

Uneasy Lies the Queer Head That Wears a Crown:  
Intersectionality in *Young Royals* (Netflix, 2021-)



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## Abstract

Over the last few years, *Netflix* has produced and released various teenage series featuring LGBTQIA+ characters, reaching large audiences. Television is pointed to as a strong influence on teenager's sexual identity formation, knowledge on the LGBTQIA+ community, and the (re)production of gender and sexuality norms. Therefore, it is important to study queer representation in teen television series. The Swedish teen series *Young Royals* (*Netflix*, 2021-) shows a seemingly awareness of intersectionality and recognizes the struggling relationship between monarchies and modern-day society, making it an interesting case study of queer representation. Therefore, this research made a textual analysis of *Young Royals*, with the aim of answering the following question: How is intersectionality represented through the characters of Wilhelm and Simon in the teen series *Young Royals*? The concept of intersectionality is used to see what ideologies the series embodies.

Following Leslie McCall's intercategory complexity approach, this thesis focuses on the categories of sexual identity, race, and class within the series' first season. To analyze *Young Royals* on a textual level, John Fiske's theory of codes of television is employed to examine how the different layers of their complex identities are portrayed and thus represented. The textual analysis has shown that class was highlighted more for Wilhelm and Simon than the categories of sexual identity and race. The technical and social codes that transmit the conventional representational codes to shape the representation of ideological codes seem to embody the ideologies of traditionalism and classism. Instead of problematizing queer identity and focusing on sexual identity like many other queer teen series, *Young Royals* problematizes the social issues that queer people are facing by showing how Wille and Simon navigate their intersectionality. *Young Royals* centers social issues that are relevant today, like discrimination caused by the social class system and the traditionalism of monarchies, leading to the marginalization of social groups such as queer people.

## Keywords

Young Royals • Intersectionality • Representation • Textual analysis • Sexual Identity • Race • Class • Queer

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# Uneasy Lies the Queer Head That Wears a Crown: Intersectionality in *Young Royals* (Netflix, 2021-)

## Introduction

*Netflix* as the world's most popular streaming service is an important contributor to LGBTQIA+ representation in media as it reaches large audiences.<sup>1</sup> Over the last five years, *Netflix* has increasingly produced and released various fictional series for teenagers and young adults featuring LGBTQIA+ characters. Several of these series are among *Netflix*' most popular productions ever, as *Élite* (2018-), *Sex Education* (2019-) and *Heartstopper* (2022-).<sup>2</sup> Another favorite among *Netflix*' audience is the Swedish fictional teen series *Young Royals* (2021-).<sup>3</sup> In *Young Royals* (hereafter referred to as *YR*), the prince of Sweden, Wilhelm (Edvin Ryding), is sent to the elite boarding school Hillerska after a video of him fighting at a party goes viral. Wilhelm (nicknamed Wille) is miserable due to the transfer, until he meets his classmate Simon Eriksson (Omar Rudberg). Simon is a working-class, non-resident student, who identifies as gay. As Wille and Simon fall in love, they keep their relationship a secret as Wille struggles to combine his queer identity with being the Crown Prince of Sweden. When their relationship is made public through a leaked sex video, their relationship seems to become a problem for the survival of the monarchy.

Teen television is often defined by a narrative that focuses on teenagers' lives as they navigate the road from adolescence to adulthood, often centering the relationship between the children and their parents. A significant feature that is associated with these narratives is their ability to address issues of identity formation, particularly sexual identity.<sup>4</sup> As *YR* fits this definition, this allows for applying theory from television studies to a streaming television series.<sup>5</sup> Media in general

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<sup>1</sup> "Top Streaming Services by Subscribers," FlixPatrol, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://flixpatrol.com/streaming-services/subscribers/>.

<sup>2</sup> Kasey Moore, "Most Watched Series & Movies on Netflix of All Time (Hours Watched)," What's on Netflix, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.whats-on-netflix.com/what-to-watch/most-watched-series-movies-of-all-time-hours-watched/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Young Royals*, directed by Erika Calmeyer and Rojda Sekersöz, written by Lisa Åmbjörn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman, aired July 1, 2021, Netflix. Netflix labels *Young Royals* as a teen series; "Young Royals: Edvin Ryding, Rojda Sekersöz and Lisa Åmbjörn talking about the impact of the show," Netflix Nordic, uploaded January 10, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2J7B28clhE>. Director Sekersöz calls *Young Royals* a "youth series" for a "young audience"; "Global Top 10 – July 5 – July 11, 2021," Netflix, accessed January 19, 2023, <https://top10.netflix.com/tv-non-english?week=2021-07-11>. The first season of *Young Royals* was streamed for more than 9.8 million hours and was in the Netflix top 10 TV Non-English of 12 countries worldwide, while the second season made it to the top 10 in 26 countries.

<sup>4</sup> Michaela D.E. Meyer and Megan M. Wood, "Sexuality and Teen Television: Emerging Adults Respond to Representation of Queer Identity on *Glee*," *Sexuality & Culture* 17, no. 3 (2013): 437-438.

<sup>5</sup> Netflix is rather considered a streaming service than television.

are the primary site of production for social knowledge regarding LGBTQ identities, according to social work scholars Lauren McInroy and Shelley Craig.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, television is pointed to as a strong influence on sexual identity formation and teen's behavioral choices.<sup>7</sup> Film scholar Richard Dyer even argues that "how a group is both represented and representative affects how members of that group see themselves, and how others see them, their place and rights in society".<sup>8</sup> Cultural politics scholar Samuel Chambers builds on Dyers reasoning to suggest seeing television as a "cultural practice that produces and re-produces the norms of gender and sexuality that *are* our lived reality".<sup>9</sup> In 2023's reality, people who identify as other than heterosexual remain at higher risk of (homophobic) violence and other forms of abuse than heterosexuals.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the suicide rate is higher among sexual minority youth than heterosexual youth.<sup>11</sup> These worrying facts in combination with the apparent influence television has on teenager's sexual identity formation, LGBTQIA+ community knowledge, and the (re)production of gender and sexuality norms, indicate the academic and social relevance of studying the representation of the LGBTQIA+ youth in teen television.

Moreover, communication scholars Robert Westerfelhaus and Celeste Lacroix state that cultural constructions of human sexuality, like television series, are fluid. This makes critically engaging with and studying queer representation on television an ongoing project,<sup>12</sup> highlighting the importance of charting new productions. Since the early 2010s, a notable, still rising, increase in the visibility of LGBTQIA+ characters on television has occurred.<sup>13</sup> While there was a lack of queer youth on television up until the 1980s, media scholar Mareike Jenner considers the popular teen series *Dawson's Creek* (WB, 1998-2003) to be the marker of an important turning point as it depicted two

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<sup>6</sup> Lauren B. McInroy and Shelley L. Craig, "Perspectives of LGBTQ Emerging Adults on the Depiction and Impact of LGBTQ Media Representation," *Journal of Youth Studies* 20, no. 1 (2017): 33.

<sup>7</sup> Meyer and Wood, "Sexuality and Teen Television," 436.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Dyer, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations* (London, Routledge, 1993), quoted in Raffi Sarkissian, "Queering TV Conventions: LGBT Teen Narratives on *Glee*," in *Queer Youth and Media Cultures*, ed. Christopher Pullen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 147.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel A. Chambers, *The Queer Politics of Television* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Mark S. Friedman et al., "A Meta-Analysis of Disparities in Childhood Sexual Abuse, Parental Physical Abuse, and Peer Victimization among Sexual Minority and Sexual Nonminority Individuals," *American Journal of Public Health* 101, no. 8 (2011): 1481.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey A. Bridge and Donna A. Ruch, "Chapter 1: Epidemiology of Suicide and Suicidal Behavior in Youth," in *Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention: Best Practices and Policy Implications*, eds. John P. Ackerman and Lisa M. Horowitz (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2022), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Westerfelhaus and Celeste Lacroix, "Seeing 'Straight' through Queer Eye: Exposing the Strategic Rhetoric of Heteronormativity in a Mediated Ritual of Gay Rebellion," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23, no. 5 (2006): 441.

<sup>13</sup> Kate McNicholas Smith, *Lesbians on Television* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2020), 1.

male teens engaging romantically for the first time in the genre.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, more gay teenagers were introduced in series like *Skins* (E4, 2007-2013), *Gossip Girl* (CW, 2007-2012), and *Glee* (Fox, 2009-2015).<sup>15</sup> Following these series, a wider variety of LGBTQIA+ characters has appeared in teen series.<sup>16</sup> LGBTQIA+ characters even seem to take on more leading roles than before in the latest teen series.<sup>17</sup>

Unique to *YR* in comparison with other Netflix teen series is its seemingly high awareness of intersectionality. Intersectionality can be explained as the consideration of multiple social categories that together make up one's identity, like class, race, and sexual identity.<sup>18</sup> *YR*' awareness of intersectionality is revealed through a range of complex characters who are clearly affected by the intersections within their complex identities. Next to the striking class difference between Wille and Simon, Simon is mixed race and openly gay, while Wille is white, and his sexual identity remains unlabeled. Simon's sister Sara (Frida Argento) is also mixed race, working class, and is diagnosed with Asperger's and ADHD. Classmate Felice (Nikita Ugglá) is black and comes from a wealthy family, while Wille's second cousin August (Malte Gårdinger) struggles financially and mentally after his father's suicide. Additionally, *YR* is unique in showing aspects of queer relationships beside sex by recognizing the struggling relationship between monarchies and modern-day society. *YR* is the first series or film to portray fictional LGBTQ+ royalty in a monarchy. With this portrayal, *YR* addresses an issue that has always been present as there have been LGBTQ+ royalty and nobility worldwide since the ancient times.<sup>19</sup> After the first same-sex royal wedding ever in 2018,<sup>20</sup> reality demonstrates that monarchies could face or have faced conflicts similar to *YR*' plot: queer people that cannot conform to tradition of heterosexual marriage within monarchies, with the consequence of endangering the monarchy's survival. Furthermore, the series shows the power contrasts between different social classes and the injustices that can follow from this.

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<sup>14</sup> Mareike Jenner, "We Need to Talk about Jack! On the Representation of Male Homosexuality in American Teen Soaps," in *Queer Youth and Media Cultures*, ed. Christopher Pullen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 138.

<sup>15</sup> Frederik Dhaenens, "Teenage Queerness: Negotiating Heteronormativity in the Representation of Gay Teenagers in *Glee*," *Journal of Youth Studies* 16, no. 3 (2013): 305; Jenner, "We Need to Talk about Jack!," 142.

<sup>16</sup> Examples are the Netflix productions mentioned before: *Élite* features a transgender character and multiple bisexual characters, while *Sex Education* features a pansexual and non-binary character.

<sup>17</sup> Examples: The main characters of Netflix' *Heartstopper* are two queer boys, as is the case in *Young Royals*.

<sup>18</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139.

<sup>19</sup> Dan Avery, "13 LGBTQ Royals You Didn't Learn About in History Class," NBC News, published October 18, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/nbc-out-proud/13-lgbtq-royals-didnt-learn-history-class-rcna3097>.

<sup>20</sup> Chelsea Ritschel, "Lord Mountbatten Marries James Coyle in First Royal Same-Sex Wedding," *The Independent*, published September 25, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/lord-ivar-mountbatten-james-coyle-wedding-gay-royal-family-a8554721.html>.

Both *YR*' awareness of intersectionality and the relationship between monarchies and modern-day society make it an interesting case for the study of queer youth representation. As *YR* has not been studied before, the following research will have an intersectional approach, allowing for analysis of queer representation in a broader sense by considering the intersections between sexual identity and the social categories of race and class. To limit the scope of this study, this research focuses on the two main characters, Wilhelm and Simon. This study will attempt to answer the following research question:

**How is intersectionality represented through the characters of Wilhelm and Simon in the teen series *Young Royals* (Netflix, 2021-)?**

The following sub-questions will help to answer the main research question above:

- How are class and race represented in relation to queer identity through the narrative of Wilhelm and Simon in *Young Royals*?
- How is the intersectionality of Wilhelm and Simon expressed and represented visually through the mise-en-scène in *Young Royals*?

## Theoretical Framework

To explain what the concepts used in this research entail and the relevance of these to study intersectionality, this chapter will establish an understanding of the following concepts: representation, intersectionality, sexual identity, queer, race, and class.

This case study will analyze the representation of intersectionality. Following cultural theorist Stuart Hall, “representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer* to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events”.<sup>21</sup> Representation connects meaning and language to culture “to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people”.<sup>22</sup> Hall explains culture as a set of practices that is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings between members of a society or group. Language in this sense can be signs and symbols, like sounds, written words, electronically produced images, or objects.<sup>23</sup> This research will thus analyze how intersectionality produces meaning in *YR* through its language.

The concept of intersectionality was introduced in 1989 by critical race and law scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.<sup>24</sup> Crenshaw used intersectionality to point out discrimination against Black women by considering multiple social categories (race and gender) to analyze their lived experiences.<sup>25</sup> Examples of other social categories that form our identity are age, class, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Before intersectionality, the most common approach to indicate discrimination was a single-axis approach, meaning seeing race or gender as separate categories of experience and analysis.<sup>26</sup> Crenshaw’s rationale for coining intersectionality is that this single-axis approach creates a distorted analysis of problems as racism and sexism. The cause of this distortion is basing the prevailing conceptions of race and sex on experiences of the most privileged group members, leading to the representation of only a subset of a far more complex phenomenon. Distorted analyses marginalize multiply-burdened people, causing claims that do not result from individual sources of discrimination to become obscured. By considering multiple social categories of

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<sup>21</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Work of Representation,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997), 15-17.

<sup>22</sup> Hall, “The Work of Representation,” 15.

<sup>23</sup> Stuart Hall, “Introduction,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997), 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” 139-168.

<sup>25</sup> Jennifer C. Nash, “Re-Thinking Intersectionality,” *Feminist Review* 89, no. 1 (2008): 2.

<sup>26</sup> Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” 139.



one's complex identity in the intersectional approach, invisible intersections can be recognized and untangled to create a more accurate analysis of oppression and discrimination.<sup>27</sup>

Crenshaw's intersectional approach has been criticized, as her research of the multiply-burdened was mainly focused on the categories race and gender. Therefore, she precluded factors beyond race and gender as nationality, class, or sexual orientation. Furthermore, Crenshaw's approach overlooks the importance of race and gender's function in social processes during varying historical moments by seeing them as constants.<sup>28</sup> However, within feminist and anti-racist scholarship, intersectionality came to serve several purposes outside of Crenshaw's approach. Intersectionality was for instance used to theorize identity more complexly, beside race and gender binaries, providing a vocabulary in response to critiques of identity politics. Additionally, intersectionality invited scholars to acknowledge the exclusions of multiply marginalized subjects from feminist and anti-racist work and the impact that these absences have had on theory and practice.<sup>29</sup>

In 2011, Crenshaw went on to describe intersectionality as a tool "designed to amplify and highlight specific problems", showing its versatility beside researching discrimination through the intersection of race and gender.<sup>30</sup> According to gender, sexuality, and feminist studies scholar Jennifer Nash, intersectionality became the golden standard multi-disciplinary approach to analyze identity and oppression.<sup>31</sup> Sociology scholars Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Qvotrup Jensen provide an overview of how intersectionality travelled to different fields like the humanities and social sciences, confirming the versatility of the concept.<sup>32</sup> They define the goal of intersectional analysis as "to explore intersecting patterns between different structures of power and how people are simultaneously positioned – and position themselves – in multiple categories, such as gender, class, and ethnicity".<sup>33</sup> According to Nash, Crenshaw's research has not given a strict method to study intersectionality in multiple subject positions.<sup>34</sup> Nash refers to sociology and political science scholar Leslie McCall, who described and analyzed different approaches that can be used when studying

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<sup>27</sup> Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139-140. These constants were mainly the case in Crenshaw's own research on Black women.

<sup>28</sup> Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality," 7.

<sup>29</sup> Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality," 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Postscript," in *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on a Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*, eds. Helma Lutz, Maria Teresa Herrera Vivar, and Linda Supik (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 232.

<sup>31</sup> Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality," 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Qvotrup Jensen, "Doing Intersectional Analysis: Methodological Implications for Qualitative Research," *NORA-Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 20, no. 2 (2012): 109-110.

<sup>33</sup> Christensen and Qvotrup Jensen, "Doing Intersectional Analysis", 110.

<sup>34</sup> Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality," 4-5.

intersectionality.<sup>35</sup> McCall's intercategorical complexity approach will be taken in this research as it takes existing analytical categories at the center of analysis with the goal to "document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions",<sup>36</sup> which corresponds with the aim of the analysis of *YR*. Furthermore, this approach allows for selecting categories to be taken into consideration, as it is necessary to limit these for the sake of comprehension, according to McCall. As each separate category that is considered requires investigation to constitute the multiple groups within its category, this categorical space can become complicated, creating a necessity for limitation.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, to study *YR* on a detailed level while considering adequate coherence within the limited scale of the research, the categories of sexual identity, class, and race have been selected.

Within television studies, scholars often tend to focus on analyzing single identity categories of character representations, according to media scholar Michaela Meyer.<sup>38</sup> Gender or sexual identity are for example the center of analysis, while other categories are disregarded. This also seems to be the case for research on many teen series. Elke van Damme has, for example, focused on the representation of gender in *One Tree Hill* (WB, 2003-2012) and *Gossip Girl* (CW, 2007-2012).<sup>39</sup> While, for instance, Frederik Dhaenens focused on the representation of sexual identity in *Glee* (Fox, 2009-2015).<sup>40</sup> Meyer states that the single-axis approach to analyze character representations can be useful to make larger arguments about how these television representations influence cultural discourses. However, contemporary television has made a shift to adapt to the increased diversity among viewers and transnational and global markets. Meyer therefore argues that television narratives in the twenty-first century use intersectional representation as a strategic device, allowing television narratives "to establish a logic whereby certain types of representations are ubiquitous yet

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<sup>35</sup> Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1773. These approaches are defined by their stance toward how they understand and use the analytical social categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality. McCall's names three approaches: anticategorical complexity, intracategorical complexity, and intercategorical complexity. Anticategorical complexity deconstructs analytical categories, based on the theoretical assumption that categories (including race and gender) are too simplistic to capture the complexity of lived experiences. Intracategorical complexity attends to the dangers of categories like inadequacy and problematizes them but does not necessarily reject categories. Intercategorical complexity does not reject categories or investigate the dangers of categorization like the anticategorical or intracategorical approach, though remaining critical of categories. Instead, it strategically uses the concept of categories with the goal to demonstrate the relationships between the categories and inequality.

<sup>36</sup> McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," 1773, 1784-1785.

<sup>37</sup> McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," 1786-1787.

<sup>38</sup> Michaela D.E. Meyer, "The Other Woman in Contemporary Television Drama: Analyzing Intersectional Representation on *Bones*," *Sexuality & Culture* 19, no. 4 (2015): 900-901.

<sup>39</sup> Elke van Damme, "Gender and Sexual Scripts in Popular American Teen Series: A Study on the Gendered Discourses in *One Tree Hill* and *Gossip Girl*," *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010): 77-92.

<sup>40</sup> Dhaenens, "Teenage Queerness," 303-317.

surprisingly invisible simultaneously”.<sup>41</sup> In her case study of *Bones* (Fox, 2005-2017), Meyer concludes that the series’ narrative problematically centralizes issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class to the one character of the “Other” woman. *Bones* positions this character as a token representative for all discourses of cultural struggle. Meyer states that this kind of representation is present in multiple economically successful television narratives and that these troublesome representation patterns should be identified.<sup>42</sup> As *YR* is a production by Netflix, an economically successful business, it is valuable to see whether *YR*’ representation of intersectionality shares the problematic representation as demonstrated in Meyer’s research.<sup>43</sup>

As stated earlier, the categories considered in studying the representation of intersectionality in *YR* are sexual identity, race, and class. Director Rojda Sekersöz and head of writing Lisa Ambjörn emphasize that queer identity is not the series’ central point.<sup>44</sup> Simon identifies as gay, whereas Wille never labels or aims to label his sexual identity. Therefore, the term queer (identity) is used as an umbrella term to comprise both characters’ sexual identities. By using the term queer instead of gay and thus studying queer identities, it is important to establish an understanding of how queer will be used in this research as it is a historically charged term. Dyer explains that queer used to be a slur to refer to sexual attraction between men as problematic between around 1869 and 1969, creating negative connotations as effeminacy, immorality, shame, and disgust. Subsequently, Queer theory and politics sought to reclaim the word, challenging these associations.<sup>45</sup> In 1996, feminist and Queer studies scholar Annamarie Jagose stated that there is no generally accepted definition of queer and many common understandings of the term contradict each other. However, queer was often used as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginalized sexual identifications. Jagose furthermore explained that “by refusing to crystallise in any specific form, queer maintains a relation of resistance to whatever constitutes the normal”.<sup>46</sup> Queer theory, according to Westerfelhaus and Lacroix, “discusses how power operates with sexuality in contemporary society to define social and cultural norms”.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, they explain queer sexuality as the challenging of mainstream society’s heterosexist order by calling into question its heteronormative assumptions, attitudes, and values. Heteronormative refers to the view of

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<sup>41</sup> Meyer, “The Other Woman in Contemporary Television Drama”, 900-901.

<sup>42</sup> Meyer, “The Other Woman in Contemporary Television Drama”, 911-912.

<sup>43</sup> Mansoor Iqbal, “Netflix Revenue and Usage Statistics (2023),” Business of Apps, last modified January 1, 2023, <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/netflix-statistics/>. Netflix had an estimated profit of 4491 million US dollars in 2022.

<sup>44</sup> Asya Iftikhar, “Young Royals’ Edvin Ryding Explains Why It’s ‘Important’ Prince Wilhelm Doesn’t Label His Sexuality,” PinkNews, published November 1, 2022, <https://www.thepinknews.com/2022/11/01/young-royals-edvin-ryding-interview/>.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* (London: Routledge, 2001), 1, 6-7.

<sup>46</sup> Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 99.

<sup>47</sup> Westerfelhaus and Lacroix, “Seeing ‘Straight’ through Queer Eye,” 427.

heterosexuality being seen as natural and normal for individuals and society.<sup>48</sup> This research will follow Westerfelhaus and Lacroix' approach to the term queer.

Media scholar Melanie Kohnen states that the projection and filtering of queer visibility in mainstream media is a racialized process as this visibility depends on discourses of whiteness.<sup>49</sup> Kohnen explains that this entanglement of race and sexuality can be traced back to the first emergence of the idea of modern sexual identity. She states that the simultaneous presence and absence of whiteness was fundamental for the early ideas about queer visibility, sexuality, and identity as their emergence is shaped by discourses of race in two different ways. First, Kohnen says that only bodies with a white, Anglo-Saxon racial identity were read without being overdetermined by race, creating the only recognizable difference of identification between them to be the sexual difference of hetero- or homosexual. And second, the subsequent classification and theorization of the homo/heterosexual binary borrowed from earlier discourses that used the white/black binary to define racial identities. Therefore, race as a constitutive factor of queerness often became unnamed in history and theories in the nineteenth century. Although whiteness was central to how queer identities and practices became visible, it was mostly left out of history.<sup>50</sup> Racialization thus has an uneasy relationship to visibility as race became visible through cultural discourses that constructed a way of "seeing" race by making interpretations instead of reading the "facts" of bodily markers. Therefore, Kohnen argues that comparisons among queer visibility, race, sex, and gender are problematic as they obscure racialization and intersections with the discourses of sexuality and gender. Sexuality is not a parallel category to sex, gender, and race as "queer people are always also sexed, gendered, and raced in multiple, mutually constitutive yet often conflicting, ways".<sup>51</sup> Kohnen's theory shows the significance of an intersectional approach, as intersectionality specifically considers relationships between categories like queer identity and race.

Communication scholar Guillermo Avila-Saavedra states that contemporary critical analyses of queer television representation must be equally informed by notions of gender, sex, class, and race, as issues of race and class cannot be separated from our everyday lives either.<sup>52</sup> Sociology scholar Yvette Taylor too highlights the importance of considering class alongside queer sexuality in research of representation. She states that Queer theory and methodology tend to generalize and make exclusions by problematically centering the most privileged. Taylor explains that although

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<sup>48</sup> Westerfelhaus and Lacroix, "Seeing 'Straight' through Queer Eye," 427.

<sup>49</sup> Melanie E.S. Kohnen, *Queer Representation, Visibility, and Race in American Film and Television: Screening the Closet* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Kohnen, *Queer Representation*, 16-18.

<sup>51</sup> Kohnen, *Queer Representation*, 20.

<sup>52</sup> Guillermo Avila-Saavedra, "Nothing Queer About Queer Television: Televised Construction of Gay Masculinities," *Media, Culture & Society* 31, no. 1 (2009): 7-8, 19.

there has been much research about the dangers of ignoring the role of class when studying sexuality, class is still often disregarded in contemporary research. This inattention to class has consequences for the understandings and knowledge that arise from this approach to research, according to Taylor. By not acknowledging the significance of social class to sexual lives, inequalities in experiences, practices, and meanings of everyday LGBTQ lives remain hidden. Research without considering class can therefore lead to a reproduction of the middle-class LGBTQ experience as universal, while the privilege of the middle-class is obscured.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Yvette Taylor, "The 'Outness' of Queer: Class and Sexual Interactions," in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, eds. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (London: Routledge, 2016), 69-71.

## Methodology

The following chapter will explain what method and case material will be used to analyze the representation of intersectionality in *YR*.

The research method to employ McCall's intercategory approach, in order to answer the sub questions and eventually the main question, will be a qualitative textual analysis. Through such a close analysis on a textual level, the intersections of the different categories of sexual identity, race, class of Wilhelm's and Simon's characters can be exposed. This textual analysis will be based on the theory of the codes of television by media scholar John Fiske. According to Fiske, television can be considered as a cultural agent that provokes and circulates meanings. To reveal these meanings, Fiske proposes to analyze the cultural codes of television. He defines a code as a rule-governed system of signs and explains that "codes are links between producers, texts, and audiences, and are the agents of intertextuality through which texts interrelate in a network of meanings that constitutes our cultural world".<sup>54</sup> By analyzing codes, the layers of encoded meanings within television programs can be decoded and thus revealed. Such semiotic analysis can expose the "naturalness" in television to be a highly ideological construct.<sup>55</sup>

The codes of television work in a complex hierarchical structure, which Fiske has classified to three levels: "reality", representation, and ideology. The first level, "reality", comprises of social codes as appearance, dress, environment, behavior, gesture, and speech. On the second level, representation, the social codes are encoded electronically by technical codes as camera, lighting, editing, music, and sound. These technical codes transmit the conventional representational codes that shape the representation of, for example, narrative, dialogue, setting, or character. The last level, ideology, organizes the conventional representational codes into ideological codes like class, race, patriarchy, and individualism.<sup>56</sup> Ideological codes work to organize the other codes to eventually create a coherent set of meanings that forms the common sense of a society.<sup>57</sup> The process of making sense of these codes' meanings involves moving up and down through the different levels. Furthermore, Fiske states that characters on television are also encodings of ideology or embodiments of ideological values, instead of just representations of individual people.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Methuen, 1987), 3.

<sup>55</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 6.

<sup>56</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 8.

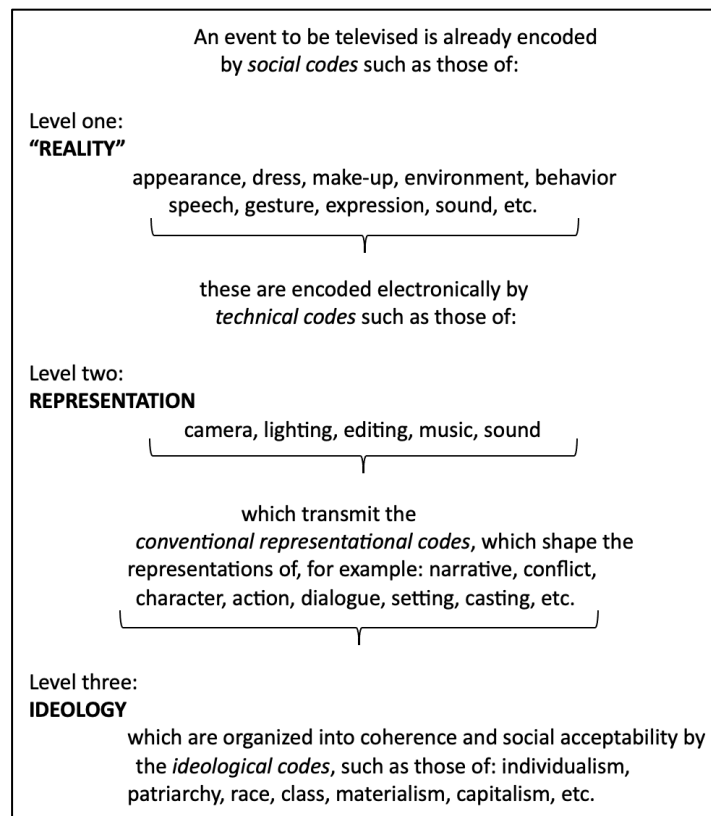


Figure 1. The codes of television by John Fiske.

By analyzing the codes of television in *YR*, I will demonstrate how the intersections of sexual identity, race, and class are represented visually and how they are navigated in the narrative. This will answer both sub-questions of ‘How are class and race represented in relation to queer identity through the narrative of Wilhelm and Simon in *Young Royals?*’ and ‘How is the intersectionality of Wilhelm and Simon expressed and represented visually through the mise-en-scène in *Young Royals?*’, as Fiske’s method includes analyzing the narrative and mise-en-scène. The elements of mise-en-scène as defined by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (for instance, setting, costumes, lighting, and staging) are analyzed in the codes on the “reality” and representation level.<sup>59</sup> These levels then work together to transmit the conventional representational codes that enable the representation and thus analysis of the narrative.

The series will be analyzed by multiple viewings and close observations of the case material, which will be documented through noting down findings that expose patterns of how intersectionality is expressed and represented through the various codes. Lastly, the conclusion will demonstrate how the social, technical, and conventional representational codes encode ideologies and how they represent intersectionality. In support of the analysis, Appendix A shows an overview

<sup>59</sup> David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, “The Shot: Mise-en-Scene,” in *Film Art: An Introduction*, ed. Jeff Smith (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010), 112-158.

of the five main characters, giving an elaborated background and character sketch. Appendix B provides a short synopsis of the episodes in season one. Both appendices are based on the multiple viewings of the episodes, completed by information from the online community platform *Young Royals Wiki*.<sup>60</sup>

## Case material

The analysis of *YR* will be focused on the two protagonists, Wilhelm and Simon. This decision has already largely narrowed down the scope of this research. Head writer Lisa Ambjörn has explained that the first season of *YR* sets up the main characters,<sup>61</sup> this season therefore lays the foundation for Wille and Simon's complex identities. As these two characters, and thus the representation of their intersectionality, are introduced in the first season, the focus of analysis will be on this season. Only the sequences in which Wille and Simon are involved within the season's six episodes will be taken in consideration. The remaining sequences that revolve around the other main characters will be disregarded.

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<sup>60</sup> "Characters," Young Royals Wiki, accessed March 20, 2023, <https://youngroyals.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Characters>; "Episodes," Young Royals Wiki, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://youngroyals.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Episodes>.

<sup>61</sup> "Young Royals: Edvin Ryding, Rojda Sekersöz and Lisa Ambjörn talking about the impact of the show," Netflix Nordic, uploaded January 10, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2J7B28clhE>.



## Analysis of *Young Royals*

### Prince Wilhelm of Sweden (Wille)

Wille is immediately introduced in the first episode, while looking at his facial wounds in the bathroom mirror.<sup>62</sup> He is addressed as “Prince Wilhelm” by an off-screen voice, who urges him to hurry to a waiting car. Through this social code of speech, Wille’s royal upper-class identity is directly revealed. During his car journey to the palace, Wille learns that his parents are forcing him to give a *mea culpa* speech and to transfer to the Hillerska boarding school. Through a flashback, the viewer discovers the reason behind the transfer; Wille was involved in a fight while going out, which was filmed and went viral. Subsequently, Wille’s speech is recorded in the presence of the royal family. The speech is filmed through a long shot that gradually zooms into a close-up of Wille, followed by him breaking the fourth wall by looking from the interviewer into the series’ camera. By this technical code of directly addressing the viewer, they can gain access to a character’s honest feelings and expressions.<sup>63</sup> This shot introduces Wille as the protagonist and emphasizes the intimacy of the viewer’s prior insight into the prince’s private life before the speech. Through directly facing Wille’s melancholic and desperate facial expression, his current distress is conveyed to the viewer. Furthermore, by initially directly addressing the viewer, a protagonist can be given agency.<sup>64</sup> Wille here grants the viewer exclusive access to his personal life. The season ends with an identical shot, emphasizing Wille’s agency by ending the viewer’s access to his personal life (E6).<sup>65</sup>



Figure 2. Long shot of the royal family during Wille’s speech.

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<sup>62</sup> *Young Royals*, season 1, episode 1, “Episode 1,” directed by Rojda Sekersöz, written by Lisa Åmbjorn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman, aired July 1, 2021, Netflix.

<sup>63</sup> Tom Brown, *Breaking the Fourth Wall: Direct Address in the Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 13-16.

<sup>64</sup> Brown, *Breaking the Fourth Wall*, 13-14.

<sup>65</sup> *Young Royals*, season 1, episode 6, “Episode 6,” directed by Erika Calmeyer, written by Lisa Åmbjorn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman, aired July 1, 2021, Netflix. In this thesis, ‘(E number)’ behind sentences implies the episode referred to. The season is only mentioned when there are specific references to the second season, as the focus of this case study is the first season of *Young Royals*.



Figure 3. Close-up of Wille breaking the fourth wall right after his speech.

Although Wille's complex identity revolves around the intersection between his upper-class identity as (Crown) Prince and his queer sexual identity, Wille's sexuality is never labeled. After Simon kisses Wille for the first time, Wille repeatedly states "I'm not..." and "I'm not like that", but he never verbalizes a specific sexual identity (E2+E3).<sup>66</sup> Beside these attempts to deny a sexual identity, he never explicitly labels himself or communicates an actual sexual identity. After Wille has been outed through a leaked sex video of him and Simon, Wille's and Simon's relationship is addressed through dialogue by other characters. These characters do not refer to or assume a certain sexual identity for Wille. Instead, the dialogue is primarily focused on his role as Crown Prince and how his relationship with Simon impedes the heterosexual marriage tradition of the monarchy. Hereditary monarchies are based on the tradition of heirs through bloodlines with the role of monarch being assigned through birth right. As Wille and Simon cannot have biological children together, there will not be a future heir to the monarchy, endangering its survival. A dialogue that demonstrates this is the conversation about the video between Wille and the Queen (E6). This dialogue's focus is on the monarchy's reputation and the consequences of a sex video for a royal in general. The dialogue does not center the Queen's (un)awareness of her son's sexual identity or that Wille has been outed to the entire world and how this affects him personally. Beside Wille not labeling himself, the narrative does not focus on Wille having to come out or discovering what he labels his sexual identity as. Additionally, nearly all dialogue about Wille after the sex video focuses on Wille's upper-class identity instead of his sexual identity. The conventional representational codes of narrative and dialogue therefore stress that Wille's royal, public identity is prioritized above his sexual, more personal identity in the series.

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<sup>66</sup> *Young Royals*, season 1, episode 2, "Episode 2," directed by Rojda Sekersöz, written by Lisa Ämbjorn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman, aired July 1, 2021, Netflix; *Young Royals*, season 1, episode 3, "Episode 3," directed by Erika Calmeyer, written by Lisa Ämbjorn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman, aired July 1, 2021, Netflix.



Figure 4. Wille cannot label his sexual identity.

The social code of behavior too emphasizes the more prominent representation of Wille's class identity over his sexual identity, as it reveals the behavior's motives. Most motives reveal reasonings of tradition instead of arbitrary queerphobia, suggesting that Wille's queer identity is essentially problematized because of his unique upper-class identity. His identity as Crown Prince makes him one of the most important public figures and representatives of Sweden, which is the opposite of Simon's due to his working-class background. This is for instance highlighted through the Queen's motive behind informing Wille of also having an "unfortunate romance" in her past (E6). As she refers to a heterosexual relationship, this indicates that a royal consort must comply with certain other requirements outside of gender that Simon does not meet. When the monarchy becomes damaged due to an unsuitable royal consort, this could lead to the elimination of the family's positions that come with power, money, and high regard. If Wille follows the tradition of meeting the requirements for a royal consort, his position as future king and the survival of the monarchy would be more secure. The Queen's motive to publicly deny Wille and Simon's relationship therefore lies in his position as the Crown Prince and the survival of the monarchy through tradition instead of general queerphobia. Motives behind behavior that do not involve tradition, do not indicate queerphobia either. This can for example be seen in August's motive for publishing Wille and Simon's sex video (E5).<sup>67</sup> August shares the video as an act of revenge after Wille embarrasses him by revealing his family's money issues in front of all his friends. August does not act out of queerphobia, which is emphasized by his regret after he realizes he has outed Wille to the entire world. Hence, behavior and the motives behind it emphasize the importance of tradition for Wille's class identity, instead of queerphobia over his sexual identity.

Wille's complex identity is also significantly expressed and supported through the social codes of his costumes. Film scholar Sarah Street states that costumes can operate as a 'system', governed by complex influences that can be related to status and social class. Referring to

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<sup>67</sup> *Young Royals*, season 1, episode 5, "Episode 5," directed by Erika Calmeyer, written by Lisa Ämbjorn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman, aired July 1, 2021, Netflix.

psychologist John Flügel, Street explains that clothes are an extension of the bodily self. Clothes can be used as protection by concealing vulnerability, but also as a form of display, often of a sexual nature.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Street builds on media scholar Stella Bruzzi's demonstration that male costumes are revealing about the stylistic representation of status, money, and style. Additionally, costumes are deployed to serve the narrative.<sup>69</sup> Costumes can suggest intertextual connections and occupy a shifting place in the narrative by for example advancing the plot.<sup>70</sup>

Wille's upper class identity is expressed through his many blue-colored costumes, visualizing him as a representative of the monarchy as an institution. Before Wille leaves for Hillerska, he wears rather neutral clothing, namely a white t-shirt with a brown leather jacket (E1). However, at Hillerska, Wille predominantly wears blue colors. (Royal) blue has notorious association with royalty.<sup>71</sup> The outstanding multiplicity of Wille's blue costumes points at a foreseen color choice. The recurring blue seems to represent Wille's blue blood to both other characters and the viewer, functioning as a constant visual reminder of Wille's upper-class identity. Wille does not merely represent himself as an individual but is always an institutional representative of Sweden's monarchy, stressing that all Wille's actions are observed by the monarchy, Hillerska, and the public through (social) media. As Crown Prince, he will forever be distinct from his peers. The ever-presence of this identity is evidently emphasized by continuously being visualized by means of blue costumes, encouraging the viewer to literally trace the complexity of his royal upper-class identity.



Figure 5. Wille dressed in light-blue in class.

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<sup>68</sup> Sarah Street, *Costume and Cinema: Dress Codes in Popular Film* (London: Wallflower, 2001), 2.

<sup>69</sup> Street, *Costume and Cinema*, 3-4.

<sup>70</sup> Street, *Costume and Cinema*, 32.

<sup>71</sup> Hailey van Braam, "Royal Blue," *Color Psychology*, published March 27, 2023, <https://www.colorpsychology.org/royal-blue/>.



Figure 6. Wille dressed in a dark-blue suit and tie, and a royal blue scarf.

Wille's upper-class identity is also expressed through his Hillerska-related costumes, visualizing him as a representative of Hillerska as an institution. Whenever Wille is not wearing blue, he often wears costumes that represent Hillerska; the Hillerska uniform or hoodie. On the one hand, Wille blends in with the other students by wearing the uniform when required. Except for his return after his brother Erik's funeral (E4), wear he wears an abundance of blue, emphasizing his newly assigned position as Crown Prince. On the other hand, he is oftentimes the only character wearing Hillerska-clothing that do not require it as other characters wear rather neutral clothing, for example during rowing practices (E2). When not representing his unique position in the monarchy through blue costumes, he still stands out from his peers by wearing costumes that represent Hillerska. This costume choice emphasizes that Wille is almost always representing an institution that he does not belong to willingly. The role of prince is inflicted on him by birth and the role of Crown Prince is automatically transferred to him as the next heir to the throne after Erik passes away. Attending Hillerska was not voluntarily either, as the royal family sent him there. In both roles as representative of the monarchy or Hillerska, Wille is stuck in institutions with limited agency over his life while remaining obliged to represent the reputation of these institutions to the outside world. This forced representation of upper-class identity is visually supported through Wille's blue and Hillerska-related costumes to both other characters and the viewer.



Figure 7. Wille wearing a Hillerska hoodie.



Figure 8. Wille covering up his royal identity by wearing a coat and scarf.

There are a few notable exceptions to the majority of blue- and Hillerska costume choices. When Wille visits Simon in Bjärstad, he fully covers his blue clothing up by wearing a black coat and multi-colored scarf, while the costume colors of the other characters are still visible despite their coats (E2). Wille seems to be literally hiding his royal identity as he enters working class spaces. This visually emphasizes how Wille distances himself from his upper-class royal identity to overcome the enormous class difference between Simon and himself. Covering the previously made associations of blue costumes with his class, makes his royal identity less evident and thus temporarily less significant than his queer identity. Wille's desire to be with Simon despite their class difference is also visually emphasized through his costume after the sex tape is leaked by August (E6). His typical blue costume is replaced by a purple t-shirt. This color can be seen as Wille literally showing his true colors after he has been outed through the video. Although purple too is a royal color, it (specifically lavender) is also color symbol of queerness and queer resistance.<sup>72</sup> This color change is emphasized through the editing as well by the purple opening credits, with a screaming Wille in purple in the background. Subsequently, Wille is seen alone while struggling with the consequences of the video. The Queen, the main representative of the monarchy, visits him to discuss how to approach the video situation. During their conversation, his mother urges him to deny his presence in the video to save the monarchy from another video scandal. As the Queen leaves, Wille's purple costume is replaced by blue again. Through the Queen's visit, the monarchy has erased Wille's queer colors to mold him back into its adequate, non-queer representative, visually emphasized through the costume color change and opening credits.

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<sup>72</sup> Andy Campbell, *Queer X Design: 50 Years of Signs, Symbols, Banners, Logos, and Graphic Art of LGBTQ* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2019), 71; Christobel Hastings, "How Lavender Became a Symbol of LGBTQ Resistance," CNN, last modified June 4, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/lgbtq-lavender-symbolism-pride/index.html>.



Figure 9. Wille wearing purple, highlighted by purple opening credits.



Figure 10. Wille is visited by the Queen after being outed by the sex tape.

Another social code that visually supports Wille’s intersectionality is his cross necklace, which is highlighted when he struggles with combining his queer and royal identity. This prop functions as a slightly conspicuous indirect identity marker of his royal blood as it relates to Christianity, which is the religion of the monarchy of Sweden. The monarch and anyone in line of succession to the throne must be a member of the Protestant Church of Sweden. Therefore, the royal family is related to Christianity through said norm and tradition, albeit perhaps symbolic.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, Hillerska associates with Christianity as students are ought to pray before dinners and faith is named within their school anthem. Hillerska’s celebration of Sankta Lucia and Christmas are also Christian traditions.<sup>74</sup> Wille is therefore constantly connected to Christianity through the two institutions of the monarchy and Hillerska, that place high value on traditions. Beside the necklace and Christian (holiday) traditions, there are not many indications that Wille is a practicing Christian. Although he always wears the necklace, it is mostly hidden underneath his clothes. However, the cross necklace is made explicitly visible during a few moments. First, it is shown as Wille starts following Simon on

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<sup>73</sup> Rebecca Thandi Norman, “The Swedish Royal Family: Everything You Need to Know,” *Scandinavia Standard*, published August 5, 2021, <https://www.scandinaviastandard.com/the-swedish-royal-family-everything-you-need-to-know/#religion>.

<sup>74</sup> “Lucia – Bearer of Light, Hymns, and Swedish Treats,” *Visit Sweden*, last modified December 12, 2022, <https://visitsweden.com/what-to-do/culture-history-and-art/swedish-traditions/christmas/lucia/>.

*Instagram* and as Wille is reading a book on the etiquette of the school (E2). Next, the light falls on the necklace as Simon hugs him the morning after he was saved from the football field and as they have sex for the first time (E4). Even though Wille is only wearing underwear and no costumes mentioned before that relate him to royal identity, the necklace is always present, regardless of its visibility. In its visible moments the necklace functions as a reminder of the ever-presence of the monarchy and its enforcing tradition of heterosexuality, even during his intimate moments.



Figure 11. Wille's cross necklace is highlighted through a close-up.



Figure 12. The light falls on Wille's cross necklace as Simon hugs him.

The function of the cross necklace is emphasized when Wille rubs the necklace during moments that show his difficulty of navigating the intersection between his class and queer identity. This happens for instance when Wille panics and runs to the hallway after he and Simon hold each other's hands during the movie night at school (E2). While reading a plaque on the wall that says '*You own the school. You are responsible for its legacy*', he anxiously rubs the necklace underneath his clothing. The shots that transition from close-ups of the plaque, to Wille's face and then to his hand on the necklace, emphasize the symbolism behind the necklace, reminding him of his responsibility for the monarchy's legacy. After the intimate moment with Simon of their hands touching, Wille panics over his role being a suitable representative of the monarchy to comply with his family's traditions and his queer identity, which would conflict with the heterosexual traditions within the monarchy. Another example of the necklace as symbol for Wille's intersectional struggle is when



August suggests sacrificing Simon for the discovered drugs after a party (E5). Wille must protect the reputation of the monarchy by not getting caught involved with drugs, but he also wants to protect his love interest, Simon, as he is innocent. By the rubbing of the necklace shown through close-ups in combination with props like the plaque, Wille's struggle of navigating his identity of being both royal and queer is visually emphasized.

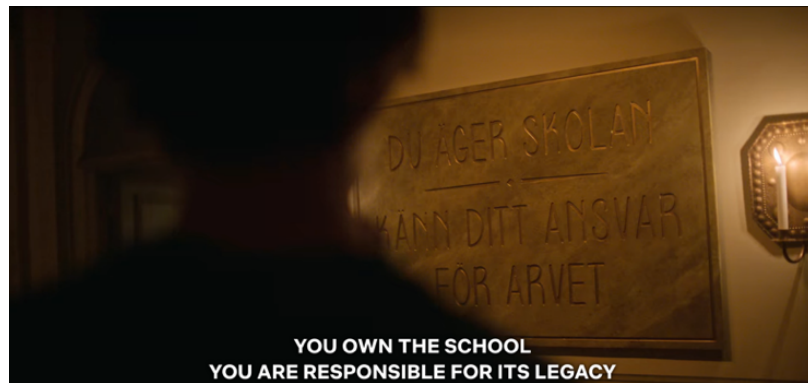


Figure 13. The legacy plaque in Hillerska's hallway.



Figure 14. Wille rubbing the cross necklace, through a close-up.

Another prop in the setting that functions to support the narrative of Wille's complex identity is the red-light cord in his room. The cord's use visualizes Wille slowly embracing his queer identity while struggling to combine it with his royal identity. During Wille's initiation party, the background is decorated with red-light cords (E1). Wille and Simon have their first romantic interaction at this party as they hide from August and are close together. The next day, one red-light cord appears on a shelf in Wille's room as a reminder of his intimate moment with Simon. Wille brought the lights closer to himself into his personal space, demonstrating his love for Simon that has been sparked at the party. After Wille has met up with Simon and his friends for the first time at Rosh's football match, Wille wears the lights around his neck (E2).<sup>75</sup> The lights have moved closer to him, now literally surrounding him, while he holds an etiquette booklet, and his cross necklace is visible through the lights. The close-up of a combination of the lights (his queer identity), the

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<sup>75</sup> See figure 11.

necklace (an indirect royal identity marker) and the booklet directly referring to Hillerska, visualizes how he tries to navigate combining the different intersections of his identity simultaneously.



Figure 15. Red-light cords in the background at the party.

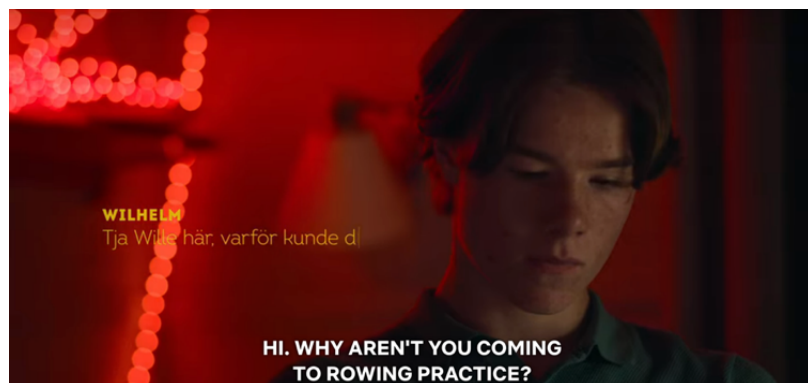


Figure 16. Red-light cord in the background of Wille's room.

Another prop that represents Wille navigating his intersectionality is the snow globe in his room, providing a visual metaphor for the development of his different identities. The globe contains a frog with crossed arms, wearing a crown and surrounded by golden glitters, based on the fairy tale 'The Frog Prince'.<sup>76</sup> Fairytales often provide a metaphor for identity development through their content and process. Two themes usually emerge in this fairytale. First, the frog-theme, when the individual experiences a curse or enchantment, causing struggles with diffusion and insecurities that are caused by bounded external scripts or when they are searching for new identifications. The prince-king theme emerges when the individual finds liberation or transformation by transcending the diffusions and insecurities.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Wilhelm Grimm and Jacob Grimm, "The Frog Prince," in *Tales from Grimm*, ed. Wanda Gág (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 179-188.

<sup>77</sup> Gertina J. van Schalkwyk, "The Crown Prince and the Frog-Prince: Characterisations in the Identity Construction of Firstborn Males," *South African Journal of Psychology* 40, no. 3 (2010): 283.



Figure 17. The frog prince snow globe.

In season one, the globe represents the frog-theme through close-ups during significant moments of Wille dealing with insecurities and diffusion about his queer and royal identity, caused by the bounded external scripts of the monarchy. The globe first appears after Wille asks the Queen for permission to come home (E1). As the monarch denies Wille's request, the subsequent close-up of the globe highlights Wille's resemblance to 'The Frog Prince'. In the fairy tale, the prince is trapped in the frog's body, while here the frog is trapped by glass. Wille's curse is to be trapped by being a prince, visualized as the glass globe, preventing him from escaping this role and putting him on display for the world to see. The glass therefore also represents his perfect public image that must be maintained, as he is constantly visible through media. The crown and golden glitters represent the wealth that Wille is surrounded by. However, the frog's crossed arms and mad expression show Wille's discontent in being trapped by the monarchy.

Next, the globe is shown upon Wille's return to Hillerska after Erik's funeral, as his belongings are moved to a bigger room as he has become Crown Prince, an important role as future king (E4).<sup>78</sup> Through a close-up, Wille picks the globe up and looks at the glitters surrounding the trapped frog. The storm-like glitters represent the turmoil that comes with his newly designated identity of Crown Prince. After putting the globe down, he deletes Simon's phone contact, distancing himself from Simon and seemingly coming to terms with his new fate. Later, Wille finds an invitation to the exclusive club of 'The Society', placed against the globe (E4).<sup>79</sup> As Wille can only join The Society as Erik's substitution, its placement highlights its relation to his new identity as Crown Prince. By accepting the invitation, Wille acknowledges the importance of facing his insecurities and the 'curse' of being Crown Prince, as the goal of the organization is to preserve the monarchy.

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<sup>78</sup> *Young Royals*, season 1, episode 4, "Episode 4," directed by Rojda Sekersöz, written by Lisa Ämbjorn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman, aired July 1, 2021, Netflix.

<sup>79</sup> The Society is an unofficial organization by the first-born sons of noble birth of Hillerska, dedicated to preserving the monarchy.



Figure 18. Wille sits down to delete Simon's contact in his phone, after putting the snow globe back in the windowsill.



Figure 19. The Society invite is placed against the snow globe.

In season two, the shift from the frog to the prince-king theme is represented through the snow globe.<sup>80</sup> After Wille threatens the monarchy by rejecting his position as Crown Prince, security grabs him to be taken to the palace, causing Wille to drop and break the globe. A flashback reveals the globe to be a gift from Erik, who was gifted it by their grandfather (S2E2).<sup>81</sup> This shot shows its emotional value as a reminder of his late brother and their conversations about Wille's luck being not having the role of Crown Prince. As the glass breaks, the frog is no longer trapped, marking the beginning of the prince-king theme as Wille attempts to liberate himself from his struggles of hiding his queer identity due to his role of Crown Prince. Wille admits his presence in the leaked sex video during his speech, liberating himself from the forced hiding of his queer identity by the monarchy.

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<sup>80</sup> Season 2 is taken into consideration here, as it provides necessary background information to how the snow globe as prop conveys meaning in *Young Royals* to support Wille's identity development.

<sup>81</sup> *Young Royals*, season 2, episode 2, "Episode 2," directed by Rojda Sekersöz, written by Lisa Ämbjorn and Pia Gradvall, aired November 1, 2022, Netflix.

## Simon Eriksson

Simon is introduced in the first episode when Wille is welcomed at Hillerska by the choir. As the choir's soloist, he catches Wille's attention, shown through several close-ups. These shots also bring him to the viewer's attention. Next, Simon is fooled by one of August's friends, who unnecessarily urges him to sing louder. This causes Simon to stand out even more beside being the soloist, as a close-up shows the distress the remark causes. After the performance, August and his friends make fun of Simon as he walks by. They refer to him as "the non-res" (Hillerska non-resident) and mark an earlier encounter with him as "makes me vomit", "gross", and "as if we'd have anything in common". This hateful speech instantly demonstrates that there is a division between non-res and resident students at Hillerska, at least for these students. Later, August approaches Simon by calling him "sosse", meaning socialist boy. An irritated Simon then reveals what his name is. Afterwards, August refers to Simon's contacts for alcohol in the town of Bjärstad as "you people", distinguishing a difference between the town and the elite resident students by using a patronizing tone and description. By introducing Simon's class identity as an outsider through the speech and behavior of other characters at Hillerska, even before revealing the character's name, his working-class background and outsider position at the school are emphasized from the beginning of the series.



Figure 20. Close-up of Simon in choir.



Figure 21. Simon addressed by August and friends.



Figure 22. August calling Simon 'sosse'.

The social codes of behavior and speech to point out the class difference between Simon and the other students are continued throughout the season. When Simon is approached by other students, his working-class identity is often referred to and therefore the class difference is continuously emphasized. An example of this behavior and speech is when August tries to keep Simon away from Wille by inviting him to his side of the table during dinner, to “save” him from his situation of talking to Simon (E1). Next, when Wille and Simon are studying together, August joins them and causes Simon to leave by claiming that he thinks that the most beautiful thing about rowing is bringing people together, as he says that “Class, ethnicity, it’s all irrelevant” while looking at Simon (E2). After Simon leaves, August refers to Simon and Sara as school freaks, showing his previous comment was not sincere. The comment does not correspond with August’s previous behavior of keeping Wille away from Simon, emphasizing he only tries to stress the differences between people of the upper class and working class. Furthermore, after returning from the football match with Simon, Wille is warned by August in front of the group about the company he keeps while showing Simon’s Instagram post of Wille (E2). As Wille skipped August’s rowing practice to meet with Simon, August tries to insinuate that Simon tries to take advantage of Wille by sharing videos of him that he is not aware of. August is again trying to keep the upper-class and working class separated and urging others to do the same. Later, during an inside rowing practice, August puts Simon in front of the entire group and gives a speech about Simon’s “class journey” (E2). He speaks about how Simon fought his way up to be there with the high-class students, “among the possibilities”. August’s speech and behavior of comparing Simon to the other students, emphasizes that there is a predominant class difference. Through the highlighting of the possibilities to be found among the resident students, August suggests that Simon’s background in the working class does not provide many life possibilities. By giving this speech in front of the entire group, August tries to affirm the differences between Simon and the resident students and make everyone aware of this.



Figure 23. August talking about class and ethnicity.

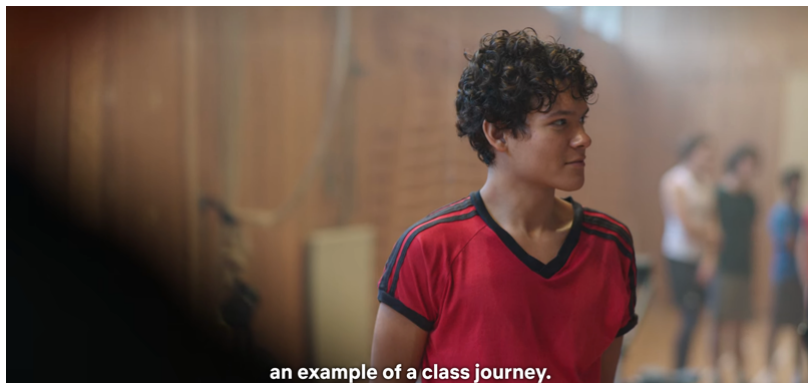


Figure 24. August giving a speech about Simon's "class journey".

After the working-class identity within Simon's intersectionality is introduced in the first episode, his queer sexual identity is revealed. Various television codes show other characters' acceptance of Simon's openness and confidence with his queer identity. Whereas Wille does not label his sexual identity, Simon labels himself as gay, which is announced to the viewer in a dialogue between him and his father, Micke (Leonard Terfelt) (E1). Simon's parents are divorced, and Micke has not been present in Simon's and Sara's life for a long time due to his alcohol addiction. There might even be a history of abuse as Linda is blamed by Sara for not leaving Micke earlier and Sara no longer wants to have any contact with him. Simon now visits Micke since a long time with the intention to pick up alcohol for August. Micke asks Simon if he wants to impress a girl by bringing alcohol, to which Simon responds that he is gay with a suggestive tone that implies Micke should already be familiar with his son's queer identity. Micke replies "Yeah, sorry" with a slight embarrassed and guilty smile and changes his question to "Some cute guy, then", to which Simon smiles in response. Both Simon's suggestive tone and nonchalance in correcting his father and Micke's embarrassed and supportive reaction emphasize that Micke was aware of his son's sexuality. As the scene highlights a long-time separation and little involvement between Micke and Simon and Micke's alcohol abuse, it is highly likely that Micke is apt to be forgetful. Furthermore, the scene does not revolve around Simon's sexual identity or potentially coming out to his father, highlighting that

the focus of Simon's character is not his queer identity. His sexual identity is not problematized through speech or behavior but is merely stated as a fact by briefly being mentioned in a scene that revolves around other issues. This is the first and only moment in which Simon expresses his sexual identity verbally.



Figure 25. Simon emphasizing his sexual identity.



Figure 26. Micke acknowledging his son's sexual identity.



Figure 27. Simon smiling at Micke.

Beside Micke, Simon's queer identity appears to be a given to his family through the social codes of their speech and behavior. Simon's mother, Linda (Carmen Gloria Pérez), is portrayed as a supportive mother in general. Linda drives her children everywhere, is happy for them when they are invited to activities with their peers, and Wille is always welcome at her house. Linda does not mention her son's sexual identity explicitly in the series, but her supportive behavior and comforting



speech suggest that she has been aware and accepting of Simon's queer identity for a longer period. Linda only addresses her son's relationship directly once, after the sex video is leaked (E6). She is seen comforting her son multiple times as he is dealing with the video's consequences and separation from Wille. Furthermore, Simon's sister Sara is aware of the romance that is going on between Wille and Simon from early on. She spots them holding hands during the movie night (E2) and notices small interactions between them from across the class. Sara asks Simon directly if he likes Wille, as she explains that she sees the way the two boys look at each other. Hereafter, the siblings start to play around while laughing and Sara teases Simon about kissing the prince. Simon teases Sara back by saying he will tell her everything about Wille, but she must wait until the next day. Sara's interested but playful behavior as sibling and the dialogue between the two show Sara's longer awareness and acceptance of her brother's queer identity.

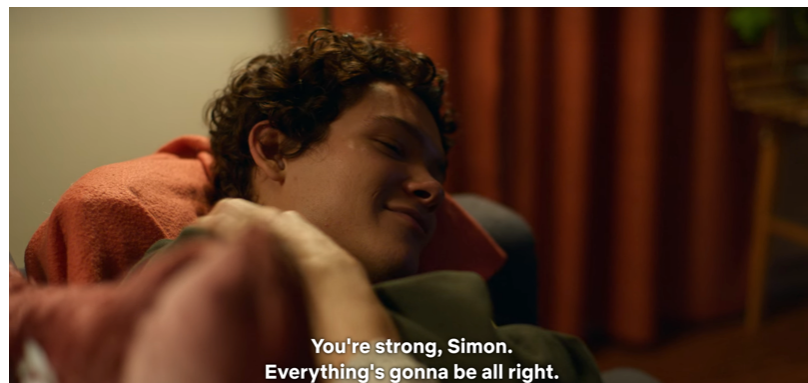


Figure 28. Simon's mother comforting him.

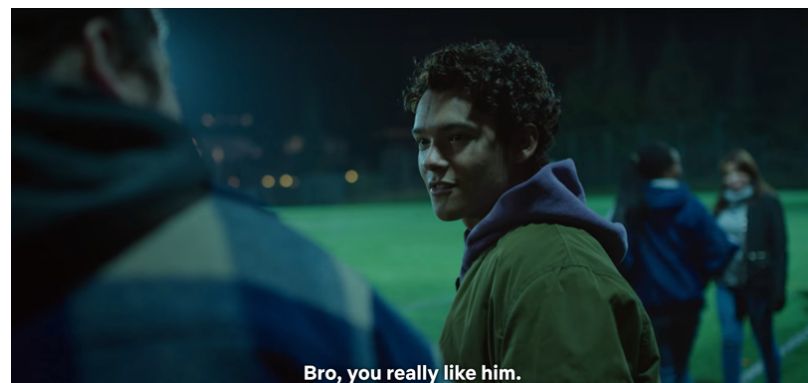


Figure 29. Ayub talking about Wille to Simon.

Simon's queer identity also appears to be a given to his friends, while his classmates or either unaware or uninterested, all shown through the social codes of their speech and behavior. Friends from his previous school, Ayub and Rosh, are shown to be aware and supportive of his queer identity. This is for example shown when Ayub meets Wille during Rosh's football match (E2). Ayub jokingly talks to Simon about him not being able to answer Wille's questions and he asks Simon what is going on between them. While smiling, Ayub immediately wants to know if Simon likes Wille,

indicating that he is aware of Simon’s sexual preference. Moreover, Ayub and Rosh visit Simon after the sex video is leaked (E6). They comfort Simon and advise him in terms of possibly switching schools. They do not want Simon to quit Hillerska as they see this as letting the ones making fun of the video win, showing their support to Simon. Additionally, Simon’s peers at Hillerska are not mentioning Simon’s queer identity but are not shown to be queerphobic either. Whereas there was little awareness of Wille’s queer identity considering the surprised reactions to the leaked video, no social codes demonstrate that Simon’s peers were or were not familiar with his queer identity before being with Wille. After their relationship is made public by the sex video, the dialogues between peers are mainly about Wille’s queer identity or him being outed (E6). The interest from their peers at Hillerska in Simon’s and Wille’s queer identity is likely related to their social status based on their class. Simon leads a much more private life than Wille and has never been in the media before, while Wille holds an important future role as the king of Sweden, making him more relevant and interesting to the public. Therefore, the public keep a closer eye on Wille than on Simon, which is emphasized through newspaper headlines and reactions on the internet that are edited into the shots (E6). This is also true for their peers; their focus in dialogue is much more on the future of the monarchy and on Wille’s sexual identity than on Simon’s sexual identity.



Figure 30. Tweets after the leaked sex video.



Figure 31. Peers talking about the future of the monarchy.

As demonstrated earlier, Simon's queer sexuality does not play the main role in his narrative, which rather revolves around different conflicts that can be traced back to his working-class identity. The conventional representational codes of narrative and conflict mainly show Simon's struggles regarding his family and school, giving him a separate storyline beside his relationship with Wille. Several of Simon's conflicts are, albeit indirectly, caused by the class difference between him and the other Hillerska students. The direct reason for Simon to contact Micke, for instance, is related to the siblings' struggle to fit in at Hillerska. They are non-res students with a working-class background and the first in their near surroundings to attend an elite school. While most other students have an upper-class background, either through old money or nobility, and their family has been attending Hillerska for generations. As Sara is struggling to make new friends and find her way at Hillerska, Simon wants to help her to fit in with their peers and have friends. As her being bullied was the reason for the transfer from their previous school to Hillerska. As August approaches Simon to arrange alcohol for Wille's initiation party, he takes this opportunity for him and Sara to be invited too, giving Sara a chance to fit in. Simon asks his dad to provide him with the alcohol, which Micke does as he wants to restore the alienated relationship with his son. When August cannot pay Simon back for the alcohol, a conflict starts between them, even leading to a short fight. Simon decides to steal prescribed medication from his father and urges August to sell those to repay him. This leads to a conflict between Micke and Simon, when Micke finds out Simon has been stealing and selling his prescribed medication. The contact between Simon and Micke subsequently causes a conflict between Sara and Simon, as Simon did not inform Sara on getting back into contact, leading to Micke showing up uninvited to the Sankta Lucia celebration. Thus, Simon is not merely the prince's love interest in the series, but he is provided with his own storyline that involves conflicts with various characters outside Wille. This storyline revolves around conflicts that are not related to his sexual identity but are caused by his class identity that differs greatly from his surroundings at Hillerska. Simon struggles with the consequences of trying to fit him and Sara in as a working-class non-res student among rich students, causing named conflicts.

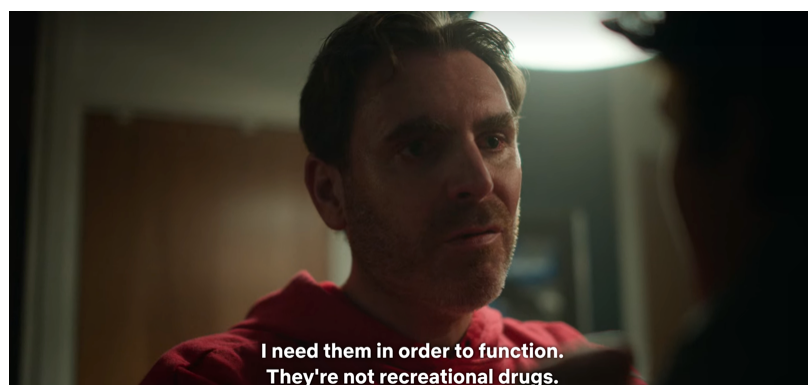


Figure 22. Simon's conflict with Micke.

Beside Simon's sexual identity and his class, his complex identity also consists of race. Although a marginalized race is an important part of identity, it is barely addressed. In the series, Simon's racial background is not explicitly clarified, but it is represented through the social codes of appearance and speech. Simon and his mother Linda have light brown skin and are one of the few characters of color, as beside Felice, Nils and Rosh, the rest of the cast is mostly white. The actors both have a Latin American background, Pérez being Puerto Rican-American and Rudberg Venezuelan.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, they occasionally speak Spanish between themselves, alternated with Swedish. However, Linda speaks Swedish with a slight foreign accent, mostly a rolling 'r', that the other characters do not have. This indicates that Swedish is not her mother tongue and she perhaps migrated to Sweden. It is not confirmed what the racial background of Linda and thus Simon is, but looking at the skin color, Spanish, and the origin of the actors, it is likely that Linda is of Latin American descent. Appearance and speech would therefore indicate that Simon is half Swedish, half Latin American. In comparison to Simon's class and his sexual identity, his race is addressed the least in the dialogue code. The only time Simon's race is explicitly mentioned or acknowledged, is in the aforementioned scene where August talks about how rowing brings together people and the irrelevance of class and ethnicity within the sport.<sup>83</sup> This statement by August is targeted at Simon as August has made similar comments about class to him before and he looks at Simon as he says it. August therefore specifically addresses Simon's race as it, like his class, differs from the majority of the students, causing him to stand out due to his particular complex identity. Although Simon is not the only person of color at Hillerska, he is the only one whose race is discussed in dialogue. Felice and Nils are also people of color, but their race is never addressed by others.



Figure 33. Simon's mother, Linda.

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<sup>82</sup> Mollie Mitchell, "Young Royals' Cast: Who Is in the Cast of the Swedish Netflix Series?," Newsweek, published July 2, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/young-royals-cast-who-cast-swedish-netflix-series-1606330>; "Carmen Gloria Pérez," FilmFreeway, accessed May 13, 2023, <https://filmfreeway.com/CarmenGloriaPerez>.

<sup>83</sup> See figure 23.

As stated in the analysis of Wille, male costumes can be revealing about the stylistic representation of status, money, and style.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, visual arts scholar Adam Geczy and fashion academic Vicki Karaminas state that the role of clothing is important in constructing material identity and its shaping of personal and social space, making studying fashion, dress, and style important to queer identity.<sup>85</sup> Building on gender theorist Judith Butler, Geczy and Karaminas explain that the act of dressing is a social process through which actors execute different performances in front of various audiences.<sup>86</sup> Style is about identity and can be a strategy of resistance, talking back, and drawing attention to one's self.<sup>87</sup> Simon's intersectionality of his work-class and queer identity is visually supported through his casual, bright-colored costumes and dislike of Hillerska-related costumes, making him stand out from the other high-class students.

When Simon is introduced to the viewer during Wille's arrival at Hillerska, he wears the Hillerska uniform, blending in with the other uniform-wearing students.<sup>88</sup> Simon only wears the uniform during official Hillerska events like the Parent's Weekend or choir performances, when it seems to be mandatory. He has also expressed to Ayub and Rosh that it is not necessary for the students to always wear the uniform, while they were all making fun of it (E1). The uniform represents Hillerska as an exclusive institution that is run by, and for the most part, attended by the elite. However, attending this school does not mean he supports what the institution entails: power and money remaining in the hands of the elite. Simon explained that he only transferred to Hillerska to prevent Sara from being bullied again. In addition, he has expressed that he is against the elite in class before, causing conflicts and tensions between him and his peers (E1). Although Simon as a non-res wears the same uniform as resident students, Simon does not have the pin of the Forest Ridge house on his uniform that the resident boys have. Simon misses this pin as he does not belong to the male dormitory of Hillerska. Simon and Sara both have a scholarship and due to their working-class background, they cannot afford to be boarding students. Even though Simon officially attends the school, wears the uniform, and joins Forest Ridge activities like dinner and sports, he remains the odd one out as he is not a member of the dormitory. The importance of belonging to the Forest Ridge house comes forward through the way he is treated by the other students. As mentioned earlier, the elite students reject and exclude Simon through their speech and behavior by constantly emphasizing their class difference. The missing pin on his costume visualizes and emphasizes this position as an outsider to both the viewer and the other characters.

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<sup>84</sup> Street, *Costume and Cinema*, 3-4.

<sup>85</sup> Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas, *Queer Style* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 3.

<sup>86</sup> Geczy and Karaminas, *Queer Style*, 7.

<sup>87</sup> Geczy and Karaminas, *Queer Style*, 22.

<sup>88</sup> See figure 20.



Figure 34. Simon and his friends making fun about wearing the uniform.



Figure 35. August wearing the Forest Ridge house pin.



Figure 36. Simon missing the Forest Ridge house pin.

When not wearing the Hillerska uniform, Simon wears casual clothing that visualizes his resistance against the upper-class ideology. His peers at Hillerska tend to wear more formal clothes like polo shirts, suits, or blazers. This formal clothing visually reveals their upper-class identity. Simon never wears formal clothing beside the school uniform when it is mandatory. While the elite students reject Simon by constantly emphasizing his working-class identity through speech and behavior, Simon in turn rejects their idea of class superiority by not conforming to their formal style. He does not adjust to the elites and therefore opposes to their idea of upper-class superiority, which is visually communicated through their clothes. Simon distances himself from the elite's culture of class superiority by literally not embodying their clothing style. This is supported by the fact that Sara

tries to fit in with the elite by starting to dress more formal, while Simon and Linda make fun of her for that, confirming there is an awareness of the formality in clothing (E6). At Hillerska, Simon stands out from the elite through his clothing style, while he blends in with his working-class friends through their similar casual clothing style.<sup>89</sup> Simon's and his friends' costumes often have a brand on them, which is mostly from popular commercial American sports brands like *Converse* or *Nike*. His peers either wear clothing that does not visibly have a brand or it is a luxury and thus more expensive brand like *Polo Ralph Lauren* or *Lacoste*. All brands are rather generally known and easy to recognize, visualizing the class differences in terms of money between the elite students and Simon. The t-shirts with print are often combined with a dress shirt, that is left unbuttoned causing it to look rather casual. There are peers who wear dress shirts, who wear them buttoned up, making it look more formal. Simon's clothing style therefore emphasizes his outsider position at Hillerska as non-resident with a working-class background.



Figure 37. Formal clothing of Simon's peers.



Figure 38. Simon with his working-class friends.

Simon's costumes are frequently a lavender-colored hoodie or dress shirt, seemingly visualizing his confident queer identity and resistance against the monarchy's traditionalism. Although purple is also a royal color, as mentioned before, the color lavender is specifically

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<sup>89</sup> See also figure 8.

associated with queerness and queer resistance.<sup>90</sup> As seen in the analysis of Simon's queer identity through speech and behavior, Simon is confident with his sexual identity. Unlike Wille who is a representative of the monarchy as an institution, Simon merely represents himself when not wearing the Hillerska uniform, enabling him to express his queer identity publicly and freely. As Wille's blue costumes evidently represent his royal identity, Simon wearing lavender visually represents the confident freedom of his queer identity to other characters and the viewer. The recurring use of blue for Wille and lavender for Simon reinforces the symbolism of the costumes for their individual identities. Furthermore, as lavender also suggests queer resistance, its use as empowerment for queer people can be seen as a statement against the heterosexual traditions and norms of the monarchy, especially when juxtaposed against Wille's blue costumes.

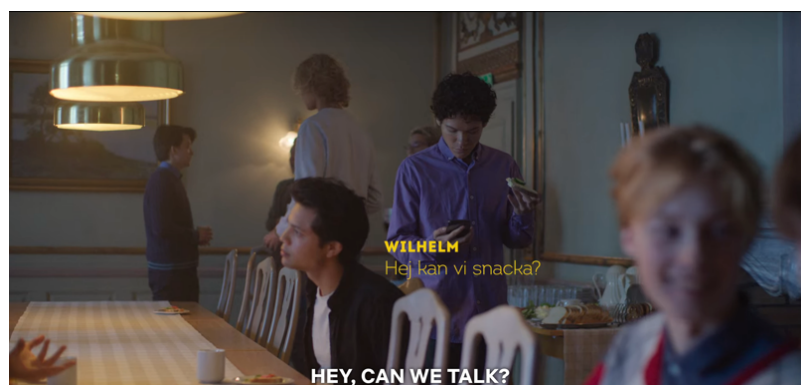


Figure 39. Simon wearing a purple dress shirt.



Figure 40. Simon wearing purple and an orange/yellow backpack.

Beside lavender-colored costumes, Simon regularly wears t-shirts or dress shirts in orange tones with a similar colored backpack. This costume color can be seen to visually symbolize Wille and Simon's opposite class identities, that turn out to be complementary. In the color wheel, orange is the direct opposite of blue, meaning they are complementary colors. These colors enhance or emphasize the qualities of their opposites. When placing them next to each other, they appear to be

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<sup>90</sup> Campbell, *Queer X Design*, 71; Hastings, "How Lavender Became a Symbol of LGBTQ Resistance."



more intense. Complementary in this sense literally means “that which completes or makes perfect”, coupling them exhibits a natural balance.<sup>91</sup> Blue being the color that symbolizes Wille’s royal identity on one side, opposite of the orange and yellow Simon wears, symbolizing his working-class identity. Furthermore, blue has mental associations of coldness and gives objective impressions of melancholy, while orange is associated with warmth and gives impressions of liveliness, joviality, and energy.<sup>92</sup> These associations correlate to the class identity that influences the environment the two characters grow up in. Wille grows up in a rather cold family, where he needs to ask his mother to be in this role instead of being the Queen. She does not allow him to be in a public relationship with Simon. His feelings are disregarded for what is best for his public reputation as Crown Prince, creating melancholic feelings in Wille. While Simon grows up in a warm circle of supportive family and friends, where he can be his jovial self and there are no restrictions for his relationships. Although, blue and orange are opposite colors, they are complementary and create balance by being coupled. Wille and Simon together find balance by both disregarding each other’s class, they are complementary like the colors of their costumes. This is highlighted in the scene when the two boys meet the day after the leaked video (E6). As they sit down across from each other, the opposite colors are literally placed opposite each other as well. This juxtaposition emphasizes their contrast and thus the contrast between their class identities. Later, they sit side by side, holding each other. As they hold each other’s hands, a close-up is made of them holding each other’s hands, accentuating the opposite colors. However, as they are complementary, the colors create a natural balance together. Bringing the two characters together through their costume colors, visually symbolizes how they balance each other in their relationship despite their enormous class difference.



Figure 41. Simon’s orange costume opposite of Wille’s blue costume.

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<sup>91</sup> Leatrice Eiseman, *The Complete Color Harmony, Pantone Edition: Expert Color Information for Professional Color Results* (Minneapolis: Rockport Publishers, 2017), 16-20.

<sup>92</sup> Faber Birren, *Color Psychology and Color Therapy: A Factual Study of the Influence of Color on Human Life* (San Francisco: Hauraki Publishing, 2016), 128.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, a textual analysis of the characters of Wilhelm and Simon was made, based on Fiske's codes of television to examine how the different layers of their complex identities are portrayed, to answer the following question: How is intersectionality represented through the characters of Wilhelm and Simon in *Young Royals* (Netflix, 2021-)? Following McCall's intercategory complexity approach, this analysis of intersectionality focused on the categories of sexual identity, race, and class to see how their intersections are represented visually and how they are navigated in the narrative. The ideologies the series provides can be revealed through how the levels of the different codes are organized, working together to convey meaning.

The analysis of *Young Royals* has shown that the category of class was highlighted more for Wille and Simon through various codes of television than sexual identity and race. The conventional representational codes of narrative and dialogue have shown to be focused on Wille's class over his queer identity, using social and technical codes as speech, behavior, costumes, and props to enhance the complexity of his intersectionality. The conventional representational codes of narrative, dialogue and conflict have shown a focus on Simon's class over his queer identity and race, through social and technical codes as costumes, appearance, speech, and behavior. A notable finding is that Simon's race is barely addressed and represented through the narrative and dialogue, additionally emphasizing the importance of class over other identities in the series. Based on the results of this analysis, the technical and social codes that transmit the conventional representational codes to shape the representation of ideological codes seem to embody the ideologies of traditionalism and classism. The traditionalism of Sweden's monarchy causes Wille's queer identity to be problematized, while Simon's class identity is problematized through the classism that dominates the Hillerska boarding school. These ideologies oppress the intersections within Wille and Simon's complex identities, causing them to increasingly become marginalized characters throughout the series.

*Young Royals* shows a different portrayal of LGBTQIA+ characters and the representation of intersectionality than other contemporary queer teen shows, as it goes beyond the many portrayed plot of series that focus on (labeling and exploring) sexual identity. The Swedish Netflix series demonstrates this current shift away from the focus on sexual identity in queer representation by focusing on larger social issues. *Young Royals* centers important social issues that are relevant today, as the discrimination through the social class system and the traditionalism of monarchies, by showing how Wille and Simon navigate their intersections of different identities as class, race, and

sexual identity. Instead of problematizing queer identity, *Young Royals* problematizes the social issues queer people are facing.

*Young Royals* has shown to not share the troublesome pattern demonstrated in Meyer's research of one character being used as a token representative for all discourses of cultural struggle. Therefore, it would be recommended to do further research on *Young Royals* as the series shows representation of intersections of other social categories that do not include (queer) sexual identity. Hence, it is recommended to analyze the other main characters, mentioned earlier in the introduction, like Sara and August in terms of intersections of class and mental health, or Felice through intersections of race and class.

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Cover page	Beechener, Ben. Illustration. "September Review: Young Royals." The Oxford Blue. Published September 6, 2021. <a href="https://www.theoxfordblue.co.uk/september-review-young-royals/">https://www.theoxfordblue.co.uk/september-review-young-royals/</a> .	Illustration of Wilhelm and Simon.
1	Fiske, John. <i>Television Culture</i> . London: Methuen, 1987.	Scheme of the codes of television by John Fiske.
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43	Omar Rudberg in <i>Young Royals</i> (2021). 2021. Photograph. IMDb, <a href="https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14664414/mediaviewer/rm662639873/">https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14664414/mediaviewer/rm662639873/</a> .	Omar Rudberg as Simon Eriksson.
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46	Nikita Uggla in <i>Young Royals</i> (2021). 2021. Photograph. IMDb, <a href="https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14664414/mediaviewer/rm3632141569/">https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14664414/mediaviewer/rm3632141569/</a> .	Nikita Uggla as Felice Ehrencrona.

## Appendices

### A. Overview of Main Characters

#### Prince Wilhelm of Sweden (Wille)

Prince Wilhelm (portrayed by Edvin Ryding), mostly named Wille by the other teens, is one of the main protagonists in *Young Royals*. He is the youngest son of Queen Kristina of Sweden and her royal consort, Ludvig. As the second son in line to the throne with less responsibilities than the Crown Prince, Wille has always tried to live his life like a regular teen. After a video of him getting in a fight while going out in a club goes viral, his parents send him to the elite boarding school Hillerska against his will. During season one, his scars from this fight are visible. Wille is a rather withdrawn and anxious, but kind-hearted person who helps other people when needed. After his older brother, Erik, dies in a car accident, Wille becomes the Crown Prince. He struggles with accepting this new role and future, especially after falling love with fellow first-year student Simon. Wille is befriended with Felice, who he knows from his childhood and who briefly has a crush on him. Furthermore, at first he trusts his second cousin, August, who later becomes his enemy when he posts a sex tape of Simon and Wille online.



Figure 42. Edvin Ryding as Prince Wilhelm of Sweden.

#### Simon Eriksson

Simon (portrayed by Omar Rudberg) is a first-year student at Hillerska, where he has started for about a month. Simon is a scholarship non-res student, meaning he does not live at Hillerska as he comes from a working-class background and cannot afford being a resident. He lives in the nearby town of Bjärstad with his mother and his sister, Sara. Simon transferred to Hillerska to keep an eye on his sister, after she was bullied at their previous school in town. He has a close relationship with Sara, and they take care of each other. His parents are divorced, due to his father's alcohol



Figure 43. Omar Rudberg as Simon Eriksson.

addiction. Simon gets in touch with his father again, after having no contact for a long time. His mother is a caring, single parent. They have a good bond, but Simon withholds a lot of information from her about his and Sara's life. Simon identifies as gay, which is common knowledge to all of his family and friends. He is clearly confident with his sexual identity. Simon is the soloist of Hillerska's choir, which is how Wille notices him for the first time. Simon is known to be critical of the monarchy and elite at Hillerska and does not shy away from expressing this. He often meets with Ayub and Rosh, his friends from his former school in Bjärstad. August quickly becomes Simon's enemy as August does not repay Simon for the alcohol he gave him, hating August even more after he shares the sex tape of him and Wille.

### **Sara Eriksson**

Sara (portrayed by Frida Argento) is a scholarship non-res student at Hillerska, like her brother. She has transferred from Marienberg to Hillerska because she was bullied, causing her to redo a year. This makes Sara a first-year student and she is in the same class as Simon and Wille. Sara seems to find it difficult to have social relationships due to her ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome, but she stays determined to make friends. Her autism causes her to be too honest and socially awkward from time to time, leading to small conflicts with others. Sara likes to spend a lot of her time in the stables with Felice's horse, Rousseau. Even though Felice does not seem to like Sara at first, they become friends and Sara becomes more involved with the school's activities. She enjoys exploring having a social life and friends for the first time. Sara also wants to fit in with the elite students, by dressing more formal like them and wanting to have the same table manners at home. Unlike Simon, Sara does not want any contact with their father, whatsoever. Romantically, Sara becomes interested in August after he kissed her in the stables. This leads to Felice splitting up with August, who was her boyfriend.



Figure 44. Frida Argento as Sara Eriksson.

## August Horn of Årnäs

August (portrayed by Malte Gårdinger) is a third-year student at Hillerska. He is a member of the noble family Horn of Årnäs and is the second cousin of Prince Wilhelm. He is introduced as a good friend to Prince Erik and is trusted to help Wille get used to his new environment when he arrives at Hillerska. He does everything to get Wille's attention and be associated with him, showing his jealousy of Wille's life as prince. August has a leading position in both The Society and The Forest Ridge House and is the captain of the boys' rowing team. While seeming a perfect student to the outside world, August is still dealing with the death of his father, who committed suicide, and the financial struggles that came with his death. Because of his personal trauma, August does anything to get what he wants. He, for example, bullies Simon for being working-class, while using him to get booze and drugs for parties. August is the one who films Wille and Simon having sex and sharing the video online, making himself their enemy. In the first season, August is briefly in a relationship with Felice.



Figure 45. Malte Gårdinger as August Horn of Årnäs.

## Felice Ehrencrona

Felice (portrayed by Nikita Uggla) is a first-year student at Hillerska. Her family has been going to Hillerska for generations. Felice is a popular student, sings in the choir, and is referred to as modern nobility. She suffers from the high expectations her parents have of her. She is for example pressured by her mother to try to date Wille, whom she knows from their childhood. Felice eventually kisses Wille, but she is turned down by him. They later become friends again and have a close relationship as friends. She figures out that her ex-boyfriend August made the leaked sex video of Wille and Simon and informs Wille. Felice is not interested in horse-riding and seems frightened of her horse, Rousseau. This makes her jealous of the ease that Sara has with Rousseau. When these problems are resolved, the two girls become best friends.



Figure 46. Nikita Uggla as Felice Ehrencrona.

## B. *Young Royals* Synopsis

### Season 1 (Released July 1, 2021)

Episode #	Synopsis
<p>1. "Episode 1"</p> <p>Directed by: Rojda Sekersöz</p> <p>Written by: Lisa Ambjörn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman</p> <p>Duration: 43 minutes and 32 seconds</p>	<p>A video of Prince Wilhelm getting into a fight at a party has gone viral. During a car ride to the palace, Wille is handed a speech to apologize to the inhabitants of Sweden. When reading the speech, he gets upset when he learns that his parents are sending him to the elite boarding school Hillerska. Wille gives the speech during a televised interview with the entire royal family. Then, his older brother Erik (the Crown Prince of Sweden), takes him to Hillerska as he attended the school as well. Upon arrival, the brothers are enthusiastically greeted by their second cousin, August. Wille is welcomed by the entire school through a performance by Hillerska's choir. Wille greets Felice in the choir, whom he knows from his childhood. He then spots Simon as the choir's soloist and shows a smile. After the performance, August and his friends make fun of Simon for being a new non-resident student. The boys talk about how Simon might be able to bring alcohol into the school for Wille's initiation party. Wille has a hard time saying goodbye to his brother. August approaches Simon to ask him about his access to alcohol in the town where Simon lives, Bjärstad. August tries to convince Simon by giving him and his sister, Sara, an invitation to the exclusive initiation party. Simon does not reply and walks away. On the bus home, Simon and his friends from town talk about Hillerska and Wille's arrival. At night, Wille texts his mother (the Queen) for permission to come home, but she refuses. During lunch the next day, Wille and Simon talk for the first time. Wille introduces himself, but August keeps him away from Simon by inviting him to his side of the table. Later, Simon visits his father to get the alcohol for the party. Wille is kidnapped for his initiation. Afterwards, at the party, Simon and Wille get to know each other better. As Simon is leaving, Wille follows him outside and they talk. As August and his friends are searching for Wille and shout his name, Wille and Simon hide. Simon teases Wille and the boys end up being very close to each other.</p>
<p>2. "Episode 2"</p> <p>Directed by: Rojda Sekersöz</p>	<p>Wille is asked to stand on his chair during breakfast as the boys think he kissed a girl when he sneaked out at the party, but he refuses. In class, Simon finds out his grades at Hillerska are much lower than at his previous school. Wille tells Simon about how the other students get private tutoring to get higher grades. Simon</p>

<p>Written by: Lisa Ambjörn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman</p> <p>Duration: 50 minutes and 41 seconds</p>	<p>approaches his teacher to start private tutoring as well. Through a text, Simon has invited Wille to attend the football match of his friend. Rosh. Wille tells August he cannot attend the rowing practice because he feels sick. Wille sneaks out and takes the bus to town. He meets up with Simon and is introduced to his friend Ayub, they watch the match together. Simon posts videos of Wille attending the game on Instagram. Wille returns to Hillerska and tries to sneak back into the building. August notices him and lectures him about hanging out with the wrong people by showing Simon’s videos. Wille texts Simon to ask him to delete the video from his social media. Simon steals his father’s medication, to make August sell it to pay him back for the alcohol. As Simon tries to hand the drugs to August during the rowing practice, August gathers all the boys to give a speech about Simon’s class journey. During a movie night at Hillerska, Wille and Simon sit next to each other and Simon touches Wille’s hand. As they hold hands, Wille panics and leaves the room. Simon follows him and after they talk, kisses him. Wille struggles to explain his feelings about the situation. Then, they kiss again.</p>
<p>3. “Episode 3”</p> <p>Directed by: Erika Calmeyer</p> <p>Written by: Lisa Ambjörn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman</p> <p>Duration: 40 minutes and 58 seconds</p>	<p>Wille and Simon meet for the first time after kissing. Wille joins Simon behind the school’s piano and explains that he is “not like that” but wants to remain friends. Hillerska hosts the annual Parents’ Weekend for the students. Wille’s parents cannot attend the weekend due to obligations outside of the country. As all students go home during Parents’ Weekend and Wille will stay at Hillerska, he asks Simon to stay with him and keep him company. Simon accepts the invitation. Simon pressures August to repay him, but August ignores him. All students join the lunch with the parents, during which Wille meets Simon’s mother. Simon takes measures into his own hands and confronts August at night, while Rosh and Ayub keep him company. As Simon attacks him, August confesses that his entire family is broke as the reason for not repaying Simon. Simon’s friends are shocked by his aggression, they express their disappointment and leave. As August is also staying at Hillerska during the weekend, Wille has to cancel his plans with Simon at Hillerska and asks if he can come to Simon’s house in Bjärstad instead. As they are leaving the school to go to Simon’s house, Wille is held back by the school counselor. He brings Wille to the principal, where he receives a phone call from the Queen. She informs Wille that Erik has died in an unfortunate car accident.</p>
<p>4. “Episode 4”</p> <p>Directed by: Rojda Sekersöz</p>	<p>As Erik as the oldest sibling was the Crown Prince, Wille now takes his role after Erik has passed away. Wille attends Erik’s funeral with his parents, and he stays</p>

<p>Written by: Lisa Ambjörn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman</p> <p>Duration: 47 minutes and 32 seconds</p>	<p>with his family at the palace for a while. When he returns to Hillerska, he gives a speech to his fellow students in memory of his brother. The choir also sings him a song to welcome him back and pay their respects to Wille, with Simon being the soloist again. Simon approaches Wille in private to ask him how he is holding up, but Wille asks him to delete all their texts and leaves. Wille is moved to a new, double room, as he sits down on the bed, he deletes Simon's phone number. Simon visits his father's house and steals more medication. Simon approaches August again about the money and forces him to sell the medication to repay him, which he does. As Simon visits his father to bring him the money, he is confronted by his angry father for stealing the drugs. Wille receives an invitation to 'The Society' which he accepts and takes Erik's place in the exclusive club for first born nobility. To celebrate that Wille joined, the boys drink a lot of alcohol and take different kinds of drugs during a card game. Wille ends up at a football field on his own, drunk and under the influence of drugs, and eventually calls Simon. Simon picks up Wille by bike and takes him to his dorm room. He stays with him during the rest of the night. When they wake up in the morning, they have sex. They do not know that they are being filmed from outside the window by August, who is shocked by what he sees.</p>
<p>5. "Episode 5"</p> <p>Directed by: Erika Calmeyer</p> <p>Written by: Lisa Ambjörn, Lars Beckung, and Sofie Forsman</p> <p>Duration: 46 minutes and 35 seconds</p>	<p>Wille and Simon wake up together and go to class separately. Wille learns that member of the Society, Alexander, has been expelled from Hillerska for drug possession. Wille visits Simon at his house for the first time. August suggests blaming Simon for the drugs to save Alexander. Wille decides to take action to prevent Simon from being blamed. He informs Simon about the situation, but Simon does not share the same concerns as he is not part of the royal family. During a next meeting with the Society, Wille proposes to let Alexander take the fall, but August protests. Wille tells the group about August's financial situation, causing Wille to get the final say with support of the other boys. The boys all tell the principal of the school that Alexander is to blame for the drugs. As everyone is getting ready for Sankta Lucia, August is uploading the sex video of Wille and Simon in the library when Sara spots him there. Wille and Simon meet up in private and Wille tells Simon that he made sure that Simon will not be blamed for the drugs. Felice gives up her spot as Lucia to Sara. Simon and Sara's father comes to Hillerska uninvited, Simon and Sara argue. While everyone is getting</p>



	<p>notifications of Wille and Simon’s sex video going viral, August gets a call that his troubles with paying the tuition fees have been resolved by the royal family.</p>
<p>6. “Episode 6”          Directed by: Erika Calmeyer          Written by: Lisa Ambjörn,          Lars Beckung, and Sofie          Forsman          Duration: 43 minutes and 35          seconds</p>	<p>Wille is visited by the Queen to talk about the leaked sex video. She pressures him to deny that he was one of the boys in the video, which Wille does not agree with. Meanwhile, Simon is being visited by the press at his home. Simon’s mother wants him and Sara to go back to their old school, Marieberg. Sara does not want to go back there as she wishes to become a resident at Hillerska. Simon has not decided what is the best option for him in terms of transferring schools, his friends try to help him figure this out. Simon and Wille are in class again for the first time after the leaked video. They meet in private twice and talk about the situation and the statement the Queen urges Wille to give. Simon briefly meets the Queen. The Queen tells Wille about her unfortunate romance in the past during a car ride to the palace. Wille gives out a statement denying his presence in the video. Wille and Simon meet, but Simon tells Wille to figure the situation out on his own. Felice tries to find out who filmed the video as it contains broken pixels. She figures out it was August and tells Wille. Wille confronts August and says August is not part of the family anymore. When Wille calls the Queen to tell her he found out who did it, she reveals that she knew this all along. Wille is upset and hangs up the phone. The Christmas ceremony takes place, after which all students go home for the holidays. Wille hugs Simon outside of the church in front of all the other students and tells him he loves Simon, to which Simon does not reply. Wille leaves Hillerska to go home for the holidays.</p>