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Being safe from what and safe for whom? A critical discussion of the conceptual metaphor of 'safe space'

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ABSTRACT

Safe space, used in educational settings as a metaphor, stresses the importance of the classroom being a learning environment characterised by respect and safety. Based on examples from Swedish and Norwegian classroom research, this article problematises and discusses the complexity in the discourse on safe space by asking the critical questions: Being safe from what? – and safe for whom? Related to the concept of safe space are questions about what possibly can make the classroom an unsafe place. In addition to various types of intimidation, harassment and attacks, discussions about certain issues and topics can, for various reasons, be perceived as threatening. The school is part of society, and in an increasingly polarised climate, controversial issues in contemporary society will often be perceived as controversial in classroom practice. In this sense, instead of giving students false promises of being safe in the Religious Education (RE) classroom, the concept 'classroom of disagreement' may be a useful metaphor, since it makes it explicitly clear that disagreements exist and are part of life.

KEYWORDS

Word; safe space; religious education; classroom of disagreement

Introduction

Based on examples from Swedish and Norwegian classroom research, this article problematises and discusses the complexity in the discourse on safe space by asking the critical questions: Being safe from what? – and safe for whom? Related to the concept of safe space are questions about what possibly can make the classroom an unsafe place. In addition to various types of intimidation, harassment and attacks, discussions about certain issues and topics can, for various reasons, be perceived as threatening. The school is part of society, and in an increasingly polarised climate, controversial issues in contemporary society will often be perceived as controversial in classroom practice. Controversial issues can be defined as questions that deeply divide a society and generate conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative value systems (Stradling 1984).

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Controversial issues are thus questions where there are disagreements, different value systems, interests and perspectives and where it can be difficult to reach a consensus. Consequently, these issues comprise both knowledge and values, and in some cases, it is difficult to draw a sharp line between facts and normative positions (Hand 2008). Ljunggren (2015) argues that the reason for perceiving some themes as controversial is due to their location on the borderline between politics and knowledge and the fact that there are different perceptions and possible positions in relation to the subject matter. Previous research has also shown that many teachers feel uncertain about how to deal with controversial issues in their classrooms (Hand and Levinson 2012; Anker and von der Lippe 2018). What is considered controversial is context dependent (both in time and place), and it may be difficult for teachers to anticipate in advance exactly what questions will stir strong emotions among their students. Using examples from ongoing classroom research in Norway and Sweden, this article discusses the conceptual metaphor of 'safe space' and how controversial issues are being dealt with in the classroom.

The concept of 'safe space'

The concept of 'safe space' derives from the 1970s women's and LGBT movement and was originally used to name physical meeting places where like-minded people could meet and share their experiences in a safe environment. In recent years, the term has primarily been used in higher education, and 'safe-space-policies' have been adopted at many universities in order to prevent discrimination, harassment, hatred and threats.¹ The historical background to the concept is to protect marginalised groups from violations, threat and hatred and to offer them a safe space. When the concept is transferred into the classrooms of compulsory schooling of children, the meaning partly changes as the framework and aims of cohabitation are different. In short, 'safe space', in this educational setting, is understood mainly in terms of classrooms where students can speak freely, without being afraid of their peers or their teacher. On one hand, safe spaces need to be open enough to include all kinds of perspectives and positions coming from the students. On the other hand, this 'openness' needs to be structured by certain rules to which everyone can agree, in order to make the exchange of ideas safe for both students and teachers. In the two requirements, there is an inherent tension, and a central question is whether a safe space can be open to all kinds of opinions and attitudes, including, for instance, anti-democratic, anti-feminist and anti-religious positions, and at the same time be a safe place for everyone. And, if so, how can such ideas be dealt with in the classroom, without violating any of the students? Another issue is related to the more pragmatic organisation and

structure of the safe space, and whether a classroom that needs strict rules in order to be safe can be considered safe at all.

Safe space in European policy documents

In recent years, the Council of Europe has paid close attention to issues concerning religion and non-religious worldviews, and how teaching about religions and worldviews can be included as an integral part of intercultural education in European schools. Following the publication of the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue – Living Together as Equals in Dignity* (Council of Europe 2008a), the Council published a Recommendation in 2008 on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education (Council of Europe 2008b). In 2014, *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education* (Jackson 2014) was published to discuss issues raised by the Recommendation of 2008. In *Signposts*, 'safe space' is defined as a place where 'students are able to express their views and positions openly, even if these differ from those of the teacher or peers' (Jackson 2014, 48). Safe space is emphasised as being a main precondition for exploring diversity and, in a separate chapter on 'the classroom as safe space', *Signposts* emphasises the importance of providing opportunities for students to participate in open discussions and dialogues. In order to develop and sustain a safe space within the school context, it is, according to *Signposts*, important to define some ground rules that all the participants understand and are willing to agree upon (Jackson 2014, 48). These ground rules are defined as appropriate language, condemnation of 'hate speech', only one person speaking at a time, respect for the right for others to hold different positions, ideas to be challenged (not persons), students to be encouraged to give reasons for their arguments and that conversations should be inclusive of all students (Jackson 2014, 56f). Based on these ground rules, *Signposts* points to the importance of creating a safe space in Religious Education (RE) where students, independent from their religious or non-religious background, can take part in classroom conversations in order to explore different views and perspectives on different topics. The concepts of 'safe space' and 'ground rules' are also recognised in other recent publications from the Council of Europe (2015) on how to teach controversial issues. Less highlighted and discussed in the different policy documents are the more ambiguous aspects of the concept 'safe space' (although this is discussed in *Signposts*) and the substantial critique that the metaphor 'safe space' has faced over recent years.

Critique of 'safe space'

In an educational context, 'safe space' is a highly controversial concept, and it has been exposed to severe criticism for several reasons. Instead of providing a

critical approach, safe space pedagogy has been accused of avoiding addressing controversial issues in the classroom. In higher education, mainly in the United States and the United Kingdom, this has recently led to tense discussions about whether or not students should be informed about the topics that will be addressed in class in advance of a lesson in which potentially distressing material will be presented (so-called 'trigger warnings'). Twenty years ago, Boostrom (1998) argued that education should not be safe and comfortable. On the contrary, students need to be criticised and challenged in order to sharpen their own perspectives and to be prepared for the world outside the classroom (Boostrom 1998, 405). 'We have to be brave because along the way we are going to be "vulnerable and exposed"; we are going to encounter images that are "alienating and shocking". We are going to be very unsafe' (Boostrom 1998, 405). In order to develop critical thinking, imagination and individual choices, Boostrom states that students need to be exposed to different views and positions and learn how to face this kind of criticism in the classroom. Teachers, on their side, 'need to manage conflict, not prohibit it' (Boostrom 1998, 407). According to Boostrom, the metaphor 'safe space' is an obstacle to learning, and he suggests that we look for other, more appropriate metaphors in education such as 'the classroom as agora' or 'the classroom as congress' (1998, 407).

Barrett (2010), on her side, argues that students and teachers are better off with 'classroom civility' rather than the discourse of safe space. Her main criticism is that students need to be challenged to develop critical and intellectual thinking and that safe spaces are counter-productive, as they give students expectations of safety and comfort (Barrett 2010, 5). She claims that it is impossible to provide safe spaces for students, in particular for minority groups and marginalised students, and that to 'contend that the classroom can be a safe space for these students when the world outside is not, is not only unrealistic, it is dangerous' (Barrett 2010, 7). According to Barrett, there is an inherent ambiguity in the safety concept, and it is not possible for teachers to be sure that what they perceive as a safe classroom is experienced as safe for all the students. Instead, she suggests establishment of some sort of classroom civility. The main difference between 'the safe classroom' and 'the civil classroom' is, according to Barrett, that while 'civility is primarily concerned with the exhibition of particular behaviours ...', safe space is concerned with students' psychological experiences of being safe (Barrett 2010, 10).

Callan (2016) contributes to this critical discussion by distinguishing between so-called dignity safety, which refers to the respect to which all humans are entitled, and intellectual safety, which, he argues, is contradictory to the aim of education. According to Callan, good education requires teaching that makes students intellectually unsafe. He sees no contradiction between teaching that provides the students with a dignity safe classroom and at the same time challenges their opinions and thus creates an

intellectually unsafe environment. He defines dignity safe as '[to be] free of any reasonable anxiety that others will treat one as having an inferior social rank to theirs' (Callan 2016, 65). Callan points to the asymmetry in risk for certain groups in relation to being humiliated. These groups run greater risk of not being dignity safe due to structural factors, and teaching must actively work with these threats of stereotyping. However, dignity safe does not mean never to encounter facts, ideas or opinions that the students finds wrong or offensive. Like Barrett (2010), Callan stresses the virtue of civility and argues that there is no antagonism between free speech and civility. Freedom of speech is a fundamental human right in a democratic society, but, within the institutional framework of public education, students and teachers are entitled to submit to values and basic rules of that institution. To ask students to be civil and respect the dignity of the other people in the room may constrain the speech of teachers and students, but Callan argues that this limitation is reasonable within educational settings.

One of the characteristics of secularisation is that religion is considered a private matter. At the same time, the classroom is a public space where the activities are regulated through curricula and laws, but it is also a place where teachers and students spend their everyday lives. In the integrative, non-confessional model of RE, all students are taught in the same classroom regardless of religious or non-religious affiliation. According to Swedish and Norwegian syllabuses, the teaching shall be impartial, critical and pluralistic and provide students with a safe learning environment where they can explore and discuss relevant issues concerning religion and non-religious worldviews. In secularised and pluralistic societies, topics related to religion are often perceived as controversial and might stir strong feelings among the students in the classroom. Recent classroom research has shown that both teachers and students express uncertainty about how to deal with divergent opinions in classroom practice. In the following, we will present two empirical examples taken from ongoing classroom research in Norway and Sweden, in order to problematise and discuss the complexity in the discourse on safe space by asking the critical questions: Being safe from what? – and safe for whom?

Examples from the RE classroom

The school subject commonly referred to as RE looks very different across national contexts. The design of the subject in Norway and Sweden is, however, rather similar (see, for instance, Skeie and Bråten 2014; Osbeck and Skeie 2014). In both countries, the subject is non-confessional and non-denominational, and students are taught together in the same classroom, regardless of their religious or non-religious affiliation. The subject is mandatory both in primary and secondary schools and includes teaching on 'world religions', major non-religious worldviews and ethics. The subject in both

Norway and Sweden has its roots in confessional Christian Education, and Christianity is still given a dominant place in the RE curriculum. At the same time, the aim of the subject in both countries stresses that knowledge about different religions and non-religious worldviews is crucial to promote social cohesion in a plural society.

A first example is taken from an ongoing research project on how to teach controversial issues in RE and refers to a conversation with an RE teacher in a Norwegian secondary school. The second example originates from an ongoing ethnographic research project, based on classroom observations and interviews with students and teachers about how global conflicts are dealt with in Swedish RE and Civics in the upper secondary school. The two examples reflect ongoing and often polarised debates in the plural society concerning freedom of speech and religious rights and are deliberately chosen since they demonstrate some of the inherent dilemmas and tensions in the concept of safe space.

Example 1

It was the last lesson on a Friday afternoon and, for a couple of weeks, the students in 10th grade had worked with human rights issues in RE. The class consisted of students from both an ethnic Norwegian majority background and students with various ethnic minority backgrounds. The teacher wanted to engage the students and had planned to play a 'dialogue game' with them. He read out different statements, and the students placed themselves in three different corners in the classroom under the headings 'agree', 'partly agree' or 'disagree'. The last statement the students were asked to consider was the following: 'Freedom of expression in our society must be protected. This is more important than the consideration that some religious people should not feel violated'. Most of the students in the class partly agreed with the statement. Some disagreed, and some students totally agreed. After the teacher had read all the statements, there was a lively discussion in the class about freedom of speech. Twice, one of the boys with an ethnic Norwegian majority background argued that he should be allowed to draw cartoons of Muhammad without being killed. He met strong opposition from other students who asked how he would feel if someone had drawn hateful images of him. After the lesson, the teacher found one of his female students from a Muslim minority background crying in the hallway. She felt violated by the comments that had been expressed previously in the classroom. Although she agreed with the statement on freedom of speech and shared this position with the boy who had referred to the Muhammad cartoons, she felt personally attacked by his comment:

It's always Islam and Muslims that are being used as examples. It's never America or [President] Trump. Even though we have talked about conflicts and violations in many religions, it is always Islam and Muslims. It hits me in the heart every time.

This example from an RE classroom illustrates some of the complexity inherent in the notion of safe space. In this case, issues concerning power relations and identity issues, majority and minority dynamics, ethnicity, religion and gender are played out in just a couple of minutes on a late Friday afternoon. In Norwegian schools, dialogue games are often used as a pedagogical method to engage the students in their own learning processes, and both the activity and the different statements that the teacher used in this lesson were taken from a teacher's textbook on RE. One of the purposes in using this kind of dialogue game in RE is to engage the students and to facilitate learning by letting them share their different perspectives on a given topic. The main purpose is for students to listen to the perspectives of others – and to express their own opinions. This requires that the participants are able to listen to each other and are willing to take part in the learning process by sharing their ideas. The 'dialogue game', as a learning activity, is rooted in sociocultural theories on learning and the idea that an individual's learning and knowledge are closely related to the cultural context, language and wider community/society. In other words, the activity that was planned for in the example above was meant to enable the expression of different perspectives, to engage the students in their own learning process by sharing their thoughts on different topics and thereby to develop their arguments. The activity was well planned and structured, and the teacher had an important role in moderating the discussion when the students argued for their positions. At the same time, the activity enabled different perspectives on challenging topics to be expressed, and in this case, the controversial statement on freedom of expression and religious rights increased the tension in the classroom. An issue at stake in this case is whether or not the classroom was safe.

According to the teacher, there was an intense discussion in the classroom on freedom of expression. However, most of the students only partly agreed with the statement that freedom of expression in our society must be protected and that this is more important than the consideration that some religious people should not feel violated. Some students totally agreed with the statement, and among these students were both the boy who gave the Muhammad cartoon example and the girl who felt offended by the same example. This means that there was not a disagreement over freedom of expression and religious rights; rather, it was the example in itself and the language used that turned out to be offensive. Although the boy met opposition from other students, the girl who felt personally offended by the example did not want to – or dare to – give her opinion. Using the language of safe space, the classroom was obviously not safe for her.

Example 2

The second example refers to an event that occurred at a public school situated in a medium-sized town in Sweden, in a class attending RE during

their last year of upper secondary school. Sweden is an increasingly segregated country, and this is visible in the school system, thus making it more difficult to describe a 'typical Swedish classroom'. However, this specific class could be said to reflect a rather representative image of Swedish society: The majority of the students were born in Sweden or had two parents born in Sweden, and about one-third were born in another country or had two parents born in another country.

'Will you only include politically correct opinions when writing about your project?' A student asked the question after he received information about a research project, including classroom observations of RE lessons and interviews with teachers and students. It turned out that the student had strong sympathies for ideas attributed to right-wing populist movements. In an interview with the student, he and his friends described that they experienced the classroom conversation as so polarised that they often chose not to express their views, since they felt misunderstood and unduly criticised. They placed themselves to the political right, expressing critical views of immigration and Islam. They were occasionally called racists and Nazis by other students. They found this wrong and offensive, as they themselves thought they were only 'telling how it is'. Their view was that only 'politically correct' utterances were allowed in the classroom and that their opinions were perceived as politically incorrect. Interestingly, other students in the same class had a completely different view of what was said and what was possible to say in the classroom. They perceived that this group of students expressed xenophobic views, generalised and distorted images of Islam, that Islam often became synonymous with Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and that these perceptions were becoming increasingly normalised in society as well as in classroom conversations. When articulating this, they were accused of renouncing 'political correctness', denying unambiguous facts about immigration and Islam.

In this example, particular groups of students perceived the situation in the classroom quite differently. While some perceived the classroom as politically correct, in the sense that only some opinions are allowed in the RE lessons, other students had the experience that both racism and hatred towards Islam was included in the classroom discourse. This tension between the two groups of students reflects to a great extent the polarised climate in the Swedish public debate on freedom of speech, immigration, Islam and political correctness; by using the term 'political correctness', the student positioned himself within this wider political discourse. What is of interest here is why the students had these different perceptions of what was being said in the classroom. In conversations with the students, it became clear that it was not only students with a migration background who felt that the other group of students articulated xenophobic ideas. Also, pupils with Swedish majority backgrounds stated that the immigration criticism that had been raised in the classroom had racist connotations. In a subsequent conversation with the

teacher, the main concern was what happens to democratic values when the entire public debate shifts in a right-wing and populist direction, which certainly is the case in Sweden currently. Democratic values, which only a decade ago seemed unquestionable and accepted by the large majority in Swedish society, are today by some groups perceived as politicised values belonging to left-wing political parties.

One way of understanding the question from the student encompassing right-wing opinions is that it was an expression of civility (Barrett 2010; Callan 2016). This student and his friends expressed the view that they were silenced and that there existed a culture of silence for 'non-politically correct opinions'. The kind of xenophobic and Islamophobic views they held should, according to the ground rules that make the classroom a safe space, not be part of the classroom, since that type of opinion violates other students. At the same time, these boys expressed the view that they were constantly being confronted by the other students and attributed with views that they did not have. They claimed that their classmates made them more extreme than they were, which again pushed them into a more extremist path. At the same time, power relations cannot be ignored and that certain groups are exposed to structural injustice, racism, discrimination and harassment. When the social climate and public debate becomes more polarised and irreconcilable, this also becomes part of the classroom discourse. However, the school's democratic aim is a normative mandate intended to counteract this kind of inequality, prejudice and structural injustice. This means that all opinions cannot be treated equally. Both the examples from the Norwegian and Swedish RE classroom demonstrate that due to power relations and identity issues, the classroom cannot be safe for all the students at the same time.

From safe space to brave space and the classroom of disagreement

Building on Boostrom's (1998) assertion that bravery is needed in order to give up old ideas and to be willing to see things in new ways, and inspired by the concept of 'courageous conversations about race', Arao and Clemens (2013) have developed their notion of 'brave space'. Instead of giving students false ideas of safety, they argue that authentic learning about diversity and social justice requires that the students and the teachers are willing to put themselves at risk (Arao and Clemens 2013, 139). According to Arao and Clemens, the meaning of safety depends on who is in the room. As we have seen from the two empirical examples, what is experienced as safe by some of the students may be experienced as unsafe by others, and the experience of safety is closely related to power relations and identity issues. In order to prepare the students to engage themselves in challenging discussions, and to take part in their own learning processes, the linguistic shift from safe space to brave space may prove to be useful:

By revising our framework to emphasize the need for courage rather than the illusion of safety, we better position ourselves to accomplish our learning goals and more accurately reflect the nature of genuine dialogue regarding these challenging and controversial issues. (Arao and Clemens 2013, 141–142)

As part of the development of a brave space, the participants should take an active part in making the ground rules and to shape the norms and expectations in the group. Arao and Clemens are critical towards the defined ground rules of safe space as they tend to conflate safety and comfort. The establishment of brave spaces requires, on the contrary, that the participants are willing to challenge their comfort zones in order to explore the issues at stake (2013, 143).

In a more recent article, Iversen (2018) simply suggests replacing ‘safe space’ with the concept of ‘communities of disagreement’. Community of disagreement is defined as ‘a group with identity claims, consisting of people with different opinions, who find themselves engaged in a common process, in order to solve shared problems or challenges’ (Iversen 2018:10). Although Iversen argues that his view is consistent with the recommendations in *Signposts* (Jackson 2014) and the Council of Europe’s policy on the content of ‘safe space’, Iversen finds the term to be too ambiguous and that it ‘promises more than it can deliver’ (2018, 1). What turns the classroom from a safe to an unsafe place are often, as we have seen in our two examples, controversial issues, where disagreements, different value systems, interests and perspectives are present together and where it can be difficult to reach consensus (Osbeck, Sporre, and Skeie 2017). According to Iversen, the classroom defined as a community of disagreement may direct both teachers and learners’ attention ‘towards how such disagreements can be dealt with, or even developed and transformed into learning’ (2018, 10). Iversen’s community of disagreement, or what we prefer to call a ‘classroom of disagreements’, has much in common with Bostroom’s concepts of ‘classroom as agora’ and ‘classroom as congress’. In line with the concept of ‘brave space’, these concepts share the idea that the classroom ought to be a place where students are intellectually challenged, where they try out different perspectives and positions, where they dare to see things in new ways, and where they possibly may be affected and transformed by intellectually demanding learning processes. Although not necessarily in opposition to safe space, ‘brave space’ and ‘classroom of disagreements’ entail no promises of safety and comfort. On the contrary, they allude to bravery, courage and controversy.

Discussion

Despite the criticism of safe space as a safety and comfort zone, there seems to be a basic agreement that all classroom practices need some ground rules in order to provide a proper learning environment for students. While Barrett

(2010) and Callan (2016) use the term 'civility', Arao and Clemens (2013) stress the importance of student involvement in outlining these ground rules of the classroom. An interesting issue is whether the classroom is framed as a 'brave space' or 'classroom of disagreement', where students together with their teacher had developed some basic rules on how to handle and respect different opinions, would have changed something in our two examples and, if so, could this framework and approach contribute to another understanding, and readiness to handle different opinions? As outlined in *Signposts* (Jackson 2014), safe space means, among other things, the use of appropriate language, condemnation of 'hate speech' and respect towards others' right to hold their positions but also that ideas should be challenged (not persons). The teacher's dilemma in the two examples given is simultaneously to convey the values on which the school and the democratic society rest and to ensure that no students are being violated. If the students are silenced and do not express their views, it is difficult to challenge their perceptions and attitudes. However, if the students express extreme or divergent opinions, this can contribute to a polarised conversation in the classroom that potentially might violate some of the students. Thus, it is relevant to discuss whether the classroom should be a safe space for all students, even students who encompass views that contradict the school's democratic values, or whether other conceptual metaphors may be more productive and helpful in the plural classroom.

Research shows that many teachers feel uncertain about how to deal with controversial issues in the classroom (e.g. Cotton 2006; Hand and Levinson 2012; Zembylas and Kambani 2012). Should teachers, for instance, allow students to express racist opinions or not? If a teacher allows this, there is an opportunity to challenge students' views, but there is also the risk that other students will be violated and hurt. If a teacher prioritises security over the opportunity to discuss and problematise different opinions, it makes it more difficult to challenge the racist views in teaching. In this act of balancing, some teachers choose to describe their role in terms of being a neutral or impartial (cf. Jackson and Everington 2017) leader of debate, while others describe their role as mainly a transmitter of norms and consider it their responsibility to make statements against opinions and positions they consider to be contrary to the democratic values of the curriculum (Unemar Öst, 2015).

Conclusion

One dimension in the discussion of the classroom as a safe space, related to religion, is that both Norway and Sweden can be described as highly secularised societies, and thus, it is not clear how to handle religion in the public sphere since religion is widely considered to be a private matter. In this sense, RE differs from other school subjects and makes it difficult to manoeuvre, in contexts where religion is a compulsory subject and where students do not

choose what to discuss, how a topic should be addressed or with whom. In this situation, can students be asked to share their innermost thoughts and world-views? In a politicised context, one could ask whether it is rationally and morally sound to encourage and support students to share their ideological, religious or non-religious convictions in the classroom when the teacher cannot control what happens outside the classroom (Iversen 2018, 8). Thus, instead of giving students false promises of being safe in the RE classroom, the concept 'classroom of disagreement' may be a useful metaphor, since it makes it clear that disagreements exist and are part of a rational discourse. If there is to be a qualitative change in understanding, the learner must dare to leave ingrained beliefs and try to see the world and phenomena from new perspectives. In that sense, the learner needs to feel safe to venture to meet new and unfamiliar perspectives. Fear and insecurity is a bad starting point for learning. However, as we have seen above, the learning environment is not unilaterally safe and comfortable. Here, a distinction between 'safe', as in 'dignity safe', and 'intellectually safe' can be a constructive contribution (Callan 2016). The students need to be safe in the sense that they, as individuals, are respected and not harassed, but a classroom ought never to be 'intellectually safe', as this would prevent students from learning and developing new understanding, which is the overarching purpose of education.

Note

1. Closely related to the discourse on safe space are so-called trigger warnings. On request from students, many universities identify books, lectures and speakers that might trigger negative emotional responses with 'trigger warnings', that is, a notification that the content might be potentially disturbing, upsetting or offensive and trigger strong emotions. The background to the concept is that students suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or victims of sexual abuse, might have extreme emotional reactions when facing certain content and that certain content would 'trigger' their trauma (Robbins 2016). There is a heated debate over whether trigger warning protects vulnerable students and enables students to prepare to encounter sensitive issues and thus enhance learning or whether trigger warnings, on the contrary, limit academic freedom and freedom of speech and hence are detrimental to the learning process (Hume 2016 [2015]; Wilson 2015).

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