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Article

Education beyond safety. Facilitating educational meetings between refugee and non-refugee youth

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Keywords:

- Global citizenship education
- Refugee education
- Decoloniality
- Professional ethics

Purpose: The article unpacks potentials of and resistance towards facilitating meetings between refugee and non-refugee youth in global citizenship education.

Design/methodology/approach: The analyses are based on participant observation in a school-based intervention in three locations, developed on the principles of design-based research [DBR].

Findings: The article exposes both how meetings between students could be deeply educational and how teachers prevent meaningful interaction between students out of concern for refugee students.

Research limitations/implications: More research is needed on how students care for themselves and others in transformational learning contexts.

Practical implications: Privileged teachers' concern for retraumatising students can veil unconscious protection of the privileged self against students' trauma and should therefore be subject to critical reflection.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers in many social studies classrooms in European countries struggle to render global issues current, local and emotionally engaging for their students (Børhaug, 2018). Meanwhile, refugee students' alternative knowledge of political and social issues is largely undervalued through deficiency paradigms that focus on language learning only (Keddie, 2012; Pastoor, 2017). Furthermore, meaningful interaction between students across different backgrounds has long been pointed to as an invaluable resource for education and for equity in general (Banks & Banks, 1995), as well as for education against prejudice in particular (Allport, 1954). Despite these well-known benefits of desegregation and integration, refugee students meet institutional barriers to integration in national school systems globally (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Institutional patterns of school segregation seem to persist despite better knowledge. Why is this the case? This article explores an intervention for global citizenship education based on collaboration between refugee and non-refugee students. The project exposes both how meetings between students could be deeply educational and how teachers prevent meaningful interaction between students out of concern for refugee students. Drawing on psychosocial and decolonial theory (Andreotti, 2015; Todd, 2015), we discuss these experiences in light of the privileged self's unconscious avoidance of the fact of violence in refugee students' lives and experiences.

Our starting point is a Norwegian school context, where educational facilities for newly arrived refugees of 16 years and older are located within or close by the campus of state upper secondary schools, but as segregated institutions (Pastoor, 2015). Here, refugees aged 16 years and older qualify for upper secondary school by completing education equal to the highest level of basic education in Norway. Observing no academic collaboration between the different schools and limited interaction between the student groups despite their proximity, we designed a global citizenship education [GCE] project about world migration, intended to foster collaboration between refugee and non-refugee students. The project design process involved teachers, students and researchers, and the outcome was a five-week social studies course in which key principles of equity education were prominent, including collaborative learning activities, diversifying knowledges, addressing hidden curriculum and actively negotiating social and structural inequalities between student groups (Banks & Banks, 1995). The project was implemented in three schools and revealed great potential for students' learning processes in both student groups, as well as significant institutional barriers to realising this potential.

The analyses point to a key problem in education in general and GCE in particular, which is the tendency to produce knowledge that illuminates the bright side of global political reality and obscures the darker truths of global politics (Andreotti, 2015; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Todd, 2015). We suggest that this problem is not merely curricular but also institutional and relational. Through our attempts to facilitate collaboration between refugee and non-refugee youth in GCE, we experienced a paradoxical teacher enthusiasm for the project in theory, coupled with reluctance to facilitate meetings between the different student groups in practice. Drawing on Sara

Ahmed's phenomenology of whiteness (2007), we read the Norwegian upper secondary schools as an institutional space that is shaped around white Norwegian bodies and realities and positions the refugee youth as not belonging, even in its attempts to 'integrate' them. Focusing on the meetings between students that the project did foster, we explore the potential for deeply personal and foundational learning that such meetings can engender.

2 METHODS

2.1 Design based research

The project was developed as a design-based research [DBR] project (Collective, 2003). DBR is a formative methodology that seeks to engineer learning experiences in a particular context that can generate theoretical insights that are applicable beyond this context (Barab & Squire, 2004). It is a participatory methodology that involves students and practitioners in the design of a significant intervention that is subsequently carried out and researched in several iterations in order to improve the intervention and shed light on its critical components (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012).

The design process began when teachers and students in both school contexts were invited to identify challenges and potentials in GCE with regard to migration. A key finding in the focus group interviews with refugee students was that they wanted to get to know the students in the adjacent upper secondary school (see also Pastoor, 2017), and they wanted them to learn about their migration experience and their lives in Norway. The students in the upper secondary school expressed an interest in learning more about the topic of migration through getting to know the newly arrived refugees and their experiences. Furthermore, teachers in both schools expressed interest in collaboration between the schools, although both teacher cohorts also pointed to practical problems with making this happen.

Following the mapping of the issues identified by participants, we collaboratively designed an educational intervention to address the identified concerns. Working with teachers and students, the research group led the development of a GCE project called 'We are all migrants' (NTNU, 2021). The project was designed to facilitate academic collaboration between the students and was adjusted to be practically feasible in the eyes of the participant teachers.

2.1 Power imbalance and drafts for decolonising curricula

Concerns about the power imbalance between the schools and student groups were raised early in the project's development. The adult education centres that the refugee students attended were marginal institutions in relation to the upper secondary schools, and the refugee students experienced themselves as marginal in the local community that they shared with the other students (Skotnes & Ringrose, 2021). This was a key concern

and generated a lot of discussion about ethical concerns, especially considering the risks involved for refugee students. Would the project make refugee students 'native informants' for the non-refugee students (Spivak, 1999)? And would non-refugee students engage in the project with sufficient respect for the refugee students' personal experiences with the topic? These questions became pivotal for the project and are key issues in the analyses below.

An important element in the project was indeed to facilitate activities that opened up conversation between the students. Through a set of activities in which the students worked in pairs, we initially encouraged a letter-writing activity wherein they could share their experiences and stories. This formed the basis for a conversation between the students who had written a letter to each other. Later in our project, we built on this relation when the students worked in pairs to create a sketch for the digital stories about migration they wanted to tell.

The course was designed around three topical nodal points: indigenous lands, colonisation and migration. The two primary didactical tools were blind maps and digital stories. During the first three weeks of the project, activities were designed around mapping three layers of relations between land and peoples with paper blind maps and crayons. First, we mapped indigenous lands locally in South Saepmie, where the project was conducted, and then we mapped indigenous land globally. Secondly, we added the process of colonisation. Finally, we added global migration. Working with crayons and paper in this process allowed students to dwell on places and historical periods of particular interest to them while situating them in the larger geopolitical context of what we can call the 'colonial world order' (Quijano, 2000). The mapwork was designed to address the refugee students' desire to share their knowledge about migration without relying on proficiency in the Norwegian language. We considered knowledge about indigenous people, colonisation and land rights locally and globally as necessary knowledge to bracket the students' knowledge about the relationship between ethnic groups, land rights and nationhood in Norway and in the politics of global migration.

In the following two weeks, the students were asked to create a digital story about migration. The work was individual, with significant elements of supportive collaboration. This process gave the refugee students a chance to tell their story if they felt like it, and the non-refugee students a chance to reflect on the ethics of narration when telling stories about other people's lives (Svendsen et. al., 2021).

2.2 Data generation & ethical considerations

The designed project was implemented in five different classes at three different sites. We have called these sites Brick Wall Upper Secondary, Short Cut Hill Upper Secondary and Adult Education, and The Village Upper Secondary and Adult Education. At the Village and Short Cut Hill sites, one class from the upper secondary school and one class in adult education collaborated. At Brick Wall, the project was conducted without cooperation with

a class of refugees in adult education. In this article, we focus on the project implementation at the Village, where the collaboration between schools and between students was closest. Data from the implementation at Short Cut Hill and Brick Wall is used to contrast and highlight findings from the Village.

The material consists of field notes generated through participatory observation by the involved teachers and researchers, as well as maps and digital stories generated by students. At the Village, one researcher, one upper secondary teacher and one adult education teacher all had teacher–researcher roles and collaborated to teach and document the implementation of the project. We followed the process closely on a day-to-day basis, which gave us the opportunity to talk to students about their experiences in the project as it developed. The field notes, including notes from conversations with students, are the primary data source for this article.

The class of refugees consisted of 14 students, 13 of whom were male. They had fled primarily from Eritrea and Syria and were mostly 17–20 years old, with a couple of older students. The upper secondary class consisted of 15 students, 13 of whom were male. Only one student in this class had a migrant background, making it a relatively homogenous class in this respect. The students in this group were 17 years old at the time. As of 2021, immigrants and their children together make up 8.7% of the population in the municipality in which the Village is situated. For Norway, the number is 14.8% (IMDi, 2022).

All participants received oral and written information about the project and consented to participation. We had translator support in our conversations about what participation in the project involved. This was important to ensure that students understood that they had the option to not participate, even if they were at school and had to do the involved tasks for educational purposes. It was also crucial to communicate clearly to refugee students that, in the case of participation, they should be careful about sharing information concerning their reasons for fleeing their home country and their flight to Norway. We explained that any such information could be used against them. The Norwegian state is known to recall both residence permits and citizenship if they think asylum seekers have ‘lied’ in their asylum interviews. As this can happen years or even decades after arrival, information security represents a permanent concern for refugees in Norway. Being aware of this potential threat to participants, we have anonymised and deleted raw data as required by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data and altered any information about time and place in individuals’ flight narratives.

3. SOCIAL STUDIES, GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND REFUGEE EDUCATION

3.1 Global citizenship education and the challenge of colonial worldviews

The International Civic and Citizenship Education Survey [ICCS] has revealed a paradoxical situation in Nordic countries, where high levels of civic knowledge scores are

'coupled with low current and expected future civic engagement and participation in comparison to the international average in the ICCS' (Biseth et al., 2021). This finding suggests that cognitive awareness may not be as mobilising for civic engagement as teaching practice in the field seems to presume (Solhaug et al., 2020). In a study of students' motivation for social studies in Norway, Kjetil Børhaug found that students were motivated by subjects that affected them directly and were emotionally engaging (Børhaug, 2018). Meanwhile, studies in teaching practice have revealed a pervasive tendency towards externalising human rights issues in general (Vesterdal, 2019) and issues concerning race and racism in particular (Eriksen, 2021; Jore, 2019; Svendsen, 2014). Several scholars have directed attention towards the functions of affect and emotion in social studies education in this context in order to shed light on emotional barriers to engaging in real and present social issues with significance for students' lives (Blennow, 2019; Eriksen, 2020; Svendsen, 2014). Others have stressed the importance of education for human rights and political engagement in this educational context (Nygren et al., 2020). Kristin Gregers Eriksen argues that these curricular and didactical challenges in the field can be better understood as effects of a modern and colonial worldview that naturalises the current global world order and hides its systemic violence towards people and the planet from view (Eriksen, 2021). The intervention from which this article reports findings was designed to address these key challenges in Norwegian citizenship education, utilising the insights of decolonial scholarship that have increasing influence in the international research on GCE.

The issues raised in Nordic research on GCE are also significant in the international literature in the field. Vanessa Andreotti sketched a seminal distinction between soft and critical citizenship education, focusing on whether educational efforts acknowledge and engage with the systemic violence and injustice of the current world order (Andreotti, 2006). In this contribution, she highlighted key problems in the idea of active citizenship in global issues in the global north, focusing on the tendency to overemphasise Northern subjects' power and agency in relation to global problems in ways that reiterate and reinstate a relation of domination between North and South. Drawing on Gayatri Spivak, she furthermore problematised GCE's role in 'worlding the West as world', or imagining the world from a first-world perspective in which the social, cultural and economic dominance of the colonial world order is naturalised (Andreotti, 2006, p. 4; Spivak, 1990). Our intervention tackled this problem by mapping a world of indigenous land as a common starting point for learning about colonisation and migration and designing collaborations through which refugee students were intended to emerge as experts who could reveal the sanctioned ignorance of mainstream political views on migration in the Norwegian context.

3.2 Refugee education and the potential of meetings

The potential of facilitating meaningful interaction between refugee and non-refugee students has been emphasised in studies of refugee education in Norway and globally (Pastoor, 2017). Harðardóttir and Jónsson (2021) argue the following:

> The stories of the forced visitors are of critical importance to the process of educational inclusion and citizenship within national educational settings in Europe. It is equally important that the story of public education in affluent countries becomes one where those often-silenced stories are heard, and where the locals, be it teachers or students, become the visitors in the life of the other through critical and decentring pedagogies. (p. 42)

The basic insight that meaningful meetings between students across different backgrounds are important is less than novel. Gordon Allport's theory that contact with people different from oneself is likely to reduce prejudice and promote intergroup relations dates back to the 1950s and has been influential in research on prejudice in general and inclusive education in particular (Allport, 1954; Banks & Banks, 1995; McKay, 2018). Research on the theory itself has focused on the conditions that need to be in place for contact to reduce prejudice, most prominently equal status between participants (McKay, 2018). The concern that inequality between participants could engender an unsafe learning environment for the refugee students was raised early in the design stage of our project and would prove crucial to how it was implemented in schools. Metastudies of contact theory-based research also show that Allport's conditions for implementations, such as equity between participants, are not crucial for attitude change (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Our analysis here suggests that the very concern for refugee students' safety might serve as an unconscious justification for upholding segregation. This suggestion requires a deeper engagement with the psychosocial aspects of such educational encounters.

4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

4.1 Psychosocial & decolonial perspectives on transformative education

Sharon Todd explains how pedagogy as a project for creating transformative spaces in education needs to face the fact of violence in humanity in order to make space for humanising conversations (Todd, 2015). She criticises the educational practice of idealising humanity by educating about human relations as we wish they were, rather than facing humanity as it is (2015). Citizenship education about humanity as we wish it were includes efforts towards educating the student as a prospective democratic citizen in a prospective democratic society in which there is rational deliberation over politics, dialogue between different perspectives and so on. While such efforts can be valuable, they do not promote critical engagement with society as it is, unless they also address the

failures and violence that the systems and principles in question also produce.

What idealising citizenship education denies is typically the fact of violence in humanity and human relations. In decolonial thinking, this mirrors accounting for the 'coloniality of being', meaning the perilous life on the dark side of the modern colonial world order (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Andreotti and colleagues argue that 'the denial of systemic, historical and ongoing violence and complicity in harm (the fact that our comforts, securities and enjoyments are subsidised by expropriation and exploitation somewhere else)' is central for understanding the pervasive educational incapacity to confront the realities of global injustice and environmental crisis (2021, p. 146). Violence is the codeword for what cannot be explained in the idealised version of society. Facing humanity in a real sense, Todd argues, presupposes facing the potential of violence (2015). In our analyses below, we use this perspective to shed light on both the meetings between students that actually happen and the diversions that prevent them from happening.

Facing humanity in classrooms and education involves taking risks. Biesta argues in his book, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (2013), that one needs to take risks in education when he describes what education (really) is: 'a practice that is slow, difficult, insecure, unpredictable, and full of risks and uncertainties' (p. 4). Setting aside enough time, allowing both oneself as a teacher and the students to not merely chase knowledge in preparation for exams, represents a risk of not performing in accordance with institutional expectations. Meetings between students with vastly different experiences represent a risk of violence, in the sense that students risk not being met and acknowledged by one another or being rejected by one another (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). These risks are, however, a part of the possibility of opening oneself to another world, which represents 'the beautiful risk' that is education (Biesta, 2013).

For Todd, it is a key point that facing humanity requires that we resist the urge to idealise humanity (2015). This is challenging for educators because we tend to facilitate education in order to achieve some future aim for students and society. This drive can indeed be seen in the 'civilising mission' of GCE (Pashby et al., 2020). It is precisely our attention to this future aim that tends to produce our idealisation of humanity, Todd argues (2015). If we rather try to stick with the realities of the present and facilitate open-ended conversations, we are likelier to face humanity. She argues that 'it is not by refining our abstract political goals that we will create more justice in the world – multicultural and otherwise – but by encountering actual persons who compel each one of us to learn to shudder – and learn to live with that existential shuddering responsively' (Todd, 2015, p. 60). This presents a challenge to global citizenship education that has a certain affinity to decolonial perspectives, which similarly ask us to 'give up' on modern ideals in order to make space for other ways of thinking and being (Andreotti, 2021).

In order for the conversations that Todd describes to take place, students with different experiences need to come together in the same room. As we will discuss in detail below, we have encountered institutional barriers to such meetings, despite agreement that it would be a good idea. Sara Ahmed (2007) offers perspectives on educational institutions

that can help explain how such initiatives are thwarted. In her essay, 'Phenomenology of Whiteness', Ahmed explains how institutions that are built socially and materially to accommodate certain people, for instance, upper- and middle-class white academics, acquire the ability to make others seem ill fitting or less welcome (2007). The social profile of an institutional space is evident in who is seen to 'fit in' and who feels at home in this space (Ahmed, 2007, p. 158). We found the upper secondary school classrooms to function as 'white spaces' in Ahmed's terms (2007), which simultaneously figured as places where meetings would happen (as they were large enough to 'fit' both groups) and as a hierarchising mechanism by which power relations between the student groups were maintained.

5. Analysis

5.1 Institutional resistance: Schools as white spaces

Collaboration between refugee and non-refugee students in education about world migration was both the key learning activity and major concern from the outset of the project. In one early meeting, the research group discussed how we could facilitate collaborative work on digital narratives between the students, and also whether this was a promising activity at all.

The argument for pairing up the students was that it would foster closer collaboration, that they would get to know each other better and that the knowledge of the refugee students about world migration and flight was likely to be used in the narratives. At this time, we also had data from focus group interviews with refugee students who expressed that they wanted to get to know the youth in the upper-secondary school and that they wanted to share their knowledge and experiences as refugees so that the other youth would have a chance to understand what their lives were like.

The arguments against facilitating close collaboration revolved around two key concerns. First, it would be challenging to facilitate because of uneven student numbers and timetables. There were more students in the upper secondary classes, so pairs would have to become groups of three, in which there would be two upper secondary students and one refugee student. Secondly, there was concern in the research group about how this educational setting would be experienced by the refugee students. These concerns focused on the potential for an uneven power dynamic between the students. The refugee students were in the process of learning Norwegian (and often also English). Collaborating on any task in the Norwegian language was therefore likely to give the upper secondary students the upper hand. Furthermore, there was concern that the upper secondary students would not engage with the refugee students with sufficient respect and sensitivity, including sensitivity to the information security of the refugee students. Finally, concerns were voiced over whether such a collaboration would make the refugee students tools for the upper secondary students' learning process, risking that they would

be made into 'authentic witnesses' for the joint digital storytelling (Spivak, 1999).

This discussion resulted in the decision that the digital storytelling activity should be facilitated individually and that we should find another format for closer academic collaboration. The chosen activity was drawing maps over indigenous lands and colonisation and migration patterns worldwide based on students' prior knowledge and prepared online resources. This activity fostered academic collaboration with sparse need for language resources, highlighted the refugee students' advanced knowledge about geographical and geopolitical aspects of colonisation and world migration, and created a common starting point in the map of indigenous lands that was largely unfamiliar to both parties. This starting point also served to denaturalise the self-evidence of Norwegian supremacy locally, as the study was conducted in a Saami region in Norway that has its own history of colonialism, racism and ethnification of land rights (Fjellheim, 2020).

The concerns about the collaborative aspects of the project were not resolved by the decision to focus the collaboration on map work, however. Similar concerns to those voiced in the research group were also raised by participating schools and were evident from the changes they made to the intervention. One upper secondary school insisted on doing the project without a refugee class to collaborate with at all, arguing that such a collaboration would be too time-consuming administratively and timetable-wise; they were not willing to 'risk it'. We allowed this school to participate anyway, as it was useful to have a point of comparison to evaluate the learning effects of collaboration.

A participating pair of adult education and upper secondary classes decided to skip the mapwork altogether because the teachers thought it would be too difficult for their students. They did not want to risk failure and bad collaboration and decided on behalf of their students to spare them the challenge. At this school, the students had some joint teaching, but there was very limited social and academic interaction between the two student groups. At the third location, the collaboration was effectuated as planned, and we will discuss data on student interaction from this school below. Before approaching the micro level of student interaction, it is necessary to consider why interaction between the student groups proved so difficult to facilitate in the first place.

It is easy to understand the practical or administrative resistance. The schools and teachers were literally asked to go out of their way to conduct the intervention. While most liked the idea, the task of matching timetables and finding spaces that could fit both groups was less attractive. While these difficulties were real, they were also mixed with other concerns. One was for the adult education students' ability to interact and learn with Norwegian language students. Some teachers focused their efforts on teaching the adult education students all the Norwegian language words and concepts that came up in the materials for the intervention. The intent was to make it possible for the students to participate and learn as much as possible. As an effect of this priority, the collaborative parts of the work had to be minimised because of time. The consequence was that the teaching involved in the project remained focused on adult education students' deficits in comparison with the upper secondary students. Their relative strength, which was

primarily better knowledge of migration and geopolitics, was not utilised.

In order to understand how the intentions of the project were not carried out in practice in two out of three locations, we found Ahmed's perspectives on institutional habit and whiteness very useful (2007). The practical problems with matching timetables and finding rooms can be seen as ways through which the institutions 'gather around' certain bodies, producing others as ill fitting (ibid.) This was most evident in the upper secondary classes, where teachers were more reluctant to have their students go out of their way to make the project happen. We can also read the concern for how the refugee students would fare when they ventured into the upper secondary school as an unconscious awareness of the dangers that the 'white space' of the Norwegian school represented to the 'visiting students'. Similarly, we can read the didactic and curricular traditions that made Norwegian language skills training take priority over producing alternative worldviews through creating maps over indigenous lands and colonisation as institutional technologies that centre students with Norwegian as their first language and position others as ill fitting.

These aspects of the upper secondary schools' institutional whiteness were also evident in the location where students collaborated. Collaboration physically happened in the upper secondary school, not in the adult education centre. Across implementations, only one upper secondary student physically went to visit his partner in the adult education centre. This reflects how the hierarchy between the institutional spaces in the project was reified by resources, as the upper secondary schools literally had more room. This is also mirrored in the hierarchy embedded in the practice of 'integration', where it is implicitly expected that refugees move 'up' in the hierarchy and into white institutional spaces (Ahmed, 2007).

The affective and emotional aspects of teachers' fears require the lens of relational ethics. In the meetings between students that happened at the Village School, we had the chance to study how these admittedly risky interactions happened.

5.2 Facing the other: When refugee and non-refugee students meet

In preparation for the students' work on digital storytelling, we showed the UNICEF animation 'Unfairy Tales: The Story of Ivine and Pillow' (UNICEF, 2016). The short film narrates a child's flight from Syria from the child's perspective. We offered a word of advice that this film was emotionally intense and that they could leave the room if they wanted. They all opted to stay. During the screening, several students and teachers present were moved to tears. It was particularly emotional for one student, Karam, who had recently fled from Syria himself with his children. Karam was still visibly moved by the narrative when the light was switched on. Following the screening, we asked the students to discuss in pairs what they wanted to make their digital narrative about. The pairs were made up of one student from the refugee class and one from the upper secondary class.

Karam and his partner, Ove, began their conversation, although Karam still had tears

in his eyes from watching the film. One of the teachers asked him if he was okay. He replied, 'Yes, it is alright. We are used to this', and smiled. His response indicated that both the topic and the emotional intensity it sparked were familiar to him.

Karam and Ove's conversation about possible topics for their digital stories sheds light on a disparate touchiness. While Karam indicated to the teacher that he could both share and sit with the emotional reality of the topic at hand, Ove did not seem so keen to stay with the trouble. He seemed worried about his partner and expressed his care by trying to take the conversation to safer ground. He suggested that emigration from Norway to America could be a good topic for their digital story. Karam complied, and they continued discussing this possibility. This was also the topic they shared when the teacher asked them about what they had talked about. Afterwards, Ove explained to the teacher that it seemed difficult for Karam to talk about flight from Syria and that he therefore suggested talking about something else.

In the next session, when the students were to work on their individual digital stories, Karam uploaded his personal photos to the platform and started a detailed account of his life in Syria and his flight to Norway, including several pictures of his children. It was evident that he wanted to tell his own story. Why had he not said so in his conversation with Ove? Our interpretation is that Karam sensed Ove's discomfort with the emotional intensity and personal investment Karam had in the topic of flight from one's homeland. He then let Ove change the topic so that Ove could feel safe in the conversation and saved his own interest for later.

In this situation, Ove withdrew from the interaction when it became real. By diverting his gaze, he avoided facing the fact of violence (Todd, 2015) and the human face of its realities, which his partner was offering. The situation illustrates Todd's point that learning in itself is a form of 'ontological violence', that is, a painful experience that is impinged on the self (Todd, 2003). In this situation, Ove is free to choose whether to subject himself to the pain of learning with his partner, and he chooses not to. In doing so, he protects himself from the pain that Karam is expressing and from the pain that learning about its causes would engender in himself. The fact that acknowledging violence as real is optional for Ove shows his privileged position in the interaction.

The protection of the self that Ove chose is easy to understand in psychosocial terms. It can be understood as withdrawal from a threat that one is unconsciously aware of. Todd explains how this basic self-protection against learning can be seen and experienced all the time in our own and in students' trepidation and procrastination in relation to tasks we know will be transformative in the sense that we will learn from them (Todd, 2003). The conversation between the students brings out an ethical dimension in this psychology of learning. By turning away from the potentially transformative experience, the student also turns away from his partner and his experience of the world.

The issue of protecting oneself from the violence that transformative learning can cause one to experience is important for considering the ethics of potentially transformative didactic designs that feed into the subjectification function of education. When we aim for

transformative processes, we ask students to risk themselves in the pursuit of learning. What is at stake here is our freedom as human beings, according to Biesta. That is, the idea of subjectification relates to our freedom to act or refrain from action, which he refers to as 'intentional nonaction' (Biesta, 2020, p. 93). Education must enable the student to choose whether to take 'the risk' or not. As teachers, we usually do not know, however, what this risk entails for students. We do not know what Ove's reasons were for turning away in the situation discussed above.

Another upper secondary school student, Jamal, chose to refrain from deep involvement in the project. He did the tasks as asked, shared the minimum information about himself that was required, and chose a quite standard solution to the academic task of narrating a story about migration. He was a student in the 'Norwegian' group who himself had experiential knowledge of migration, as his parents were immigrants. Perhaps Jamal chose not to risk his identity as 'Norwegian' by choosing not to pursue his personal story concerning migration. Similarly, not all refugee students chose to narrate their own stories and chose other aspects of the issue of migration to engage with. In these choices, we see how students were able to protect themselves against the risks the project offered them. This possibility for self-care and protection is crucial for transformational learning designs that aim to spark subjectifying experiences. The observation that students do take care of themselves in this manner suggests that teachers should not 'avoid' difficult questions on behalf of their students for fear of 'retraumatising' them. Rather, education for transformation needs to be structured in ways that highlight students' own agency and self-determination, including opportunities for self-care.

Several students from both groups chose to dive into the conversation and explore the issue of migration from one another's own experiences. Nahome and Tor approached the process of discussing possible topics for their digital stories on migration in a different manner than Karam and Ove. Tor asked questions and encouraged Nahome to share his experiences with him. Nahome was happy to share his knowledge and experiences in this way. After their conversation, Tor asked the teacher about the possibility of writing his own digital narrative based on Nahome's story. He wanted to know if this was okay and asked the teachers for permission. He had already asked Nahome if he was okay with him sharing his story, which he was. Tor told the teacher that one of the reasons he wanted to interview Nahome was his own lack of knowledge about what being a refugee was like. During this collaboration, Tor, the upper secondary student, also visited Nahome at the adult education centre and in this way ventured out of the 'white space' of the upper secondary school in his learning project (Ahmed, 2007). Another upper secondary student ventured out of the frame of the school by interviewing his neighbours, who were refugees. Tor and Nahome, along with the student who interviewed his neighbours, were willing to take risks in their meeting with another, potentially facing the violence of humanity, as Todd prescribes as necessary for learning 'to live with that existential shuddering responsively' (2015, p. 60).

An aspect of living with existential shuddering responsively can be to acknowledge and

be mindful of when and how one's own actions touch others. Several of the other students from the upper secondary class also expressed their concerns and discomfort regarding writing a story about migration because of their lack of experience with migration. They knew something about what was happening with migration to Europe via the Mediterranean, but they did not know the people or how it affected them. Talking to the refugee students seemed to make the non-refugee students aware of their own ignorance. Furthermore, it made them consider how their own narration of these events would appear to someone who was both more knowledgeable about and also directly affected by knowledge production about migration. Here, the imagined migrant was quite literally replaced with the real refugee students in the non-refugee students' mindset (Todd, 2015, p. 60).

6. DISCUSSION: FACING HUMANITY AND THE RISK OF LEARNING

Privilege, or living on the 'bright side' of the colonial world order, allows one to maintain the illusion that the idealisation of humanity and the world that Todd criticises corresponds to reality. Such acts of avoidance are central to what scholars of racism and settler colonialism have named 'white ignorance' (Mills, 1997) or 'colonial ignorance' (Battiste, 2013). White ignorance describes the practice of overlooking and refusing to accommodate knowledge about racism into one's worldview (Mills, 1997). Todd's perspective on learning as ontological violence suggests that such refusals can be seen as acts intended to protect the self from the harm of learning about this violence. Understanding how this insight into learning psychology intersects with key knowledges in social studies appears central to promoting transformative education.

For us, the interaction between students in the two student groups became instructive for how to understand the concern and avoidance we had also detected from teachers and researchers in the project. Drawing on Todd and a psychosocial perspective on learning and injustice, we think it is possible to understand these actors' resistance to accommodating collaboration in practice as acts of self-protection against the deep and challenging learning processes that collaboration can produce. Like Ove in the example above, teachers at the Short Cut High location who minimised the contact between the student groups thought this was better for the refugee students. Thinking with Todd, we suggest that unconscious fears of transformative learning play into this concern. Put simply, the privileged self detects a sense of fear when faced with the prospect of collaboration between the refugee and non-refugee students when the topic is migration. This fear is then interpreted as a concern about the possible harm that the refugee student might suffer in the situation. The interpretation suggests that the meeting between the students can expose violence and that the meeting should therefore be avoided. Who and what does this protect? Essentially, the avoidance protects the privileged students and teachers from facing the fact of violence and produces the continuation of sanctioned ignorance of the violence that refugees and others who experience systemic injustice have to live with. Furthermore, our analysis suggests that such protective choices prevent

students from exerting the agency of protecting themselves if necessary, depending on their personal needs. In this way, teachers' fears can effectively prevent education that practises freedom, prevent the authorisation of the self that making one's own choices represents and reproduce segregation. Knowledge of these fears and inhibitions can help enable teachers to step out of their own fears and allow for the risks of transformational education.

Creating pedagogical spaces as liminal spaces can invite self-transformation (Todd, 2015, p. 55). In our project, marginal knowledges about colonisation and indigenous peoples' lands worked as a point of entrance to a conversation in which critical perspectives on the current world order and Norwegian society were legitimised. Furthermore, the letters between students opened up a personal conversation in which students could be personally present. When they met to talk and work on maps, we saw how the conversation created pedagogical liminal spaces as received attitudes and knowledges were displaced and subjected to new perspectives (Conroy, 2004). Such fresh perspectives were generated by the map work as an entrance to understanding migration. After having completed maps of indigenous lands, colonisation and current world migration, we asked students where people migrated from and to. They offered the simple answer, 'people are moving from the places that were colonised to the places that colonised'. This perspective illustrates how students have understood the historical continuity of coloniality to be an aspect of present-day migration patterns. Similarly, the ethical turn in majoritarian students' reflections on how to create a narrative about migration served to displace the privilege of representation and foster conversations between the students about migration and flight as real and experienced phenomena.

These learning processes were naturally challenging for everyone. Todd writes that facing violence and humanity in education requires 'shuddering' in a bodily and affective sense (2015, p. 59) She is concerned with producing pedagogical spaces in education that can create opportunities of 'accepting and living with our "shuddering", or indeed of learning to shudder' (2015, p. 59). She highlights:

(…) in facing the interconnectedness of our lives to others (…), could we not start to rethink what it means to live well together without a blueprint of what counts as the 'common good,' for example, produced prior to our actual encounters with others with whom we share the world? (2015, p. 54)

For the refugee students, the need to engage with the world of upper secondary education was self-evident, as most of them were attempting to qualify to attend an upper secondary school. Their interconnectedness with the upper secondary institution and its students was already established. The fact of relationality was perhaps more of a surprise to many of the upper secondary students, who found themselves ethically accountable to other students they had often not considered to be part of their community prior to the project.

7. CONCLUSION: EDUCATION BEYOND SAFETY

Our deepest lesson from this project has been the insight that privileged teachers' and researchers' well-intentioned fears are motivating the practice of segregation that prevents refugee students from becoming part of host country school communities. These fears are veiled by a discourse of 'safety' that does not make the classroom safe for refugees, but rather prevents them from coming into host country classrooms in meaningful ways. In practice, we saw concerns for refugee students' safety become arguments for protecting privileged students and teachers from the violent realities of global inequality, war and border regimes. In this way, teachers' concerns for refugee students' safety serve to continue the sanctioned ignorance to the violent world that refugees and others who experience systemic injustice live in.

These insights reflect Zeus Leonardo and Ronald Porter's considerations of the impossibility of 'safe spaces' in race dialogue (2010). They argue that 'safe spaces' for discussing racism are only ever safe for whites, and that the discourse itself safeguards the white privilege of being protected from the violence of the reality the dialogue seemingly addresses (ibid.). Furthermore, they point out that that interracial dialogue, in addition to being inherently unsafe, rarely is genuinely educational for people of colour. As our analyses above suggest, this dynamic was also present in our project. The two different groups had different reasons for participating. The non-refugee students wanted to listen and learn, and the refugee students wanted to tell. Leonardo and Porter underline the need to understand that marginalised students wish to participate in these desegregated and risky educational spaces despite their awareness of these problems. Drawing on Franz Fanon's decolonial psychoanalytics, Leonardo and Porter point out that the problem facing marginalised students is not one of othering or inequality, but rather one of non-existence in the worlds of the privileged people they live alongside (2010, p. 148). In this situation, an unequal and risky situation in which they can share their experience of the world is preferable to remaining invisible. The conversation offers the hope of an ethical relation to the privileged other – of becoming a real person in that world.

Teachers' concerns for safety and equality worked as a technology for keeping the space of the upper secondary school a space shaped around white bodies and realities (Ahmed, 2007). This psychosocial aspect was augmented by central curricular and didactical norms in the participating schools. At the Brick Wall site, students' learning efficiency was put forward as a reason to implement curricular aspects of the project, but not the meetings with a refugee class. The 'white space' of this school was not troubled by the theoretical insight into indigenous lands, colonisation and migration that the project also offered. These high-performing students were able to incorporate the idea of a modern colonial world order into their learning process without being interrupted or finding themselves reoriented by the experience. Thinking with Andreotti, this leaves us convinced that transformational education needs to address human being, or the ontology of the world, not merely knowledges (Andreotti, 2015). However, the didactical diversions at Short Cut High made it evident that knowledge regimes have a part to play. Here, a language-based

deficiency paradigm made teachers spend all their time learning concepts, leaving refugee students at an actual disadvantage in relation to the upper secondary students, because they had not been given the chance to value their comparable academic strength. Even when implemented as planned, the project did not deconstruct the 'white space' of the upper secondary school, however. The intervention allowed for the refugee students to visit and to be welcomed as guests who had valuable knowledge and experience to share. While these visits were neither inherently safe nor equal, they allowed for the refugee students to tell the stories they wanted to tell and for the non-refugee students to have the chance to listen.

The experiences we have shared in this article suggest serious ethical implications of colonial ignorance (Battiste, 2013) in the teaching profession. The privileged Northern teachers and researchers that were involved in this project, including ourselves, seemed to think that the ethical predicament concerned whether or not we would put already marginalised and traumatised students in situations where they had to revisit their vulnerability. Our concern reveals that we thought, on some level, that it was an option for them to leave it all behind, not to be mentioned again. If the refugee students were to leave the matter of the violence of the global world order at rest, so to speak, both privileged educators and the privileged students we were likely to unconsciously identify with could find ease in the lie that it is better for everyone if we don't bring up the war. The deeply unethical nature of this line of thinking is exposed by the fact that it was also used to prevent refugee students from coming into meaningful conversations with non-refugee students, despite their wishes to do so. The concern for safety and equality in the student interactions rested on the pretence of a self-other relation, where the upper secondary students were the self, and the refugee students the other (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). However, the refugee students were calling for the chance to establish this relation in the first place, as segregation does not allow for ethical relationality across difference (ibid.).

It seems the problem for the privileged educator is not to superficially acknowledge that our own vulnerability is a condition for a responsible and ethical relation to the other (Todd, 2015). Rather, it is the fact of violence and vulnerability in the lives of students we shy away from in a violent desire to escape the relational bind that implicates us in each other's wounds and joys.

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