subject, this topic is highly relevant as it provides a rich opportunity for students to develop their language and communication skills. Discussing gender identity can enhance students' abilities to articulate their thoughts and feelings, engage in respectful dialogue, and understand diverse perspectives. This aligns with the English core curriculum on communication, which states that “the teaching shall give the pupils the opportunity to express

themselves and interact in authentic and practical situations” (MER, 2017, p. 2). By engaging in discussions on gender identity, students can reflect on varied human experiences and viewpoints. Exploring gender identity in the English curriculum presents a valuable opportunity for students to meet language expression and communication goals. By delving into this subject, students can “express oneself with fluency and coherence with a varied vocabulary and idiomatic expressions adapted to the purpose, recipient and situation” (MER, 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, engaging in conversations about gender identity encourages students to ask questions and actively participate in follow-up discussions, in addition to adjust their language usage accordingly. However, as the participants in this study are from a Norwegian (L1) secondary school, it is important to also take into consideration the which extent L2 language usage is achieved.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis consists of six chapters. Following this chapter, *Introduction*, Chapter 2, titled *Theory and Related Studies*, delves into the theoretical framework and prior research related to topics addressed in the thesis. Chapter 3, *Methodology*, provides a detailed overview and chronology of the project and explains the data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 4, *Results*, presents the findings of the thesis. Chapter 5, *Discussion*, discusses the results in relation to theory and prior studies and explores the teaching implications, and addresses limitations. Lastly, Chapter 6, *Conclusion*, summarizes the key study findings and suggests avenues for future research.

2 Theory and previous studies

This chapter presents the different concepts and terms used in this thesis, such as gender and sex, gender identity, and gender roles and stereotypes. Following this, the theoretical frameworks and previous studies related to this thesis on reflections and understanding of gender identity will be presented. This covers key areas, including Queer Critical Literacies, Process Drama, and Gender Diversity and Awareness in Education, also introducing the Pedagogy of Discomfort.

Finally, the chapter reviews related studies on incorporating LGBTQ topics in education and using drama to explore gender diversity. These studies underline the effectiveness of these methods in fostering understanding and acceptance among students.

2.1 Key terms and definitions

Understanding the intricacies of gender identity, gender roles, and sexual orientations is pivotal in today's society, where discussions surrounding gender diversity and inclusivity are gaining momentum. As highlighted by Aaserud (2021), these aspects evolve not only from one's bodily gender but also from a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors. Before delving deeper into these complexities of the findings from this study, it is essential to establish a clear understanding of the relevant key terms and concepts such as gender, biological sex, and gender identity.

Gender and sex

In school, we learn that *gender* is decided based on the composition of chromosomes, resulting in gender being a bodily concept based on one's genitalia. Aaserud (2021) explains that gender is one of the first and perhaps the most central social identities we humans become aware and conscious of in our lives.

From a historical viewpoint, Butler (2006, pp. 8-10) states that the idea of *sex* has been associated with biological characteristics such as reproductive organs and chromosomes. Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that society considers appropriate for men and women. While sex is often perceived as biologically fixed, gender is understood to be socially constructed and culturally contingent.

The distinction between sex and gender challenges the idea that biology alone determines who we are. Gender, shaped by social and cultural factors, varies across cultures and time periods. This diversity means that not all individuals who identify as, for example, women share the same experiences or identities. Some embrace traditional femininity, while others reject it entirely.

Gender identity

Gender identity is a term that has no definitive answer but rather many suggestions on how it *can* be understood (Aaserud, 2021, p. 45), therefore when writing this thesis about gender identity, it is crucial to explore the different possible definitions of the term in the related field of research. In *Kjønnssinkongruens hos ungdom*, Aaserud (2021) states that in newer research and literature, gender is defined as the “subjective experience of being a boy, girl, boy and girl, neither or something else entirely” (p. 39, authors’ translation). He further explains that there are various gender identity categories one can identify with, and both the number of categories and the terminology are constantly evolving (Aaserud, 2021). Additionally, Aaserud refers to Stoller’s (1992) definition of gender identity as a complex system of personal beliefs about one’s masculinity or femininity, regardless of biological factors like the sex assigned at birth. This definition highlights the psychological aspect of gender identity, emphasizing its subjective nature (p. 78).

Sexual identity and orientation

When discussing sexual identity and orientation, research typically categorizes it into several components. *Identity* refers to labels such as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and others. *Emotional attraction* encompasses feelings of romantic interest or affection. *Sexual attraction* involves being physically turned on by someone. *Sexual practice* pertains to behaviors and activities related to intercourse (Aaserud, 2021, p. 44).

Gender roles and stereotypes

According to Aaserud (2021), gender roles encompass personality traits, attitudes, and values categorized by society as either masculine or feminine. These roles are significantly shaped by factors such as social class, ethnicity, and religion. Conventionally, masculine traits include aggression, dominance, competitiveness, determination, and physical strength, often

accompanied by direct and forceful language. Conversely, feminine traits are characterized by qualities such as nurturing, warmth, emphasis on appearance, and empathy. In contrast to the assertive tone associated with masculinity, feminine communication is expected to be gentle, tender, and emotionally expressive (Aaserud, 2021, p. 123).

2.2 Queer critical literacies

Queer critical literacies (QCL) delve into issues of power, access, and diversity with regard to gender identity and sexual identities, as emphasized by Govender and Andrews (2022, p. 82). To fully understand the concept of QCL, it may be helpful to break it down into its two components: queer and critical literacy.

Firstly, Aaserud (2021) defines queer as a collective term for people who breaks with the traditional gender and sexuality traits (p. 28), as mentioned in section 2.1. In the context of QCL, queer “refers to an analytical framework and theoretical position that interrogates how heterosexuality, heterosexism, (hetero)patriarchy and cisgender norms have become naturalized and legitimized in a range of ways across contexts” (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 83). This means that “queer” is a way of thinking and analyzing, that challenges how society has normalized and accepted heterosexuality, discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, male dominance, and traditional gender roles in various situations. Secondly, critical literacy, as a teaching approach, is implemented in classrooms to develop critical consciousness among students. This method encourages students to challenge social injustices by examining their existing knowledge of the world (Yoon, 2016). Through this approach, students learn to identify and confront biases, power structures, and social injustices present in the texts they read.

QCL fundamentally transforms how we practice critical literacy, taking queer identities, perspectives, and experiences seriously. It challenges conventional ideas about gender and sexuality, seeking to “queer” our common-sense understandings of these concepts. Moreover, it plays a vital role in reshaping identities and advocating for more socially just and accurate representations (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 83). In essence, QCL ensures that diverse experiences, particularly those associated with queer identities, are not only acknowledged but also represented in a fair and equitable manner, contributing to a more inclusive and just society.

Govender and Andrews state that “there is no single way of doing QCL work in language and literacy education” (2022, p. 86); thus, they have adapted five types of disruption or questioning in relation to QCL as a pedagogy tool: 1) *Questioning representation of queer people and experiences*, meaning that “representations of queer people or experiences should be subject to critique as these might erase queer people [...] or identities other than those that fit an essentialized gay or lesbian mold” (p. 86). For instance, students could be prompted to consider the reasons for the exclusion of gender from various texts and contexts (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 86). The second disruption, 2) *questioning reading practices* aims to shift texts away from heteronormative frameworks. In doing so, instances depicting queerness—such as same-sex desire or gender nonconformity—are not dismissed or overlooked due to heterosexist biases, which might otherwise downplay their significance. Subsequently, 3) *questioning the policing of gender and sexuality* “involves continuous questioning of discourse of appropriateness surrounding gender and sexuality and the way learners engage in, witness, or respond to policing of gendered behavior” (p. 87). This means that challenging the regulation of gender and sexuality involves consistently allows students to question the norms and expectations related to gender and sexuality, as well as how individuals interact with, observe, or react to the enforcement of these norms. QCL examines conversations and texts to challenge common ideas about gender and sexuality. It disrupts the way people think by making them question what they know and assume about these topics, resulting in 4) *questioning knowledge, assumptions and meaning-making*. “The final question type works to challenge students’ ideas about themselves” (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 89): 5) *questioning self*. This disruption involves both questioning how one’s own gender expression is socially constructed and how one can be active in questioning, challenging and “dismantling systemic [...] marginalization and discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality” (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 89). These questions will be useful for the researcher when discussing the participants’ reflections and understandings of the theory.

2.3 Process drama

In today’s education system, drama serves as a crucial tool that facilitates a collaborative, aesthetic, creative, inclusive, and practical approach to learning for both students and teachers. Process drama, as defined by Sæbø (2016), is a teaching framework in which various dramatic

methods and conventions are integrated into students' academic, social, emotional, and personal learning processes as part of their work with a selected topic and teaching material (p. 16).

Bowell and Heap (2013) describe process drama as “the type of drama in which performance to an external audience is absent but presentation to the internal audience is essential” (p.

6). Process drama, also called drama in education, “is the sort of work that is created not for a watching audience but for the benefit of the participants, themselves” (Bowell & Heap, 2013, p. xi). As teachers, we are obligated to create a safe space that “will enable them [the students] to interact with the world and to understand it more fully through their interaction so they may function more successfully in it” (Bowell & Heap, 2013, p. 2). Drama can serve as a bridge of experiences, as it links the faces of reality and fantasy. It can be used as a tool to help our students see things in a whole new light. According to Bowell & Heap (2013), drama is empowering as it “provides opportunities for investigation and reflection, for celebration and challenge” (p. 3). Drama in the classroom can establish a space where the students feel safe to open up and express their thoughts and opinions.

2.3.1 Tableaux

“In a tableau, students use their bodies to express a range of gestures and posture to signify meaning” (Branscombe, 2015, p. 322). A tableau involves a group of participants creating a three-dimensional scene through gestures, positions, and facial expressions, visualizing a frozen moment in time that can be navigated and interpreted by others (Branscombe & Schneider, 2013, p. 95). Tableaux are also considered an effective means to allow learners to “use language, movement and visualization to express” (Rogers, 2010 as cited in Branscombe & Schneider, 2013, p. 98) their thoughts and ideas about a certain topic. In education, tableau is used as a learning method to help individuals reflect and express thoughts and ideas.

The main aim of a tableau “is to arrest attention, to detain the viewers to impede their perception” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 127). This means that a tableau often presents a scene or a visual image that is striking or unusual, compelling the viewers to pause and engage more deeply, possibly rethinking their usual interpretations or noticing details they might typically overlook.

While drama tableaux are recognized as an effective method for practical learning, they present certain challenges (Normand, 2022). For instance, some learners may find tableaux intimidating, while others may become overly enthusiastic. When employing tableaux with learners, the facilitator needs to be able to “engage with a variety of L2 learners and negotiate their different needs, from silent learners, [...] [those] reluctant to engage in the tableaux activities, to overeager L2 learners who might dominate the group sessions” (Normand, 2022, p. 212). Therefore, it is crucial for the facilitator, and in this case, the researcher, to remain attentive and prepared to redirect learners back to the task.

Additionally, to the tableaux, the students will perform thought-tracking amongst themselves. Thought-tracking involves the “teacher freezing the action in a drama and then tapping the shoulder of children in role, signaling their opportunity to speak aloud their in-role thoughts as this moment” (Baldwin, 2012, p. 133). Thought-tracking is based on the idea that learners can through a character voice “phrases, thought or emotions experienced at this particular frozen moment in time” (Normand, 2022, p. 192). Not only does thought-tracking allow the participants to express their own opinions and thoughts, but it also opens up a space for active listening to the thoughts of others, allowing the learners to gain new perspectives on their own and others’ way of life (MER, 2019, p. 3).

2.3.2 Exploring gender diversity through process drama

In *Performative Innganger til Undervisning*, Hovda (2023) writes about discussing gender diversity through process drama with students on lower elementary levels. The chapter intends to inform teachers, instructors and anyone who wishes to talk about the topic of gender diversity with their students. The process drama is based on the fairytale called *Stjerneild*, which is about a young boy who goes on a quest to save his favorite hero. The purpose of the process drama is to convey the message that people can identify as different genders and to explore identity and gender expressions. The topic of gender diversity is worked with through a series of activities where the students will 1) read the fairytale, 2) create a connection between the title, story, and the individual student’s perception of the story, 3) using each other to explore the characters through role modeling, 4) *den tomme stolen*, 5) drawings, 6) discussing gender stereotypes, and 7) asking questions to the main character (Hovda, 2023, pp. 162-173).

Hovda believes that employing process drama in education can expand the platform for young people to comprehend gender diversity and associated topics on a larger scale. He believes that missing knowledge about other people is what causes prejudices, which can manifest as negative attitude and perceptions of ideas and other people. Therefore, we should talk about gender diversity with young learners as this gives them access to new knowledge about being and living, creates curiosities and an arena where the learners can feel that it is safe to acknowledge other expressions and express themselves (Hovda, 2023, pp. 175-176).

Hovda (2023) provides valuable insights into promoting the acknowledgment of all and any gender identities and challenging the binary conception of gender, which is crucial for fostering inclusivity and understanding in educational settings. However, in contrast to Hovda's focus, this study aims to explore teenagers' perceptions and understanding of gender and gender identity in a broader sense. Rather than advocating for specific viewpoints, the research seeks to create a space where all perspectives are heard and understood.

2.4 Gender diversity and awareness in education

In *Mangfoldskompetanse og kritisk tenkning: perspektiver på undervisning*, Røthing (2020) discusses diversity awareness with a special focus on gender and gender diversity. Røthing argues for recognizing and embracing diverse gender identities and expressions, while underlining that she is not interested in the number of genders, which is also a big factor of importance in this MA thesis. She emphasizes the need for educators to have both theoretical knowledge and practical understanding of gender issues as a means of incorporating effective teaching practices (p. 11).

In Chapter 3, Røthing writes about how children and youth are constantly engaging with, trying out, and interpreting gender in countless interactions and encounters, sometimes consciously, sometimes not. However, she argues that it is not solely gender because in youth's understanding of the world, people in it, and themselves, gender is interlaced with a number of other factors, such as age, skin color, religion, and social background (2020, p. 70).

Gender in relation to education is about two general aspects: 1) how gender is implemented into education and how the schools, in affiliation with the curriculum, plan to educate their students about gender, and 2) how gender is perceived and handled in schools, focusing especially on the

difference between boys' and girls' behaviors, and portrayal of their academic performance (Røthing, 2020, p. 90). Røthing discusses gender stereotypes in educational settings and how these impact students' performance and engagement, calling for a critical examination of how educational structures and teacher expectations contribute to these ongoing issues.

Research on gender in Norwegian schools has shown significant shifts from the 1970s to the present. Røthing (2020) notes changes in how boys and girls perform and are perceived differently within the educational system. In the 70's girls were perceived as quieter and were therefore given less attention from the teacher. Newer research, however, shows that these gender differences have reduced slightly, and girls are now the dominant group in school (Nielsen, 2009, 2011 in Røthing, 2020, p. 92). Røthing explains how this dominance is related to academic performance, and that girls tend to outperform boys academically. In *Kjønnsforskjeller i skoleprestasjoner*, Backe-Hansen et al. (2014) focus on gender differences in educational performance and the factors that sustain them. They explain that as a group, girls are generally more motivated and engaged in schoolwork than boys. The aspect of motivation is not just based on the drive to do the work provided but is connected to different aspects such as upbringing, social-class and status, and ethnic affiliation (p. 84).

Additionally, Backe-Hansen et al. divide the aspect of gender differences in school performances into three themes: The first theme is discrimination and power relations between genders, which relates to female discrimination and the stereotypical power that men hold over women. The second theme, the feminization of schools, is discussed based on statistics showing a majority of female educators in schools, which may negatively affect boys' school performance. The third theme is schools' teaching and evaluation methods, which is connected to the assumption that girls are more socially competent and, therefore, given more responsibility for their own learning achievements (2014, p. 98).

2.4.1 Pedagogy of discomfort

The concept of pedagogy of discomfort was created as an educational framework designed to actively “engage students and teachers with issues of difference, race, and social justice by troubling their emotional comfort zones” (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017, p. 3). By pushing the borders of comfort and forcing discussions on what may feel “wrong”, they foster greater

inclusivity, empathy, and understanding among students and educators, challenging the idea that secure classrooms equate to comfortable learning environments.

Incorporating LGBTQ topics and including gender diversity, into education may challenge traditional norms and beliefs, causing discomfort among students, educators, and even parents or guardians. Boler's (1999) *Feeling power: emotions and education* introduces the use of *pedagogy of discomfort*. Boler questions what students and educators “stand to gain by engaging in the discomforting process of questioning cherished beliefs and assumptions?” (1999, p. 176). Pedagogy of discomfort challenges educators and students to self-reflect on one's own values and cherished beliefs, and to examine and to analyze their self-perceptions in the context of how they view others.

Røthing (2019) explains that pedagogy of discomfort criticizes education that perpetuate stereotypes about “the others”, and, implicitly, about “us”, and which fails to address and challenge power dynamics (p. 45). This method critiques the traditional forms of teaching that may unconsciously reinforce stereotypes about “the others” (people who are different from oneself in terms of culture, race, gender, etc.) and “us” (the group to which one identifies as belonging). The goal is to reveal and interrogate these assumptions to better understand and challenge the power dynamics at play within society and educational systems (Røthing, 2019).

She also states that it has been argued that applying some discomfort into educational practices, is not only inevitable when working with social justice and addressing sensitive topics such as race and sexuality, but that it is also necessary if one wishes to create change. By confronting these stereotypes and power imbalances, this pedagogy aims to foster a more reflective, inclusive, and equitable learning environment. It pushes individuals to step out of their comfort zones, question the status quo, and engage in deeper, more meaningful dialogues about diversity, equity, and justice (Røthing, 2019).

In their 2022 study, Johannessen & Røthing's research highlights how class dynamics and the learning environment significantly impact how students express and explore gender diversity. This suggests that the atmosphere created by classmates and the educational approach can either facilitate or hinder discussions and understanding of gender and sexuality issues among students. They note that teachers often shy away from certain topics to maintain a ‘safe space’, which is “understood mainly in terms of classrooms where students can speak freely, without being afraid

of their peers or their teacher” (Flensner & Von der Lippe, 2019, p. 276). A ‘safe space’ is aimed at avoiding uncomfortable situations; however, this practice is contested by researchers who argue that such avoidance needs to be challenged (Johannessen & Røthing, 2022).

Flensner & Von der Lippe (2019) state that while it is crucial for students to feel safe and respected on a personal level, they also argue that intellectual comfort should not be the ultimate goal of the classroom setting. The idea is that while it is important for students to feel safe and respected in class, they also need to be challenged intellectually. If classes only focus on making students comfortable, they might miss out on learning about difficult or complex topics, and the reality of the real world. Teachers have the challenge of creating a classroom that feels safe but also pushes students to think deeply and learn new things. This way, students can grow and understand more about the world around them (Johannessen & Røthing, 2022).

2.4.2 The “heterosexual matrix” – the gender normative

“Gender is one’s performance of self, either masculine or feminine” (Tredway, 2014, p. 164). In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler (2006) refers to the heterosexual matrix, which is “a sex-gender-sexuality tripartite system, that accounts for how we make assumptions based on what we see” (Tredway, 2014, p. 163). The matrix is a cultural and social system that normalizes and defines one’s gender identity to one’s biological sex and sexual desires. This matrix works to maintain heterosexuality as the standard and expected sexual orientation. Butler’s (2006) concept of the “heterosexual matrix” illuminates how societal norms shape our perceptions and assumptions. By linking sex, gender, and sexuality, a person’s observable characteristics help society assume a “particular sexuality” (Tredway, 2014, p. 164).

Gender → Sexuality ↘ Sex ↓	Masculine	Feminine
Male	Heterosexual	Homosexual
Female	Homosexual	Heterosexual

Figure 1. Judith Butler's "Heterosexual Matrix" as shown in Tredway (2014, p. 169)

People are understood or made sense of through visual perceptions of their sex and gender, categorized into binaries like male/female and masculine/feminine. Observers then use these perceived categories to infer the individual’s sexuality—typically either heterosexual or

homosexual, another binary system. For instance, someone perceived as “male and masculine would be understood as being heterosexual” (Tredway, 2014, p. 169). Conversely, a woman perceived as masculine might be assumed to be a lesbian. This process reflects how most people interpret others based on visual and societal norms.

In examining gender identity within classrooms, understanding and considering the “heterosexual matrix”, as conceptualized by Butler (2006), may prove crucial. This matrix links sex, gender, and sexuality, categorizing individuals into binary constructs based on societal norms. Observers often make assumptions about an individual's sexuality from perceived characteristics. Integrating this concept into this study allows the researchers to explore if and how the participants view gender norms, and if these views influence students’ perceptions of gender identity.

2.5 Related studies

Studies and articles on exploring drama in the classroom reveal its positive impact on learning. Related research underlines the importance of inclusive curriculum and environments for all students, highlighting the importance of integrating diverse perspectives into education to promote understanding and acceptance. In navigating the landscape of existing research for this MA thesis, it is clear that there are many previous works that have tackled the relevant topics of queer studies, identity, and gender in the context of English studies. There has also been a fair amount of exploration into using drama to address sensitive subjects; especially relevant are those discussing gender and identity. However, rather than trying to cover everything, this section will narrow down to two key areas of related studies: 1) integrating LGBTQ+ topics into education, and 2) using drama in the classroom.

2.5.1 Related studies on incorporating LGBTQ topics in the classroom

Dodge and Crutcher (2015) explores strategies for inclusion of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) topics (Dodge & Crutcher, 2015, p. 95) in the classroom. They advocate for the use of Linked Text Sets (LTSs) in classrooms, which pair canonical texts with works relevant to students’ lives, including those that reflect LGBTQ experiences and identities. LTSs are suggested as a method to engage students critically, allowing them to make connections

between their lives and the texts, “while also constructing deep, nuanced ideas about the human condition” (Dodge & Crutcher, 2015, p. 95). They also argue that educators committed to social justice should include diverse texts that reflect all students’ experiences, especially those often overlooked. By fostering empathy and understanding among all students, educators can advance towards creating schools and curricula that are truly inclusive and equitable.

Dodge and Crutcher explain that integrating LGBTQ literature “helps students’ question, discover, and discuss the multiple experiences of people in our society, creating a curriculum that promotes empathy and social justice” (p. 97). This means that including LGBTQ topics in the curriculum may not only foster acceptance of diversity but also provide representation for those who may not feel reflected in the standard teaching materials (Dodge & Crutcher, 2015, p. 95-96).

The authors claim that it is often difficult to find representations of LGBTQ experiences in schools, libraries, bookstores, or cinemas. Incorporating LGBTQ-themed Young Adult Literature (YAL) into curricula allows students to explore and discuss the varied experiences within society, thereby fostering empathy and promoting social justice. As educators who hold influential positions, we must engage responsibly. It is crucial to initiate and frequently engage in discussions on LGBTQ diversity. YAL serves as a starting point for conversations with students about how systems of dominance are perpetuated in society and through our educational practices (Warner, 2011, as cited in Dodge & Crutcher, 2015, p. 97).

However, the article addresses the potential challenges and risks teachers might face, such as parental pushback, professional repercussions, community resistance or policy restrictions, and provides strategies for navigating these challenges while promoting an inclusive educational environment. This approach not only benefits LGBTQ students by validating their experiences and identities but also educates their peers, which can lead to broader social change (Dodge & Crutcher, 2015).

Dodge & Crutcher (2015) further emphasize the importance of integrating LGBTQ themes in the curriculum. They argue that such integration not only promotes acceptance and understanding among students but also offers a reflective mirror for those not typically represented in educational materials. This discussion about LGBTQ-inclusive pedagogies, sets the stage for this study as it explores implications of incorporating gender identity into education.

Complementing Dodge and Crutcher's article, the 2022 MA thesis by Gausel investigates the practical implementation of LGBTQ literature in English classes in Norwegian schools. Gausel's (2022) research focuses on the availability and authenticity of English-language texts featuring LGBTQ themes in selected schools, providing a critical examination of current educational practices and resource allocations. Gausel (2022) research show how "prevalent LGBT representation was in the English texts that were found in the selected school and to be aware of whether or not pupils were introduced and familiarized with the topic in their English classes" (2022, p. 7).

The aim of Gausel's (2022) study was to 1) determine the availability and authenticity of English-language texts with LGBT representations in selected school libraries and textbooks, and to 2) assess English teachers' views on incorporating LGBT topics through literature and other resources. Regarding LGBT representation in the English foreign language classroom, the results showed that teachers "knew little of whether the resources they had contained LGBT representation" (p. 61), making the topic less prioritized in the classroom. Gausel discusses teacher attitudes towards incorporating LGBTQ themes, citing Page's (2017) study on teacher comfort and implementation strategies in the English language arts classroom. This examination is pivotal for understanding the educational ecosystem's readiness to embrace LGBTQ-inclusive curricula and the challenges that educators might face.

Page (2017) conducted a survey to examine English Language Art (ELA) "teachers' level of comfort in integrating LGBT themes literature into their classroom practice" (Gausel, 2022, p. 10). The survey focuses on English language arts teachers' comfort levels in integrating literature with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) themes or characters into their curricula and classroom practices. The study highlights significant relationships between teachers' age, comfort, awareness of resources, and implementation levels. The study "found that younger teachers generally felt more comfortable integrating LGBT literature into their curricula" (p. 12). Additionally, the study addresses the influence of teacher location and strength of religious belief on their comfort and implementation levels, finding that rural teachers and strongly religious teachers displayed lower comfort and implementation levels. "The most common reason given for not using LGBT texts in the classroom was a fear of confrontations or challenges by parents or other community members" (p. 11).

The paper calls for further research and professional development where Page (2017) claims that it is necessary to explore strategies that assist teachers in overcoming their apprehensions and enhancing their effectiveness. Teachers have the potential to significantly support students who are frequently marginalized and isolated within educational environments. However, it is essential that they are provided with the necessary tools, concepts, and support networks to empower themselves, which will enable them to effectively empower their students in turn (Page, 2017, p. 13). Page's study suggests that when teachers are better equipped and supported, they can more effectively make a difference in their students' lives, particularly for those who identify with or are exploring LGBTQ themes, making this study particularly relevant to this MA thesis, which focuses on how student knowledge and observations can be used as a pedagogical tool.

This MA thesis investigates gender identity perceptions; it will also cover LGBTQ-related themes and classroom discussion. Thus this study joins a broader effort to create more inclusive and compassionate learning environments, contributing to a growing body of work in this field.

2.5.2 Related studies from the field of drama in the classroom

In this study, 9th graders may be encouraged to empathize with and understand different viewpoints on gender identities through process drama. Delving into the wonders of drama in the EFL classroom, a study done by Sedberg (2023) aimed to “investigate whether, how, through which viewpoints, and in which ways 6th graders interrogate multiple viewpoints during an IT (Image Theatre) process” (p. 18). The data was collected through both video and audio recordings. These recordings captured the process of the 6th-grade EFL students creating and performing Image Theatre.

The students interrogated their own and co-students' tableaux characters and created backstories to further understand their characters. Throughout the IT, the students were actively “trying to understand their characters, empathizing with them, and providing the characters with context” (p. 91). Through three pre-lessons, Sedberg and the students worked intensely with Shaun Tan's novel, “The Arrival”, where they worked on text comprehension through a class read, picture analysis of the situation, facial expressions and body language, and lastly through sharing of the students' interpretations of the story (Sedberg, 2023, p. 20). Shaun Tan's “The Arrival”, were

used to construct tableaux that depicted various self-chosen scenarios. The participants used their bodies to represent different scenes or events inspired by the text, where the first tableau “needed to portray oppression and that the ideal tableau had to be realistic” (Sedberg, 2023, p. 21).

Following the performances, students engaged in semi-open-group interviews, providing an opportunity for discussion and analysis of their tableaux. According to Sedberg, these interviews served a dual purpose: 1) to allow the participants to continue the IT process in critical conversations, and 2) to allow the participants to “act as co-researchers by analyzing their own tableaux” (2023, p. 18). The interviews were primarily conducted in Norwegian, but with the encouragement of speaking English. Some students employed both languages, but Norwegian was the dominant language. Sedberg also emphasized the importance of treating the interview as a conversation as the participants could engage in “brainstorming, (...), thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other and reacting to the emerging issues and points” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144, as cited in Sedberg, 2023, p. 27). The main goal of the interview was for both the researchers and the students to put on their “critical glasses” as a means to analyze their tableaux, with the help of a photograph of the tableaux as visual stimuli (Sedberg, 2023, p. 27).

A thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. This involved an inductive coding of recurring themes and patterns within the students’ discussions and performances. By working on the analysis, Sedberg claims she became “aware of the different methods students used to interrogate multiple viewpoints in addition to the different viewpoints that were interrogated” (2023, pp. 31-32). Additionally, a multimodal discourse analysis was done on the data from the IT process and the interviews. Sandberg emphasizes that because of time limitations, only relevant and essential modes and “images adding additional meaning to the context” (2023, p. 34) are addressed in the analysis. This included various modes of communication, including body language, props, and costumes (Sedberg, 2023, p. 33-34).

Firstly, the results found that IT facilitated the interrogation of fictional characters, with students embodying these characters, and it fostered understanding, empathy, and character development. Some students even exhibited a sense of ownership over their characters, indicating deep levels of identification and further enhancing viewpoint interrogation. Additionally, students engaged in self-reflection, interrogating their own perspectives as they imagined personal stories connected to their characters. The photographed tableaux provided important information for the

study, and also helped Sedberg better understand what the students were trying to show in their tableaux, proving helpful for the analysis. Ultimately, the study concludes that IT effectively fosters Norwegian EFL 6th-grade students' ability to interrogate multiple viewpoints, fostering critical literacy perspectives and enhancing their understanding of diverse viewpoints (Sedberg, 2023, pp. 91-92).

Normand (2022) talks about the affordances of drama tableaux in the classroom “for encouraging reflection and perspective-taking, and for enabling collaborative responses” (p. 217). In this study, the decision to utilize drama tableaux as a data elicitation method stemmed from the motivation to address “(1) affordances of drama tableaux for research with young L2 learners and (2) the affordances of drama tableaux for eliciting interlanguage pragmatics data” (Normand, 2022, p. 193). The study consisted of 58 Norwegian EFL learners from grade 3rd, 5th and 7th grade. The data elicitation took place at a Norwegian primary school during spring of 2018. Firstly, the data was piloted with two 3rd-grade and one 4th-grade groups to test the instruction, group sizing, and timing of the different activities chosen for the study.

The language learning activities progressed through what Normand called five “stages”: 1) a freeze-dance activity that aimed at reducing anxiety and preparing learners for subsequent tasks; 2), a body sculpting activity where the researchers acted as clay figures for learners to sculpt into a tableau, altering power dynamics. 3) The learners brainstormed apology scenarios from personal experiences, improving metapragmatic reflection. Next, the learners 4) created tableaux from self-generated and researcher-prompted scenarios, enhancing pragmatic skills in various contexts. The last stage was 5) an emoticon appraisal task, and group discussion that allowed learners to evaluate apology strategies and reflect on language use, fostering open dialogue and feedback gathering. Mixing English and Norwegian facilitated comprehension and engagement in a comfortable environment (Normand, 2022, pp. 201-204).

Regarding its affordances for research with young second language learners, Normand (2022) states that this drama tableaux in fact is an effective data elicitation method. The activities are designed to be fun, inclusive, and suitable for children, encouraging active participation and enhancing learners' motivation and concentration. This way it also helps create a safe and comfortable environment that promotes honest expression and spontaneous interaction among learners.

Normand states that the use of drama tableaux is not without its challenges. It requires the researcher or instructor to be comfortable with leading drama activities, such as be able to improvise and make “in-the-moment decisions when necessary” (2022, p. 211). Overall, the results show that the “the use of drama tableaux allowed L2 learners to embody and reflect on paralinguistic features of apologies” (Normand, 2022, p. 217)

Lastly, Normand claims that working with young learners require activities that spark engagement, take into considerations power dynamics and “cater for learner differences” (2022, pp. 216-217). Overall, the use of drama tableaux effectively fosters reflection and perspective-taking, while also facilitating collaborative responses. This approach generates numerous “teachable moments” and opportunities for “consciousness-raising”, enhancing the learning experience (Normand, 2022).

The studies by Sedberg (2023) and Normand (2022) shed light on the multifaceted role of drama in educational settings. While Sedberg delves into the interrogation of multiple viewpoints through IT processes, Normand explores the use of drama tableaux as a means to evoke reflection and collaborative responses, particularly in the context of language learning. Both studies underscore the potential of drama as a versatile pedagogical tool, in Norwegian primary school, emphasizing its capacity to cultivate empathy, encourage reflection, and facilitate interactive learning experiences.

Both this MA thesis and related studies underscore the importance of creating inclusive learning environments and exploring sensitive topics such as gender identity in educational settings. By drawing on insights from previous research on LGBTQ-inclusive education and drama-based approaches, this study aims to promote reflection and understanding among students.

3 Methodology

This thesis explores 9th graders' reflections on and understanding of gender identity through a process drama consisting of three collaborative learning activities. Thus, this study aims to answer *what reflections and understanding of gender identity do Norwegian EFL 9th graders express through participation in a process drama?*

The data in this study was collected through student participation in the process drama with a special focus on the discussions that occurred throughout the different drama activities. Additionally, a selected group of students participated in focus group interviews, where the researcher encouraged further discussion around what the students had expressed during the process drama. All the data for this study was collected through audio recordings.

3.1 Methodological approach

This study is categorized as a small-scale qualitative participatory study. The research involves a limited number of participants—only 17 ninth graders—making it a manageable and focused study. The methodology seeks depth over breadth, using activities and discussions to extract detailed insights into students' perceptions of gender identity. The study's use of thematic analysis further underscores its qualitative nature, focusing on identifying patterns or themes within the collected data to provide nuanced insights. The research outcome is ultimately the “the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38).

The study's design encourages active involvement from the participants. Participatory research involves using “a range of different tools (drama, stories, visual art and music) which have the potential to accommodate [...] children's views in natural and meaningful ways” (Pinter & Zandian, 2012, p. 236). The participants were engaged in process drama, free listing, and other interactive activities that not only serve as data collection methods but also allow them to contribute content and context through their reflections and discussions. These activities fostered a collaborative environment where the participants' voices were integral to the research process, as they could share their experiences and interpretations openly. This engagement is a hallmark

of participatory research, where study participants are collaborators, not just subjects of the research.

3.1.1 Participants

The study's sample was a mix of two Norwegian 9th-grade EFL classes that follow the Norwegian curriculum. Each class consisted of about 25 students, with one class having an even number of boys and girls, and the other class with a majority of girls. In total, 17 students wanted to participate in the project and provided the researcher with consent forms, signed by both parents and the individual student (see Appendix 4), 14 girls and three boys.

In *Teaching Young Language Learners* Pinter (2017) defines children as individuals up to 14 years old (p. 2). The participants in this study are 14-15 years old, placing them in a unique stage between childhood and adolescence, and in the change phase of children to teenagers. Thus, the participants may show traits of both age groups, creating both challenges and opportunities for prompting and teaching more comprehensive discussion.

The choice of 9th grade as the target group for this project is rooted in several key considerations. At the age of 14-15, students are navigating the complex terrain of puberty, identity, and sexuality. This is a critical phase where they begin to shape their individual perspectives and beliefs. This developmental stage presents a unique opportunity for exploring topics like gender identity. Furthermore, the researcher's perception and experiences of 9th graders is that some may be at a stage in their academic journey where they might exhibit a sense of being "done" with school. Following this, the researcher wanted the students to participate in a study with somewhat untraditional data collection methods, to spark engagement.

First and foremost, as mentioned in section 1.2, the motivation of the study lies in the researcher's previous practice period with 9th graders, where the researcher conducted a lesson on sex and identity and had later been intrigued by the experiences and challenges that came with that lesson. The choice of 9th graders was, therefore, a purposive sampling, as the students were deliberately selected based on the variable of age, as they were deemed most suitable for addressing the research question (Farrugia, 2019, p. 70). Secondly, also as highlighted in section 1.2, the researcher had conducted a process drama on fairytales and identity with some of the students in a previous practice period. Approaching these students with another process drama

aimed to leverage the study based on the students' existing knowledge, potentially tapping into their memories from the 6th grade. Using a school and group of participants already familiar with the researcher, created easy access when selecting the school to conduct the project.

3.2 Overview of the project

The following methodology section first presents an overview of the project, including descriptions of participants, and the chronology of the project. The data collection methods are then introduced, such as audio recordings of process drama lessons and focus group interviews, the data analysis method called thematic analysis, quality criteria, and finally, the ethical considerations.

3.2.2 Chronology of the project

This section provides the chronology of the project. The process drama lesson consisted of four activities, which were designed to elicit spontaneous and genuine responses from the participating students, aiming to provide valuable insights into their reflections and understanding of gender and gender identity. Following the process drama, 3 out of 4 student groups, one missing due to sickness, participated in focus group interviews where they discussed the activities and claims made during the process drama.

The research was conducted in the school's music room, which provided us with a wide-open space for the participants to feel comfortable moving around the room. When working with the tableaux, the participants were divided into four groups and were assigned a corner and audio recorder each to discuss and practice.

The project involved three visits to the school (see Figure 1). The first visit introduced the project to the participants. The following two visits collected data and conducted focus group interviews with the participants.

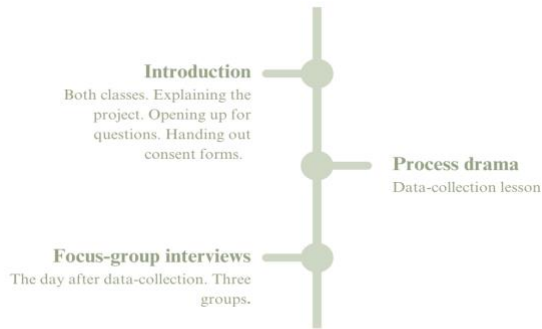


Figure 2. Project timeline

Introductory visit

Before the process drama and data collection with the 17 ninth grade students, the researcher visited the school to introduce the study and prepare the students for the upcoming project. During this visit, the researcher particularly talked about the sensitivity of the topic, emphasizing specifically to the students that during the process of drama and the focus group interviews, they should under no circumstances feel pressured or obliged to discuss their own personal gender identity. Following this, the researcher also briefly went through the plan for the upcoming two visits, ensuring that participants were prepared for the discussions and activities ahead. Additionally, the researcher also clearly explained the importance of two specific rules and expectations for the process drama: 1) to maintain focus and discipline during the session, a non-verbal cue system was established, where the researcher would signal for silence with a specific arm movement that participants were instructed to mirror, and 2) four audio recorders were positioned in each corner of the room as the main source for the data collection, and the students were given clear instructions not to tamper with them.

Process drama - data collection lesson

Activity 1: Free listing

The first activity, free listing, focused on activating the students and starting their thought processes on the lesson's theme. Free listing is considered a technique used to gather spontaneous and unfiltered responses from participants. The free listing activity is inspired by Normand & Walsh-Knarvik's (2022) clustering activity. Here, the participants wrote down their word associations on 'post-it' notes, which were clustered on the whiteboard to reveal common

themes. This visual aid sparked an open discussion on the class's collective knowledge on the theme of the study (p. 17).

In this approach, each student was given a piece of paper and three 'post-its'. The students were then provided with the two keywords "gender" and "gender identity", and within the following 3 minutes, they were instructed to write down any words, phrases, or thoughts they associated with the keywords. As opposed to the clustering activity, the 'post-its' were not clustered on the whiteboard, but the researcher collected the 'post-its', to be used in the third activity of tableaux. The main aim of this exercise was to capture the immediate and direct thoughts and associations of the participants with the topic of gender and gender identity.

Activity 2: Four corners

The second activity aimed to encourage discussion on the students' perspectives and responses to various claims and dilemmas through the implementation of the four corners activity. The four corners activity is a useful tool when exploring topics in the classroom that, in one way or another, cause a diverse pool of opinions within the student group. By allowing the students to take different stances where they can explore and challenge each other's viewpoints, we allow them to explore different values, prejudices, and freedom of speech in a safe space (Songe-Møller et al., 2023, p. 220).

Activity 3: Tableaux and thought-tracking

For the tableaux activity, the initial thought was to have the students' teacher thoughtfully craft diverse group compositions based on pre-existing friendships. As the participants were encouraged to discuss a sensitive and controversial topic (COE, 2016), which may result in some discomfort (Røthing, 2019), the aim was to bring out the best in collaborative efforts, as individuals within these friend-based groups were likely to feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts. However, due to a miscommunication between the researcher and teachers, the groups had not been pre-made and had to be made spontaneously by the researcher with little help from the teacher. This will be further discussed in chapter 5.4 *Limitations*. In the end, four distinct groups were created: an all-boys group, and three all-girls group. These particular groups were created and used for both the group activity – tableaux – and the focus group interviews. These will be further elaborated in section 3.1.1.

Included in the tableaux performances, the students participated in *thought-tracking*, where they voiced their characters' thoughts. Thought-tracking allows children to connect more deeply with the thoughts and reactions of the characters they portray, in addition to “enable and model active listening to the thoughts of others” (Baldwin, 2012, p. 133). The participants had to, in their groups, first, identify the different characters they were representing in the given scenario. The researcher then moved into the tableau and touched a student's shoulder. That student then had to imagine what their character was thinking or feeling at that particular moment within the scene. This involved considering the character's motivations, emotions, beliefs, and desires based on the context of the scenario. The “audience” listened to the expressed thoughts and emotions. By doing this activity, the researcher and the participants gained insight into how and what the different students interpreted and associated with the topic of gender identity.

The four corners and the tableaux activities are two of the primary data collection methods employed in this study. Therefore, they will be discussed in greater detail in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. These sections will provide an in-depth exploration of each method and a description of how these activities were conducted.

3.3 Data collection methods

This section describes the methods used to gather data for this study. The study uses three main techniques: the four-corner activity, group discussions around tableaux, and focus group interviews. The four-corner activity helped the students start to think about gender identity by taking a stance on the different statements and dilemmas. Next, in the tableaux activity, the participants discussed in groups and created visual representations of their thoughts. Lastly, the focus group interviews allowed the students to reflect in more depth and share more about their views. These methods were chosen to get a complete view of the student's thoughts and to support the study's goals of understanding and teaching gender identity in schools.

3.3.1 Four corners

The first data collection method employed was the four-corner activity, where the researcher presented a statement (see Appendix 2.1) and labeled each corner with a possible response: *yes*, *no*, *it depends* and *other response(s)*. An audio recorder was placed by each corner to capture the

responses. After some participants expressed difficulty understanding the first statement, the researcher asked if they preferred the subsequent statement to be presented in both Norwegian (L1) and English (L2). The researcher and the participants then agreed on first presenting it in L2, then in L1. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to move to the corner that best aligned with their own views, rather than following their friends. To facilitate independent decision-making, the researcher suggested participants wait five seconds after hearing the statement before moving to a corner. However, due to high engagement and eagerness, implementing this delay proved challenging.

		Assigned corner response
CLAIMS	There is a big difference between boys and girls	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. It depends 4. Other response
	Boys and girls have the same "rules" for how they should behave	
	A person is either a boy or a girl	
DILEMMA 1	Anna's older sister is getting married, and Annas has decided she wants to wear pants. She never wears dresses, and she feels most comfortable in pants. When she tells her sister about this, she says she will not allow it. Anna's sister believes that when you are a girl, you should wear a dress on such a special occasion. She also thinks it's quite embarrassing if Anna dresses differently from the other girls in her wedding. What should Anna do?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anna should stick to her decision to wear pants. 2. Anna must accept her sister's decision the she should wear a dress. 3. Anna should start wearing dresses now so that she gets used to it. 4. Other responses.
DILEMMA 2	Benjamin has always felt different than the other boys in his class. In 8 th grade he understood why. Benjamin does not feel like a boy, and he hasn't for a long time. What should Benjamin do?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Benjamin should ignore these feelings. 2. Benjamin should figure it out themselves. 3. Benjamin should talk to someone about these feelings. 4. Other options

Figure 3. *Four-corners: claims, dilemmas and corner responses*

In this approach, the participants were forced to take an active stance. The figure above presents the claims and dilemmas that the researcher gave the participants. After they were presented, students moved to the corner that corresponded with their viewpoint on the given claim or dilemma. One of the claims the students discussed was “a person is either a boy or a girl”, and of the dilemmas were as following: “Benjamin has always felt different than the other boys in his class. In 8th grade he understood why. Benjamin does not feel like a boy, and he has not for a long time. What should Benjamin do?”

For the claims, three alternative options were provided to each corner, in addition to one with “other response(s)”. Then, the participants engaged in group discussions to explain why they chose that corner, followed by a whole-class discussion. In instances where a corner remained unoccupied, the researcher encouraged the student to discuss potential reasons to why that might be the case. Additionally, when only one participant occupied a corner, the researcher actively engaged with that individual to discuss their unique perspective. Each claim or dilemma prompted students to align themselves with one of the provided viewpoints or offer an alternative perspective. Through this structured approach, participants were encouraged to articulate their reasoning, engage in group discourse, and contribute to a collective understanding of the issues at hand.

3.3.2 Tableaux and thought-tracking

Following the second activity of four corners, the third and last activity involved dividing participants into smaller groups and assigning them the task of creating tableaux. In a tableau, a prepared image is presented, usually by a small group, to the other participants. The participants worked together in groups of 3 to 5 students to come up with a frozen image representing their collective understanding of gender identity. They were given back the ‘post-its’ they made during the free listing as aid in this activity. After discussing each member’s notes, they chose a theme that best captured their collective understanding. This teamwork allowed the students to create a tableau that clearly and meaningfully showed the class’s different viewpoints on gender.

While in their groups, the learners were encouraged to work collectively, discussing and sharing their thoughts, ideas, and viewpoints as they worked on the tableau scenes. As stated by Sæbø (2011), the collective aspect of tableau making occurs when students work together and share their ideas for the tableau. However, each individual must also be open to changing their ideas based on what other group members suggest. As one student shares an idea, it might spark a new idea for someone else, resulting in a final tableau that often integrates everyone’s ideas and the group’s interactions (p. 25).

As the groups discussed and practiced their tableaux, an audio recorder was placed in the area to capture the dialogue. The researcher’s role included clarifying any misinterpretations, guiding, and observing the groups. As part of this activity, thought-tracking was included in the

presentation of the tableaux. This gave students the chance to vocalize their thoughts and reflections. When the researcher moved through the tableaux and performed the thought-tracking, an audio recorder was used as a “microphone” to capture each character's expressed thoughts.

3.3.3 Focus group interviews

“A focus group study is a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 2). Focus groups let participants discuss together as a group, allowing participants to share their thoughts. Participants do not only answer questions but also explain their views to each other and the interviewer, making for a more interactive and insightful conversation (George, 2012, p. 1). The interviewer’s responsibilities, in addition to asking questions, included refraining from judgment and being aware of how one’s body language can communicate approval or disapproval (Krueger & Casey, 2015, pp. 5-6). In this study, the focus group interview offered the researcher a valuable insight into students’ reflections and perceptions on gender identity, all the while allowing the students to express their thoughts in a non-threatening environment.

The data from the focus group interviews were captured through audio recordings, that have been transcribed for the main analysis of this thesis. The focus group interviews were conducted the day after the process drama lesson. Choosing to conduct these interviews shortly after the process drama was based on several possible advantages, such as 1) freshness of experience as the participants’ memories of the process drama would be more vivid and immediate, 2) the interviewer’s memory of the process drama observations were more fresh, 3) the emotional impact of the process drama might still be fresh in the participants’ minds, and lastly, 4) the participants’ initial and immediate reflections and insights were most likely to be captured accurately.

Before the interviews were conducted, an interview guide was developed, which included three sets of questions that all covered different areas of the study (see Appendix 3). Dörnyei (2007) justifies the use of an interview guide as it 1) ensures that the topic is covered and nothing gets left out, 2) suggests appropriate questions, 3) offers a list of useful questions that can be used if

needed, 4) offers new questions to begin new statements, meaning that the interview guide provides questions to easily transition to new topics during the interview. and 5) lists “comments to bear in mind” (p. 137).

The interview guide (see Appendix 3) was divided into the categories of 1) follow-up from the tableaux, 2) discussion points stemming from group discussion during the tableaux exercises and, 3) general and broader questions covering the topic. The first set was general questions about the group dynamic and aimed to ask the students about their overall thoughts on the tableau. The second set (see Appendix 3.1-3.4) of questions was created after the conducted process drama and based on the observations and audio recordings of each student group’ statements and discussion that occurred during the tableaux and thought-tracking. The third and last set was created before the researcher conducted the process drama with the participants. These questions were created with the aim of prompting the participants’ immediate reflections, without positioning them toward any specific viewpoint. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, despite the study being set in an English class and intended to practice oral communication skills. This choice was made to ensure that the students could express their thoughts and reflections more comfortably and accurately, without the additional challenge of articulating complex ideas in a second language. Conducting the interviews in the L1 allowed for richer and more nuanced responses, providing more in-depth insights into their experiences and opinions.

3.3.4 Transcription and Anonymization Process

Table 1 presents the procedures for anonymizing participants’ data in various research activities, detailing the equipment used and the methods for ensuring anonymity. During the free listing activity, the participants wrote their names on ‘post-it’ notes, which were later torn in two and discarded after the activity to prevent any association between names and data. In the four corners and tableaux, an audio recorder was used, and the names mentioned were excluded from the final paper, with the information being reconstructed to be non-recognizable, as the data will not be presented by participants’ pseudonyms, only as general quotes. During the focus group interviews, the data was recorded through a phone connected to the Nettskjema platform, and any names mentioned were encoded to ensure anonymity in the final documentation. Overall, the

project employs techniques to maintain participant confidentiality and data privacy throughout the study.

In this study, particularly in the results and discussions chapter, the participant quotations discussed will not be presented with pseudonyms. This decision lies the practical challenges. For one, the learners frequently move around, resulting in the task of consistently distinguishing between individuals' voices from the audio recorders becoming impractical.

Table 1. Equipment and anonymization process

Activity	Equipment	Anonymization
Free listing	Post-it with names	Torn in two and thrown away after process drama
Four corners	Audio-recorder	No names
Tableaux	Audio-recorder Camera (capture the tableaux to be used in the interviews)	Names may occur, not included in the thesis Reconstructed / non-recognizable
Focus group interviews	Audio-recorder through phone connected to Nettskjema. Observation notes	Names may occur, reconstructed with coded names for paper Coded names

3.4 Data analysis method

As this is a small-scale qualitative study focusing on participants' understanding of a specific topic and involves identifying themes relevant to the research question, a thematic analysis (TA) was considered the most suitable analysis method. Braun & Clarke (2022) defines thematic analysis as “a method for developing, analyzing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset, which involves systematic processes of data coding to develop themes” (p. 4).

A thematic analysis can reflect the complexity of real-world situations and unravel the hidden meanings and patterns behind the concept of 'reality'. The idea behind theme in a thematic analysis is about capturing the important elements of the data related to the research question, offering valuable information about the patterns (themes) that repeatedly appear in the data set,

the deeper meaning and/or importance behind these pattern, and other meaningful patterns within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 82-83).

The thematic analysis for this study is coded with an inductive approach. An inductive TA “means [that] the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Inductive analysis is characterized by coding the data without attempting to force it into pre-existing coding frameworks or the researcher’s preconceived analytical notions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). The data collected in this study were analyzed through an inductive thematic analysis where the data from the four corners, tableaux, and focus group interviews will be read and re-read for any themes related to gender identity, “without paying attention to the themes that previous research of the topic might have identified” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

The themes in this analysis have been identified by the researcher based on the data collected from both the process drama and the focus group interviews. However, the key themes are not related to the specific questions asked, but findings of the study itself. This means that the researcher read and re-read the answers provided by the participants and chose those that are related to the research questions. As mentioned, an inductive approach is a process of coding data that does not fit into pre-existing knowledge on the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83), but rather letting the data guide the research on its own. This can raise some questions, as Braun & Clarke (2006) argue that despite the approach’s wide limits, the researchers identified themes will not be generated in a complete “epistemological vacuum” (p. 84). In other words, the selection of the key themes may have been influenced by the researcher’s pre-existing knowledge and understanding on the topic.

The data analysis in this research was based on the concept of Braun & Clarke’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis to systematically investigate the data collected through the process of drama sessions and interviews. In phase one, the *researcher familiarized themselves with the dataset* (p. 35) by listening to all recordings multiple times and performing detailed transcriptions in Microsoft Word and Nettskjema. Specifically, following the process drama lesson, and before the focus group interviews, the researcher listened to and transcribed the tableaux group discussions in Microsoft Word. The transcriptions were used as a base for a set of questions for the interviews, to make the questions related to each group tableau scenario. For efficiency, the focus group interviews were transcribed directly into Nettskjema. Additionally,

the audio recordings from the four-corner activity were listened to multiple times, allowing the researcher to take notes from each corner's response to the corresponding statement or dilemma. Importantly, the transcripts were kept in their original language to preserve authenticity, with translations provided only for illustrative quotations in the thesis.

During phases two through four, *coding, generating initial themes and developing and reviewing themes* (p. 35), the researcher began the coding process by manually highlighting potential themes directly on the printed transcripts and the four-corner notes. This was complemented by extensive note-taking, where reflections, expressed meanings, and opinions from each of the group discussions and interviews were systematically cataloged into a table, facilitating the creation of initial themes.

Phases five and six involved *refining, defining, and naming the identified themes* (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 36). Repeatedly reviewing and analyzing the data was crucial for thoroughly understanding it and making sure that the identified themes accurately reflected the views and experiences of the participants. Ultimately, the analysis resulted in two main themes: 1) *discussions on gender and sexuality*, with one sub-theme, 1a) *binary gender versus gender identity*, and 2) *questioning gender stereotypes* with two sub-themes of 2a) *visual appearances* and 2b) *gender and school performance*. These themes underscored the collective reflections of the 9th-grade participants, revealing their understanding of and opinions on gender identity. The identified themes will be used to further discuss the results gathered from each of the data collection methods. Below is a visual representation of the identified main theme and the three sub-themes.

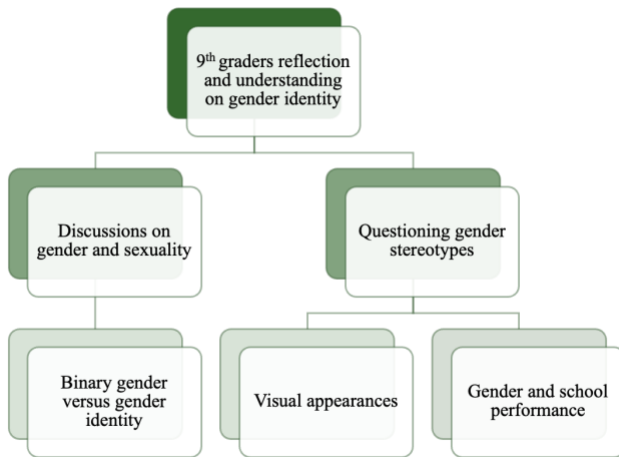


Figure 4. Thesis topic, main themes, and sub-themes

3.5 Study quality – credibility and trustworthiness

As qualitative study is subjective and interpretive; truth is considered relative, and ‘facts’ depend on the researcher’s individual perceptions and interpretations (Dörnyei, 2007, p.54). One challenge in qualitative research is striving to achieve the highest possible quality in both conducting and reporting the research. As referenced in both Dörnyei (2007) and Cope (2014), the following chapter will present Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) taxonomy of quality criteria to make sure the study is considered ‘trustworthy’.

Table 2. Strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness

Criteria	Employed strategies
Credibility – ‘truth value’	Audit trail Audio recordings
Transferability – ‘applicability’	Sampling Activity appendix
Dependability – ‘consistency’	Audit trail
Confirmability – neutrality of the findings	Audit trail Participants’ quotes

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the “truth value” and accuracy of the study, participant views, and their interpretation by the researcher. A study is considered credible if the collected data and the interpretations and discussion presented by the researcher can be “recognized by individuals that share the same experience” (Cope, 2014, p. 89). The credibility of this study may have been enhanced by utilizing audio recordings for data collection. These recordings, used to interpret and analyze the data, likely preserved, to some extent, “the actual language that is used, providing an objective record of what was said” (McKay, 2006, pp. 55-56). Having an audio recording provides a link to the discussions and interviews, minimizing the risk of misinterpretation or bias that might occur if the researcher were relying solely on memory or handwritten notes. This helps in maintaining the credibility of the data.

Transferability refers to the research being applicable to other contexts. “A qualitative study has met this criterion if the results have meaning to individuals not involved in the study and readers can associate the results with their own experiences” (Cope, 2014, p. 89). As such, this thesis addressed this criterion as it provides a detailed description of the process of drama activities, a description of the (purposive) sampling, and the classroom context. Additionally, the detailed appendices and descriptive methodology may allow future researchers to replicate and transfer this study into their own.

Dependability refers to the data being stable and consistent. For example, dependability can be ensured when another researcher agrees with the decision trails at each stage of the research process. An audit trail offers “a detailed [...] account of the steps taken to achieve the results” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 60). A study is considered dependable if its findings can be replicated with similar participants in similar conditions, based on the researcher’s process and descriptions (Cope, 2014, p. 89).

Confirmability refers to the findings being solely based on the “participants’ responses and not the researcher’s biases or viewpoints” (Cope, 2014, p. 89). Throughout this research, each stage has naturally progressed to the next, creating a clear and logical sequence. The audit trail for this thesis encompasses a comprehensive documentation of each stage of the research process. The audit trail for this thesis includes detailed documentation of each step in the research process. The theory and related studies contain key literature on gender identity, process drama, and qualitative research methodologies. The methodology is documented through a detailed lesson

plan (see Appendix 1), detailed activity descriptions, and a questionnaire guide for the focus group interviews (see Appendix 3). The data collection methods are meticulously logged with audio recordings and transcripts. Additionally, the data analysis method provides a step-by-step documentation of Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, coding, and theme development.

In addition to Lincoln & Guba's (1985) taxonomy of quality criteria, Mackey & Gass (2022) discuss how "it is crucial for researchers to allocate time for conducting pilot tests". Due to time limitations and miscommunication between the researcher and the selected school for the study, the researcher was not able to do a pilot group with a sample similar to the actual study participants. However, some teacher-students volunteered to take part in the piloting at the university, allowing the researcher to pilot the chronology of the process drama.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The key aspects of research ethics "center around the concepts of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity" (Kuchah & Pinter, 2021, p. 5). Working with learners involves several ethical considerations. As the learners are exploring the topic of gender identity, which might also evolve into sexuality, it is crucial to prioritize the well-being and privacy of the children involved in the research. This section presents the different ethical considerations that come into play for this study, such as participants' consent, relations, and the researcher's role.

When researching with minors, informed consent should not only come from the parents or a guardian but also from the children. While obtaining consent from both parties can present certain challenges, it is important to recognize and protect the children's right to participate in decisions related to the research that directly involves them (Kuchah & Pinter, 2021, p. 6). This study recognizes the importance of treating the students as active participants, respecting their perspectives, and acknowledging their reflections. Therefore, when sending out the consent forms from SIKT, the individual students also had to give consent to take part in the study (see Appendix 4).

The selected 9th-grade students are also familiar with the researcher, who has some previous experience with process drama. The researcher had a three-week practice period with the chosen participants when they were in 6th grade. During these three weeks, the students were also

involved in a process drama where they talked about the traditional Norwegian folktale Reve-Enka and explored the theme of similarities and differences. Since this, the classes have been mixed, resulting in a possible different class dynamic than the researcher may expect.

As such, in conducting the research, careful attention was paid to comfort. During both the group activities and focus group interviews, the researcher took deliberate measures to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all participants. Techniques such as open-ended questioning, active listening, and encouragement of diverse perspectives were employed to foster open dialogue while respecting individual boundaries. Instances of discomfort or sensitive information disclosure were handled with sensitivity and discretion.

The figure below, a transcription of a group discussion, presents a group dynamics where one student appeared to take a leadership role, potentially leading to dissatisfaction among other group members regarding the final tableau outcome. However, during the focus group interview, the researcher's attempt to explore this interaction further was limited as only one participant from the interaction was present. Despite this constraint, the discussion around the group's dynamics resulted in a generalized agreement that they worked well together. This highlights the challenge of fully elucidating individual perspectives within group dynamics, particularly when not all participants are present for discussion.

Student 1: What is your idea?

Student 2¹: We can just hold someone down... show that something is against a person's will... and they could get shot.

Student 3²: Is there something else we can do because that's very extreme. Isn't there something more subtle... that doesn't involve shooting people?

Student 2: We'll just do that... done.

¹ The executioner
² The executed

Figure 5. Group discussion transcription

4 Results

This chapter presents the results from the study's data collection: the four-corner activity, the tableaux group discussion, and the focus group interviews. The findings will be presented in chronological order. First, the results of the four-corner activity will be presented by statement and dilemma with the results from each of the corner responses. Following, the findings from the tableaux group discussions and the interviews will be presented. These findings are divided into the different topics each individual group discussed. The results show a wide range of different topics and areas of discussion after having researched EFL 9th graders' reflections on and understanding of gender identity. In light of these findings, the study seeks to answer the following research question:

What reflections and understanding of gender identity do Norwegian EFL 9th graders express through participation in a process drama?

4.1 Four corners

In exploring the topic of gender identity, a four-corner activity was conducted to gather diverse perspectives and understandings. During the four-corner activity, the participants were prompted to discuss and express their views and immediate reflections on different scenarios and dilemmas regarding gender identity. This activity was aimed at uncovering societal perceptions and individual opinions regarding gender roles and characteristics. A total of 17 participants engaged in the discussion, selecting responses categorized into four options: "Yes," "No," "It Depends," and "Other" (see Appendix 2.2). The following sections will present the data from each of the scenarios and dilemmas the participants discussed.

4.1.1 Statement 1: There is a big difference between boys and girls

The results revealed contrasting viewpoints among the participants. The majority of the participants – 15 out of 17 - agreed with the statement that *there is a big difference between boys and girls*. They acknowledged and pointed to noticeable disparities in appearance, behavior, and societal expectations.

These differences were exemplified by the participants as hairstyles, stating that *“det er mer vanlig at jenter har langt hår og at gutter har kort hår”* [it is more usual for girls to have long hair and boys to have short hair] clothing choices, and perceived personality. In terms of behavior and personality traits, a prevalent view was that boys often display greater bravery and aggression towards each other; *“gutter gjør mye ting jenter ikke gjøre, de slåss og er slemme med hverandre”* [boys do things that girls don't do, boys fight and are meaner to each other]. Moreover, the participants pointed out that certain activities and behaviors are often seen as things boys do more than girls, reinforcing stereotypes. For example, some mentioned that boys are seen as braver and more likely to fight or be mean to each other. Additionally, it was noted that in professional contexts, *“men will often get more respect because the men are more like strong”*. These observations show how deeply ingrained gender roles are and the expectations placed on boys and girls from a young age.

Furthermore, two participants expressed a view that differences between boys and girls are mainly due to how society shapes us and how we are raised, not just because of our gender itself. One participant expressed that *“some families make their kids think that men and women are more equal, but my mom told me that when I grow up and want to get a job, men will have more chances and opportunities”*. They also pointed out that our cultural background and what our families believe heavily influence our roles, like what jobs we might do or our duties at home. These participants suggested that *“if girls and boys get raised equally, they will act more similar and feel more equal”*, helping to break down typical gender stereotypes.

No participants selected “no” or any other alternative responses, which indicates that the majority of participants agreed that there are differences between boys and girls based on aspects such as appearances, societal background, and behavior.

4.1.2 Statement 2: Boys and girls have the same “rules” for how they should behave

The findings from this discussion highlighted the learners' perceptions of distinct differences in societal expectations and treatment based on gender, particularly in settings like schools. Most of the participants expressed that girls and boys are held to different standards of behavior. They noted that girls are typically expected to be more well-behaved, quieter, and cleaner, whereas

boys are often allowed more freedom to be energetic and less tidy without the same level of rebuke from adults. This sentiment was summed up by one participant who stated, *“Girls are expected to always be well behaved, quiet, clean, while boys can have a more free spirit.”* The female participants expressed feeling pressured to conform to stricter behavioral standards compared to boys, who are perceived as having more leeway to be active and energetic without facing the same judgment or criticism from adults. As a counter argument to this, the male participants who chose “it depends” shared nuanced observations about how behavior is perceived and treated differently based on gender, particularly in educational settings. They highlighted disparities in how talking is addressed: when boys talk in class, they often face harsher consequences and criticism compared to girls, who may be overlooked or not reprimanded as severely: *“hvis guttene snakker sammen i klasserommet, blir de kritiskert og kjefta på, mens læreren sier ingenting hvis jentene snakker”* [If the boys talk in the classroom, they are judged and get yelled at, while the teachers remain silent when the girls talk].

Additionally, students observed biases in academic expectations and grading and claimed that their teachers have higher expectations of girls and are more lenient or rewarding towards boys for similar performance. They stated that girls are often expected to perform better and behave better: *“Hvis guttene gjør noe som er normalt, men på samme nivå som jentene, så får guttene bedre karakterer, men hvis jentene gjør noe på samme nivå som guttene, får jentene dårlige karakterer”* [If the boys do something that is normal, but at the same level as the girls, the boys get better grades, but if the girls do something at the same level as the boys, the girls get worse grades]. Some of the female participants had a perception that boys are graded on a curve based on their expected lower performance. Those female participants suggested that when boys performed better than their usual standards, even if their performance was similar with the girls, the boys received better grades. Conversely, the perception is that when girls perform at the same level as boys, the girls are graded more harshly and receive worse grades. Here, the female participants implied that girls are graded against a higher standard, and only exceptional performance is rewarded.

4.1.3 Statement 3: A person is either a boy or a girl

The discussion centered around whether a person can only be classified strictly as a boy or a girl based on biological sex, and the results were telling. Out of 17 participants, 16 agreed with this the statement that *a person is either a boy or a girl*. They supported the binary gender perspective and expressed a strong belief in the binary understanding of gender based on biological sex. These participants asserted that a person's gender is explicitly linked to their genitalia at birth, and as such, there exist only two genders - male and female. Their viewpoints centered around the traditional scientific definitions of gender: *“Du er enten født som jente eller gutt, og du kan ikke gå å endre på det. Du kan ikke si at du er jente hvis du har guttetiss”* [You are born either as a boy or a girl and you can't just change that. You can't just say you are a girl if you have a penis].

Conversely, one participant diverged significantly from the majority's views and disagreed with the scenario placing themselves at the corner where the response was “No”. While acknowledging the biological distinctions between male and female, they voiced support for the LGBT community and the recognition of diverse gender identities: *“I respect the LGBTQIA+ community, so I respect people that identify as they/them”*. They emphasized the importance of respecting and validating the experiences and identities of LGBTQIA+ individuals. While acknowledging biological sex, they recognized that gender identity can exist beyond the traditional binary borders, and affirmed the right of individuals to identify and express themselves in ways that align with their internal sense of gender.

4.1.4 Dilemma 1: Clothes

In this first dilemma the participants explored the scenario of Anna, who prefers to wear pants but is expected to wear a dress to her sister's wedding. The discussion revealed divided opinions on how Anna should address this conflict between her personal comfort and her sister's wishes for wedding attire.

About half of the participants felt that Anna should adhere to traditional expectations for the wedding. *“I'm thinking she should just wear that dress for 5 hours. I mean she'll live. She can use pants every other day, just put on a dress and make her sister happy, after all it's her day”*. They argued that since it is her sister's wedding, Anna should respect her sister's wishes and

wear a dress, even if it makes her uncomfortable. The rationale was largely centered around the importance of the wedding day and the desire to avoid conflict or discomfort for others attending the event. One participant summarized this viewpoint by saying, *“it is her sister’s wedding, so she should respect her sister’s wishes to wear a dress”*.

The other half opted for the corner labeled ‘other responses’, as they felt conflicted with choosing about selecting only one specific option, because they believed that the other corners had their own validity. They argue that Anna should be able to wear what makes her comfortable and reflects who she is, but they also express that *“hvis jeg var Anna, ville jeg tenkt at det er jo tross alt søsteren min sitt bryllup, og at jeg ville gjort hun glad”* [if I was Anna, I would think that is my sister’s wedding, and I would want to make my sister happy]. Some participants also discuss the traditions of girls wearing dresses and claim that we should move beyond the old-fashioned ideas about girls having to wear dresses and should be free to choose pants if that is what she likes: *“Bare fordi du er jente, så betyr ikke at du er nødt til å bruke kjoler og sånn. Men, tradisjonelt sett skal jenter bruke kjole, men vil hun ikke, så syntes jeg ikke hun må”* [Just because you are a girl, doesn’t mean you have to wear dresses and such. However, traditionally girls should wear dresses, but if she doesn’t want to, she shouldn’t have to]. Some participants also advocated for Anna’s right to wear what she feels most comfortable in, emphasizing personal authenticity over conforming to traditional norms. *“She is who she is, so she should be allowed to wear pants”*. They argued that Anna should have the freedom to choose her attire based on her personal identity and comfort.

4.1.5 Dilemma 2: Feeling different

In this dilemma, the participants explored the complex experiences of Benjamin, an 8th grader grappling with gender identity issues. The dilemma elicited a range of perspectives on how Benjamin might address his feelings of difference. This is the dilemma (see Appendix 2.4) with the most mixed viewpoints.

The participants that chose the corner **Benjamin should ignore these feelings** argued that a boy should be allowed to wear makeup and dresses, without having to identify themselves as a girl. Participants in this corner argued that societal norms should not dictate gender expressions. They emphasized that wearing makeup or dresses does not necessarily dictate one’s gender identity.

This group questioned the gender stereotypes of “boy-things” and “girl-things” advocating for a more a fluid understanding of gender. One participant captured this sentiment by stating, “*What is it that defines thinking as a boy or thinking as a girl? You can be a boy that wears makeup, it doesn’t mean that you are a girl. You can be a girl that wears clothes defined as ‘boy-clothes’, and still be a girl*”.

In response to the suggestion that **Benjamin should talk to someone else about it**, it was recommended that he seek support by confiding in a trusted individual, such as a school nurse or teacher. They acknowledged the potential challenges of dealing with such feelings alone and stressed the benefits of opening up to someone to better understand and address these emotions. The advice was encapsulated by the view that “*det kan være vanskelig å gå gjennom noe sånt aleene. [...] Hvis han snakker med noen, kan det være lettere å finne ut hvordan du føler og hvorfor du føler deg sånn*” [it may be difficult to go through it alone. If he feels something strange [...] if you talk to someone, it could maybe be easier to find out how you feel and why you feel that way].

The last group, in the corner labeled other responses, did not adhere strictly to a single viewpoint but rather expressed a spectrum of personal beliefs and hypothetical scenarios. The participants considered their actions if they were in Benjamin’s situation, reflecting on familial support and the potential challenges of coming out. Some highlighted the distinction between mental and physical gender, and that “if you mentally believe you are a girl, that is okay, but you are still a boy”. Other participants discussed parental support, with some students confident that their parents would be understanding and helpful if they were in Benjamin’s situation: “*Ikke at dette noen gang hadde skjedd meg, men jeg ville snakket med foreldra mine, og jeg vet at de ville ha hjulet meg gjennom prosessen*” [Not that this would ever happen, but if it was me, I would tell my parents, and I know they would help me through the process]. Others were less certain due to potential fears of not being taken seriously or supported.

4.2 Group discussions: tableaux and focus group interview

This section presents the detailed findings from the group tableaux discussion and the focus group interviews. The findings from the group interviews and tableaux group discussions will be

presented collectively, as the questions for the group interviews were based on the discussions from the tableaux.

Group 1, the only group consisting of boys, addressed their immediate connection between gender identity and homosexuality. Group 2 examined gender expression through clothing choices and societal perceptions of appearance. Group 3, depicted a scene of transgender discrimination, reflecting on their perceived societal attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals. Each group's insights reveal differing levels of understanding, openness, and the impact of societal norms on their perceptions of gender and sexuality.

4.2.1 Group 1

Group 1, consisted of three boys, presented a tableau scenario depicting a boy's wardrobe and explored the potential discomfort associated with homosexuality or having a homosexual classmate. The outcomes of this group's discussions and focus group interviews will be categorized into areas of discussion on homosexuality and talking about gender and sexuality.

In the interviews, when asked about why they chose this angling on homosexuality in relation to gender identity, the participants answered that they did not know themselves, "*det var egentlig bare det første vi tenkte på*" [it was just the first thing we thought of really]. Questions were raised about who would portray the homosexual person, with some participants expressing reluctance due to concerns about how their classmates would perceive them: "*Jeg kommer ikke til å si at jeg er homo i virkeligheten*" [I am not going to say I'm homosexual in real life]. They also revealed discomfort with being in the spotlight or assuming a role that might draw attention to their own sexual orientation.

The participants expressed varying levels of openness and awareness regarding discussions on gender and sexuality. Some individuals indicated a general openness to discussing these topics but admitted to not having deeply considered them before. All three participants defined gender solely with biological sex (male or female) and re-stated stated that "*there are only two genders when they dig up your body in a few thousand years, scientists will find boy or girl remains*", which also was mentioned in the four-corner activity. One participant mentioned not fully understanding the concept of gender identity, stating that "*I don't even know what gender means*", allowing the other group member to explain their understanding of gender by using

terms such as *man, woman, boy, girl, feelings, your identity, who you are, how you think and how you look*.

The participants stated that role models and admired individuals are significant factors shaping attitudes toward gender and sexuality. Both positive and negative influences from admired figures can impact individuals' perceptions and beliefs on these topics.

Additionally, the participants observed future teaching implications regarding the limited extent of discussions on gender and sexuality within school settings. One of the participants stated that his lack of knowledge on gender identity does not come from not wanting to talk or think about the topics; he just "*hasn't thought that much about it*".

4.2.2 Group 2

Group 2, consisting of five girls, performed a tableau illustrating a scenario where a group of girls judged a classmate, who is perceived as a girl, for wearing a suit or pants to their confirmation¹. The insights from this group's discussions and focus group interviews will be grouped into three areas of presenting: perceptions of appearance, attitudes towards diversity, and discussions on gender and sexuality.

Participants discussed the concept of appearance and clothing choices, particularly in relation to gender expression. The idea started off with a transexual person, resulting in the group depicting a girl wearing a suit, therefore breaking traditional gender norms through clothing.

Some participants expressed concerns about the interpretation of clothing choices. For instance, opting for a suit instead of the traditional national attire² was seen as potentially signaling a lack of femininity. There was a perception that not conforming to stereotypical feminine clothing could lead others to question or make assumptions about one's gender identity. The participants also highlighted what they understood as a misconception: wearing stereotypical "boy clothes" automatically signifies a rejection of femininity or a desire to identify as a boy.

¹ Confirmation in Norway is held to mark the symbolic transition from childhood to adulthood.

² "National attire" translates to "bunad". It refers to traditional Norwegian attire that is typically worn on special occasions such as weddings, May 17th, and other celebrations.

A general finding that has emerged from this group was the discussion and portrayal of attitudes towards those different. In the tableaux scenario the participants portrayed negative body language and made critical comments towards the girl dressed differently. The girls in national attire engaged in backbiting and made derogatory remarks such as questioning the choice of clothing, asserting superiority in appearance such as *“I look so much prettier than you”*, and expressing confusion or disapproval towards the unconventional clothing choice by saying, *“Why is she wearing pants when she is a girl?”*. These behaviors were justified by the girl as she believed that individuals who deviate from norms often face judgment from others.

In the interview, the girls claimed that none of them ended up portraying the girl wearing pants because they felt unable to authentically convey their true feelings in such a scenario: *“Ingen av oss spilte hun jenta i dress fordi vi følte at da klarte vi ikke vise hvordan vi faktiske følte det. Vi kunne ha lata som, men da hadde det ikke blitt like ekte”* [None of us portrayed the girls wearing a suit because then we all weren't able to show what we truly felt. We could have pretended, but it would not be as real]. The girl with the pants was not a visual character in the interview; instead, the participants used the audience as that character and directed their attention to the audience.

In contrast to the conveyed depiction from the tableaux scenario and statements made during the interviews, one of the participants stated, *“You should be allowed to be yourself, but it is not easy if you are not respected and accepted by others”*. This opens up for a discussion of whether the girls' portrayed attitudes were made up to create tension in the scenario or if their attitudes, expressed both verbally and non-verbally, were based on how they believe they would react if the scenario were a real-life situation.

The participants found it acceptable and important to engage in conversations about gender and sexuality, recognizing its significance in fostering understanding and acceptance. They acknowledged that discomfort with discussing these topics may stem from personal insecurities about one's own body and identity, highlighting the emotional complexities associated with these discussions. Additionally, the participants expressed varied levels of comfort and understanding when discussing gender and sexuality. They all conveyed a belief in the binary concept of gender, viewing it as a simple division between male and female.

When asked if they have talked and explored the topic of gender identity in school, the participants indicated that their education on sexuality was limited, with only one lesson, which deemed insufficient to cover such complex topics adequately. One participant in particular reflected upon only having one lesson about sexuality, and that *“I do not know that much about it, so I would love to learn more about it”*. This opens up for discussion regarding future teaching implications, and that students show an interest in discussing the topic in school.

4.2.3 Group 3

Group 3’s tableau scenario depicted a person being executed for being transgender, featuring an executioner and two spectators—one expressing happiness and the other sadness. The participants engaged in a dialogue reflecting on the confusion and prejudice surrounding gender (identities), resulting in these three areas of discussion: tableaux attitudes, appearances, and talking about gender identity.

Regarding tableaux attitudes, the participants crafted a vivid scene to show the tough situations LGBTQ people face. When asked by the researcher why and how they decided on their scenario, the participants explained that they drew inspiration from real-world events, particularly a news story about homosexual men being executed in Iran, to create a tableau that highlighted the harsh realities faced by LGBTQ individuals due to discrimination and violence.

The participants assigned roles within the tableau to represent different perspectives on LGBTQ issues: The person being shot represented an LGBTQ individual, emphasizing the targeting and victimization of individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The executioner symbolized homophobia or transphobia, reflecting societal attitudes and actions that perpetuate discrimination and violence against LGBTQ individuals. The two audiences—one happy and one sad—represented varying opinions *“because people have different opinions on LGBTQ”* underscoring the diversity of attitudes and perceptions within society.

After deciding what their tableau would depict, the students given the role of the transgender characters questioned how their other classmates could discern their gender identity based on appearance alone. *“How are they supposed to know? Do I look like a gay or transgender person?”* They expressed uncertainty about how LGBTQ individuals are perceived by others and discussed the challenges of understanding and identifying with these identities solely through

external appearances. Regarding appearances, participants discussed how stereotypes and societal norms influence perceptions of gender. When questioned about this, the participants explained that they explored with hairstyles, in particular hair length, to help depict a girl playing a transgender male character. *“She has long hair, and she does not have any manly features, so that’s why”*. They argued that societal norms have deemed short hair as masculine and long hair as feminine. However, they also stated that *“I am not saying that girls cannot have short hair”*.

Throughout the group discussion and the interviews, the participants continuously engaged in discussions about gender and sexuality. Gender was discussed in relation to biological sex, with participants expressing beliefs in a binary concept of genders—man and woman—based on genitalia.

Gender identity was also discussed in relation to how individuals feel internally and how they choose to present themselves outwardly, *“you may think that you feel like a girl, but just because you want to wear dresses and makeup, can you be defined as a girl? Boys can wear makeup without being girls and transgender”*. The participants questioned the societal norms of gender roles and appearances, challenging stereotypes that associate certain characteristics with specific genders. They emphasized that self-expression, such as wearing dresses or makeup, should not solely define one’s gender identity.

The participants also explored certain challenges with expressing one’s gender identity. They noted that it may be easier for individuals who conform to societal norms, *“if you are ‘normal’ it is easier”*, to express their identities compared to those who visibly differ from societal expectations from a young age.

Additionally, the participants were able to connect the importance of acceptance and respect, and one’s overall personality and likability. Participants suggested that being liked and respected as a person could influence acceptance of one’s gender identity or sexual orientation.

4.2.4 Group 4

Unfortunately, due to illness, only one out of the three intended participants were available for the interview session scheduled. As a result, the researcher was unable to conduct the interview as planned. However, to ensure the research progresses smoothly and effectively, the data

gathered from the tableau group discussion will be presented, as it may also provide important input for the discussion.

The group focused on the visual element of the tableau, in regards of **appearances**, such as clothing and body language, as a way to emphasize each character's gender expressions. This highlighted their understanding of how gender can be expressed outwardly and how appearances can influence or reflect one's gender identity.

During the group work, the participants discussed gender and sexuality by exploring the possibility of portraying people with gender identities in their tableau. The group's tableau started with the common understanding of two genders, but as they discussed, the group explored that gender may not be strictly binary. They discussed that some may identify with a gender different from their sex assigned at birth.

This results chapter summarized the findings from the study's data collection, including a four-corner activity, tableaux group discussions, and focus group interviews. The findings reveal varied understandings of and reflections on gender identity, providing a basis for the next chapter's discussion on the identified themes (figure 4) presented in section 3.4.

5 Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings by using the identified themes presented in section 3.4. The chapter is divided into two main themes 1) discussions on gender and sexuality and 2) questioning gender stereotypes, including sub-themes: 1a) binary gender versus gender identity, and 2a) visual appearances and 2b) gender and school performance.

5.1 Discussions on gender and sexuality

Discussion on gender and sexuality is one of the main identified themes based on the results from this study, which show that the participants' understanding of gender identity is largely related to sexuality. In the tableaux activity, the participants were given an open task with the only directions of creating a scenario based on the groups 'post-it-notes', using the groups collective understanding of gender identity as inspiration for creating the scenario. As mentioned in 4.2.1, one of the groups, which consisted of all boys, focused on homosexuality when creating their scenario. This suggests that there is a common association between the concepts of gender identity and sexuality among the study participants. Similarly, Røthing (2020) present an example how a group of 8th graders in a Norwegian school associated gender norms, sexual orientation, and gender identity with each other (p. 34).

The QCL framework emphasizes the importance of challenging and reevaluating the existing knowledge and assumptions about gender and sexuality (Govender & Andrews, 2022). As mentioned in section 2.1, Govender & Andrews have adapted five types of questioning as a pedagogical tool. In the tableaux activity, the male group mentioned in the paragraph above *questioned knowledge, assumptions, and meaning-making* (2022, p. 88). In this study, as students engaged in discussion on gender identity and sexuality, they were prompted to explore what they knew about gender and identities. The results show that the participants have a tendency to equate gender identity with sexual orientation. Additionally, in the second activity, four corners, the participants were forced to take a stance based on their own opinion and discuss with those agreeing with themes. By engaging in discussion on gender identity, the students were able explore personal beliefs, as well as being forced to listen to and respect their classmates' different beliefs. Such activities not only challenge existing prejudices but also promote empathy

and understanding towards one's own and other (MER, 2017, p.3) viewpoints to certain sensitive topics (COE, 2016). This aligns with the queer critical literacy's framework, which advocates for questioning and disrupting normative assumptions about gender and sexuality in educational settings (Govender & Andrews, 2022).

Teacher: You chose to focus on the theme of homosexuality. Why did you make the decision of that topic?
Student 2: I really have no idea.
Student 1: It was really just the first thing we thought of, really.
Student 2: It was after you said that thing about...
Student 1: Yeah, that thing about the dress.
Student 2: The dress and suit thing. I just thought, like, I don't know what it was, but it was really just a thing that made me think, or made us think about ... Yeah, about that [homosexuality]
Teacher: And then, you assigned yourself these roles within your group. And you spent quite a bit of time deciding who would represent the homosexual character. Why do you think you spent so much time on that?
Student 1: Because no one wanted to be that one.
Student 2: Yeah, no one wanted to be that person. Or none of us wanted to play that person.
Teacher: Why not?
Student 1: I feel it was because of the, uh, because that person is in the spotlight, and gets the most attention.

Figure 6. Focus group interview translation (translated from L1)

This focus group interview transcription exemplifies the principles of QCL by highlighting how conversations can challenge and disrupt common ideas about gender and sexuality (Govender & Andrew, 2022). The researcher's questions prompt the students to reflect on their quick decision to focus on homosexuality and their reluctance to portray a homosexual character, revealing their underlying assumptions and societal influences. This interaction also aligns with QCL's goal of *questioning knowledge, assumptions, and meaning-making* (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 88), as it brings to light the students' preconceived notions, discomfort and biases.

5.1.1 Binary gender versus gender identity

The study's findings suggest a mutual understanding of gender identity in relation to binary gender. The participants are generally aligned with a binary perspective of gender as strictly male or female. Contrasting this binary perspective, the process drama activities encouraged and challenged the participants to discuss gender on a broader spectrum, questioning the participants' conceptualized knowledge and assumptions on the topic (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 84).

With a smaller sample of 9th graders already familiar with each other, the process drama created an arena where the participants engaged in potential uncomfortable discussions about gender. By questioning students' beliefs and assumptions about certain topics, in this case gender identity, the concept of “pedagogy of discomfort” (Røthing, 2020), is implemented as the questioning and challenging will promote inclusivity, empathy, and understanding of what they might believe as “wrong”.

During the four-corner activity, it was stated that *“you are allowed to think what you want, but in 10,000 years, when they dig up your body, they will be able to tell if you were a boy or a girl, and that’s a fact”*, emphasizing a limited understanding of people right to identify as other, but, again, marks the viewpoint of binary gender. Another participant echoed this sentiment, stating, *“det er laget to kjønn for en grunn og jeg tenker at vi bare kan holde oss til det”* [two genders were created for a reason; I think we should just stick to that].

However, the minority viewpoint underscores a growing acknowledgment within some community segments of gender as a broader spectrum and introduces the aspect of ‘LGBTQIA’. This perspective challenged the majorities viewpoints and advocated for a more inclusive understanding of gender identity, highlighting the ongoing societal shift towards recognizing and respecting gender diversity. As captured in a thoughtful reflection, one participant stated, *“I know there are biologically two genders, boy and girl, as it has always been. But I respect the LGBTQIA+ community, and while there are two biological genders, you are allowed to feel a different way”*.

5.2 Questioning gender stereotypes

The activities challenged students to reconsider their views on what constitutes masculine or feminine behaviors and appearances. This questioning is critical in an educational context, as it allows students to critically analyze and discuss the stereotypes they encounter in everyday life and media. By facilitating a dialogue around these stereotypes, the study helped students understand the arbitrary nature of such norms and the potential harm they can inflict when rigidly enforced. This exploration is vital for developing critical thinking and empathy, which are essential for navigating a diverse society. Engaging students in questioning gender stereotypes

not only supports their personal growth but also contributes to a more inclusive and equitable school environment.

“What is it that defines thinking as a boy or thinking as a girl?” This question was brought up in group 3’s focus group interview. The participants questioned the basis of gender-specific thinking, critiquing the common practice of defining gender through external attributes like clothing and behavior instead of recognizing an individual’s inherent gender identity. They highlighted concerns that societal norms around ‘boy-things’ and ‘girl-things’ could negatively influence how people see their own gender. They argue that it is incorrect to define or change someone’s gender identity based on their preferences for what is traditionally seen as a gender-specific external factor.

If a boy likes to use what we identify as ‘girl-things’, likes makeup and dresses, he is automatically defined as a girl. But boys should be allowed to act feminine without having to be gay or transgender.

The students’ reflections and discussions during the process drama activities challenge Judith Butler’s (2006) concept of the “heterosexual matrix,” which links perceived sex, gender identity, and expected sexuality. By questioning why society insists on strict categories based on appearances such as clothing and makeup, the participants critically examine how these norms dictate individual behavior and perception. One student’s statement, *“You can be a girl that wears clothes defined as ‘boy-clothes’, and still be a girl,”* underscores the argument that clothing does not define gender, advocating for the separation of gender identity from traditional norms of gender expression. This perspective is further reinforced by another student’s observation, *“The world is influenced by boy- and girl-things, and it shouldn’t be that way, because that may influence someone’s thoughts about who they are,”* highlighting the impact of societal expectations on personal self-conception. The participants argue that such norms lead to misconceptions about gender and enforce stereotypes that do not reflect the true diversity of one’s identity. For instance, why should a boy wearing a dress or using makeup be automatically assumed to be homosexual or transgender? This question directly challenges Butler’s matrix by proposing that these gender norms are socially constructed and subject to change. By questioning why certain items and behaviors are assigned a gender and why deviating from these norms leads to assumptions about one’s sexuality or gender identity, the students challenge the traditional

binary and culturally constructed notions of gender, advocating for a more nuanced understanding that recognizes gender as primarily determined by one's inherent identity rather than by external factors.

This study's activities facilitated discussions on gender stereotypes, encouraging students to challenge societal norms and assumptions. By interrogating the basis of gender-specific behaviors and appearances, participants questioned the heteronormative matrix (Butler, 2006). These discussions reflect QCL's emphasis on disrupting common ideas about gender and advocating for a more nuanced understanding of identity (Govender & Andrews, 2022). Through collaborative dialogue, students engaged in a process of challenging gender norms.

5.2.1 Visual appearances

The participants associated gender-certain visual cues with stereotypes, such as clothing and hairstyles. The process drama allowed them to interrogate these associations, leading to critical discussions about how societal norms influence our perceptions of gender. This aligns with the pedagogical aims of queer critical literacies, which challenge traditional narratives and encourage students to analyze how identities and roles are constructed.

As mentioned in section 4.3, one group was particularly passionate about discussing how you look, and dress may either help you decide what you identify as or be a telling signal for other people how you identify. During group 3's tableau, one of the participants were especially caught up on how the audience would be able to tell that the character she portrayed in the tableau were transgender, when she looks so much as a girl. The groups solution to this problem was hair. By putting on a hood and making her hair shorter, it would be a visual element that would help the audience see that the character was a boy. For many children today, hair length is a decisive sign of gender.

Connecting the participant's concerns and statements questioning gender stereotypes, Røthing (2020) talks about how a person is 'readable'. By this, she means that a person's outer expression, such as hairstyle, clothes, accessories, and body language, is what makes someone gender readable as either a man or a woman (p. 111). By putting some effort into changing one's outer expression, men and women may easily change their appearance to what is considered stereotypical of the other gender. Colors and clothes are also crucial when both children and

adults read and perform gender (Røthing, 2020, p. 74). This way of identifying gender can also be found in group 4's group discussion when working on their tableau, as one of the girls stated, *"I can be the guy because I have a hoodie so I can make my hair shorter"*.

5.2.2 Gender and school performance

A recurring theme in participant discussions is how differently boys and girls are treated. One student noted, *"Girls are expected to always be well-behaved, quiet, clean, while boys can have a more free spirit"*. They further explain that this disparity in expectations can have far-reaching consequences on how students are perceived and evaluated academically.

"I feel that teachers expect girls to behave better and perform better, while boys tend to act out. Teachers also demand that girls have a deeper understanding of various subjects. If boys perform slightly better than average but at the same level as girls, they receive higher grades. However, if girls achieve the same level as boys, they receive lower grades. Boys often receive better grades merely for attempting tasks. Essentially, there are higher expectations placed on girls compared to boys."

This observation highlights the different standards to which boys and girls are held, both in behavior and academic settings. The participants claim that teachers have different expectations and grading standards for boys and girls, and that they require girls have a broader knowledge base and understanding of various subjects compared to boys. Arguably, girls today are in the lead and take responsibility for the academic work in school, while boys as a group are behind performance-wise (Røthing, 2020, p. 93). Evidently, studies show that as a group, girls are generally more motivated and engaged in their own school performance than boys.

The participants expressed perceptions of differences in school performance and revealed underlying biases and expectations placed on students based on gender. By questioning these disparities, participants challenged societal norms and advocated for equity in education. By discussing these different, the participants *questioned the policing of gender* (Govender & Andrews, 2022, p. 87).

5.3 Teaching implications

Teaching topics that are considered sensitive and controversial is essential for preparing our young citizens to participate actively in society. Discussing topics that relate to the “major social, political, economic or moral problems of our time” (COE, 2016, p. 14), will help students learn to engage in dialogue with people who have differing opinions.

5.3.1 Students reflection – a teaching resource

These participant reflections present a valuable opportunity for educators to broaden the discussion around gender and sexuality in the classroom, linking to Govender and Andrewws (2022) framework of Queer Critical Literacies (QCL). By incorporating QCL into classroom discussions, educators can empower students to question representations, reading practices, and the policing of gender and sexuality, ultimately fostering a more critical understanding of societal norms and promoting social justice.

The responses from the four-corner activity and group discussions highlight entrenched gender stereotypes and societal norms. For instance, the view that “boys are braver and more aggressive” or “girls should wear dresses” reveals the need for educational interventions that challenge these stereotypes. This understanding is crucial for developing empathy and supporting a more inclusive environment. A teaching strategy may be to incorporate discussions on gender stereotypes and norms in various subjects, such as literature and social studies. This can be implemented by using role-playing scenarios allowing the students to explore and challenge traditional gender roles. For example, one could use the aspect of a tableau and have the students switch roles in each other’s tableaux and discuss how it feels to be in each other’s shoes. Similarly, as done in Sedberg’s (2023) study, incorporating Image Theatre can be a way for students to explore and represent different perspectives related to gender stereotypes. Students could create tableaux depicting common stereotypes or societal expectations around gender roles, and then dynamically explore alternative perspectives within those tableaux.

The data revealed mixed feelings about non-binary and transgender identities, with some participants acknowledging diverse gender identities and others adhering to a binary view of gender. Teachers can educate their students on using inclusive language, respecting pronouns, and creating classroom norms that affirm all gender identities (Aaserud, 2021). However, as

mentioned in the introduction, and as supported by Jørgensen (2024), teachers should be considerate and tread with wariness as one should only inform, not convince the students when incorporating LGBTQ topics into the classroom.

The findings indicate a gap in the participants' knowledge about gender identity, with some expressing a desire for more education on these topics: *"We've had one lesson about sexuality, but it wasn't enough. I don't know that much about it, so I would love to learn more"*. Teachers can develop a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum that includes lessons on gender identity, sexual orientation, and healthy relationships, either over a longer period of time or more distributed throughout the school year. Integrating the interdisciplinary topic of health and life skills into the English subject offers a unique opportunity to enhance students' linguistic and communicative abilities while also promoting their personal development and understanding of diverse perspectives. By fostering proficiency in expressing oneself in writing and orally (MER, 2017, p. 3), students not only strengthen their language skills but also cultivate essential life skills that contribute to their overall well-being and self-awareness.

Additionally, as the participants expressed the importance of group discussion when talking about sensitive topics, it may be essential to implement strategies that foster collaborative learning. One effective approach is to encourage group projects where students can research and present on various aspects related to gender and sexuality. For instance, by allowing students to explore topics such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and the impact of societal norms on gender roles. These projects could be structured to include small group discussions, collaborative research, and presentations that allow students to share their findings with the class. By working in groups, students may benefit from diverse perspectives and develop a deeper understanding of complex issues. This method not only enhances their knowledge but also promotes critical thinking and empathy, creating a more inclusive and respectful classroom environment

Educators should promote critical thinking by encouraging students to question societal norms related to gender and sexuality within the EFL classroom. This setting allows students to analyze literature and media that reflect various perspectives on these issues, fostering a deeper understanding of the fluidity of these concepts and the constructed nature of traditional gender roles. Discussions can challenge the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 2006), supporting those who do

not fit traditional categories and enriching the educational experience for all by exposing them to diverse perspectives.

5.3.2 Teaching considerations

An important teaching consideration when working on sensitive topics, is that of grouping arrangements and compositions. One participant expressed discomfort when placed in a group with unfamiliar peers: *“if you are put (in a group) with people you haven’t talked to much before, it becomes embarrassing and uncomfortable to speak openly about gender and sexuality”*. During the four-corner activity, the larger groups often had only 3-4 active speakers, making it uncomfortable for others to voice their opinions. Conversely, smaller groups were able to participate in more open and comfortable discussions. Students found it easier to speak in smaller groups: *“it was easier to talk in the smaller group than in the large ones, because no one wanted to speak and say what they meant”*. Smaller group discussions can create a safer space for students to express their thoughts and engage more openly. Teachers should consider forming smaller groups to facilitate comfort and encourage participation.

Gender perceptions can significantly influence our interactions with others. For teachers, this awareness is crucial, as their views on gender can deeply affect their understanding and interpretation of students’ actions and words, as well as their responses in interactions with students and parents that “many children, adolescents, and adults have clear perceptions of gender” (Røthing, 2020, p. 105). However, Røthing argues that we are often unaware of our own beliefs and the reasonings behind having these beliefs. Consequently, an important aspect of teachers’ diversity awareness is being conscious of their own understanding and knowledge of gender and ensuring that these views do not impede their interactions with students (Røthing, 2020, p. 105; COE, 2016, p. 19). Reflecting on their beliefs and biases can help them create a more inclusive classroom environment. Sensitivity to students’ comfort levels and peer influences is crucial. Teachers should strive to create an atmosphere where all students feel safe and valued, fostering open and honest discussions about gender and sexuality.

In one of the group interviews, a participant noted following a friend’s lead during discussions, which could hinder authentic engagement: *“it was fine [...] I followed my friend a lot, but I know we shouldn’t have done that”*. Following this statement a group member noted the presence of

popular students, and how they together in a group could influence others to conform to their views: *“this is a very strange conversation, but there were some popular ones there, so I think the others didn’t want to disagree with them. Maybe those who had different opinions were afraid of being looked down upon”*. Strong personalities in groups could dominate discussions, as illustrated by an exchange among students about representing violence in a tableau, showing the impact of assertive individuals on group dynamics.

Finally, a significant portion of the participants articulated their understanding of gender within binary definitions, with two traditional genders: male and female. However, when challenged with dilemmas on boys and girls challenging this binary concept by wanting to wear makeup, dresses, and pants, the participants raised the question: Can a person’s gender identity be solely defined by external expression? Boys can wear makeup without necessarily being identified as girls or transgender. And, what constitutes the definitions of boy and girl in today’s context? As the researcher was not the right person to answer these reflective questions, future research may involve allowing participants, tailored to their age groups, to explore their traditional views on gender and what drives their identification with the opposite gender. Aaserud (2021) underscores the importance of providing youths with opportunities to observe diverse gender expressions encompassing visual attributes like clothing, makeup, hairstyles, vocal tones, and body language. Furthermore, he advocates for facilitating reflections among youths regarding which traits feel innate to them and which ones evoke discomfort (p. 124). Through these exposures, youth may become more aware and accepting of the ongoing evolution of gender expressions within society (Aaserud, 2021).

5.4 Limitations

This section examines several key limitations that emerged during the study, impacting the quality and depth of the data collected. These limitations include the logistical challenges of group formation and audio recording, the inherent focus on visual aspects due to task selection, the influence of time constraints, the lack of established teacher-student relationships, miscommunication about teacher involvement, impromptu group compositions, gender imbalance among participants, varying levels of prior knowledge, and the influence of participants’ preexisting attitudes and beliefs. By identifying these issues, we can better

understand the factors that affected the study's outcomes and consider improvements for future research.

During the four corners activity, participants consistently gathered in larger groups at one corner for each dilemma, which limited discussion within these groups. To facilitate more interaction, the researcher intervened, instructing them to form smaller groups. Unfortunately, this adjustment impacted the data collection process, as it disrupted the audio recordings. In hindsight, a more effective approach would have been to redistribute audio recorders from an unoccupied corner among the groups to ensure better data capture. Consequently, transcribing the discussions became challenging at times, potentially compromising the quality of the data collected during the study.

The participants' emphasis on the visual aspect of the tableau characters gender expression highlights a significant limitation rooted in task selection. It is crucial to consider how the choice of the tableau task itself influenced this overall focus on appearances. The nature of the task inherently directed attention towards outward expressions, such as clothing and body language, as a means to convey characters' gender expressions. Consequently, task selection likely played a role in shaping the emerging themes and topics from the data.

Another limitation is that of time. The researcher had not been informed that the participants had a break in between two classes. The timing was somewhat insufficient as it split the process drama into two. This may have influenced the data collection, as the researcher had little time to adapt to the time schedule. It was a thought that consistently influenced the researcher, as they kept an eye on the clock to ensure that everything was accomplished on time, resulting in less time on the class discussion that occurred during the four-corner activity. Spending more time on these discussions would have allowed for a deeper exploration of the topic, providing richer data and more comprehensive insights into the participants' perspectives.

Despite having established relationships with a handful of the participants, the researcher was not their teacher. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, it would have been beneficial if the students had discussed it with someone, they were more comfortable with. The lack of teacher-student familiarity may have influenced the openness and honesty of the participants' reflections and statements.

Additionally, the study was originally planned under the assumption that the teachers would be present during the process drama. However, due to the non-participation of many students, the teachers had to conduct classes with those not involved in the study, resulting in their absence during the process drama sessions. This absence led to less formal control over the classroom environment, affecting the seriousness and engagement with which students approached the activity. Additionally, teachers could have provided immediate pedagogical support, helping to steer discussions and reflections more effectively toward the curriculum goals related to gender identity. At the same time, without the teachers present, some participants might have felt more comfortable and less restrained, making it easier for them to express their thoughts and opinions openly. The absence of teachers could have reduced the pressure or fear of judgment that students might feel when authority figures are around, leading to more candid and honest participation. Moreover, having teachers in the room might have unintentionally directed the discussions through their comments, potentially tainting the data. Therefore, the absence of teachers is not entirely negative, as it may have allowed for a more authentic and uninfluenced collection of student perspectives. This highlights the complexity of the data collection situation and suggests that the impact of teacher presence should be carefully considered in future studies.

Another limitation due to miscommunication was that of group compositions. When the researcher arrived to conduct the data collection, there was no planned grouping, leading to impromptu group formations. The spontaneous grouping may have resulted in teams with dynamics that were not beneficial to open or balanced discussions on gender identity.

A significant gender imbalance, with only three male participants, could skew the perspectives presented during the activities, limiting the diversity of views and possibly influencing the comfort level among participants in discussing gender-related topics. Pre-assigning groups could have helped manage dynamics more effectively, ensuring that each group had the potential to engage fully with the subject matter.

In relation to the data analysis in itself, three limitations on biases and participant engagement may have occurred. Despite employing an inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a researcher bias may have occurred. The researcher's own perspectives and assumptions may have had an influence the identification and interpretation of themes in the data.

In relation to accurate and valid data there may have occurred some limitations in regard to the data collected. Given the sensitive nature of the topic of gender identity, some participants may have felt inclined to provide socially acceptable responses rather than expressing their genuine thoughts and feelings. This bias could affect the validity of the data collected, especially in group settings where peer pressure may influence individual responses. Additionally, despite the efforts to encourage independent decision-making and active participation (e.g., through structured activities like the four-corners and tableaux), some participants may have been more passive or reluctant to engage fully. This could result in incomplete or skewed data, particularly if certain viewpoints are underrepresented.

In conclusion, these limitations highlight areas for improvement in future studies, particularly in the careful planning and conducting of the study, to ensure more effective data collection and richer, more balanced discussions on sensitive topics like gender identity.

6 Conclusion

This study explored the reflections and understanding of gender identity among Norwegian EFL 9th graders through participation in a process drama. By examining the data collected from various activities, including the four corner discussion, tableaux, and focus group interviews, the study showed a general agreement among the participants about the topics, finally answering:

What understanding of gender identity do Norwegian EFL 9th graders express through participation in a process drama?

The findings of this study were analyzed through an inductive TA based on the data from two process drama activities and focus group interviews. The free listing activity captured students' initial, unfiltered thoughts on “gender” and “gender identity”, setting the stage for deeper exploration. The four corners method facilitated discussion and promoted an exchange of diverse perspectives. In the tableaux and thought-tracking activity, the participants created frozen images representing their collective understanding of gender identity and vocalized their characters' thoughts, adding depth to their visual representations. Finally, the focus group interviews provided an opportunity to delve deeper into the themes that emerged from the earlier activities. Through thematic analysis, these methods revealed common themes such as 1) discussions on gender and sexuality and 2) questioning gender stereotypes, with the corresponding sub-themes: 1a) binary gender versus gender identity, and 2a) visual appearances and 2b) gender and school performance. This approach effectively uncovered the nuances in students' perceptions of gender identity, aligning with the study's goal of exploring understanding within the classroom.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

The reflections captured during the drama and interviews revealed a range of attitudes toward gender diversity. Some students expressed openness and empathy, while others showed hesitation, resulting in an interesting data collection with a broad variety of viewpoints.

The study revealed that the participants often equated gender identity with sexual orientation. The process drama showed that many students viewed gender through the lens of sexuality, reflecting a common association between these concepts (Røthing, 2020). The majority of the

participants adhered to a binary understanding of gender and gender identity, with statements such as *“you are born either as a boy or a girl, and you can’t just change that”* to support this finding. Additionally, the participants discussed differences in appearance, behavior, and societal expectations, explaining that gender identity is often viewed through a stereotypical lens of what and how society perceives gender. The participants also revealed a diverse viewpoint regarding differences in how boys and girls are expected to behave. Some believed that girls are often held to stricter standards of behavior and cleanliness, while boys were allowed more freedom. Others drew on gender differences in an educational setting claiming that *“if boys do something better than normal, but at the same level as the girls, they get better grade”*.

6.2 Potential avenues for future research

This study’s data collection only lasted for approximately three hours. As such, future research could implement longitudinal studies. Conducting longitudinal studies on gender identity, exploring and teaching about the topics in a broader aspect, and exposing students to the varying viewpoints of gender identity, may track changes in students’ understanding of gender identity over time, offering valuable information on the development of their perspectives and how these evolve over time. This approach can help identify key stages in development and the impact of various educational interventions on students’ perceptions and attitudes toward gender diversity. Additionally, conducting this research across different age groups could reveal how perceptions of gender identity evolve over time. Younger individuals might have different understandings and attitudes toward gender identity compared to older age groups and generations, influenced by varying aspects such as cultural, social, and educational contexts. For example, younger generations may be more exposed to and accepting of diverse gender expressions due to increased visibility and discourse around gender issues in media and education. In contrast, older generations may hold more traditional views influenced by the norms prevalent during their childhood. Understanding these generational differences could provide valuable insights into the dynamics of gender identity and how societal shifts influence personal identification over the lifespan.

Similarly, expanding the sample group could possibly offer more diverse reflections and understandings of gender identity, providing a broader perspective on this controversial topic. A

larger and more varied sample group, encompassing different cultural, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds, may offer a richer and more nuanced understanding of gender identity, capturing the wide scale of experiences and perspectives that exist. As this study only took place in one out of many schools in differing demographic areas, another possible avenue for future research is to expand it to include diverse educational settings, such as urban vs. rural schools, public vs. private institutions, and schools with different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. This may uncover an even broader variety of gender identity understandings. Also making it interesting to see how these factors of geography and socioeconomic backgrounds may affect the participants' understanding.

Given that only 17 out of nearly 50 consent forms were handed out to the chosen group of participants, a significant research opportunity lies in exploring the role of parental attitudes and the effectiveness of collaborative efforts between schools and families in discussing controversial and sensitive topics. This research could provide valuable insights into fostering inclusivity both within and outside the classroom. By understanding the barriers and facilitators of parental consent and involvement, educators and policymakers can create more comprehensive strategies to ensure all students can participate in and contribute to important discussions for their social and emotional development.

This study solely focuses on 9th graders' reflections and understanding of gender identity. As mentioned in section 2.5.1, Page (2017) talks about teachers' discomfort with incorporating LGBTQ topics into education, but that younger teachers generally feel more comfortable. Thus, a possible avenue for future research may be to investigate the reflections and experiences of younger teachers in regard to incorporating sensitive and controversial topics in the classroom.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Lesson Plan

<p>Curricular aims in English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - express oneself with fluency and coherence with a varied vocabulary and idiomatic expressions adapted to the purpose, recipient, and situation - ask questions and follow up input when talking about various topics adapted to different purposes, recipients and situations 		<p>Interdisciplinary topics in English:</p> <p>Health and life skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being able to express their feelings, thoughts, experiences, and opinions ... on the pupils' own way of life and that of others. <p>Democracy and citizenship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication can promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices. 	
<p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dilemmas for four corners - Audio recorders - Camera to capture tableaux 		<p>Preparations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Before the lesson, the researcher has visited the participants and introduced the study, expectations and opened up for questions - Prepare an open space for activities 	
Activity	Time	Description	Why?
1	10	<p>The students are provided with the two keywords “gender” and “gender identity”, then they are instructed to write a list with any words, phrases and general thoughts that come to mind when they hear these words.</p> <p><i>These lists will be used in a later activity.</i></p>	<p>To activate the learners and start their thought process regarding the lesson's theme.</p>
2	20	<p>The researcher presents the students with a set of statements and dilemmas with a range of possible viewpoints/responses. The researcher reads a statement aloud and assigns each corner a pre-made viewpoint/response. There must always be a corner with “other response”. The students move to the corner that best aligns with their viewpoints on the scenario or dilemma.</p> <p>Students who have chosen the same corner discuss why they have chosen this response. The class and researcher go through the corners together and talk about the different responses to the statement.</p>	<p>To foster honest reflections on the topic of gender identity.</p> <p>Do the students feel comfortable disagreeing with their peers, and will they talk about it in plenary?</p> <p>Collect data through audio recordings and observation form (see</p>

			<p><i>(If a corner ends up empty, the researcher can encourage the students to discuss why that might be)</i></p> <p><i>(If a corner is occupied by just one student, the researcher will go to that corner and discuss with the student)</i></p>	whether students hesitate or change direction)
3	Creation of the Tableaux	30	In groups (4-6 students), the students will create a tableau based upon what they believe is an accurate depiction of gender. The group will go through each group member's list from the Free listing activity, then choosing one and base their tableaux on this.	Collect data through audio recordings.
4	Tableaux performance with thought tracking.	20	One group at a time presents their tableaux. In the thought tracking activity, each group will present their tableaux in the assigned space, then the researcher will walk around and touch a student's shoulder and have them voice what their "character" is thinking.	Collect data through video and audio recordings. Photograph

Appendix 2 – Four corners: claims, dilemmas and corner responses

		Assigned corner response
CLAIMS	There is a big difference between boys and girls	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. It depends 4. Other response
	Boys and girls have the same “rules” for how they should behave	
	A person is either a boy or a girl	
DILEMMA 1	<p>Anna’s older sister is getting married, and Annas has decided she wants to wear pants. She never wears dresses, and she feels most comfortable in pants. When she tells her sister about this, she says she will not allow it. Anna’s sister believes that when you are a girl, you should wear a dress on such a special occasion. She also thinks it’s quite embarrassing if Anna dresses differently from the other girls in her wedding. What should Anna do?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anna should stick to her decision to wear pants. 2. Anna must accept her sister’s decision the she should wear a dress. 3. Anna should start wearing dresses now so that she gets used to it. 4. Other responses.
DILEMMA 2	<p>Benjamin has always felt different than the other boys in his class. In 8th grade he understood why. Benjamin does not feel like a boy, and he hasn’t for a long time. What should Benjamin do?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Benjamin should ignore these feelings. 2. Benjamin should figure it out themselves. 3. Benjamin should talk to someone about these feelings. 4. Other options

Appendix 3 – Focus group interview guide

Question guide, Norwegian

Group info: 5 girls / 5 boys / 2 girls and 3 boys		Preparations:
Theme	Questions	Student responses
Follow-up from the tableaux	<p>Hvordan kom dere til enighet?</p> <p>Klarte dere å lytte til hverandre?</p> <p>Var det noe som var særlig utfordrende?</p> <p>Kunne dere løst samarbeidet på en annen måte? Var alle enige med gruppens helhetlige løsning?</p> <p>Hva husker du best fra arbeidet du gjorde i løpet av økta?</p> <p>Hva ønsker du å lære mer om?</p>	
Based on group discussions during tableaux	<p><i>Disse spørsmålene vil bli laget etter opplegget med prossessdramaet. Spørsmålene vil bli basert på diskusjonene den enkelte gruppe har innad når de lager tableaux.</i></p>	
General questions	<p>Hva tenker du på når du hører begrepet "kjønnsidentitet"?</p> <p>Med dine egne ord, hvordan ville du definere begrepet kjønn?</p> <p>Har dere noen tanker om det å uttrykke sin egen kjønnsidentitet?</p> <p>Tror du folk i din aldersgruppe diskuterer kjønnsidentitet ofte? Hvorfor eller hvorfor ikke?</p> <p>Hvordan tror du media og populærkulturen påvirker vår forståelse av kjønn?</p>	

Appendix 3.1 – Interview guide, group 1

GROUP 1

Group info: 3 boys		Preparations:
Theme	Questions	Student responses
Follow-up from the tableaux	<p>Hvordan kom dere til enighet?</p> <p>Klarte dere å lytte til hverandre?</p> <p>Var det noe som var særlig utfordrende?</p> <p>Kunne dere løst samarbeidet på en annen måte? Var alle enige med gruppens helhetlige løsning?</p> <p>Hva husker du best fra arbeidet du gjorde i løpet av økta?</p> <p>Hva ønsker du å lære mer om?</p>	
Based on group discussions during tableaux	<p>Hvorfor valgte dere å fokusere på temaet "homofili" så raskt? Kan dere dele tankene deres bak denne beslutningen, og hvordan koblet dere det til diskusjonen om kjønnsidentitet?</p> <p>Da dere skulle fordele roller, virket det som om det var en del tid brukt på å bestemme hvem som skulle representere den homofile karakteren. Har dere noen tanker om hvorfor det tok tid, og hva var deres prosess bak dette valget?</p>	
General questions	<p>Hva tenker du på når du hører begrepet "kjønnsidentitet"?</p> <p>Med dine egne ord, hvordan ville du definere begrepet kjønn?</p> <p>Har dere noen tanker om det å uttrykke sin egen kjønnsidentitet?</p> <p>Tror du folk i din aldersgruppe diskuterer kjønnsidentitet ofte? Hvorfor eller hvorfor ikke?</p> <p>Hvordan tror du media og populærkulturen påvirker vår forståelse av kjønn?</p>	

Appendix 3.2 – Interview guide, group 2

GROUP 2

Group info: 5 girls		Preparations:
Theme	Questions	Student responses
Follow-up from the tableaux	<p>Hvordan kom dere til enighet?</p> <p>Klarte dere å lytte til hverandre?</p> <p>Var det noe som var særlig utfordrende?</p> <p>Kunne dere løst samarbeidet på en annen måte? Var alle enige med gruppens helhetlige løsning?</p> <p>Hva husker du best fra arbeidet du gjorde i løpet av økta?</p> <p>Hva ønsker du å lære mer om?</p>	
Based on group discussions during tableaux	<p>Hvordan kom dere fram til ideen om at en jente skulle gå i bukse under konfirmasjonen når alle andre jenter gikk i kjole? Kan dere dele tankene deres bak denne avgjørelsen, og kan dere prøve å forklare hvordan dere knyttet dette til diskusjonen om kjønnsidentitet.</p> <p>Hva forsøkte dere å formidle gjennom dette kroppsspråket, og hvorfor følte dere at det var viktig å inkludere det i scenarioet deres?</p> <p>Ble det diskutert om noen kunne føle seg komfortable med å kle seg annerledes enn det som vanligvis forventes i samfunnet? Hvis ja, hvordan kom dere fram til dette scenarioet, der en jente går i bukse under konfirmasjonen mens andre jenter går i kjole.</p>	
General questions	<p>Hva tenker du på når du hører begrepet "kjønnsidentitet"?</p> <p>Med dine egne ord, hvordan ville du definere begrepet kjønn?</p> <p>Har dere noen tanker om det å uttrykke sin egen kjønnsidentitet?</p> <p>Tror du folk i din aldersgruppe diskuterer kjønnsidentitet ofte? Hvorfor eller hvorfor ikke?</p> <p>Hvordan tror du media og populærkulturen påvirker vår forståelse av kjønn?</p>	

Appendix 3.3 – Interview guide, group 3

GROUP 3

Group info: 4 girls		Preparations:
Theme	Questions	Student responses
Follow-up from the tableaux	<p>Hvordan kom dere til enighet?</p> <p>Klarte dere å lytte til hverandre?</p> <p>Var det noe som var særlig utfordrende?</p> <p>Kunne dere løst samarbeidet på en annen måte? Var alle enige med gruppens helhetlige løsning?</p> <p>Hva husker du best fra arbeidet du gjorde i løpet av økta?</p> <p>Hva ønsker du å lære mer om?</p>	
Based on group discussions during tableaux	<p>Hva fikk dere til å velge akkurat dette scenarioet? Har dere noen gang hørt om lignende situasjoner før som inspirerte dere?</p> <p>Hvorfor bestemte dere dere for at en person skulle være glad og en annen trist i scenarioet deres? Hva var tanken bak dette valget?</p> <p>Dere stilte noen gode spørsmål rundt hvordan publikum skulle vite at karakteren din var transe? Og dere endte opp med å ta på hetten? Hvorfor?</p>	
General questions	<p>Hva tenker du på når du hører begrepet "kjønnsidentitet"?</p> <p>Med dine egne ord, hvordan ville du definere begrepet kjønn?</p> <p>Har dere noen tanker om det å uttrykke sin egen kjønnsidentitet?</p> <p>Tror du folk i din aldersgruppe diskuterer kjønnsidentitet ofte? Hvorfor eller hvorfor ikke?</p> <p>Hvordan tror du media og populærkulturen påvirker vår forståelse av kjønn?</p>	

Appendix 3.4 – Interview guide, group 4

Before the researcher discovered that this group could not be interviewed, the questions were prepared after the data collection session and were ready for the scheduled interview day.

GROUP 4

Group info: 4 girls		Preparations:
Theme	Questions	Student responses
Follow-up from the tableaux	<p>Hvordan kom dere til enighet?</p> <p>Klarte dere å lytte til hverandre?</p> <p>Var det noe som var særlig utfordrende?</p> <p>Kunne dere løst samarbeidet på en annen måte? Var alle enige med gruppens helhetlige løsning?</p> <p>Hva husker du best fra arbeidet du gjorde i løpet av økta?</p> <p>Hva ønsker du å lære mer om?</p>	
Based on group discussions during tableaux	<p>Dere diskutere lappene deres først. Dere sa dere at dere var enige fordi dere hadde skrevet «to kjønn» og «trans». Hva tenker dere er (u)likheten mellom disse to begrepene?</p> <p>Når dere skulle «skille» ut gutten, valgte dere ta på hetten, hvorfor?</p> <p>Hva tenker dere om at noen mennesker i virkeligheten kan kjenne seg usikre på sitt kjønn, slik som dere illustrerte i deres scenario?</p>	
General questions	<p>Hva tenker du på når du hører begrepet "kjønnsidentitet"?</p> <p>Med dine egne ord, hvordan ville du definere begrepet kjønn?</p> <p>Har dere noen tanker om det å uttrykke sin egen kjønnsidentitet?</p> <p>Tror du folk i din aldersgruppe diskuterer kjønnsidentitet ofte? Hvorfor eller hvorfor ikke?</p> <p>Hvordan tror du media og populærkulturen påvirker vår forståelse av kjønn?</p>	

Appendix 4 – SIKT approval

Vil ditt barn delta i forskningsprosjektet

Exploring gender identity through process drama

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke niendeklassingers tanker og refleksjoner rundt kjønnsidentitet og se hvordan deres tanker kan hjelpe fremtidige lærere til arbeide med dette emnet i klasserommet. Studien bygger på LK20 læreplanen og det tverrfaglige temaet folkehelse og livsmestring, som fastslår at elever bør ha muligheten til å uttrykke sine følelser, erfaringer og meninger og at elevene skal bli gitt mulighet til å bli bevisst over andre perspektiver og forskjellige måter å tenke på, om egen og andres livsstil. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med prosjektet mitt er å utforske niendeklassingers ideer og refleksjoner om det dagsaktuelle temaet kjønnsidentitet. Prosjektet er knyttet til en masteroppgave i engelsk, som er en del av lærerutdanningen. Forskningen vil bli gjort gjennom deltakelse i et prosessdrama i klasserommet og fokusgruppeintervjuer i etterkant. Prosessdramaet vil bestå av tre ulike aktiviteter: 1) *Freelisting*, der elevene skriver ned de første ordene de tenker på når de hører ordene «kjønn» og «kjønnsidentitet», 2) *Fire hjørner* der elevene skal ta stilling til ulike påstander og dilemma, og drama- og teateraktiviteten 3) *dramatablå*, der elevene skal lage frysbilder rundt gruppens egne refleksjons om kjønnsidentitet.

Etter at prosessdramaet er gjennomført vil jeg (Marte Andreassen) ha fokusgruppeintervju med elevene i gruppe. Her vil ideene og refleksjonene som har kommet frem i løpet av prosessdramaet bli videre diskutert i gruppeintervju der elevene vil få mulighet til å utdype refleksjonene deres fra de ulike aktivitetene de har gjort. Forskningsprosjektet vil utelukkende ha fokus på elevenes tanker og oppfatninger og forskeren vil ikke dele egne tanker om og perspektiver på tema.

Problemstillingen (oversatt fra engelsk) for prosjektet er:

1. Hvordan kan prosessdrama i engelskfaget bidra til studentenes refleksjon og diskusjon om egen og andres forståelse av og oppfatning om kjønnsidentitet?
2. Hvordan kan disse refleksjonene og oppfatningene hjelpe fremtidige lærere i arbeidet med temaet kjønnsidentitet i engelskfaget?

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Dette er et forskningsprosjekt ved Universitetet i Stavanger og Marte Strand Andreassen (masterstudent) og Silje Normand (veileder) er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Universitetet i Stavanger. Fakultetet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora/ Institutt for grunnskoleutdanning, idrett og spesialpedagogikk.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta da ditt barn er innenfor den utvalgte elevgruppen for dette masterprosjektet. For meg er det viktig at elevene kjenner meg, og jeg har derfor valgt å gjennomføre forskningen med elever jeg har vært i kontakt med tidligere, både som lærer på barneskolen og som student gjennom et tidligere forskningsprosjekt.

Skolen har også vært positive til at de vil være tilgjengelig for meg og mitt masterprosjekt.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du godkjenner at ditt barn kan være med i prosjektet, innebærer det at du godkjenner at han/hun blir tatt opp på lydopptak og at frysbildet han/hun er del av blir tatt bilde av. Lydopptakene vil forekomme ved to anledninger – første gang i løpet av prosessdramaet og andre gang under fokusgruppeintervjuene. Fokusgruppeintervjuene vil skje i etterkant av prosessdramaet da halvparten av spørsmålene vil være basert på hva elevene sier og gjør i prosessdramaet. Fokusgruppeintervjuene vil ta ca. 30 minutter og vil gjøres i de samme gruppene som produserer *dramatablået* (frysbildet) sammen. Gruppens fotograferte frysbylde vil bli vist i gruppeintervjuet og brukt som utgangspunkt for videre diskusjon.

Intervjuspørsmålene vil bli delt inn i to kategorier: 1) forhåndslagde spørsmål om tematikken og 2) spørsmål basert på observasjoner gjort under prosessdramaet. Du som foresatt kan få se intervjuspørsmålene på forhånd ved å ta kontakt.

Dataen fra intervjuene vil bli samlet via lydopptak og fotografi. Lydopptakene kommer til å bli transkribert, som vil si at jeg kommer til å skrive ned det elevene sier slik som teksting på en film. Elevenes navn kommer til å bli byttet ut med et kodenavn, slik at det ikke er mulig å gjenkjenne elevene. Dersom fotografi av frysbylde blir inkludert i prosjektoppgaven vil dette bli rekonstruert i form av tegning uten gjenkjennelige ansiktstrekk.

Dersom foresatte (eller elever) har ytterlige spørsmål, kan de ta kontakt med meg på tlf. 90183103 eller ms.andreassen@stud.uis.no

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å la ditt barn delta, kan du eller ditt barn når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser hvis du/ditt barn ikke vil delta, eller senere velger å trekke deg. Det vil ikke påvirke deg/ditt barns forhold til klassen eller lærere om du ikke ønsker å delta, det er valgfritt. De som ikke ønsker å delta i forskningen vil få et annet tilbud på skolen. Jeg kommer til å være tydelig på når forskningen starter og når lydopptakene settes på.

Jeg håper at flest mulig vil delta, både fordi det vil gi elevene mulighet til å reflektere om temaet, men også fordi elevenes refleksjoner kan, på langsikt, hjelpe fremtidige lærere med å samtale om temaet i undervisningen.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Det er kun masterstudent, Marte Strand Andreassen, og veileder, Silje Normand, som vil ha tilgang til opplysningene.

Alt av lydopptakene vil innen kort tid samme dag bli lastet opp til en kryptert server og lydopptakene vil bli slettet fra de fysiske lydopptakerne. Under er tiltak jeg vil gjøre for å sikre at ingen uvedkommende får tilgang til personopplysningene.

- Lydopptakene vil bli transkribert og ingen navn vil bli brukt i selve masteroppgaven. Elevene vil bli kategorisert som elev 1, elev 2, osv.
- Det er kun masterstudent som vil ha tilgang til kodekoblingen mellom ditt barns navn og anonymiseringen som blir brukt i prosjektet.
- Fotografi av frysbylde blir inkludert i prosjektoppgaven vil bli rekonstruert i form av tegning uten gjenkjennelige ansiktstrekk.
- Ved prosjektslutt vil all ubehandlet data bli slettet. Signerte samtykkeerklæringer (dette arket) vil bli lagret under lås separat fra annen data.

Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen. Ingen personopplysninger vil bli publisert. Vi er underlagt taushetsplikt og opplysningene vil bli behandlet konfidensielt.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 31. desember 2024. Datamaterialet med ditt barns personopplysninger anonymiseres. Ubehandlet data, lydopptak og bilder vil slettes etter prosjektet er godkjent. Transkripsjoner beholdes, da dette kan bli brukt til videre forskning.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Stavanger har Sikt – Kunnskapssektorens tjenesteleverandør vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- *Universitetet i Stavanger*, Fakultetet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora / Institutt for grunnskolelærerutdanning, idrett og spesialpedagogikk ved Silje Normand, silje.h.normand@uis.no
- *Universitetet i Stavanger*, Fakultetet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora / Institutt for grunnskolelærerutdanning, idrett og spesialpedagogikk ved Marte Strand Andreassen, tlf. 90183103, ms.andreassen@stud.uis.no
- Vårt personvernombud: Rolf Jegervatn, epost – personvernombudet@uis.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til vurderingen som er gjort av personverntjenestene fra Sikt, kan du ta kontakt via:

- Epost: personverntjenester@sikt.no eller telefon: 73 98 40 40.

Med vennlig hilsen

Silje Normand
(Veileder)

Marte Strand Andreassen
(Forsker)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Exploring gender identity through process drama*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til at mitt barn:

- deltar i et prosessdrama hvor det blir tatt lydopptak
- deltar i et fokusgruppeintervju hvor det blir tatt lydopptak
- bli tatt bilde av i gruppens endelige frys-bilde

Jeg samtykker til at mitt barns opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av elevenes foresatt, dato)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Exploring gender identity through process drama*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i et prosessdrama hvor det blir tatt lydopptak
- å delta i et fokusgruppeintervju hvor det blir tatt lydopptak
- å bli tatt bilde av i min gruppes endelige frys-bilde

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av deltagende elev, dato)

Kryss av her dersom du eller ditt barn ikke ønsker å delta i forskningsprosjektet.

(Signert av elevenes foresatt, dato)

(Signert av elev, dato)