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Teachers' Views of Human Rights Education

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PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

After the atrocities of World War II, it became clear that something needed to be done to prevent cruelty and gross human rights violations from happening again. The United Nations (UN) was formed, with its purpose of “reaffirm[ing] faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small” (United Nations, 1945). One of the first tasks of the UN was to create international human rights standards so that violations such as the Holocaust in Germany would not happen again. In 1947, the Human Rights Commission of the UN, headed by Eleanor Roosevelt, had its first meeting to develop a document that would be a global standard of achievement for human rights.

The document that resulted is known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and it was passed in 1948. The UDHR outlines basic political, civil, and socioeconomic rights that all humans should possess. To the educational community, article 25 is most important. The first section of the article outlines the right to education and explains that elementary education should be free and compulsory. The second article clarifies the purpose of education.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (United Nations, 1948)

The United States is one of the countries that has signed this document and agreed to adhere to these standards.

In an effort to put a system in place to support countries in their implementation of Human Rights Education (HRE), the United Nations declared 1995-2004 the Decade for Human Rights Education (UNDHRE). The plan of action for the decade defined HRE as

Efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and molding of attitudes directed to: a) the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; b) the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity; c) the promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups; d) the enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law; e) the building and maintenance of peace; and f) the promotion of people-centered sustainable development and social justice. (United Nations, 1996)

Overall, the UNDHRE was largely unsuccessful (Print, Ugarte & Naval, 2008). The mid-term evaluation of the UNDHRE, published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, analyzed the progress made in various regions. In the Americas, the High Commissioner reported in 2000, "A large majority of countries in the region have not devised policies pertinent to human rights education or passed laws calling for the introduction of human rights into the education of children, young people, and adults" (p. 9). The information for the

report was gathered from surveys of officials and people from non-governmental organizations throughout the region. The United States has still not made much progress in ensuring that teachers and school districts are able to provide HRE to their students. In December 2004, the United Nations implemented a new plan called the "World Programme for Human Rights Education." Hopefully this effort will be more successful.

It is important that the United States set an example for other countries in their adherence to the UDHR because we are one of the major powers in the world today. To ensure that future generations value peace, dignity, and human rights, it is necessary to instill those morals in the nation's children. Children should be exposed to the world around them and learn to value their own human rights. People need to know what their rights are in order to ensure that they are protected.

Training of teachers, availability of HRE materials, and support from the government are necessary to provide HRE to students in the United States. Teachers need to feel adequately equipped and educated about human rights. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of teachers' beliefs about HRE in order to determine the best way to move forward in pursuit of HRE for all students.

The study explores teachers' beliefs about HRE teaching materials, training, support, confidence, and current practices. This information can be used to make the conditions more suitable for teaching human rights so that future generations will know about their own rights and respect the rights of others.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

I was inspired to do this research because of my semester abroad in South Africa. South Africa is a country with a recent history of human rights violations. Apartheid caused a culture of judgment based on skin color, distrust between and among different groups of people, and widespread poverty. Because of this, South Africa now has a culture of human rights, where it is a part regular part of discourse and legislation.

Upon returning from my trip, I decided to further study human rights. During a class on international human rights, I learned about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That document makes it quite clear that all people should be educated about human rights. Because I made it through the public school system and had only become aware of human rights when I was living in South Africa, I thought that it would be valuable to investigate Human Rights Education for my thesis.

Thus began my research on Human Rights Education. Because it is not a well-studied or well-known topic in the United States today, I chose to start with the basics. By surveying teachers on their views of human rights education, perhaps we can use this information to give them the confidence, support, and resources to implement human rights in their own classrooms, creating the reality of a human rights culture here today.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Defining Human Rights and Human Rights Education

It is essential to define human rights and human rights education as background knowledge for this thesis. Donnelly (2003) defined human rights as “rights one has simply because one is a human being” (p. 1). These rights are inherent to everyone without discrimination and regardless of “nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status” (UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, 2009). The five categories of human rights are political, civil, economic, social, and cultural. Civil and political rights include the rights to life, equality before the law, and freedom of expression. Economic, social, and cultural rights include the right to work, social security and education. Another important social right is the right to be educated about human rights; this concept is known as human rights education.

A simplified definition of human rights education (HRE) from Adam Stone (2002) is “all learning that develops the knowledge, skills, and values of human rights” (p. 537). The definition that best describes the hopeful outcome of HRE is “efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills” (United Nations, 1996). In addition, Adam Stone argued that HRE must be transformative to be successful. Educators must teach *for* human rights while they are teaching *about* human rights. Students must be able to connect their learning to the environment outside the classroom because part of HRE is to empower students to affect positive change in the world (Stone, 2002). The United Nations is an international organization that deals directly with human

rights by outlining the norms and standards for the world community. The next section examines the United Nations' involvement in and impact on HRE.

United Nations and HRE

The United Nations, in an effort to promote HRE in the international community, declared the years 1995-2004 to be the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (UNDHRE). The objectives of the decade were:

(a) The assessment of needs and the formulation of effective strategies for the furtherance of human rights education at all school levels...(b) The building and strengthening of programmes...for human rights education at the international, regional, national, and local levels; (c) The coordinated development of human rights materials; (d) The strengthening of the role and capacity of the mass media in the furtherance of human rights education; (e) The global dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human rights in the maximum possible number of languages and in other forms appropriate for various levels of literacy and for the disabled. (United Nations, 1996, p. 5)

The UNDHRE was largely unsuccessful: in a final evaluation of the decade, the United Nations published a report of the “achievements and shortcomings” (2004). Among the achievements were putting HRE on the agenda for various countries, some revision of school curricula and textbooks, and development of educational materials. Shortcomings included the need for more time than a single decade to implement and improve HRE, the struggle to reach rural populations, lack

of development of HRE methodologies, and lack of funding and resources for implementation. Only two countries reported that governments had created specific plans for HRE. After the UNDHRE, it was clear that there was still work to be done.

In response, the UN implemented the World Programme for Human Rights Education in 2005. The first phase, 2005-2009, had similar objectives to the UNDHRE, but with an added emphasis on promoting common understandings, methodologies, and instruments for HRE. In addition, the program emphasized developing a partnership for countries and organizations to work together to share and develop HRE practices (United Nations, 2005) . Countries are being surveyed on their progress towards the objectives of the first phase in order to monitor their progress and the success of the initiative. The next section explains how the United States has responded to these initiatives.

Current HRE Implementation in the United States

Any progress with HRE in the United States has been achieved by individual teachers, parents, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs have developed programs that can assist individuals who want to implement HRE in their classrooms. Examples of these organizations are Amnesty International, the Human Rights Resource Center, and Human Rights Education Associates (HREA). In 2009, as a part of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Council of Europe; Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights; and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2009) created a free 240-page document that is available on

the internet entitled “Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A Compendium of Good Practice” with a wealth of resources for educators. The aim of the document was, as stated in the foreword, to “inspire new initiatives in human rights education, encourage further implementation of those already in place, and enhance co-operation and partnership at all levels” (p. 7). It contains 101 “examples of good practice” in HRE, gathered from 237 submissions originating from governments, NGOs, professional bodies and associations, and individual educators.

Despite the resources available, usually individual teachers in the United States are teaching human rights only with the permission of their immediate supervisors; there aren't many school-wide or district-wide programs in place (Stone, 2002). Teachers may not be taking advantage of these resources because they do not know about HRE or are not encouraged to teach about human rights by their school administrators or districts.

There are only a few examples of HRE being addressed in public policy by state governments. In twenty out of fifty states, HRE is in the state-mandated curriculum. However, many of those states consider HRE a suggestion and leave it up to districts to decide on its implementation. The states that have the most comprehensive HRE implementation are Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, and Vermont. Unfortunately, not a single state requires pre-service training in HRE for teachers (Stone, 2002). Suarez (2007) researched the discourse between professionals on the Human Rights Education Associates website. He concluded that schools have not been successfully developing awareness for human rights and

human dignity. Additionally, he observed that “in the United States, HRE is not even a low priority in the country” (p. 58). In the next section, I describe key aspects of an effective program of Human Rights Education.

Teaching Human Rights Education

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (n.d.) published a booklet that provides educators with ideas for teaching human rights. It emphasized the importance of teaching *for* human rights in addition to teaching *about* human rights. The basic elements of human rights such as “life, justice, freedom, equity, and the destructive character of deprivation, suffering and pain” should be where the lessons begin. The High Commissioner outlined important concepts for each level of education. Pre-school and lower primary HRE focus on fostering feelings of confidence and social tolerance. Older students develop knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of their classrooms and explore the UDHR and other human rights documents in order to facilitate discussion of their rights (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

Suarez (2007) noted that some professionals thought that human rights should be a mandated subject in schools, whereas others believed that HRE has to be “infused into all aspects of the curriculum” (p. 60). Some schools addressed it as a subject or theme for a month, but others viewed HRE as something conveyed by the teacher-student power relations and aspects of the “hidden curriculum.” The concept of the “hidden curriculum” means the implicit way that things are taught in classrooms and the school environments rather than the curriculum that is taught

explicitly. As expressed by Stone (2002), this conclusion supports the stance that teachers should be teaching *for* human rights and not just *about* them.

The next section describes character and moral education—two types of education that are closely related to HRE. These types of education are more well-known and researched. This information can be used to help understand HRE, and studies dealing with teachers' views of character and moral education can be compared to the survey results gathered in this thesis.

Character and Moral Education

Because there is limited research in the field of Human Rights Education, it is helpful to look into research on character and moral education, especially studies that focus on teachers' views of these types of education. Human rights, character, and moral education are all non-academic areas of teaching that seek to change students' attitudes and beliefs. By looking into character and moral education, insight can be gained into conditions and attitudes affecting Human Rights Education.

Defining Character and Moral Education

Character education lacks a concrete, across-the-board definition, causing much confusion among educators (Revell, 2002; Williams, 2000). The National Commission on Character Education defines it as “any deliberate approach by which school personnel, often in conjunction with parents and community members, help children and youth become caring, principled, and responsible” (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006, p. 84). It has also been defined more simply as “knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good” (Williams, 2000). In most definitions, the

focus is on core values being taught explicitly to students (Milson, 2002; Williams, 2000; Revell & Arthur, 2007).

In a comprehensive review of strategies for moral education, Schuitema, Ten Dam & Vegugelers (2007) identified two major objectives of moral education. The first involves individual students' personal development and welfare. Moral education strives to help individuals on their path to adulthood and identity-development. Secondly, moral education aims to better all of society through prosocial and moral development of citizens. One of the prominent academic figures in moral development was Lawrence Kohlberg. He believed that moral education should be targeted toward helping people deal autonomously with moral and ethical dilemmas. When moral education is a part of the curriculum, it involves teaching critical thinking, problem solving, perspective taking, and decision making (Schuitema, et al., 2007).

The next section explores various studies on human rights, character, and moral education. These studies of teachers' views provide background information on the topic of this thesis: Teachers' Views of Human Rights Education.

Beliefs, Opinions, and Reactions

Professionals' Beliefs About HRE

There are only a few studies that surveyed teachers about their beliefs, opinions, and reactions to moral, character, and human rights education. These studies can provide background and a baseline for understanding people's views of these types of education. One study by David Suarez (2007), examined the conversations between participants in discussion boards on the HREA website. The

participants in the discussion boards were educational professionals from 52 different countries around the world, many of whom were affiliated with NGOs and inter-governmental organizations. The discussion topics ranged from purposes to implementation to assessment of HRE.

Most of the educators believed that the purpose of HRE was to socialize students and produce responsible, active citizens who enact human rights rather than just knowing they have them. Many people recognized that schools haven't been successful in creating awareness for global human rights and human dignity. Many students and teachers do not know about human rights or the international instruments that protect these rights.

Much of the conversation between professionals was found to revolve around content and pedagogy for HRE. There were questions about whether it should be a part of the formal curriculum or conveyed through teacher-student power relations and the "hidden curriculum," with supporters for both viewpoints. Some participants stressed the importance of infusing HRE into all aspects of the curriculum, while others think it should be taught as a mandatory subject, which makes it more likely to be taught in schools. It is difficult to implement large-scale transformations in pedagogy, and HRE could cause added pressure and strain on teachers. These are both concerns of the professional HRE community.

The third major topic addressed in the online community on the HREA website was assessment of HRE. When it comes to assessing the impact of HRE, some participants did not think that evaluation was necessary because the benefits

are obvious. However, others believe that assessment and evaluation of HRE could be helpful and lead to improved outcomes.

The conclusions that Suarez reached in his study include the observation that there is “no ‘one best system’ for HRE” (p. 66). HRE continues to be discussed, evaluated, and molded by those who practice and implement it. Those involved in HRE do not want to impose one single vision. Rather, they want HRE to “manifest itself in a country” (p. 65). This study involved discourse and views of HRE, a topic that is not well-researched. The rest of the studies outlined below involved moral and character education, which is also useful because of the similarities between these types of education.

Teachers' Views of Moral Education

It is valuable to consider teachers' views of character and moral education because they closely relate to HRE. Where there are gaps in the HRE research, other information can be gathered from studies of these other types of education.

In order to determine what moral education topics teachers deem appropriate for their students, Lin, Davidman, Petersen & Thomas (1998) conducted a comparative study of teachers in Taiwan and in the United States. They surveyed 94 teachers in Taiwan and 140 in the United States with a questionnaire. The survey listed 20 topics in moral education and the teachers identified whether or not the topic should be taught and why. Each teacher gave answers for a sixth grade level and undergraduate college level, choosing the topics that were appropriate for each age group. For the sixth grade results, which are most relevant to this study, the top four topics from teachers in the United States were ethnic conflicts, avoiding

AIDS, industries damaging resources, and causes of crime. The lowest ranked were pros and cons of gambling, outlawing alcoholic beverages, limiting the number children per family, and legalizing prostitution.

There was much diversity of opinion in the survey; no two teachers responded the same, and no topic was unanimously agreed upon. This illustrates that teachers possess varied opinions about how moral education should be taught. If standards and curriculum were more explicit, school districts could guarantee that moral education is adequately taught. However, if left up to the individual teachers, some material could be judged inappropriate or unimportant by a teacher and omitted.

A study by Boyd and Arnold (2000) investigated groups of preservice and beginning teachers to find points of disconnect between teachers' views of education and the aims of moral and antiracism education. They concluded that teachers fell into three different categories or "perspectives" on the aims of education. The three perspectives were individual, interpersonal, and political. Teachers with the individual perspective were concerned for individual students and their personal well-being. Those from the interpersonal perspective focused on the quality of interactions between individuals, and those from the political perspective focused on the wider realm of social groups and their interactions. The difference among the three perspectives is important to understand because these beliefs of teachers influence how they would teach moral, character, and Human Rights Education. HRE tends to be mostly focused in the "political perspective" of interactions among social groups, but teachers' views of the purpose of education

(individual, interpersonal, or political) influence how they regard and carry out educational programs

Teachers' Views of Character Education

Milson and Mehlig (2002) surveyed 254 elementary school teachers in the United States Midwest to discover their sense of self-efficacy for character education. Although the researchers reported that teachers receive little training in character education, their data showed that teachers feel capable and efficacious about teaching character education. Like HRE, character education is something in which teachers do not usually receive much training.

There were a few questions that caused uncertainty in the study. 70.2 percent of teachers reported that they believed that some students won't be more respectful even if teachers promote respect, and 37.9 percent said that they are not usually able to stop a dishonest student from lying. This research illustrated that teachers feel efficacious when working with students who already have strong morals and values. However, more training is necessary to make them confident dealing with difficult students who need character guidance.

Revell and Arthur (2007) also found a lack of training in character education. They investigated student teachers' attitudes towards character education. The student teachers reported that their coursework did not adequately prepare them for character or moral education. They were hesitant to intervene in students' moral guidance and were only prepared to influence behavior and views of students in a limited way. These student teachers understood the importance of character

education but did not feel adequately prepared from their teacher preparation programs.

All of these studies relate directly to this study on teachers' views of human rights education. The results of this thesis can be compared to these other studies to draw further conclusions.

Summary

The United Nations has been [promoting](#) implementation of HRE for many years through initiatives [such as](#) the Decade for Human Rights Education and the current World Programme for Human Rights Education that began in 2005. This program is making great strides towards bringing HRE to people around the world.

There are very few studies that have been done involving HRE. However, by examining studies of character and moral education (areas of education that are closely related to HRE), information can be gathered about teachers' views, self-efficacy, and opinions. This thesis [documented](#) teachers' views and experiences with HRE in order to better understand what can be done to improve its implementation and effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

INSTRUMENT [ATION](#)

The data was collected with a paper survey developed by the researcher. Human Rights Education was defined for the participants using the definition provided by the United Nations in the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. This clarified that the researcher and participants were using the same definition of HRE throughout the entire survey.

The first question asked participants whether or not they had heard of HRE before reading the definition on the survey. By asking this question, it becomes clear whether or not HRE is familiar to today's teachers. If they had never heard of HRE, then they most likely are not teaching human rights in their classrooms.

Questions 2 through 14 are statements of conditions, and the participants were asked to check all of the conditions under which they would teach about human rights. In order to help teachers to utilize HRE in the future, it is important to know what conditions need to be met. This section targeted things like district and state requirements, support of colleagues and parents, fitting it into the “normal flow” of teaching, and the importance of receiving training.

Questions 15 and 16 focused on what teachers *are* doing to teach towards human rights. This is a way to see what teachers are doing well in the classroom and how they manage to fit human rights into the curriculum. They were prompted with specific topics within HRE—freedom, tolerance, equality, diversity, and peace. These answers, due to their open-ended format, were analyzed qualitatively.

Questions 17 through 40 were Likert scale items in which the participants responded to statements by checking off one of four boxes—strongly disagree,

disagree, agree, or strongly agree. These items were varied, sometimes phrased positively towards support of HRE and others phrased negatively (against HRE). They were roughly based on six different topics—being for/against HRE, integration of HRE into teaching, whether or not values should be taught in school, the importance of availability of materials and training for HRE, and the importance of outside support (other teachers, parents, administration, etc.).

The final five questions (41 through 45) asked the participants for personal information in order to make comparisons. They were asked to provide their gender, grade they teach, years of teaching experience, teaching environment (urban, suburban, rural), and whether they teach in a public or private school. This allowed for t-tests and comparisons between different subgroups of teachers to reach more conclusions from the data.

This survey was given to the participants and then collected after completion and returned to the researcher.

SAMPLE

The survey was given out at “Confratute” a summer conference for teachers, in July 2009 at the University of Connecticut. Confratute is described by one of its founders Joe Renzulli as “host[ing] a national faculty that specializes in providing *practical strategies* that focus on creativity, higher level thinking skills, an examination of intelligences outside the normal curve, and the infusion of investigative ways of learning into all classrooms.” Confratute’s “focus is on differentiation of instruction, high-end learning, and enrichment teaching.”

Those who took the survey were all participants in Confratute, which means

that they most likely have some interest in differentiation, enrichment teaching, or working with gifted and talented students. Confratute draws participants from all over the country and from overseas, who teach at many different levels.

Participants attended for one week or two, with various package options for registration. The cheapest package, for one week without housing or meals was \$685. Teachers can get credit for professional development for the conference and some get funding from their school district, however for many the conference is an out-of-pocket expense (University of Connecticut, 2009).

Only 53 completed surveys were returned. The sample population only included 6 male teachers. The grade level of teachers ranged from Kindergarten to high school, and there were teachers from urban, rural, and suburban schools. Only 5 of the teachers were from private schools, the rest taught in public schools.

FINDINGS

FINDINGS

There are many conclusions that arose from the compilation and analysis of the survey data. As for familiarity with Human Rights Education, the first question addressed whether survey participants had prior exposure to the topic. [Twenty-three](#) of the teachers (47 percent) reported that this was the first time they had heard or read about Human Rights Education. This speaks to a lack of awareness, which is [disappointing](#) due to the stress placed on Human Rights Education in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education was deemed a failure and this is further evidence. If teachers are unaware of HRE, they cannot be expected to teach it.

The next thirteen [survey](#) questions addressed the conditions under which teachers would teach about human rights. [Contrary](#) to the previous question about exposure, 37 of the teachers (70%) checked off that they “find opportunities to fit this topic into the normal flow of [their] teaching.” This is a hopeful response because, although they were not previously exposed to the actual term of Human Rights Education, they seem to be making time to fit it into the school day.

Additionally, 45% of teachers reported that “it would be necessary to receive training if [they were] going to do this,” 40% reported that “there would need to be curriculum materials provided to [them],” and 34% [indicated](#) that they “believe this topic is better suited to some subject areas than others.”

The next question asked if the teachers ever covered topics of Human Rights Education in their classrooms, with freedom, tolerance, equality, diversity, and peace given as examples. Only one teacher replied “no” to this question. This is

extremely promising. Although not all teachers were aware of Human Rights Education, almost all incorporate aspects of Human Rights into [their teaching](#).

Following this question was an open-ended response asking what the participants have done to teach about human rights and how it is incorporated into the curriculum. This was analyzed qualitatively to [determine](#) what topics and strategies teachers are using to put HRE into their classrooms. There was a wide range of answers, which were narrowed down into 29 categories. 15 of the teachers (28.3%) mentioned that they teach about respecting, tolerating, or accepting differences; or they wrote about teaching equality and diversity. The second most common answer was teaching about Civil Rights (12 teachers, 22.6%). This included teaching about Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and the Underground Railroad.

The third most common [response](#) was using literature to teach about human rights (11 teachers, 20.8%). Many responses included references to specific books or types of literature. Teachers reported using storytelling, myths, and plays. Books that they used included The Watsons go to Birmingham- 1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis, Number the Stars by Lois Lowry, Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan, The Elephant Man by Bernard Pomerance, Harrison Bergeron by Kurt Vonnegut Jr., A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, and To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee.

Eight teachers (15.1%) did not give a response, even though they answered “yes” to the question asking if they taught about any of the aspects of HRE (Question 15). Six teachers emphasized the importance of building a positive classroom community. The following topics all had five responses each: multicultural

education, teaching through current events, teaching through natural classroom discussion as things come up in class, and Social Studies lessons. Teaching through explicit human rights lessons only had [four](#) responses (including one teacher who teaches using “the human rights given by the United Nations”). Four teachers mentioned teaching about the Holocaust. Slavery and women’s rights both had three responses. Three teachers wrote about doing something active with their students such as social action projects or raising money and awareness for a social justice or activist cause.

Three responses were interesting in that they contained statements that I would consider unsupportive of HRE. Participant [#53](#) wrote “often these topics in schools become vehicles not for education but for advocacy for or against particular interest groups. I do not support that.” Participant [#45](#) wrote, “I don’t know that HRE should or can be mandated though. This would make it one more item ‘on the plate’ of teachers who are already over-burdened. Math teachers would especially struggle.” In addition, [Participant #42](#) wrote “it is not a part of the regular curriculum at this time.”

Two teachers wrote about using writing or essays to teach their students about human rights, two taught about Japanese internment during World War II, and two mentioned teaching about Black History Month. The rest of the topics only had one response each: teaching about wealth distribution percentages and poverty, immigration, freedom, aesthetic views in art diversity, creative thinking skills, UNICEF during Halloween, tribal issues in Africa, worldview, fair trade and rainforests, and learning about human rights through independent investigations.

One participant did not write a response because she responded in question 15 that she does not teach about any of the aspects of HRE.

The next group of questions was a set of Likert scale items, where participants responded with strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The statements related to six topics including whether or not schools should have Human Rights Education, integration of HRE, teaching values in schools, the necessity of materials and training, teachers' confidence in teaching HRE, and the importance of outside support.

When scores were adjusted for those items that were phrased negatively (For example, question 28: "I rarely encourage students to practice fairness, equality, and justice."), all of the categories had averages that were between "agree" and "strongly agree." This showed an overall support for HRE and integration, a desire for materials and training, support for teaching values in school, self-confidence in teaching HRE, and an emphasis on support from other teachers, parents, and administrators.

The specific questions with the highest averages were questions 27, 23, 21, and 28. Question 27 stated, "I make an effort to teach my students to show tolerance and respect for those who are different." Question 23 stated, "I am comfortable modeling respect for human rights in my classroom." Question 21 stated, "Even if I were given teaching materials, I would not teach human rights to my students," and Question 28 stated, "I rarely encourage students to practice fairness equality and justice." When the negatively phrased questions were adjusted, they ended up having some of the strongest responses.

When correlations were calculated between the categories of questions, all had correlations of greater than 0.32. This shows that those who respond positively to any of the categories are likely to respond positively to the others as well.

When the personal information of the participants is taken into account, t-tests can be done to compare groups of participants. T-tests were done between those who teach in urban vs. non-urban schools, teachers who have taught for less than ten years vs. those who have taught for more than ten years, and those who were hearing about HRE for the first time vs. those who reported that they had heard of it before the survey. None of these t-tests showed significant differences.

DISCUSSION

This discussion will focus on the implications of the findings and suggestions for future research. There is a lack of research in this field, and the conclusions of the survey results bring to light many suggestions for promoting HRE in the United States.

The United Nations has been trying for many years to promote HRE through programs like the Decade for Human Rights Education and the current World Programme for Human Rights Education. As shown by the results of the survey, many educators (47% of teachers surveyed) do not even know what HRE is. Clearly, more effort needs to be put into getting the word out about HRE. If teachers have never heard of HRE, they cannot be expected to implement it.

It is advised by human rights scholars that HRE should be imbedded into the curriculum and not necessarily taught as a separate subject (Stone 2002, Suarez 2007). The teachers surveyed agreed with this. Seventy percent said that they “find opportunities to fit this topic into the normal flow of [their] teaching.” In addition, the survey participants provided examples of what they do in their classrooms to promote Human Rights through teaching about freedom, tolerance, equality, diversity, and peace. This is promising, and perhaps it is the route that should be advised for teachers. As one of the survey participants pointed out, HRE would be “one more item ‘on the plate’ of teachers who are already over-burdened.” Perhaps if teachers are equipped with ways to fit HRE into their daily teaching, then they would be more likely to implement it.

As noted by Stone (2002), very few states have implemented HRE and no states require any type of training for their teachers. Although there are curriculum

materials available, teachers are not aware of them. [Forty-five](#) percent of teachers surveyed responded that “it would be necessary to receive training” in order to teach HRE, and [40%](#) responded that “there would need to be curriculum materials provided [to them].” Training teachers in HRE and providing materials or showing teachers where to find materials that already exist would be a step forward in the implementation of HRE.

Overall, there was strong support for HRE in the survey. It showed that teachers think that schools should have HRE integrated it into the curriculum. They are supportive of teaching values in school, and feel confident about teaching HRE as long as they are supported (by other teachers, administrators, school districts, and parents) and receive materials and training. Clearly, the survey shows that teachers are open and receptive to the idea of implementing HRE in schools. As long as the effort is put in to help the teachers, there is no reason why the World Programme for Human Rights Education cannot succeed.

As a future educator, I plan [to](#) implement HRE in my classroom as much as possible. I know firsthand, [especially](#) from my study abroad experience in South Africa, the importance of creating a culture of human rights. My classroom will have that culture. In my student teaching, I tried to integrate human rights through “teachable moments,” which is similar to many of the responses of survey participants. I also told stories about South Africa and about mission trips that I have taken to help impoverished people in southern Mexico. My students rarely had a chance to learn social studies, but I tried to incorporate HRE as much as possible.

When I have my own classroom, I plan to start [by](#) doing HRE myself [with my students](#). But then I [intend](#) to help other teachers in the school, district, and state to follow my lead and start HRE themselves. My survey showed that teachers, regardless of their teaching environment, years of experience, or level of exposure, have interest in implementing HRE; [however](#), they reported a need for training, support, and materials in order to do so. I hope to [provide](#) this support and expose teachers to the resources that exist for HRE, and possibly create my own lesson plans and resources for teachers to use. I also would like to advocate for HRE on a larger scale to policymakers to hopefully improve HRE nationally and internationally.

Through my research for this thesis and the limited implementation of HRE that I have done in my student teaching classroom, I have become much more passionate about this topic. Children's minds are wide open and extremely receptive to HRE. They know what is "fair" and "unfair." To children, human rights simply mean that everyone deserves to have a "fair" life, with food, housing, education, etc. Children are extremely empathetic and desire to help people. HRE can allow them to carry this empathy from a classroom level to a global level. Teaching our children these values is the first step towards creating a global culture of human rights in the future.

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