

# Young Learners' Perceptions of Learning about Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment: The Struggle for Recognition in School

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## Abstract

Based on participatory research with teachers and young learners', this article explores students' perceptions of learning about sexual and gender-based harassment in upper secondary school in Norway. Drawing upon theoretical considerations on recognition, intersectionality and legal literacy as educational capital, this article discusses approaches to teaching and learning that could ensure young learners' rights to active participation and voice, which is an essential element for protection and prevention of harassment. The empirical material indicates that learners would like to learn more about these sensitive issues, although this applies to a greater extent for girls rather than boys. Their wish to learn more about harassment and abuse could be interpreted as a struggle for recognition, motivated by experiences of disrespect. However, defending one's rights, and having someone defending one's rights, in school requires both students' and teachers' legal literacy, which according to the empirical material is limited.

## Keywords

young learners – sexual harassment – recognition – legal literacy – educational capital

## 1 Introductory Vignette

Narrator: *It's after school and Adrian is in the locker room. He is alone, putting on make-up. Two girls walk by and notice him:*

Theresa: *Damn, are you putting on make-up?*

Adrian: *Um, no ...*

Theresa: *Only girls put on make-up!*

Mina: *Sorry, are you a girl or a boy? I never understood that.*

Theresa: *F\*\*king f\*g.*

Adrian's classmate, Sarah, overhears the girls' harassment, and enters the locker room:

Sarah: *If he wants to put on make-up, he can. If you can do it, he can too.*

The two girls leave. Roleplay ends.

This is an excerpt from a roleplay written and performed by students at an upper secondary school in South-East Norway. This was part of a participatory research project I conducted with both teachers and students as active participants during the school year 2018/2019. Together with two teachers, to whom I have given the pseudonyms Helena and Julie, we cooperated on including young learners' voices regarding which topics they would like to learn more about. Based on their wishes, we developed teaching lessons about sexual and gender-based harassment that affects the lives of young people.

The Ombudsperson for Children urges the Norwegian government to ensure that more research is conducted on sexual harassment between young people, and that prevalence, causes and preventive measures should be researched (Lindboe, 2018). This article seeks to explore adolescents' experiences of taking part in teaching lessons on these issues, which I consider as part of what could constitute preventive measures. Research on educational programmes about sexual harassment indicates that learning about this phenomenon may influence attitudes positively and increase knowledge about what constitutes harassment (Connolly *et al.*, 2014).

Internationally, Norway is known for ranking highly on the Human Development Index due to high standards of living and a prosperous economy (United Nations Development Program, 2020). Norway is also considered to be in the avant-garde for securing children's rights (Kipperberg *et al.*, 2019), and championing human rights is part of Norway's image and foreign policy (Lile, 2019a; Vesterdal, 2019). Nevertheless, several studies document that children and adolescents in Norway experience human rights violations and face challenges of violence, such as sexual and gender-based harassment (Bakken, 2020; Bendixen *et al.*, 2016; Lindboe, 2018).

This study is situated in the intersection between human rights education, sexuality education and social science education in a Norwegian upper-secondary school. In Norway, neither sexuality education nor human rights education are subjects on their own, but these fields, rather, are integrated into other subjects. Most recent research on sexuality education in Norway has focused on teachers' practice related to gender, sexuality, harassment and abuse (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019, 2021; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw and Trysnes, 2020; Hind, 2016; Nordbø, 2019; Røthing and Bang Svendsen, 2009; Støle-Nilsen, 2017) instead of young learners' experiences of learning about these issues. However, the Norwegian Ombudsperson for Children has conducted a study among 200 adolescents, exploring their perceptions of what characterises sexual harassment and abuse among adolescents, as well as their perceptions of teaching practice concerning sexuality and boundary setting (Lindboe, 2018). The Ombudsperson's report urges that young learners should be able to influence how the sexuality education should be, and that their active participation and voices are of uttermost importance in such teaching practice (Lindboe, 2018: 45). This would be in tune with both Article 12 on children's rights to be heard and Article 28 on their rights to education, including sexuality education, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). One of the aims of human rights education is precisely to enable learners' voice and active participation in teaching and learning (Osler, 2016; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2011), which also applies to sexuality education. Students' perceptions, emotions and life-worlds are increasingly gaining interest among educational researchers exploring the potential of social science education in Scandinavia (Blennow, 2018; Mathé, 2019). There are competence aims in this subject regarding how learners should learn about gender, sexuality and intimacy boundaries (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019), which I elaborate on later.

Recent studies have addressed role-play as a pedagogical method for learning about international politics and trade (Evensen, 2015; Hagen, 2018; Ursin, 2018). In social science for teacher education, Leming (2016) has explored the use of role-plays for learning about sexuality, looking into how emotions can play an important part in teacher students' learning processes. However, role-play as a pedagogical method to enable young learners' active participation and learning about gender and sexuality is under-explored in social science education in secondary and upper-secondary school in Norway. The dominant teaching practice in social science education in secondary school is that the teacher speaks or uses class discussion with support from textbooks, whereas role-plays are sporadically used (Solhaug *et al.*, 2020). Social science teachers

rely mostly on class discussion with support from news articles when addressing issues related to gender, sexuality, harassment and abuse (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019). To my knowledge, no research has been done on how social science students in Norwegian upper secondary school experience actively *participating* in writing and performing role-plays as a pedagogical method for learning about gender-based and sexual harassment.<sup>1</sup> This article aims to fill this knowledge gap. The research questions for this article are: *how can young learners be active participants in learning about sexual and gender-based harassment, and how do they experience such participation?* To answer these research questions, I draw upon theoretical considerations of recognition, intersectionality and legal literacy as educational capital (Bourdieu, 1986, Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Honneth, 1995; Jordet, 2020; Lundy and Sainz, 2018)

In the new curriculum for social science education in upper secondary school from 2020, the most relevant competence goals for this article are that students should, ‘reflect on challenges related to setting [intimacy] boundaries and discuss different values, norms and laws concerning gender, sexuality and the body’ and that students should ‘explain the basis of human rights and explore and give examples of human rights violations nationally or globally’ (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). This focus on *legal knowledge* combined with gender and sexuality is new in upper secondary school. Before discussing the relevant legal frameworks in this regard, I briefly define harassment in legal terms and provide an overview of the prevalence and consequences of harassment.

## 2 Defining Harassment

The Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discriminatory Act defines harassment as ‘acts, omissions or statements that have the purpose or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading or humiliating’, whereas sexual harassment refers to ‘any form of unwanted sexual attention that has the purpose or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or troublesome’ (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, 2018). Verbal sexual harassment consists of unwanted sexual comments, whereas nonverbal harassment is related to body language, and indirect harassment could entail being subject to sexual rumours or unwanted sharing of sexualised imagery

1 I have conducted searches in the library database ORIA, using the keywords role-plays in social science education in Norwegian [rollespill i samfunnsfag].

in social media (Bendixen *et al.*, 2017). Sexual harassment can also include being touched in a sexual way, being forced into kissing or other forms of sexual behaviour (Bendixen *et al.*, 2017). There are several forms of harassment: 1) (hetero) sexual harassment, 2) harassment based on sexual orientation and 3) harassment for 'gender-nonconformity' (Meyer, 2009). In addition, same-sex harassment also occurs – between people of the same sex. These categories can overlap, as portrayed by the role-play excerpt in the introductory vignette. The motives for harassing others could be misplaced sexual desire, harassment as a subordination technique or unintentional harassment (Sletteland and Helseth, 2018).

### 3 Prevalence and Consequences of Harassment

According to the most recent Ungdata-report conducted among 211,500 adolescents from 2018–2020 (Bakken, 2020), many adolescents experience unwanted sexual touching and verbal sexual harassment in a hurtful manner such as being called “whore” or “fag” – this applies to approximately one out of four girls and one out of ten boys (Bakken, 2020: 44). A study conducted among upper secondary students in Norway (N = 1384/1485), finds that being exposed to non-physical sexual harassment is associated with low scores on indicators of well-being and that such misbehaviour is harmful for young students' mental health and self-esteem (Bendixen *et al.*, 2017). This coincides with international studies portraying how experiencing bullying and sexual harassment is associated with low life-satisfaction and having mental health issues such as depression and psychological distress (e.g Gobina *et al.*, 2008; Gruber and Fineran, 2008; Landstedt and Gådin, 2011; Williams *et al.*, 2005). Some groups of people experience more gender-based and sexual harassment; girls more often report being sexually harassed than boys, and their mental health is to a greater extent affected by this unwanted sexual attention. Sexual minority youth more often report being harassed in comparison to heterosexual youth (Williams *et al.*, 2005), and homosexual boys especially experience homophobic remarks (Roland and Auestad, 2009). Transgender youth express that they constantly face harassment and the ‘negative reactions they receive on disclosure often have a severe negative effect on their self-esteem’ (Grossman and D’augelli, 2006: 124). In sum, sexual and gender-based harassment most often targets girls, sexual minority – especially homosexual boys, and transgender youth, which places them at risk in school and in need of special protection.

Adolescents in vulnerable positions and situations do not always get the protection they are entitled to. In today's Norway, many children and adolescents find that school employees rarely intervene when they are harassed in school (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw and Trysnes, 2020). This could be linked to how some teachers find it difficult to differentiate between healthy, worrisome and harmful sexual behaviour among pupils (Draugedalen, 2020), or that some teachers do not necessarily consider children and adolescents as sexual beings (Draugedalen *et al.*, 2021). Not intervening when teachers are informed about young learners' experiences with unwanted sexual attention constitutes serious breaches of Norway's commitment to fulfilling the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989) in regard to multiple articles such as Article 2 – the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to be heard in matters that affect children's lives and last but not least article 29 (d) on children's rights in education. In theory, the CRC seeks to ensure for children fundamental rights to the 4P's; Protection, Participation, Provision and Prevention (Kipperberg *et al.*, 2019). However, there appears to be a discrepancy between theory and practice in educational settings when it comes to ensuring children's protection from gender-based and sexual harassment in Norway, as well as preventive teaching about various forms of sexual violence related to young people's lives (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw and Trysnes, 2020).

#### 4 Norway's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Education

Norway ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. The CRC has increasingly been integrated in the domestic legal system from 2003, and the revision of the Norwegian Constitution in 2014 was a major legal development (Langford *et al.*, 2019). The bicentennial of the Norwegian constitution (1814–2014) was celebrated and renewed by among other aspects strengthening children's rights through the amendment of paragraph 104, stating that:

Children have the right to respect for their human dignity. They have the right to be heard in questions that concern them, and due weight shall be attached to their views in accordance with their age and development. For actions and decisions that affect children, the best interests of the child shall be a fundamental consideration. Children have the right to protection of their personal integrity ...

the Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway, amended on 20 June 2014

The amendment of paragraph 109 of the Norwegian Constitution explicitly states children's rights to education, and that the education shall promote respect for human rights:

Everyone has the right to education. Children have the right to receive basic education. *The education shall safeguard the individual's abilities and needs, and promote respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights.* The authorities of the state shall ensure access to upper secondary education and equal opportunities for higher education on the basis of qualifications.

the Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway, amended 20 June 2014

These amendments could be interpreted as expressions of children's rights to *human rights education*, as addressed by Osler & Skarra (2021). However, Lile points out that "the commitment of the legislator is somewhat obscured by a lack of clear direction on how this constitutional provision should be interpreted" (Lile, 2019b: 421).

In 2017, the Norwegian Education Act was modified and paragraph 9A now states that, 'the school must have zero tolerance for violations such as bullying, violence, discrimination and harassment' and that 'everyone working at the school must keep an eye on the pupils to ensure they have a good psychosocial school environment, and *if possible*, intervene against violations such as bullying, violence, discrimination and harassment' (the Education Act, 1998, modified in 2017). The notion of '*if possible*', however, could be interpreted as opening up the possibility of not intervening. Thus, this educational legal framework is ambiguous, and it can jeopardise young learners' protection from harassment in school (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw and Trysnes, 2020).

In 2018, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child listed 22 questions that Norway had to answer, and one of these issues concerned which measures are taken to ensure that children are protected from various forms of violence (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2018b). The official response from Norway included a legal reference to amendments in the Education Act in 2017 concerning 'a clear zero-tolerance policy in compulsory education against all forms of bullying, violence, discrimination, harassment and other violations' (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2018a). Norway's response did not reveal the actual words of the Education Act – intervene 'if possible' (the Education Act, 2017), which is more ambiguous than what is portrayed in this response. Whether the strengthening of the educational legal framework has influenced children's rights in practice remains uncertain.

## 5 Theoretical Considerations on Recognition, Intersectionality and Legal Literacy as Educational Capital

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights confirms that ‘everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law’ (UN, 1948, Article 6). Professor of Education, Audrey Osler, affirms that, ‘the concept of recognition of equal and inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights is fundamental to the human rights project’ and simultaneously, she suggests that legal recognition is ‘insufficient in human rights advocacy and HRE’ (Osler, 2015: 263). My interpretation of Osler is that she argues for critically addressing *lack of recognition* and *asymmetrical power struggles* through schooling (Osler, 2015). Inspired by Kimberlé Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), Osler addresses how an intersectional perspective can be fruitful for understanding how young learners experience injustice in different ways, depending on multiple axes of differentiation (Osler, 2015). The intersection of how one performs one’s gender and acts out one’s sexuality combined with age is of relevance for the discussion of the empirical material since harassment most often targets girls, sexual minority – especially homosexual boys, and transgender youth (Bakken, 2020; Landstedt and Gådin, 2011; Roland and Auestad, 2009; Williams *et al.*, 2005). To be harassed entails being *denied recognition* (Honneth, 1995), which I return to in more detail.

Recognition of children’s rights in practice requires that school management, teachers and other school employees have a certain level of legal literacy (Lundy and Sainz, 2018). Legal literacy can be understood as a set of capabilities related to ‘understanding the law and its relevant instruments, as well as the possible legal pathways to take’ (Lundy and Sainz, 2018: 17). Teachers’ legal literacy is likely to be a prerequisite for teaching children about their rights, enabling them to enjoy their rights in practice and promoting an education that works for their rights.<sup>2</sup> Professor of Law, Laura Lundy, and human rights educator, Gabriela Sainz, address the notion that legal literacy is a prerequisite for transformative human rights education since transforming violations of rights into actionable principles for the protection of rights require legally literate individuals (Lundy and Sainz, 2018). They also argue for critically addressing breaches of rights in formal education through incorporating lived experiences of injustice. This is of relevance for this article, because the students were asked to write and perform role-plays based on harassing situations that were familiar to them in their life-worlds, although this did not necessarily

2 The concept of legal literacy extends beyond the CRC, but I chose to focus mainly on the CRC for analytical purposes.



mean that it had to be a situation they had experienced themselves. From my perspective, transformative human rights education can be linked to the *pedagogy of recognition*<sup>3</sup> based on love, rights and solidarity (Jordet, 2020).

The pedagogy of recognition builds on Axel Honneth's theory of recognition (Honneth, 1995). An essential component of Honneth's theory of recognition concerns how social relationships shape the sense of self and identity-formation:

The reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of *mutual recognition*, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partner in interaction.

HONNETH: 92, 1995, emphasis added

Honneth (1995) contends that recognition is intersubjective and relational, and that we develop a sense of who we are and our self-worth as human beings through how others grant us recognition as subject with emotional needs, wishes and rights.

Professor of Pedagogy, Arne Jordet, has developed a theoretical model built on Honneth's theory of recognition (Honneth, 1995), which portrays how love, rights and solidarity are three dimensions of a pedagogy of recognition that could provide optimal learning conditions for children, and that could ensure fundamental values such as human dignity – as enshrined in the objectives clause of the Norwegian Education Act (1998).

Jordet (2020) expands on Axel Honneth's understanding of love (1995). Instead of focusing on love in primary family relations, Jordet applies this concept to the teacher – student relations. Love is a multi-faceted concept, and love in the teacher profession should not be understood as erotic love. To have love for the students involves meeting them with an *attitude* founded on the notion that all human beings are equal subjects with their own thoughts, emotions and experiences. Love in the teaching profession also consists of an *action* component, which is to enhance the students' best interests in everyday practice both inside and outside of the classroom (Jordet, 2020). Caring

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3 The way I see it, is that the common feature between HRE and the pedagogy of recognition is, amongst other aspects, that learners are entitled to rights, they should know their rights and they should experience that their rights are respected in everyday practice in school. I believe that the *pedagogy of recognition* to a greater extent than HRE grasps the emotional and relational dimensions of teaching, and the important role of emotions and relations for learners' development of a positive self-esteem and sense of worth.

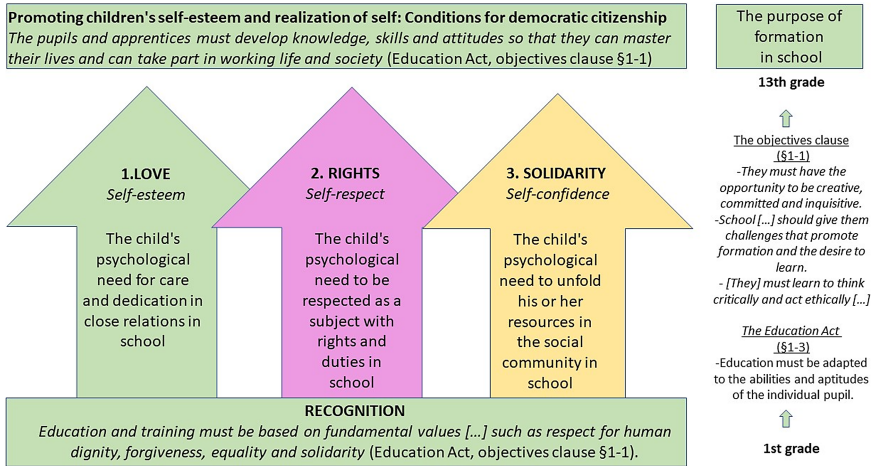


FIGURE 1 Arne Nikolaisen Jordet's model of the three dimensions of a pedagogy of recognition (2020: 374, my translation).

teacher-student relations can have a positive impact on the lives of young people, and perhaps especially for those in vulnerable positions and situations.

Love through recognition of rights can contribute to students' *empowerment*. It can enable students to take ownership of their own lives and resist forces that contribute to *disempowerment*. This concept of empowerment resonates with the principles of education *for* human rights in HRE (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2011, Article 2). Arne Jordet points out in his book, *Recognition in school*, that empowering young learners is to draw attention to and support the individual's inherent resources (Jordet, 2020), see figure 1. The focus is on what the young learners *actually can do* and not what *he or she cannot do*. As we will see later, this is relevant for the role of the *interventionist* in the students' role-plays, because the purpose was to create awareness of what they could do to counter sexual and gender-based harassment. However, intervening in harassment situations is not necessarily straightforward, which will be discussed in light of the empirical material later.

To teach students about acts of gender-based and sexual harassment as violations that can take place in young learners' life-worlds is to recognise children's lived experiences of injustice. To teach about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gives all children and young people legal protection from discrimination and violence, could build students' legal knowledge base that they can draw upon when they experience that their rights are being violated. To teach about the importance of telling someone about unwanted sexual experiences can *strengthen students' ability to protect themselves* by notifying it to a greater extent. To teach about the inviolable human dignity

of children and young people is a way for adults – teachers and other school staff, to recognise children’s rights and to show care and love for students. It is also a way of enabling learners’ self-respect and respect for others, as well as a way of *educating in solidarity with young learners* and *promoting solidarity among them*. Teaching in solidarity can be considered to *share a common concern* (Honneth, 1995), which in this case constitutes concerns related to experiences of sexual and gender-based harassment. Being exposed to harassment can entail being insulted or humiliated, which is linked to being *denied recognition*:

Negative concepts of this kind are used to designate behavior that represents an injustice not simply because it harms subjects or restricts their freedom to act, but it injures them with regard to the positive understanding of themselves that they have acquired intersubjectively.

HONNETH, 1995: 131

To experience harassment and bullying in school is detrimental to students’ development as a person and their self-esteem, and this provides poor conditions for learning. Ideally, school should enable students to master their lives through giving them the opportunity to being actors in their own lives. This is linked to the concept of *agency* (Giddens, 1991). However, exerting agency and mastering one’s own life, depends on being granted recognition of others in close relations. If school fails to protect and prevent young adolescents from being harassed and bullied, this could constitute an institutional misrecognition of their human dignity (Jordet, 2020).

Honneth writes about how negative experiences of disrespect ‘could represent precisely the affective motivational basis in which the struggle for recognition is anchored’ (Honneth, 1995: 135). However, how can we understand the fact that not all human beings, who experience being disrespected and denied recognition, do not voice their unwanted experiences of disrespect? I believe that Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of field, capital and power relations could provide insight (Bourdieu, 1986).

If we follow the reasoning of Laura Lundy and Gabriela Sainz (2018) that we need legally literate individuals to transform breaches of rights into actionable principles of protection, we can look at the legal knowledge which could form part of an individual’s cultural capital. Cultural capital can exist in several forms, and I am here referring to this kind of capital ‘in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 17). My interpretation of Bourdieu is that cultural capital can take the form of educational capital, although it entails more than education (Bourdieu, 2010).

Educational capital could be knowledge that constitutes dispositions of the mind and body that can influence one's behaviour and ability to act in a "field of forces" – or power relations. Young learners' legal literacy, or lack thereof, is part of their educational capital that could condition how they act when facing sexually harassing situations.

## 6 Participatory Research with Teachers and Young Learners

I refer to this research cooperation with teachers and students as *participatory research*, inspired by the mixed methods approach to social justice participatory research design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). The intent is to promote human development by critically addressing challenges to individuals and society, in this case gender-based and sexual harassment, by using the integration of quantitative and qualitative research, in which the theoretical lens is based in human rights (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). This research cooperation builds and expands on findings in my previous research based on phone-interviews with social science teachers (N = 64); if teachers cooperate in developing teaching lessons on sensitive topics related to gender, sexuality, sexual harassment and abuse, teachers are statistically more likely to address these matters (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2021).

In this participatory research project, it was essential to include students' voices. Osler addresses the fact that the CRC, which requires adult decision-makers to take young people's perspectives into consideration, can be integrated into research designs as well as into everyday educational practice (Osler, 2016: 109). The Ombudsperson for Children in Norway states that the school must facilitate that 'pupils are allowed to participate in how their sexuality education should be, and they must be allowed to be active participants in their education in the form of conversations and discussions' (Lindboe, 2018: 37, my translation). Students' voices are included throughout the research project: 1) In a digital survey amongst the students on which topics related to gender and sexuality they would like to learn more about, 2) during the performance of the role-plays, 3) in their reflections in the classroom right after the role-play, and 4) during group interviews with me a few days after the role-play took place.

Norwegian social psychologist, Mons Bendixen, suggests that role-plays with well-developed scripts, in which the learners are active participants, could be a suitable pedagogical method for preventing sexual harassment through education (Brandslet, 2017). Thus, we developed teaching lessons on verbal harassment by using role-play as a pedagogical method. Our approach was inspired by the Theatre of the Oppressed developed by Augusto Boal (2002) in the sense

that we sought to illuminate power relations in harassing situations through the performance of drama written by the young learners themselves. Role-play as a pedagogical method is not suited for gendered or sexual offences involving physical contact, because it would jeopardize learners' physical integrity and sense of security in the classroom.

## 7 Digital Survey Among Students

The digital survey consisted of only two questions; 1) Gender, and 2) Which topics do you think should be part of social science education? In the response alternative for gender, we included the gender-neutral pronoun *hen* to open up for the learners' different ways of identifying as gender. Three learners out of a total of 111 informants identified as *hen* – which constitutes 2.7 per cent of the informants. This coincides with international studies in this field; between 0.1 per cent – 2 per cent of the population identify as transgender or gender non-conforming – referred to as TGNC population (Goodman *et al.*, 2019). However, this depends on inclusion criteria. A study conducted in the Netherlands (N = 8,064), indicates that 4.6 per cent of natal men (assigned gender as male at birth) and 3.2 per cent of natal women (assigned gender as female at birth) report an ambivalent gender identity (Kuyper and Wijsen, 2014).

## 8 The Content of the Teaching Lessons

In advance of the role-play, Julie introduced important theoretical concepts. This consisted of explaining various forms of harassment and the distinction between verbal, non-verbal and physical harassment. The legal component consisted of a reference to the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, para. 13 on the prohibition against harassment (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, 2018) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) on Article 2 on the right to freedom from discrimination, Article 8 on the right to identity and Article 28 on the right to education, which according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, includes the right to sexuality education (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2010).

During the implementation of the teaching lessons, I had the role of participating observer (Fangen, 2010), while Julie conducted the lessons. In the group interviews with the students, I wanted to find out how they experienced

TABLE 1 Overview of the teaching lessons (First published in Norwegian in an upcoming 2022 book).

Time	Activity	Ressources	Objectives
35 minutes 10 minutes	Theoretical concepts introduced by the teacher The teacher explains about the different roles in the role-play and divides the class into groups	Powerpoint about sexual and gender-based harassment News article about a case of gender-based harassment in Oslo	The learners should know what constitute sexual and gender-based harassment, different motives for harassment and the legal framework
45 minutes	The learners write the manuscripts for the role-plays	The learners draw upon their knowledge about the theoretical concepts in their design of the role-play	The learners should link the concepts to everyday situations in their lives where harassment can occur
45 minutes x 2	Performance and discussion of the role-plays	The learners' own role-plays	Enhance knowledge about harassment and action-skills for defending one's own and other people's rights in practice

being able to influence what topic the teaching should be about by taking part in the digital questionnaire and their experience of the implementation of the role-plays. The role plays and interviews were recorded on audio tape and transcribed. After each role-play, there was a whole class discussion based on the students' reflections on the harassment. A few days later, I conducted semi-structured group interviews with 29 students who had taken part in the role-plays to find out more about how they experienced the lessons, (Table 1).

## 9 Ethical Considerations

This study has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, which seeks to ensure that research projects adhere to strict ethical guidelines. The students received information about this study's purpose, their rights to withdraw at any time, to get access to the empirical data, and to get the empirical data deleted if they wanted. Nevertheless, the ethical concerns I had relating to this project went way beyond the information sheet and consent, although these aspects are also important.

We conducted this survey in March/April in 2019, which was one month before the actual teaching lessons and role-plays would take place. For us, it was an essential didactical and pedagogical aspect to introduce these sensitive issues in advance, so that the learners could be emotionally prepared. We emphasised that if any of the students felt uncomfortable about taking part in the teaching lessons, we wanted them to contact us. If one or more of the students were to disclose personal information to us about past or ongoing harassment and/or abuse, we would make sure to cooperate with the school nurse to ensure that proper measures were taken.

A boy contacted Helena and told her that he had experiences with unwanted sexual contact as a child and that he therefore did not want to participate. Of course, he was exempted from participating and informed Helena that his situation had been followed up. Teachers should prepare young learners in advance so that these sensitive issues do not come unexpectedly to students. I recommend that teachers invite the students to contact him or her if they have any concerns or queries in order to enhance students' sense of emotional safety and security. It is also an essential point that teachers prepare well to teach about these topics. We made extensive use of the book, *What I Should Have Said – A Handbook Against Sexual Harassment* [Det jeg skulle ha sagt – En håndbok mot trakassering] (Sletteland & Helseth, 2018).

The principle of doing as little harm as possible (Ryen, 2017) should be at the heart of every project design. According to the ethical guidelines published by the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee (2019), the principle of avoiding doing harm is an essential part of research ethics:

In humanities and social science research, there is usually little risk of participants being exposed to serious physical harm. However, serious mental strain is a possibility. This may be more difficult to define and predict, and it can be difficult to assess the long-term effects, if any. "Strain" is used here in a broad sense, and it covers both *everyday discomfort*, risk of

retraumatisation, and also more serious mental strain which the research may cause the participants.

The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee, 2019

These guidelines apply a broad definition of “strain”, including even feelings of discomfort. For students who had previously experienced harassment and abuse, these lessons could potentially be discomforting; and even for those who did not have this prior experience. Several measures were taken in order to reduce potential harmful effects; the students were informed about the content and aim of the teaching lesson two weeks in advance and were encouraged to contact their teacher or me if they had any queries. To avoid physical harassment in the role-plays, which is the most degrading form, the students were limited to verbal and non-verbal harassment such as body language. As part of the preparations for the role-plays and in order to ensure students’ sense of emotional safety and security, the students were divided into groups with students they felt comfortable and safe with. This was done to prevent the potential perpetuation of already existing harassing relations. Another aspect was how to design the teaching lesson in a way that did not leave the students feeling belittled or disempowered to stop harassment, because this would have been the contrary of what the intention was. As such, we opted for adding an element of students’ active engagement in stopping the harassment; one or more of the roles in each group was to be an interventionist one. They were given the task of designing a role-play that was close to their everyday life in well-known surroundings and places, such as at school, training, bus, party and the like. In each group, there was someone who was harassed, someone who harassed, some “bystanders” who watched and an “interventionist” who intervened in the harassment. As addressed in the theoretical considerations, the purpose of the interventionist was to empower students to defend one’s own and other people’s rights to protection from verbal sexual harassment among peers.

## 10 Results

The presentation of results consists of three parts; first, I present the results from the digital student survey and students’ perceptions of being able to influence the topics they learn about in social science education. Secondly, I present students’ perceptions on taking part in the role-plays. Lastly, I discuss students’ knowledge about the CRC and the role of legal literacy.



## 11 The Digital Survey and Students' Experiences of Participating through influencing Teaching Lessons

The results of the digital student survey showed that many of the students wanted to learn about sexual harassment and sexual violence that affects their generation; 55 per cent answered that they would learn about sexual harassment among peers, and 48 per cent answered that they would learn more about sexual violence among peers, which includes more serious forms of physical sexual violence, such as rape. In this study, it is clear that students want to learn more about *sexual harassment and sexual violence that affects their generation*. Teaching and learning about *issues that are relevant for children and adolescents' lives here and now* resonates with the words written by the educational philosopher, John Dewey, over hundred years ago: 'I believe that the school must represent present life' (Dewey, 1897).

The results from this student survey (Figure 2 and Table 2) portray clear gender differences; there were no limits for how many topics each student could choose, and on average girls have "ticked off" more of the options. Sixty-nine percent of girls voted for sexual harassment among young peers, whereas only 39 per cent of boys voted for this option. The gender differences regarding students' responses to each topic are visualised in this bar graph:

TABLE 2 Results from the student survey (N = 111).

<i>Which topics do you think should be part of social science education?</i>	<i>Girl</i>	<i>Boy</i>	<i>Hen – gender-neutral option</i>	<i>In total</i>
1. The good sexuality	26	15	1	38%
2. Femininity/masculinity	30	19	2	46%
3. Sexual harassment among young peers	41	19	1	55%
4. Female genital mutilation	24	10	0	31%
5. Pornography	22	16	1	35%
6. Sexual violence among young peers	35	17	1	48%
7. Sexual violence as a weapon in war	26	19	1	41%
8. Child sexual abuse	26	18	1	41%
9. Transgenderness	25	9	2	32%
10. I do not want to answer	2	12	0	13%
<b>In total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>111</b>

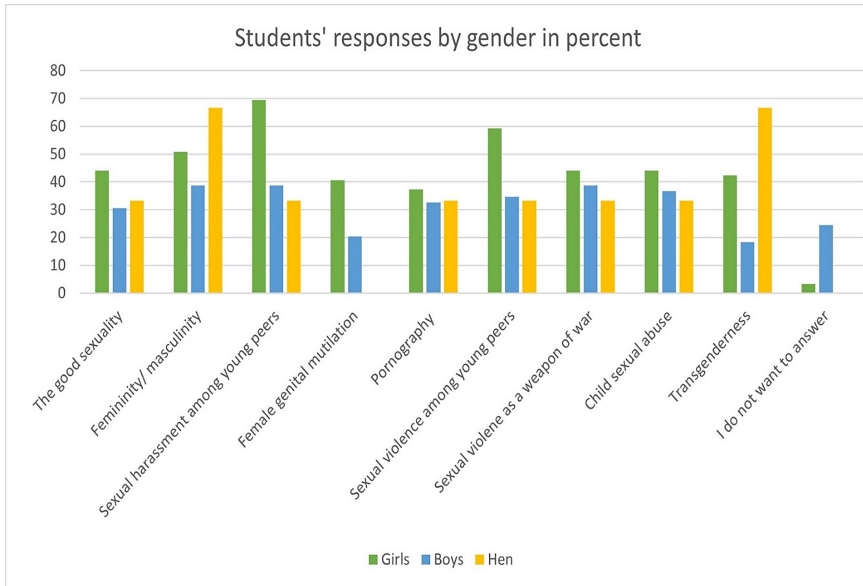


FIGURE 2 Students' responses by gender in percent.

It might be that girls in general are more interested in discussing these sensitive issues, because they are more exposed to harassment and abuse than boys (Bakken, 2020; Mossige and Stefansen, 2016; Myhre *et al.*, 2015). In Bourdieusian terms, for girls, school might be considered as a field of forces that possibly could alter power relations that disfavour them. Learning about harassment could potentially increase learners' educational capital, including legal literacy, about sexual harassment and abuse (Bourdieu, 1986). Young girls' feelings of being disrespected could constitute the motivational basis for a struggle for recognition (Honneth, 1995). I believe this is of relevance for understanding these female students' interest in learning more about sexual harassment and abuse in school, since girls to a greater extent than boys experience this kind of misrecognition of their human dignity and fundamental rights. This does not mean that boys necessarily are the harassers – as earlier pointed out, girls also harass each other – a phenomenon known as same-sex harassment.

There are also more boys than girls who answered that they 'do not want to answer this question', and it could be that boys are less interested in these issues, because it does not affect them to the same extent. However, I believe that it is important for teachers to address the fact that sexual and gender-based harassment also targets boys, and especially homosexual boys, in order to avoid "framing" boys as perpetrators. This would be counterproductive for learning and could reproduce stereotypical images of what it means to

be a boy. Teaching should highlight each young learners' fundamental human rights to freedom from discrimination regardless of gender and sexuality as enshrined in the CRC Article 2 (CRC, 1989).

When looking into what the three students, who identify as the gender-neutral pronoun *hen* answered, there were particularly two topics that were of interest: femininity/masculinity and transgenerness. This is probably related to how these issues are highly relevant for their lives here and now, and for their self-understanding. I do not contend that it is possible to make generalisations here: however, it is interesting that the students in this sample chose topics that are relevant for their lives and sense of self. I consider that opening up an educational space for identifying as *hen* is essential for giving recognition to each individual's self-identification as gender and sense of worth – students' human worth is not conditioned by how they perform their gender.

In the group-interviews after the teaching lessons, some of the students stated that they were disappointed because they would like to learn more about several topics outlined in the survey – not only sexual and gender-based harassment, but also sensitive issues such as pornography, child sexual abuse, transgenerness and so on. Therefore, I interpret both the results from the student survey and group-interviews as empirical material that portrays learners' wish to learn more about the variety of these sensitive topics related to gender and sexuality, and especially in relation to their life-worlds. This can be related to a recent interview-based study among 26 social science students in Norway in which the authors found that students are motivated by content that concerns them directly, involve ethical considerations or that evoke emotions (Børhaug and Borgund, 2018).

In the group-interviews with the students after the role-play, the students were engaged and willing to discuss and participate. Empirical studies indicate that role-play is a suitable pedagogical method to evoke emotions and engagement in social science education (Leming, 2016; Ursin, 2018). My experience was that more students opened up for dialogue when they talked to me in small groups consisting of four to six students (their role-play group) rather than discussing the role-plays in a whole-class discussion. There may be some students who always speak and dominate, whereas other students for various reasons do not feel like taking part in a whole-class discussion. In the group-interviews, I ensured a democratic dialogue in which each student was invited to share perspectives, opinions and emotions concerning the teaching lessons. I coincide with Arne Jordet regarding how 'the key to good dialogical interaction is in open, explorative and authentic questions' where the aim is to unravel the students' knowledge, understandings and experiences, and not control what they know or do not know (Jordet, 2020: 356).

As part of our democratic dialogue, I was interested in exploring how they felt about being able to influence the content of the teaching lessons. Here is an excerpt from our dialogue:

Beate: What do you think about the possibility of influencing the content of the teaching lessons?

Alex: It is nice that you can choose what you think is important [to learn more about].

Martin: I think that it provides an opportunity to decide what you would like to know more about, and that you can have more to say [in the decision-making].

Beate: Mhm [confirming]. What do you think?

Michaela: I think it gives an opportunity to be able to decide what one wants to know more about ... So it's nice to be able to influence the teaching a bit. It is fun to see what students think they are not learning enough about. It's kind of okay for people to actually get to talk about these things. Although they may not be so easy to talk about.

The majority of the students were positive about being able to influence the content of the teaching lessons. My overall interpretation of students' perceptions is that this kind of participation provided a sense of *agency* in the classroom (Giddens, 1991). Teachers could easily do this in everyday educational practice by letting the learners influence which topic they would like to discuss in more detail within the framework of the curriculum in each subject. Although pupils' voice is about more than a pupils' voice survey (Struthers, 2020), this is one of several alternatives for including learners' voices in the planning phase of teaching. The combination of letting students influence which topics they would like to address in-depth, enabling their active participation and opening up for dialogical conversations between students and between teachers and students, is fruitful for ensuring children's participatory rights as enshrined in the CRC Article 12 on the right to be heard in matters that affect their lives (UN, 1989). I consider that this would be in tune with human rights education and the pedagogy of recognition (Jordet, 2020; Osler, 2016; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2010).

## 12 The Role-plays and Learners' Experiences

This overview (Table 3) portrays how 5 groups consisting of 29 students in total chose to play out their versions of the role-plays:

TABLE 3 Overview of students' role-plays.

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Kind of harassment</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Digital dimension</i>	<i>Study program</i>
<b>Group 1:</b> 7 boys	Sexual harassment based on sexual orientation: Among boys	At the mechanics	No	Vocational study program
<b>Group 2:</b> 1 boy and 3 girls	Sexual harassment based on sexual orientation: girls harassing one boy	At the school's library	No	General studies [studiespecialising]
<b>Group 3:</b> 5 girls	Same-gender harassment among girls: A girl is being harassed for her clothing	At a party	Yes	General studies
<b>Group 4:</b> 2 boys and 3 girls	Sexual harassment based on gender expressions: A boy who puts on make-up gets harassed by classmates	In the locker-room after school	No	General studies
<b>Group 5:</b> 4 girls	Same-gender harassment among girls	On the bus	Yes	General studies

There was a wide range in how students chose to write and perform the role-plays. Three out of four categories for sexual and gender-based harassment were included: 1) Harassment based on gender expression, 2) same-sex harassment and 3) sexual harassment based on sexual orientation. The fourth category of heterosexual harassment was not performed in Julie's classes. In two of the role-plays, the students included a digital dimension.

Many of the students expressed the view that they felt that the role-play was artificial, and this was especially related to the role of the interventionist. They argued that in real life they rarely experience that someone interferes with harassment:

Beate: In your role-play, you had to intervene in the harassing situation ...

What could be the challenges of doing so?

Selma: In this role-play, or in general?

Beate: In the real world.

Selma: Again, it really depends on the situation, I feel. If it's like physical stuff, it can be very uncomfortable, or that you somehow cannot stop it.

If you are a little girl, and there are big guys somehow. Then it may be that you cannot stop them, or that you do not dare. That was what I thought a bit about in that role-play, that if you are going to intervene, *it is the case very often that there is no intervention* emphasis added.

This student describes that in real life, perhaps, nothing had been done. Selma describes how being 'a little girl' situates you in a less privileged power position in comparison to 'big guys', and that stopping them would be close to impossible. She highlights that the role of the 'interventionist' didn't feel real, because 'it is the case very often that there is no intervention'. Selma's statement can be seen in connection with previous research which shows that 38 per cent of students who experience harassing comments from either teachers or fellow students (N = 260), state that they rarely or never experience that someone intervenes in the situation (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw and Trysnes, 2020). These statements also highlight that students are reluctant to intervene in harassment, among other things due to fear of being dragged into a conflict or of being physically injured, which contributes to a *bystander effect* that inhibits them from showing solidarity with people who are harassed (Darley and Latane, 1968). Other students say that they are reluctant to intervene, because they might have misunderstood the situation and thus can be seen as the person who just does not understand the jargon. Thus, slightly contrasting Honneth (1995), I would say that negative experiences of injustice do not necessarily provide the motivational basis for a struggle for recognition, especially not if fear-related feelings are involved and a strong sense of being unable to alter the power relations are in play. As Selma pinpoints here, one's power position is influenced by multiple axes of differentiation (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Osler, 2015), such as gender, age and physical strength, which could condition one's ability to act upon harassing situations in practice although one is theoretically legally protected from such misbehaviour.

### 13 Lack of familiarity with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

As part of the group-interviews, I asked the learners about what they remembered about the CRC from the teaching lessons. The main finding is that young learners are not too familiar with this Convention, which is epitomised in Martin's comment on how he does not 'really remember much about the Convention on the Rights of the Child'. However, some students did remember

and some were interested in different articles such as Article 8 on the right to identity:

Michaela: Yes, I thought about that one [Article 8 CRC].

Beate: Do you think that expressions of identity can be linked to sexual harassment?

Alex: This may be what many people target if they are going to harass someone ... how they choose to behave and what they choose to do. ... They [those who harass] take it out on those who are a little different.

Michaela: When *people are harassed for who they are*, that is when *it hurts the most*, because it's something they cannot change (emphasis added). ... Your identity is a really big part of your life, and the fact that people sort of take hold of it [your identity] and... *It must be a little scary* (emphasis added).

Michaela expresses how harassment can target aspects of one's identity when '*people are harassed for who they are*', and that this kind of harassment is what *hurts the most*. Such experiences entails *being denied recognition* (Honneth, 1995). As previously addressed, experiencing non-physical sexual harassment is associated with low self-esteem, depression and anxiety (Bendixen *et al.*, 2017). Harassment targets one's self-esteem. Michaela states that being harassed could contribute to fear-related feelings. Negative feelings can sometimes have a positive effect; Honneth addresses the fact that negative feelings such as disrespect 'can become the motivational impetus for a struggle for recognition' (Honneth, 1995: 135–139) which would entail standing up for one's fundamental rights. However, 'fighting back' requires that you know you are entitled to rights that protect you from experiencing disrespectful treatment such as harassment. In other words, it would require legal literacy as part of one's educational capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 2010; Lundy and Sainz, 2018). My interpretation is that without legal literacy, fear-related feelings may inhibit a struggle for recognition.

I continued the interview by asking them how the right to identity could apply in practice, whereas Martin answered:

You have to dare [be who you are], I would say. It is very difficult to create an arrangement that allows everyone to be who they are, because everyone has the right to have opinions about what they want. Everyone here has the right to have an opinion about me. So to be who I am, *I just have to endure it [harassment] in a way*. It is very difficult (emphasis added).

These quotes portray that the learners are not too familiar with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and this was a common feature in several group-interviews. As such, there might be a discrepancy between the normative framework of the Overriding part of the curriculum concerning how ‘the pupils must also acquire knowledge about these rights’ (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017: 4) and their level of legal literacy in practice. Little familiarity with the legal framework that should protect against harassment contributes to how learners *individualise the responsibility to endure harassment* rather than highlighting their right to legal protection from such misbehaviour. Martin pinpoints how other people have the right to have an opinion about him and not the legal limitations regulating what one can say or do to a person. Being legally literate is a prerequisite for being able to defend one’s rights in practice (Lundy and Sainz, 2018). My interpretation of the students’ quotes is that they are not fully aware of their rights, which in turn does not enable them to protect their rights in practice. Not being able to protect one’s rights in practice feels emotionally challenging, as Martin finds this ‘very difficult’. Legal framework is among the least addressed topics when teachers address matters related to gender, sexuality, harassment and abuse (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019), therefore, students’ relative lack of legal literacy is not surprising in light of previous research on teaching practice.

Learners’ lack of legal literacy could be related to teachers’ lack of legal literacy, and teachers’ lack of legal literacy appears to be a plausible explanation for why teachers to a small extent address the legal framework related to gender, sexuality, harassment and abuse. When teacher Julia introduced the theoretical concepts in the first part of these teaching lessons, she included a brief reference to the CRC (1989). Although I wanted to emphasise this Convention to a greater extent than we actually did, Julia said that she was not too familiar with it, and that she did not feel like giving too much emphasis on the CRC. She did not consider it to be necessary since the learners were 17-years old and almost adults. I wanted to give Julie autonomy and space to make the teaching lessons ‘her own’, and therefore, I did not push to emphasise this Convention. She did not have legal studies in her professional background, and the majority of social science teachers do not. In my previous research among social science teachers (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019, 2021), the informants came from a wide range of disciplines. Lack of legal literacy could be a challenge for social science education in general, and for human rights education in particular, because teachers’ lack of legal literacy can be reproduced in learners’ lack of legal literacy. Bourdieu’s concepts of field and capital is also of relevant here: young learners’ legal literacy, or the lack thereof, can be considered as part of



their cultural capital conditioning their ability to act in a field of power relations (Bourdieu, 1986).

#### 14 Students' Reluctance to Voice their Unwanted Experiences of Harassment

In the group-interviews, several of the informants express the view that they would be reluctant to inform the teachers about their experiences with unwanted sexual attention in the school setting. I asked them whether they would have contacted the teacher if they experience harassment in school:

Alex: Do not think so.

Martin: Noooo, *it would have to be very serious if I were to report it*. It would require a lot [emphasis added].

Beate: Why is that?

Martin: No, I think there are easier ways to solve it without involving a lot of parents and teachers and a lot of adults. At this age you should begin to resolve these things on your own. Yes, I think so. *Unless it's really, really bad, I would not bring it up*. (emphasis added).

Selma: I kind of agree that you can see if you can resolve it yourself. But it depends a bit on the situation and such. If you feel that you need a little help to solve this ... it does not have to be teachers, you can get help from others, sort of.

Alex: I would rather have asked a friend or talked about it with friends.

Alex and Martin express that they would deal with harassment on their own, or discuss it with a friend. It could be that for the boys to ask for help could entail showing vulnerability, which possibly could be considered as a sign of weakness that stereotypically is not in tune with ideals of masculinity. Norms for masculinity could inhibit them from showing vulnerability. Alex and Martin choose to resolve harassing situations themselves without seeking help. For girls, notifying about harassment and voicing vulnerability does not counter stereotypical ideals of femininity, and this could play a role regarding why the boys were hesitant in notifying their teacher about unwanted sexual attention, whereas the girl was more prone to seek help from others – albeit not necessarily the teacher. It is clear that they do not consider teachers to be the 'protective agents' they should ideally be according to the Norwegian Education Act paragraph 9A (Education Act, 2017).

## 15 Concluding Remarks

The starting point for this research project was to design teaching lessons on issues concerning gender and sexuality with both teachers' and students' active participation. When the students stated that they would like to learn more about sexual and gender-based harassment among peers, we opted for creating an educational space for recognising young learners' life-worlds, and that this lifeworld can contain negative experiences of injustice. The way I see it, the teacher can show students a form of love by taking students and their experiences seriously.

Results from the digital student survey reveals that students would like to learn more about sexual harassment and sexual violence that affects their generation. I do not contend that these results are universal, but rather that they portray contextual patterns which can be seen in relation to previous research conducted among social science students regarding how they are engaged and motivated by topics that concerns them directly or evoke emotions (Børhaug and Borgund, 2018). The sample is relatively modest ( $N = 111$ ), which is a limitation, but the results are interesting in the sense that there are clear tendencies towards the fact that the students wanted to address sensitive issues in their own life-worlds. In my previous study among 64 social science teachers conducted in 2018, I sought to measure which topics related to gender, sexuality, harassment and abuse teachers address in the classroom (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019). The alternatives included to what extent they had been taught about #MeToo, penalties for rape, intimacy boundaries, non-consensual sharing of sexual imagery, the legal framework protecting against harassment and abuse, rape among young peers and child sexual abuse. I found that teachers do not address such issues related to sexual violence to any great extent and, if they do, they teach to a small extent about harassment and abuse targeting young people. This is a paradox, which can also be understood as an explanation of the results of the digital survey among social science students; teachers do not address harassment, rape among young peers and child sexual abuse to any great extent, and this is precisely why the young students would like to learn more about these issues. In light of previous research (Børhaug and Borgund, 2018; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019), the results from the digital survey and in tune with transformative human rights education (Lundy and Sainz, 2018), I would recommend that school staff, teachers, student teachers and teacher educators link teaching about these sensitive issues to young people's lives, because this can create engagement and motivation for learning, and perhaps most importantly, it can also enable them to protect themselves and others from unwanted sexual attention.

Despite the fact that the teaching lessons and the role-plays were theoretically intended to promote empowerment and action-skills for facing harassment and defending both their own and others' rights (Jordet, 2020; Osler, 2016; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2011), the young learners rather expressed a form of powerlessness due to how sexual and gender-based harassment manifests itself in real life. The common feature of both boys' and girls' perceptions is that they feel disempowered. The students express that they are worried about being drawn into a kind of conflict, that they will be physically harmed or that they have misunderstood the situation. I interpret the students' statements as characterised by disempowerment in the face of harassment, and that they feel to a small degree that they themselves can influence the situation or that someone else can intervene. This contributes to the *bystander effect* (Darley and Latane, 1968). In combination with little legal literacy, fear-related feelings may inhibit a struggle for recognition. In sum, students feel disempowered when facing harassment in their everyday lives and they do not necessarily consider teachers to be protective agents safeguarding their right to protection from harassment.

Gender could be a factor that conditions adolescents' ability to report harassment, and it does so differently for girls and boys – for boys reporting incidents of harassment could entail portraying vulnerability that can be perceived as countering stereotypical norms of masculinity. This is illustrated in the discussion of Alex and Martin's statements concerning their hesitance to notify the teacher if they experience harassment. My interpretation is that gender and ideals of masculinity potentially condition their willingness to notify. This does not apply to girls to the same degree, because showing vulnerability does not necessarily counter stereotypical ideals of femininity. I see that this plays out differently for the boys than for the girl Selma who, rather, highlights an inability to act upon harassment due to an underprivileged power position in terms of the intersecting axes of differentiation such as gender, age and physical strength (Crenshaw, 1991; Osler, 2015).

Young learners' sense of disempowerment could be linked to young learners' lack of legal literacy (Lundy and Sainz, 2018), which in turn could be a consequence of teachers' lack of legal literacy. Young learners' ability to defend their rights is conditioned by teachers' legal literacy. First, it conditions whether or not students learn *about* their fundamental rights. It also conditions education *through* human rights – teachers need to know that students have rights in order for teachers to defend their rights in practice when learners report experiences that constitute breaches of their rights. Defending one's own and others' rights is not straightforward – one's ability to do this in practice is to a certain extent conditioned by the power relations that are in play. I consider

both teachers' and learners' legal literacy as part of educational capital that might condition one's ability to act in a field of power relations (Bourdieu, 1986, 2010). It can condition teaching practice and the content of the teaching lessons, and in turn, *teachers' educational capital conditions what students learn in school and what becomes part of learners' educational capital*. However, lack of familiarity with the CRC is not the individual teachers' fault, but should be understood within the broader organisation of teaching practice such as the content of teacher education programmes. Teachers need a certain level of legal literacy in order to teach young learners about their rights and to uphold these rights in practice. As such, I believe that there is a need for more emphasis on legal literacy and human rights in teacher education. There is also a need to strengthen school leaders' legal literacy through management education, because the school management plays an important role in shaping school culture and whether or not teachers address issues related to gender, sexuality and harassment (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2021).

The students felt that the role-play did not reflect "how things work" in real life. I expected that we would have lively class-discussions immediately after each performance, but that did not happen. Rather, the enthusiasm came when we discussed the role-play in small groups, and I believe this is related to the fact that the students might have felt more comfortable and emotionally secure in this setting, rather than in the whole-class setting. My impression is that there is great potential for recognition of young learners' human dignity in such democratic dialogues. I felt that the students I interviewed appreciated my active listening and interest in their perspectives, opinions and emotions, and this can be transferred to teacher-student relations. I believe that opening up a space for such interaction between teacher and students may lay the ground for recognition of learners' human dignity and enhance teachers' possibilities of being a Significant Other in students' lives. This way, role-play as a pedagogical method could provide a point of departure for dialogues about their life-worlds and the challenges they are facing on an everyday basis. Since the most common teaching practice in social science education is somewhat teacher-oriented (Solhaug *et al.*, 2020), it is likely that many students are not too familiar with role-plays as a pedagogical method. Challenging traditional teaching practice requires that teachers are trained in such pedagogical approaches that seek to involve students as active participants. The Norwegian teacher educator, Tove Leming, asserts that student-active pedagogical methods are essential to improve the quality of higher education programmes, including teacher education (Leming, 2016: 62).

To ensure that the teacher listens to all of the young learners' voices – not only those who always speak up, I would recommend engaging in democratic

dialogues with students in smaller groups in which learners are placed in groups with classmates they feel comfortable with. This also provides room to go more in-depth on the topic. Through such democratic conversations anchored in *love* for the students, *recognition* of their lived experiences of injustice and of their rights to protection from discrimination and harassment, teachers can promote learners' human dignity and their legal literacy. They can encourage them to voice their experiences with unwanted sexual and gender-based harassment – and *stand with them and provide emotional support* when they do. There is no doubt that love is an essential component for good teacher-student relations, and student-student relations, and the pedagogy of recognition requires *the combination of love, rights and solidarity*. The realisation of this approach presupposes teachers' legal literacy to enable children and adolescents' development of legal literacy, enable them to enjoy their rights in practice and promote an education that works for their rights (Jordet, 2020; Lundy and Sainz, 2018). I do not contend that teachers should be lawyers, but I concur with Audrey Osler: *Teachers should be human rights activists* (Presentation by Osler, 2021). I would add, "*caring and warm human rights activists*" – building their self-esteem through love in everyday practice and recognition of their rights, which could make a great difference in young people's lives – despite the challenges.

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