



## LGBT Issues in Norwegian Textbooks: Shared or Fragmented Responsibility?

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### Abstract

In Norway, a model for schools' teaching about LGBT issues is chosen where the responsibility is divided between different school subjects: social science, natural science, RLE<sup>2</sup> (religion, philosophies of life and ethics), Norwegian and English. This article looks at how this is implemented in the textbooks. 129 textbooks in Norwegian primary and lower secondary education (grades 1–10) are analysed. Of these, 246 textbook pages included LGBT issues. In this article, I discuss how LGBT issues are included in Norwegian textbooks and how the divided responsibility between school subjects work. The most striking finding is that of the five subjects, English and Norwegian have the least demanding curriculum goals, but still the largest number of pages related to LGBT issues. The inclusion of fictional voices makes possible a *nomadic perspective* (observing issues from multiple perspectives). It is also striking that about half of the textbook pages are in 10th grade textbooks. *Heteronormativity* is still a problem, and bisexual and transgendered people are far less visible than lesbian and gay people are.

**Keywords:** primary and lower secondary school; textbooks; LGBT; heteronormativity

### Background

In many countries, the situation for LGBT youth is generally better than a few years ago. In some schools and for some youth, being LGBT is almost no problem, as for instance McCormack (2012, p. 55) describes after studies of three British high schools. However, the situation for the individual youth depends on what happens in the particular school and the particular classroom, and this varies significantly. “Homo” (gay) is still a derogative term in Norwegian schools (Slåtten, Anderssen, & Fosse, 2007), many pupils learn little about LGBT issues and the teaching can be problematic (Røthing & Svendsen, 2008). Surveys of living conditions show that invisibility is still a problem, particularly

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<sup>2</sup> Now: KRLE (Christianity, religion, philosophies of life and ethics)

for transgendered people and bisexual people (Anderssen & Malterud, 2013; van der Ros, 2013). Surveys also show that many Norwegians, including youth, have negative attitudes towards LGBT people (i.e. Anderssen & Slåtten, 2008). Thus, schools still have an important task.

WHO (2010) gives guidelines for sexuality education for different age groups, and these guidelines include LGBT issues. According to these guidelines, children aged 4–6 should be informed that it is possible to fall in love with a person of the same gender and get help to develop a positive gender identity. At age 9–12, children should (among other things) get information about the difference between gender identity and biological gender, and be helped to develop an understanding of diversity in sexuality and sexual orientation.

Textbooks have a key role in sexuality education. Textbooks are still the main source used by teachers in most subjects in Norwegian primary and lower secondary schools (Gilje et al., 2016). Textbooks' role includes being seen as more neutral and authoritative than the teacher—"the objective truth through which to evaluate other texts and sources as opposed to being a 'text' itself" (Schmidt, 2016, p. 124). As Taylor reminds us, "A person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (Taylor, 1994, p. 25, quoted in Burner & Biseth, 2016, p. 2). Textbooks represent society and need to be analysed.

In this article, I will use the phrase "LGBT issues" about all that pupils should learn about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lives. I use "LGBT" (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) as a concept as this is dominant at the moment, even though it is problematic because words like "bisexual" contributes to upholding the gender dichotomy.

When the curriculum "Kunnskapsløftet" (LK06) was introduced in 2006, five of the subjects included competence aims that can to some degree be said to point to LGBT issues. These are quoted in table 1.

*Table 1: Selected competence aims in the curriculum Kunnskapsløftet (LK06)*

Subject	Grades	Competence Aims
English	8–10	demonstrate the ability to distinguish positively and negatively loaded expressions referring to individuals and groups
Natural Science	5–7	explain what happens during puberty and talk about gender identities and variation in sexual orientation
	8–10	discuss problems and issues in connection with sexuality, different sexual orientation, contraception, abortion, and sexually transmittable diseases
Norwegian	8–10	discuss and elaborate on how language can have discriminatory and injurious effects
RLE	5–7	talk about ethics related to different family constellations, the relation-

## 6 LGBT issues in Norwegian textbooks: Shared or fragmented responsibility?

		ship between the sexes, gender identity roles and the relationship between the generations
	8–10	reflect on ethical questions related to interpersonal relationships, family and friends, forms of cohabitation, heterosexuality and homosexuality, youth culture and body culture
Social Science	1–4	talk about the tasks of family and variations in family forms, including single-provider families, extended families, families where the principal persons are of the same gender, and families with several sets of first-born
	5–7	talk about variations in sexual orientation in relation to love, cohabitation, and family
	8–10	discuss and elaborate on the relationship between love and sexuality in light of cultural norms
		explain what attitudes and prejudices are, and discuss and elaborate on opportunities and challenges in multicultural communities
		explain why culture is not inherent, and explain and analyse cultural variations
		elaborate on fundamental human rights and discuss and elaborate on the value of respecting them

While having LGBT issues included in many subjects may lead to a shared responsibility where different perspectives from the subjects complement each other, it could instead lead to fragmentation and unclear division of responsibility. An alternative way of allocating responsibility would be to give one subject the main responsibility for all such goals, as Finland has done with the obligatory subject “hälsökunskap” (“Health Education”) (Paakkari, Tynjälä, & Kannas, 2010). For such choices in the future, it is important to investigate how each of these models work. In the next section, I will summarise previous research on LGBT issues in textbooks, including research from Norway and Finland. Then, I will look at the Norwegian model and whether the responsibility is shared and complementary or fragmented.

### Theoretical point of view

The theoretical starting point of this study is queer theory and its key concept heteronormativity, defined in this way by Cameron and Kulick (2003):

[...] those structures, institutions, relations and actions that promote and produce heterosexuality as natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged and necessary. Queer theory interrogates heterosexuality by dismissing its claims to naturalness, and examining, instead, how it is vigorously demanded and actively produced in specific sociocultural contexts and situated interactions. (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 55)

In addition I follow Simonsson (2017) in including the concepts of *marked* and *unmarked* from Brekhus (1998). Brekhus pointed out how sociological research had become “the

sociology of the marked”, in which subgroups—with labels—were studied (such as women, gay and lesbians, African Americans), while there were other groups—often unlabeled—who were either not studied or, when they were, were seen as generalizable to all humankind. Research on men was not seen as “men’s studies”, research on white people was not seen as “white studies” and so on. He called the former marked and the latter unmarked. Problems of members of marked groups tend to be generalized to the whole group, while problems of members of unmarked groups tend to be assigned to humans in general or to the individual. By keeping the focus on the marked groups, we *re-mark* them. Brekhus suggested three main ways of countering this markedness: *reverse marking* (treating the unmarked as marked), *marking everything* (leaving nothing unmarked) and developing an *analytically nomadic perspective* (observing issues from multiple perspectives).

Seen through the lenses of these concepts, LGBT issues can be part of textbooks in several different ways:

- They can be ignored completely, in which case the heteronormativity is total.
- They can be delegated to separate parts of the textbooks, while heterosexuality is taken for granted in the rest of the textbooks. In that case, LGBT issues are marked and heterosexuality is unmarked.
- When included, they can be treated in a problem-focused way where the problems of being a LGBT person are assigned to being LGBT, in the way Brekhus explains that marked groups are often treated.
- They can be included in a way where “we” (the readers) are supposed to tolerate “them” (LGBT), thus reproducing heteronormativity among “us”.
- LGBT issues can also be included as “the same as” non-LGBT, either with non-LGBT as the unmarked and LGBT as the marked or by marking everything.
- They can also be included in a way that shows the value of diversity by including different voices—in a nomadic perspective way.
- Or they can be included in a reverse marking way, where heterosexuality and cis-gendered persons are treated as topics on their own.

### **Previous research – internationally**

Research on LGBT content in textbooks is limited, but there are some patterns emerging. Many studies have found that textbooks ignored homosexuality. Some of these are summarized in table 2. Some of these studies also note how homosexuality/LGBT issues, when mentioned, are often connected to negative issues such as the Holocaust or HIV/AIDS (Schmidt, 2016; Temple, 2005; Wylie, 2012). Bisexual and transgender issues are rarely mentioned, although this is pointed out explicitly in just a few of the articles. Many of the articles describe striking omissions: “Occasional short texts about gay figures [...] are all notable for their avoidance of any mention of homosexuality.” (Gray, 2013, p. 49).

8 LGBT issues in Norwegian textbooks: Shared or fragmented responsibility?

*Table 2: Research articles finding that homosexuality/LGBT is invisible in textbooks (\*: information missing)*

Publication	Country	Number of books	Subjects	Age level	Main findings
Temple (2005)	Canada	20	Personal and Social Ed., Moral Ed., Family Economics, Human Biology, and Catholic Moral and Religious Ed.	12-17	The books ignored homosexuality. When same-sex sexuality was discussed, it was in negative contexts and reduced to sexual activity. Moreover, bisexuality was rarely mentioned.
Gray (2013)	global	10	English as a foreign language (EFL)	*	“a blanket avoidance of any representation of clearly identified LGBT characters.” (p. 49).
Hawkins (2012)	USA	12	US History	*	Three of twelve analysed books did not mention LGBTQ issues at all. Of the remaining nine textbooks’ 8874 pages, LGBTQ was mentioned on 55 of the pages (0.6 percent). Some LGBTQ persons were mentioned, without it being mentioned that they were LGBTQ persons.
Thornton (2008)	USA	*	US History	High school	Similar results. Notes how a U.S. history high school textbook details James Baldwin writing about “patterns of discrimination” towards blacks, but does not note his similar writing about discrimination towards gays.
Salami and Ghajarieh (2015)	Iran	*	EFL	*	The textbooks supported a compulsory heterosexuality discourse. They gave a stereotypical image of women and men in line with the dominant Iranian culture.
Adonis (2015)	South Africa	40	Different subjects	Different grades	Sexual orientation was invisible. In addition, in one instance in the textbooks, pupils were asked “What do people in your community think of gay people?”, which implies that homosexuality is something different.
Wilmot and Naidoo (2014)	South Africa	3	Life Orientation	Grade 10	“inadequate information about sexualities and in its place a simplistic, moralistic ideological approach. Furthermore, discussions of the family, dating, safe sex and marriage assume heterosexuality as the norm” (p. 323). Some illustrations link homosexual acts to

					abuse. Bisexual and transgender issues are very rarely found.
Schmidt (2016)	USA and Canada	8	US History / Canadian History	High school	“textbooks lacked substantive LGBTQ content” (Schmidt, 2016, p. 129). When sexual orientation was mentioned in the text, it was often in a negative context, such as AIDS.
Wylie (2012)	USA	7	World History	High school	“virtual absence of any mention of LGBT people and issues [...] When gays and lesbians are mentioned in the text, it is as a victim (the Holocaust) or as a villain (HIV/AIDS). Stories of LGBT agency through the gay rights movement are not present in the text” (p. 143).
Paiz (2015)	USA	45	English as a Second Language	*	“the average ESL reading text/textbook can be described as being heteronormative”. (p. 89)

In research on gender representation in textbooks, some studies show that traditional gender roles are still the norm (e.g. Hall, 2014; Ullah & Skelton, 2013), while in some localities there has been much progress (Lee & Collins, 2009). On the other hand, there also exist research on how sexuality is treated in textbooks that do not itself mention LGBT issues (Irala, Urdiain, & Burgo, 2008), thereby contributing to the invisibility that other research points to.

### Previous research – Norway, Sweden, and Finland

Due to their geographical proximity and cultural similarity, I will look at research from Norway, Sweden and Finland in some detail. Until recently, little research has been done on how LGBT issues are treated in Norwegian textbooks. A simple review of textbooks for the 1997 curriculum (L97) was published just as a newspaper article. In the article it was claimed that homosexuality was given a problem focus, that love was portrayed as a heterosexual phenomenon, while homosexuality was defined by means of the words “sexual attraction”, and that textbooks used “they”-formulations which created a distance to “the homosexuals” (Smestad, 2005). More recently, Åse Røthing, partly in collaboration with Stine Helena Bang Svendsen, has published several articles on selected textbooks for the 2006 curriculum Kunnskapsløftet (LK06). In Røthing (2012), she argues, based on classroom research and curriculum and textbook studies, that gender equality and gay tolerance are construed as part of Norwegian culture, in contrast to the foreign (non-Western). The conclusion partly coincides with the conclusion in Røthing & Svendsen (2011), where the researchers on the basis of an analysis of selected textbooks in natural science, social science, and RLE in lower secondary school, with emphasis on eight social science

textbooks, concludes that the textbooks portray gender equality and gay tolerance as “inherent traits” in Norwegian culture. In an analysis of natural science textbooks, Røthing has concluded that there is “selective inclusion and an absence of sex” (Røthing, 2013). Biology textbooks take heterosexual reproductive copulation as the starting point, and “coitus typically becomes the only sex act that is explained clearly and with reference to how erogenous zones are stimulated” (Svendsen, 2012, p. 402). The science textbooks are

rarely explicitly othering. However, the very selective inclusion of non-heterosexuals and non-heterosexualities and the complete invisibility in the paragraphs on sex, the body and sexually transmitted infections, is striking. (Røthing, 2017, p. 150)

In Sweden, the Swedish Youth Federation for LGBTQ Rights (RFSL Ungdom) made a report in 2004 analysing 13 biology textbooks. In three of the books, LGBT identities were not mentioned at all. Several books included problematic language, including language presenting homosexuality as deviant and abnormal. Gender identity was rarely mentioned, and many errors were found (Ryng, Sysimetsä, & Blomqvist, 2005). This study was followed up by a study commissioned by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) which analysed textbooks in natural science, history, social science, and religion. The main finding was that Swedish textbooks have a heteronormative point of view (Larsson & Rosén, 2006).

Clearly sexual orientation, like gender, is seen as a complement, an appendix to a preformulated story about history and the social, religious and biological reality. Or maybe rather as an appendix to an appendix, as questions of sexual orientation is often connected to questions of gender which are already appendices to something else. (p. 37)

They also found interesting differences between the subjects. Sexuality was more systematically treated in natural science and religion than in social science and history. “This means that sexuality and sexual orientations are seen partly in a biological/natural science context, partly in a religious/ethical context, but rarely in a systematically historical or social science context” (Larsson & Rosén, 2006, p. 10).

These Swedish findings have been followed up in a couple of student papers analysing newer biology textbooks, finding a strong biological approach and traditional gender roles, while the heteronorm and the cis-norm are strong. Transgender persons are never mentioned explicitly in these textbooks (Hansson, 2015; Hessel, 2015).

Finnish research has shown that Health Education has generally been successful when it comes to teaching students how to take care of their health (Aira, Välimaa, Paakkari, Villberg, & Kannas, 2014). However, it has also been shown that Finnish textbooks mostly cover LGBT issues in the section on Sex Education (Kjaran & Lehtonen, 2018). “This strategy marginalises the topics, relating them only to sexual behaviour and health and sickness. It does not question heteronormativity in Languages, History, Science, and other subjects” (Kjaran & Lehtonen, 2017, p. 5). This is supported by Honkasalo (2014), claiming that “Even though sexual minorities and sexual diversity are increasingly taken



up in the textbooks, they are handled in separate chapters and by separate examples” (p. 295). Moreover, Honkasalo (2014) also points out that the textbooks reproduce the image of “the West” as liberal and progressive, in contrast to “the non-West” as repressive and illiberal, in a similar way as Røthing and Svendsen (2011).

The research from outside the Nordic countries describes a blanket invisibility of LGBT issues. The situations in Norway, Sweden, and Finland are different: LGBT issues are included to a degree that makes possible a more detailed analysis of the inclusion. Selective inclusion is a major problem in all three countries. In both Norway and Finland, a stark contrast between the West and the non-West is set up. Also, in Finland LGBT issues are strongly associated with health, which is not the case in Norway and Sweden.

## Research questions

Based on the literature review I decided on the following research question: “How are LGBT issues included in Norwegian textbooks in primary and lower secondary schools?” I have several subquestions: “Which themes are treated in connection with LGBT issues?”, “Are LGBT issues treated as a main theme, as a “subtheme” or as something mentioned in passing?”, “Which strategies are used for dealing with the markedness of LGBT?”, “Are textbooks problem focused in their treatment of LGBT issues?”, “How are LGBT issues treated in illustrations?” and “How are LGBT issues treated through literary texts?”

Based on the answers to these questions, I will also be able to say something about how the division of the responsibility for LGBT issues between five subjects is working at the textbook level. Is the responsibility shared or fragmented?

## Method

At three occasions, The National Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People (LLH) awarded a prize to textbooks which stood out in how they treated gay issues. Publishers were asked to provide their textbooks (including task books) in the five subjects having relatively clear competence aims relating to gay issues (see table 1). A textbook group (of which I was part) went through all the provided textbooks line by line to map where the textbooks touched upon gay issues. This material was then handed over to a jury (composed of people from LLH, Queer Youth Norway, School Student Union of Norway, Union of Education Norway and one independent member) who chose the textbook deemed worthy of a prize.

LLH has given permission to use the material collected as a basis for this research project. This use of existing data is efficient but may lead to omissions if the textbook group made errors. Such omissions are unlikely to influence conclusions significantly. In particular, conclusions based on occurrences (as opposed to non-occurrences) will not be significantly influenced by shortcomings in the material. Note, however, that while the



textbook group was looking for gay issues, I am looking for LGBT issues, which is a broader concept. Based on discussions in the group, I am confident the group would also include transgender issues to the extent the issues were there. Indeed, such examples are found in the material.

Publishers had provided 129 textbooks (see table 3). The textbook group found gay-related content in 59 (45.7 %) of the textbooks. The books have been analysed page by page based on the criteria appearing in the research questions. The first analysis is a simple content analysis with quantitative results. These results have been the starting point for more thorough content analyses of parts of the materials.

*Table 3: Number of books provided by publishers and books found to have gay related contents.*

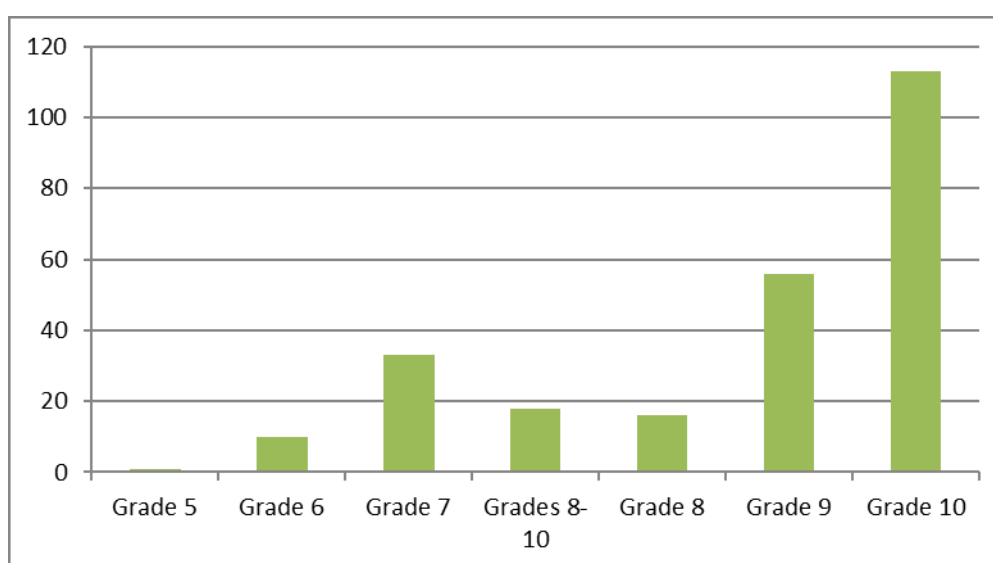
Grade level	English		Natural science		Norwegian		RLE		Social science	
	Total	Gay	Total	Gay	Total	Gay	Total	Gay	Total	Gay
8.–10.	19	8	8	2	30	16	5	5	29	15
5.–7.	1	0	11	4	4	2	4	3	8	3
1.–4.	0	0	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	20	8	28	7	35	18	9	8	37	18

An important limitation of this study is that only pages including LGBT issues are analysed. This provides an overview of what textbooks explicitly do with LGBT issues, which is important but cannot say anything about other parts of the books. In this sense, the study complements earlier studies that have looked at fewer textbooks but at more of the text in each. Moreover, only textbooks provided by the publishers are included. Thus, the sample of textbooks is large (n=129), but not necessarily representative.

## Results and discussion

The first part of the content analysis was to see which of the pages in the material did include references to LGBT issues. In all, 246 pages included references to LGBT issues. The distribution between the subjects was as follows (the number of books in parenthesis): English 39 pages (from 20 books), Norwegian 65 p. (35), natural science 28 p. (24), RLE 36 p. (nine) and social science 78 p. (41).

*Figure 1: The number of textbook pages with LGBT content per grade level*



The distribution over the grades is seen in figure 1. Some textbooks are for the span 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> grade, which explains the separate bar for this span. We notice that there are more pages at the later grades than at the earlier grades, except that there are more pages in 7<sup>th</sup> grade than in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The aims in the curriculum document is specified for the spans 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> grade (see table 1), so we see that textbook writers tend to put most of the LGBT material at the latest grades possible.

For each page, I considered whether LGBT was the main theme of the page, a sub-theme or merely mentioned in passing (1–3 sentences on a page). In all, there are 105 pages in the material where LGBT is the main theme. If we look at how these 105 pages are distributed we get a somewhat different picture: English 20 pages, natural science 11 pages, Norwegian 50 pages, social science 15 pages, and RLE nine pages. RLE, natural science and social science have competence aims that mention sexual orientation or homosexuality explicitly; still English and Norwegian have more pages in textbooks with LGBT as a main theme. This is surprising and is due to the fictional literature having LGBT as a main theme (even when seen as pages per book provided). This means that it is important to include language textbooks in the analysis to get a comprehensive view of what textbooks offer to pupils.

More than half of the textbook pages where LGBT is the main theme (55, to be exact) are in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. In addition, the fictional texts in English and Norwegian are mostly in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Possible explanations can be that textbook writers think that pupils do not need to know this before in 10<sup>th</sup> grade or that they think that teachers prefer to postpone it as late as possible. In either case, publishers or teachers are delaying far too long an introduction to LGBT issues, given that youth begin developing and exploring their sexual orientation far earlier.

Among the subjects, social science stands out by having almost half of the textbook pages mentioning LGBT issues “in passing” (37 pages). Of the wealth of topics that social science is supposed to cover, LGBT issues are relevant to many. LGBT is mentioned in

connection to families, human rights, social roles, language use, history, and prejudices, among others. One example is that some textbooks mention gays as victims when discussing the concentration camps of the Nazi regime.

The different subjects mention LGBT issues in different connections. Broadly speaking, the data shows that English and Norwegian mention LGBT issues in literary and cultural connections, social science in connection with sexuality, love, marriage, and history, natural science connected to sexuality and love, while RLE has religions' view of homosexuality as a main focus. Most of this seems to be easily explained based on the descriptions in the curriculum, but one might expect that social science would take care of the purely romantic parts (love) and left part of the sexual to natural science. This is not the case, and therefore there is a danger that there will be an unintended overlap between subjects, with other topics (for instance preventing STD when having non-heterosexual sex) not being covered by any subject.

## LG or LGBT?

On 150 of the pages either the concepts “homofili”<sup>3</sup> / “seksuell legning”<sup>4</sup> are used, or phrases like “falls in love with one of the same sex”. On 79 pages lesbian are mentioned, either by use of the word or by discussing homofili in the context of women. Similarly, homosexual men are mentioned (or are main characters) in only 65 pages. In that sense, there is no reason to claim that lesbians are underrepresented in the textbooks compared to gay men, except that it may be that homofili (without explicit reference to gender) is taken as concerning gay men. Bisexuals, in contrast, are mentioned in only 38 pages. It is worth noting that in the four pages mentioning transgender persons, two have a misguided definition of the concept: “Transepersoner” [sic] are people who can feel both as man and woman” (Fiskum & Steineger, 2007, pp. 143, 164). Thus, LG are privileged at the expense of bisexuals and transgendered people.

## Illustrations

I have identified 59 photos/illustrations with LGBT content in the textbooks. The typical photo is a photo of two persons who seem to have the same gender (more often women than men), most often white, quite often glad and of varying ages—quite often of school age but even more often adults. figure 2 is therefore quite representative—and exactly this photo is present four times in the textbooks.

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<sup>3</sup> “Homofil” is the most used Norwegian word for “gay”. It is considered to signify love more than sex when compared to “homoseksuell”.

<sup>4</sup> “Seksuell legning” is often translated “sexual orientation”, but “legning” is more constant compared to “seksuell orientering”.

*Figure 2: Photo from the movie "Fucking Åmål"*



It is hard to illustrate bisexuality in pictures, and I have not found good examples of that, and no good photos connected to transgendered persons either. The LGBT related illustrations that do not show two persons of the same sex are most often rainbow flags (eight instances) or other kinds of logos. There are also other illustrations: one photo of concentration camp prisoners with pink triangles, some pictures of historical persons (Sapho, Oscar Wilde, Erling Lae, Gro Hammerseng and Katja Nyberg, Siri Sunde, Kim Friele and Wenche Lowzow) and a photo where someone has written "Bjørn is gay!" in the road.

### **Strategies for dealing with markedness**

The present data consists of the textbook pages that include LGBT issues. This analysis will only look at the ways these texts treat LGBT issues. Of the 129 textbooks provided, 70 did not include any reference to LGBT issues, which means that the most common way of treating LGBT issues is by ignoring them.

There are still some cases where homosexuality is defined without at the same time defining heterosexuality, or where homosexuality is defined based on heterosexuality; "Gays fall in love, have heartache and experience good and bad times in their relationships. Just like heterosexuals" (Holth, 2006, p. 109). In some books, much is written about (implied heterosexual) love and then a little about homosexuality is mentioned in the end. These are examples of re-marking homosexuality and leaving heterosexuality unmarked—thereby reproducing heteronormativity.

More commonly, the textbook addresses a supposedly straight pupil and puts the pupil in the position to opine about homosexuality. Examples: "Many gays and lesbians are fighting for the right to adopt children. Do you support them?" (Heger & Wroldsen, 2008, p. 135) and "How do you think it feels to be gay?" (Berner, Borge, & Olsen, 2007, p. 44). Again, homosexuality is re-marked and heteronormativity is reproduced.

One way of avoiding the markedness is to write about human beings, not genders. For instance: “[...] for many, finding out about their sexual orientation is an important question” (Holth, 2008, p. 180). The strategy of marking everything can also be found, for instance by not only defining homosexuality and bisexuality but also heterosexuality:

Most people fall in love with someone of the opposite gender. That is called being heterosexual. But there are also many who fall in love with people of the same gender. That is called homosexuality. Some are bisexual. That means that they can fall in love with people of both genders. No matter who we fall in love with, feelings are the same” (Helland, 2007, p. 72).

In previous research, many textbooks have had a problem-focused approach to LGBT issues. This can be a consequence of LGBT being marked. In the present material, there are few examples of too much focus on problems—the analysis revealed only a few examples where the descriptions of problems were not balanced with descriptions of the good sides of being a LGBT person, and these examples were often in connection with the competence aims concerning harassing language. But still there are also examples of authors who choose to put homosexuality into problematic connections, such as here: “The writers write about bullying, puberty, incest, inept parents, racism, homosexuality, uncertain friendships, but also about positive friendships and good parents.” (Rosslund, Larsen, & Aske, 2006, p. 206). The sentence would have sounded different if homosexuality was moved to the last list: “The writers write about bullying, puberty, incest, inept parents, racism, uncertain friendships, but also about positive friendships, homosexuality, and good parents”.

Two of the three strategies mentioned by Brekhus have not been mentioned so far: negative marking and the nomadic perspective. Now, I will turn to analyse further the Norwegian and English textbooks.

### **Engagement in the research process**

In the textbooks, there are many texts from other sources: 18 fiction and 14 non-fiction texts. Of these, 14 fiction texts and seven non-fiction texts are from Norwegian and English. The fictional texts are often long—10 pages from *Fucking Åmål* by Lukas Moodyson is the extreme. The non-fiction excerpts are short; many of them are interviews with or texts by well-known gays or bisexuals. As these are not covered in earlier research on Norwegian textbooks, I have analysed them in more detail.

The fictional texts almost exclusively have to do with LGB youth’s feelings—either when falling in love (eight instances), when being kissed or touched (five), when “being in the closet” or “coming out of it” (nine), when experiencing heteronormativity (seven) and when being teased or bullied for being gay (two). The author voice of a textbook will perhaps always be read as unmarked and therefore heterosexual. Bringing in fictional LGBT voices may, therefore, be an effective way of breaking the heterosexual privilege or developing a nomadic perspective:

Jason glanced around the theater. His pulse quickened. The longer his hand stayed there, the more significant the fact became, the more difficult it would be to explain away. He should remove his hand now. *Do it. Now.* But Kyle's hand beneath his own excited him too much. He hadn't expected the skin to feel so tender. The raised veins along the back felt soft and warm. (Alex Sanchez, *Rainbow Boys*, in Bromseth & Wigdahl, 2006, p. 22)

In all but two of the stories, the main characters are LGBT persons, giving fictional first-hand accounts of LGBT lives. The non-fictional texts are more varied. Three mention LGBT just in passing, but the remaining four are LGBT voices—two are coming out stories and two are argumentative texts from newspapers. It is significant that in some of the textbooks, the fictional stories are followed by questions making LGBT an explicit issue, thereby re-marking LGBT, while in other textbooks, the questions do not make LGBT an explicit issue.

I did not find examples of reverse marking—for instance treating heterosexuality as a topic while taking homosexuality for granted. As Brekhus notes, this strategy can be used in humor, but no humorous text of this kind can be found in the Norwegian textbooks.

## Conclusion

The textbooks use many strategies for including LGBT issues. The most common approach is still ignoring these issues, but compared to the widespread disregard of LGBT issues that are found internationally (Adonis, 2015; Gray, 2013; Hawkins, 2012; Salami & Ghajarieh, 2015; Temple, 2005), this analysis gives a less negative image. Neither are LGBT issues mainly mentioned in connection with negative issues. Nonetheless, LGBT issues are found on less than two pages per textbook in this material, and this content does not include bisexuals and transgendered people to any substantial degree. Illustrations of homosexuals are also mostly white people. People of color in the Norwegian population will, therefore, not easily find someone to identify with in these textbooks. Moreover, LGBT issues are considerably less visible in textbooks for earlier grades in each of the main grade spans.

Compared to the situation in Sweden, where sexuality and sexual orientation was seen more in a biological and religious/ethical context than a social science context (Larsson & Rosén, 2006), and in Finland, where health contexts dominated, in Norway LGBT issues are discussed in many contexts and in many ways. The most important single finding in this project is that texts of fiction in the subjects Norwegian and English make up a significant part of the LGBT content in the textbooks. For some reason, textbooks from these subjects have not been included in earlier analyses of LGBT content in Norway. Internationally, research has not shown the same amount of LGBT content in language textbooks. The special role of the fictional texts in English and Norwegian seems important: by introducing different voices and letting students meet lived experiences from LGBT (and other) characters, a nomadic perspective can be attempted.



The analysis shows that the division of responsibility for LGBT issues between several subjects makes various perspectives visible, including the ones from Norwegian and English literature. However, the division also makes it unpredictable what each pupil will find in their textbooks. For teachers, it is important to see the LGBT issues across subjects to reduce fragmentation. While a model where one subject has the main responsibility for LGBT issues makes it possible to create better textbooks with less fragmentation and better coordination, the division approach may better support a nomadic perspective where LGBT issues are illuminated more fully.

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20 LGBT issues in Norwegian textbooks: Shared or fragmented responsibility?

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