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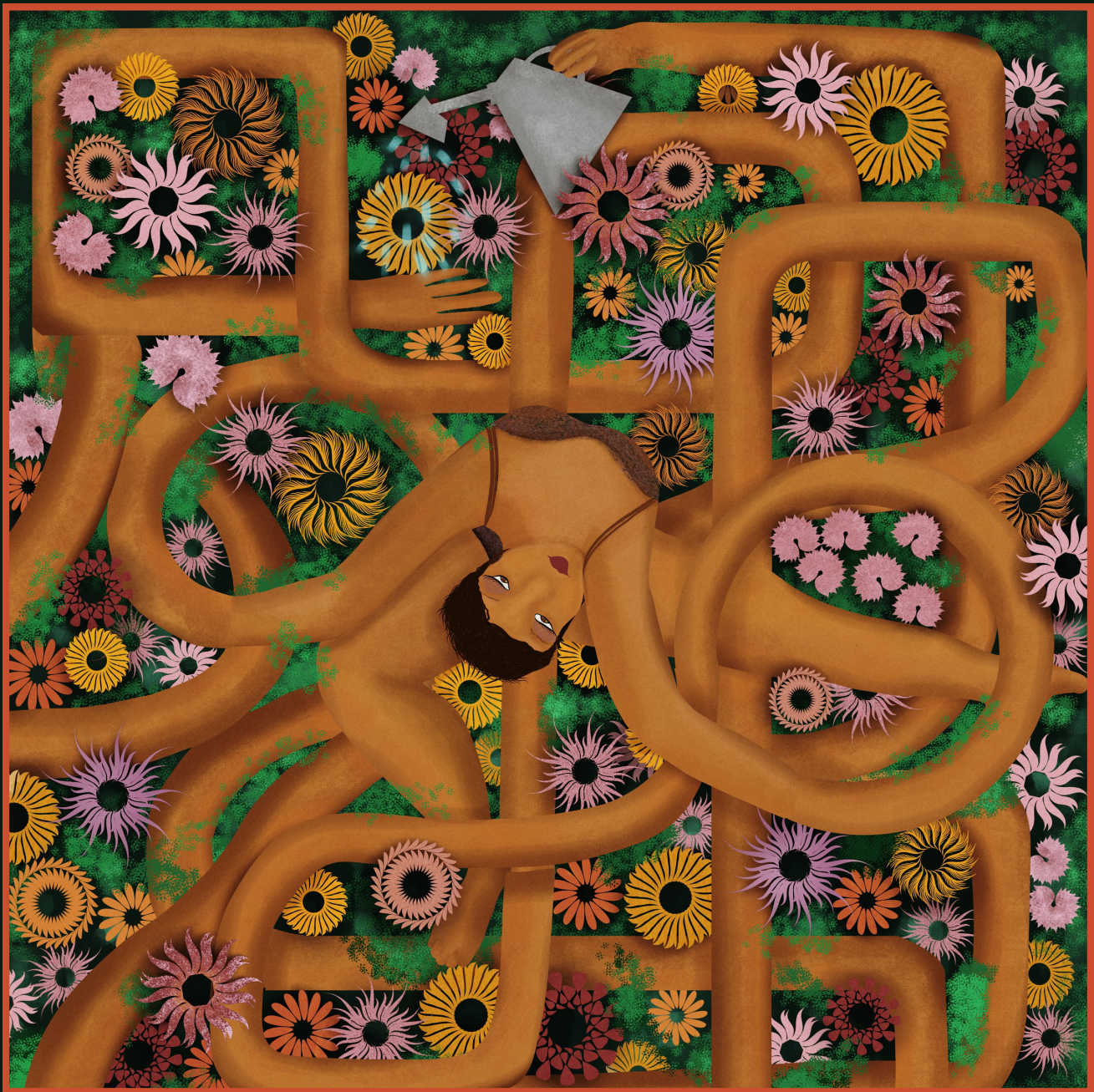
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Mapping Our Dreams and Rooting our Futures: Possibility Trees as Essential Pedagogy and Praxis in Peace, Social Justice, and Human Rights Education

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Abstract

In this article, we explore a pedagogical and conceptual tool we have refined and developed for the fields of peace, social justice, and human rights education: "the possibility tree." Initially introduced in our 2021 book, we explore this tool in more depth in this article to show how such pedagogical and conceptual processes are key components of peace and human rights education praxis with greater implications for both research and teaching. Our aim is to provide an applied praxis-oriented framework for educators, practitioners, researchers, and theorists that are concerned with larger issues of peace, justice, and human rights. While we do not delve into the distinct theoretical concepts and genealogies (and their intersections) of peace and human rights education in this article, we use this opportunity to expand upon the importance of pedagogical and conceptual practices and their applicability, as these integral processes have ultimately remained underexplored in scholarship. To illustrate the potential, we also discuss how the concept of the "possibility tree" has been used by scholars and practitioners since the book's publication in 2021. We posit that tools such as the possibility tree are necessary interventions, especially as pedagogies and practices of peace and human rights education are often sidelined in broader discussions that privilege theoretical framings over implications for pedagogy and praxis .

Keywords: peace education, human rights education, social justice, critical pedagogy, praxis

Introduction

Over the past five decades, peace education and human rights education have moved out of the margins and have emerged distinctly and separately as global fields of scholarship and practice. While it was quite common for these formerly obscure fields to be somewhat peripheral to other more mainstream forms of education or scholarship (to the extent that some people have never heard of them), the terms peace and human rights education are no longer as unknown as they used to be. Promoted through multiple efforts, including through the United Nations (UN), civil society, grassroots educators, in preschool to grade 12 educational settings, and in higher education, both of these fields consider content, processes, and educational structures that seek to dismantle various forms of violence, as well as move towards broader cultures of peace, justice, and human rights. Both fields consider the *content* as well as the *processes* of education, and analyze the *structures* in which learning takes place in formal, non-formal, and informal educational settings (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021). Though these two fields have developed distinctly and separately, their growing

presence in movements, scholarship, and educational settings have often raised questions not only about what each is, but also about how they are distinct and similar.

In 2021, we, the authors of this article, published a book (which also launched a new book series on Peace and Human Rights Education with Bloomsbury Publishing) that transpired after over two decades worth of conversations between us and among our colleagues and students about the similarities and differences in the fields.[1] As both of us are scholars whose work and teaching engages these fields separately, but also bridges them, we decided that this introductory book could help untangle the core concepts that define both fields, unpacking their histories, conceptual foundations, models and practices, and scholarly production. Moreover, we also considered the overlap between them (and their relationship to social justice education) to produce fertile ground for new engagement across the fields. As a result, *Educating for Peace and Human Rights: An Introduction* (2021, Bloomsbury) was born. The book examines the nexus of these fields and provides a review of the scholarly research on the challenges and possibilities of implementing peace and human rights education in diverse global sites. While these fields are distinct with their own unique bodies of literature, genealogies, epistemologies, and practices, their intersections provide a bridge for those whose work rests at the nexus, and view it as a launching point for more robust critical engagement.

Although these theoretical distinctions and intersections are the crux of the manuscript, the book also introduces pedagogical possibilities that remain at the core of peace and human rights education. In this article, we discuss one of these options, "the possibility tree," a pedagogical and conceptual tool introduced in our 2021 book. We assert how it and similar tools are key components of peace, social justice, and human rights education praxis, with implications for both research and teaching. We conceive of the possibility tree as an *applied praxis-oriented framework* for educators,

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[1] Some of this article draws on our 2021 book *Educating for Peace and Human Rights: An Introduction* (www.bit.ly/Hantz-Bajaj), and we thank Bloomsbury Academic Publishing for permission to use sections of the book for this article.

practitioners, researchers, and theorists that are concerned with larger issues of peace, justice, and human rights. In particular, the possibility tree can be utilized (1) to make meaning of learning and envision possibilities for more just futures; (2) to complement Freire's "problem tree," a popular education tool described later in this article, in order to identify new avenues for community engaged praxis; and/or (3) to map new research directions. While we do not delve into the theoretical distinctions and convergences of peace, social justice, and human rights education in this article (see Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021, for that), we view this article as an opportunity to expand upon the applicability of conceptual and pedagogical tools like the 'possibility tree' that were introduced in the book. In the subsequent sections, we also discuss how the possibility tree has been utilized and purposed by other scholars and practitioners since the book's publication in 2021 in various ways. We posit that tools such as the possibility tree are necessary interventions, especially as pedagogies and practices of peace and human rights education are often sidelined in broader discussions that center their theoretical framings, yet rarely go beyond the abstract.

Pedagogies of Peace, Social Justice, and Human Rights

At the heart of much of the work of peace, social justice, and human rights education across contexts is both reflective and ongoing engagement and praxis, and the opportunities to imagine and work towards more just and sustainable futures. While we explore more deeply the theoretical foundations of these fields in the book, we note here that that work and pedagogy of the late Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire (1970) in particular—rooted in critical consciousness, dialogical relationships and practice, transformative agency, and problem-posing—is often a vehicle for the enactment of peace, social justice, and human rights education. While there are other theorists and practitioners that provide pragmatic guidance for these types of pedagogies (Reardon, 1995), we are inspired by Freirean approaches because of their explicit transformative liberatory potential. Though Freire noted that education has the potential to indoctrinate and perpetuate hegemony and the status quo, he was unequivocal in its possibilities to also liberate, stating,

"Education either functions as an instrument... to bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which [human beings]... discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Freire, 2000, p. 34). Moreover, Freire (1970; 2000) always maintained that this type of critical engagement for social change "... cannot be purely intellectual but must also involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must also include serious reflection: only then will it be praxis" (p. 65). Thus, the commitment to reflection and thinking insists upon and opens up space for praxis-oriented teaching, research, and practice; in turn, this continual reconsideration and type of pedagogy is fundamental in enacting peace, social justice, and human rights education (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016).

Freire's Problem Tree

While Freire (1970; 2000) employed several types of dynamic pedagogical tools in popular education (participatory research and action, culture circles, generative word mapping, etc.), one of the methods used for problem-posing was the "problem tree." The problem tree is a visual device that allows people to explore the root causes of a particular issue that affects their daily lives by mapping these causes in relation to quotidian experiences and larger systemic policies and practices. By making and visualizing the connections between one's lived experiences and structural framings, the idea is that people in communities can collectively analyze and come up with ways to transform their social worlds towards a more just and humane future. The problem tree has resonance with other heuristics developed by peace theorists such as Johan Galtung (1969) in his elaboration of the 'triangle of violence,' which offers an analytical tool for identifying forms of direct, structural and cultural violence in society. Freire's problem tree has been taken up by local actors in a variety of settings and this specific community engagement is critical to its enactment (see Hantzopoulos, 2015). In many ways, the process of creating a problem tree is one that not only invites local engagement, but also encourages *local* analyses and solutions to *local* problems, while simultaneously connecting them to larger structural and systemic issues others are also facing. Overall, the problem tree activity is

concerned with both the *process* and the *content*, and sees these two threads as intertwined, ongoing, and embedded in non-teleological continual reflection and dynamism.

The work of urban education and Indigenous studies scholar Eve Tuck (2009; 2012) with New York City (NYC) youth and other local stakeholders is an illustrative example of how the problem tree can be deployed in both conceptualizing and mapping issues, and, in this case, with their experiences with NYC public schools. The Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire (CREDD),[2] which Tuck documents in her work, was formed to conduct youth participatory action research on New York City public school policies and practices that produce school push-out (see www.evetuck.com). As part of their work, they undertook mapping a problem tree about how and why their school system wasn't working for them. In the reproducible tree they created, one can visually see how the roots, trunks, branches, and leaves, all give a full generative picture of why NYC schools are not working from the perspective of students who are ostensibly recipients of that system.

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[2] See: http://faculty.newpaltz.edu/evetuck/index.php/credd/

Figure 1: CREDD Problem Tree[3]

To elaborate on the process of creating this tree, the researchers explain how first, this method begins by identifying the problem, and then they explain the visual, pedagogical, and conceptual process.

> In the research project we conducted with the Youth Researchers for a New Education System, we used the problem, 'The current school system isn't working.' The leaves then describe the day-to-day occurrences of the problem, which are the symptoms of the problem. Examples of the leaves might include *my teacher told me not to come to class if I was going to be late, we have to share textbooks,* and *I have never met with my guidance counselor.* Next as a whole group we draw on patterns in the leaves to answer the question, "What feeds the leaves?" in order to start mapping the trunk. The trunk

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[3] The tree was downloaded and reproduced from the following website with attribution to Youth Researchers for a New Education System (YRNES): http://www.evetuck.com/problem-tree

represents the attitudes or beliefs that keep the symptoms in play. Examples of ripples of the trunk might include *there aren't enough seats for all of the students in my classes, resources are unfairly distributed,* and *the generally held fear of young people in the U.S.* We then ask the question, "What roots the trunk?" in order to map the roots of the problem. The roots are the systemic and structural sources of the trunk ripples and the leaves. The roots might include *capitalism* and *hierarchical power systems of domination.* (http://www.evetuck.com/problem-tree)

As researchers, the CREDD project adapted this method to not only conceptually map systemic issues in NYC public schools, but also used this as an approach to "collaboratively generate research questions, as part of our participatory design of research projects, as a tool of data collection in focus groups, and as a tool to facilitate collective analysis of myriad data" (www.evetuck.com/problem-tree). Problem trees are therefore not only simply utilized to describe problems; they also function as community-led dialogues or conversations, and can be utilized as a springboard to generate critical consciousness and inspire new ways of imagining more just and inclusive spaces. By focusing on how one's lived experiences intersect and are shaped by larger systemic issues, they can be used as a point of departure to consider contextualized approaches that move towards dismantling oppressive structures and creating new ways of being in the world. In this sense, problem trees hold potential as both a pedagogical *and* conceptual tool with implications for teaching, learning, research, and practice.

The Possibility Tree

Inspired by the pedagogical process and visual product of problem trees (which helps map the structural roots and the quotidian realities that manifest from injustices that individuals and communities face), we decided in our book (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021) to flip this model to create the 'possibility tree'—a tool that both conceptualizes and delineates the ways in which peace and human rights education might be intertwined, and also one that provides a visual catalyst for imagining new worlds and possibilities. According to Reardon (1988), envisioning is vital to the pedagogy and practice

of peace education that is aimed at sustaining justice and human rights, as she explains that, "Thinking about how the world might be and envisioning a society characterized by justice are the essence of conceptualizing the conditions that comprise positive peace. If we are to educate for peace, both teachers and students need to have some notion of the transformed world we are educating for" (p. 25). In the following sections, we delineate how the possibility tree might be used as both a pedagogical tool for teaching, a conceptual tool for research, and sometimes both simultaneously as the distinctions are often blurred in both the process and product.

The Possibility Tree as a Pedagogical Tool for Teaching

The initial catalyst for creating a possibility tree was born in a classroom as a means to illustrate and model some of the fundamentally fluid and generative pedagogies undergirding critical approaches to peace, social justice, and human rights education. In order to embody both the spirit and the heart of this process rather than just impose only our own understandings, in the introductory chapter of our book (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021), we included a possibility tree made with Maria's former undergraduate-level students after they took the course "Education for Peace, Justice, and Human Rights" at Vassar College. We share their work to both show how local meanings shape people's perceptions of peace, justice, and human rights, as well as model the dynamic process.

Reflecting a similar process as Tuck (2009), the students mapped out the roots, trunks, branches, and leaves to obtain a more thorough understanding of the fields and their relationships to each other by considering "What does a culture of peace, justice, and human rights look like?" This process took place during several meetings outside of class in the Fall of 2019 over the course of two months, and Maria (the instructor) only provided the prompts and questions. The group of undergraduate students—Kevin Arce, Natalie Bober, Grace Han, Alice Woo, and Adam Weil—took the process from there to flesh this out over time and met on their own without Maria. While they were all undergraduate students at Vassar at the time, and shared a lens that was certainly influenced by that context, they all also have

different lived experiences both on campus and off, rooted in their cultural, racialized, socio-economic, migration, sexual, religious, and gendered identities. They eventually came up with the visual below, with the help of another student, Stephen Han.

Figure 2: Envisioning a Culture of Peace, Justice, and Human Rights Possibility Tree

The mapping process revolved around a few questions and prompts. In order to articulate the "roots," the group was asked "What are the roots of a culture of peace, justice and human rights?" The group grappled with this over time, and ultimately expressed some of the foundational "core" of peace education and human rights education, but also some of the basic structures that they believed would encourage such a culture to flourish. As indicated in the tree, these roots included fundamental concepts to both fields like equity, planetary stewardship, global citizenship, positive peace, human rights, demilitarization, decolonization, and more. For the trunk, we utilized the question "What feeds the symptoms?" to articulate mechanisms and vehicles to promote and "feed" these foundational roots. As noted above, these

included education, the eradication of direct violence, the enactment of positive peace, people protesting for social change, and more. While the group did not name notions like critical consciousness, transformative agency, or even peace and human rights education (just education), their symptoms often implicitly relied on these processes through the ways they relate to the roots and the branches. In other words, there was an assumption of what education truly should be (to inherently embody these concepts) when looking at the tree as an interconnected (and not isolated) whole.

To articulate what would be listed in the branches, the group decided to build off the "nourishment" from the symptoms and describe how this might manifest in policy and practice; they included concepts like healthcare, redistribution of wealth, etc. The leaves then became the articulations of these concepts and more specifically, how these policies manifest in individuals' and communities' lived experiences. There is a range of possibilities expressed including voter rights, paid family leave, affordable housing, and more. Further, one can see how each branch/vehicle leads to the possible lived experience – the branches and subsequent leaves were color-coded in the original (reproduced in greyscale here) – to show how the branches nurture the leaves.

While this tree is partial and incomplete, is contextually-situated and bound, and certainly more could be added or defined (or even contested), it shows the pedagogy of peace and human rights education in action, both in process and through a 'work-in-progress' product (as it is something that can be remade and shifted over time). As well, the tree visually presents ways to view how these two fields might interlock foundationally—despite their distinct characteristics—which is the crux of the arguments developed in the book and also expanded upon in the next section with Figure 3 (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021). Moreover, for Figure 2, the possibility tree can also serve as a complement to Freire's problem tree to begin to map avenues for addressing the issues that plague our schools, communities, and societies. In this sense, while this example illustrates its potential as a pedagogical tool, it also may serve as a conceptual tool to map understandings of the shared intersections of the fields of peace education and human rights education.

The Possibility Tree as a Conceptual Tool for Research

As we were working on our book, and as suggested above, we were deeply influenced by the impact of the image of Maria's students' possibility tree and began to think how we might visually explain some of the conceptual arguments that we were articulating in the book. We decided that a visual heuristic in the form of a possibility tree might provide readers an opening to what we explore more deeply in the book through charting the holistic ecosystems of peace, social justice, and human rights education. As a result, we use the visual shown in Figure 3, titled Educating for Peace and Human Rights Possibility Tree (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021, p. 140), to illustrate the intersections and common principles of these fields after we discussed them separately in earlier chapters. We then offer a framework in that chapter for how educational visions can grow out of the common, shared soil of liberatory education projects, such as peace education and human rights education. Thus, we explain and bring this tree to the forefront in Chapter 5 of the book when we deeply discuss some of the intersections of the field and provide this visual to intersect the points, as seen in Figure 3.
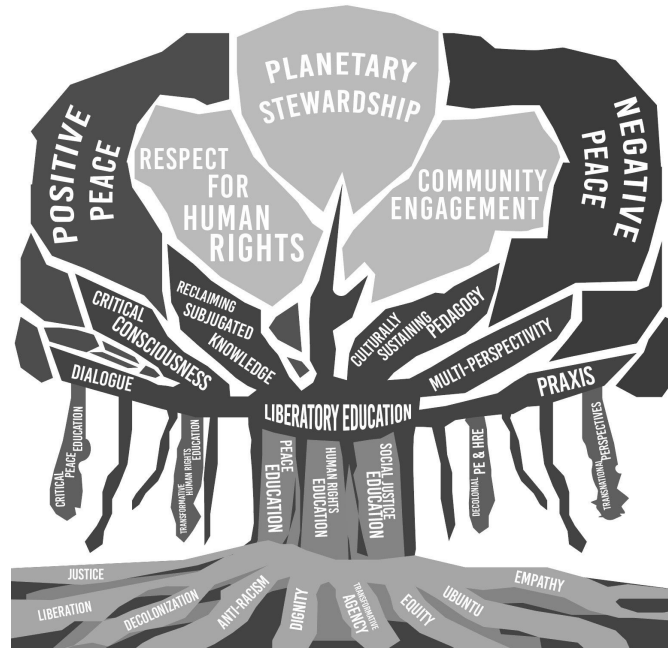

Figure 3: Educating for Peace and Human Rights Possibility Tree

As seen in the Figure of the possibility tree, the single tree takes the form of a banyan tree to illustrate some shared underpinnings of the fields and the fertile terrain of their conceptual intersections. The roots are the foundational concepts and include dignity and transformative agency as well as the broader concepts of justice, liberation, decolonization, antiracism, equity, Ubuntu,[4] empathy, and solidarity. The large trunk of liberatory education has the fields of peace education, human rights education, and social justice closely wrapped around it, with many overlaps and intersections among these fields. Despite their key differences, peace education, social justice education, and human rights education—in their more critical, transformative, and engaged forms—coalesce around the goal of honoring the inherent dignity of learners and fostering within students transformative agency, defined as the ability to act in the face of structural constraints to advance individual and collective goals related to positive social change (Bajaj, 2009; Bajaj, 2018; Bourdieu in Reay, 2004; Hantzopoulos, 2016; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).[5]

We have conceptualized the branches as the ways learning takes place in these interrelated fields and include approaches such as dialogue, praxis, critical consciousness, culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017), reclaiming subjugated knowledges, and multiperspectivity. The leaves and

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[4] The concept of *ubuntu*, a Nguni Bantu word meaning "humanity," informed a collectivist philosophy known as ubuntuism propagated by decolonial thinkers throughout parts of Southern sub-Saharan Africa when nations like Zimbabwe and South Africa transitioned to majority rule. For instance, *ubuntu* informed the spirit of South Africa's post-apartheid national Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as defined by Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu to mean my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in [others]. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, "a person is a person through other people." I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share. A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good. (1999, pp. 34–5)

Peace education scholar Murithi argues that *ubuntu* offers a framework that emphasizes a shared humanity through "a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness" and promoting reconciliation, further elucidating the relevance of *ubuntu* for peace educators (2009, p. 227).

[5] The shared tenets of liberatory education, exemplified by peace education, human rights education, and social justice education, are as follows (1) Contextually Relevant Curricula/Pedagogy, (2) Recognition of Learners' Inherent Dignity, (3) Deep Analyses of Social Inequalities, (4) Fostering of Critical Consciousness, and (5) Cultivation of Transformative Agency (see Bajaj, 2018; Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021)

fruits represent the broad outcomes that the fields espouse, such as positive peace, negative peace, community engagement, respect for human rights, planetary stewardship, and global citizenship. One of the unique features of banyan trees is their capacity to drop down new roots (which over time, conjoin and coalesce with the primary trunk). We argue that these new dropdown roots are the renewals of the field, spurred by its global spread and engagement by new scholars, reviving and building upon firm foundations and traditions in the spirit of reflexivity and growth. A few new directions in the image include critical peace education, transformative human rights education, decolonial approaches to peace and human rights education, and transrational perspectives; however, there may be and are more, and we have intentionally left some of the roots (as well as branches and leaves) blank to consider other possibilities. While this is not a complete metaphor for all of the linkages and themes raised among the fields in the book, we imagined that this possibility tree – as a work-in-progress product - might spark conversations about how these visions are entangled.

Renewals and Extensions of the Possibility Tree

At one of our book launch events in 2021, we were fortunate to have activist, scholar, and peace educator Margo Okazawa-Rey—who also serves as part of the advisory board for our book series—respond to the book. While she spoke about many themes (liberation, "mainstreaming" peace and human rights, putting civil rights in conversation with human rights) that related to the book, she was struck by both the possibility and problem tree metaphors, suggesting ways to push the metaphors further as we continue to think about addressing root causes of violence and imaginaries for more just sustainable futures. She offered:

> I am thinking about the tree metaphor. I love the tree of possibilities as well as the problem tree. It's interesting that now we are moving toward the tree of possibilities and not just staying with the tree of problems. Looking at both the problem tree and the possibility tree, I wonder about what kind of soil each tree is growing in? About the tree of possibility, what kind of soil must it, or its seed, be planted in

to ensure it thrives? What are the nourishing elements of that soil? What kinds of trees of possibilities must be planted and grown to ensure the survival of the planet and all its inhabitants? Perhaps equally important, what are the ways we can take the problems from the problem tree and compost them so that compost could and will enrich the soil in which it is growing to produce healthy "fruits" and "nuts," to give the tree a chance to become healthy and fruit-bearing? Could that same compost be added to, or even constitute the soil mixture to plant and grow amazing new trees, more beautiful and generative than ever before?

I've been thinking about composting because, in my experiences as a teacher and activist, our main work is analyzing problems, then throwing away the problems, or unlearning something, like racism, or undoing something like various kinds of oppressions. I'm not sure unlearning and undoing are even possible. How can we ever unlearn how to ride a bicycle? How can we undo harm that has been inflicted? Are there ways to take all the bad stuff that's with us, and somehow compost it? To think about the essences of some of those terrible things as "compostable" that provide us possibilities of transformation—which is what composting is. I wonder if we can use that metaphor to think deeply and creatively about not just getting rid of stuff, like anti-racism and anti- any form of oppression, but having a generative way to think about what to do with the problems growing on the problem tree—the politics and methodologies of possibilities and transformation. (Book Launch Zoom Event, October 9, 2021)[6]

In this powerful passage, Okazawa-Rey discusses how the possibility tree can be further used to not just think about what comprises the roots, trunks, branches, and leaves, but also what is in and nourishes the actual soil on which the tree is planted. Moreover, she suggests the problem tree and its problems might be integral to this process of creating a possibility tree. She implores us to think about ways of not just discarding the "bad stuff," but actually composting these branches and leaves and roots because, in reality, these things would need to be transformed, not simply tossed, even if

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[6] The October 9, 2021 book launch event recording can be accessed on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZGRR2JRjqQ

radically altered and uprooted. As educators and researchers, this conversation sparks even more possibilities for mapping and envisioning. How might we not just consider the soil rooting the trees, but also the air quality, the light, and the water needed to nurture the tree and allow it to thrive (or conversely decay)? What new plants or grass can also sprout up in a more peaceful and just ecosystem? Or which roses, thorns, and buds manage to break through despite the odds and rise through the concrete (Shakur, 1989)?

Since the publication of the book and its launch, many people have been inspired by and used the possibility tree both as a conceptual tool for their research or as a pedagogical tool in their classrooms, and sometimes both simultaneously (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021). Below, we share some of the concrete examples to both show how people have applied this in their own practice and also illustrate how they have made it their own.

jamal epperson is a doctoral candidate in International and Multicultural Education at the University of San Francisco as well as a higher education professional. In the Group Leadership course that jamal teaches at Loyola Marymount University, they have had students create possibility trees to represent their social change models and approaches. In that class, jamal offers the following guidance to students:

> Please use the following prompts to help guide your illustration/development of the Social Change Possibility Tree. As you create the tree, you might find it helpful to consider the following questions, with the trunk of the tree representing Social Change.
>
> - *Roots:* What exists in the soil where we're planted? What historical events/life situations/external factors shaped our society?
>
> - *Trunk:* What is at the core of our lives/what empowers us to work towards social change within?
>
> - *Branches:* What theories, concepts, and practices grow from our goals and social change?
>
> - *Leaves and fruit:* What are some of the outcomes of social change in the work we do?
>
> - *New roots:* What new directions might praxis lead us towards?

- *Soil:* What kind of soil does this tree thrive in? What kinds of compost can help to nurture its growth? (*From Dr. Okazawa-Rey's comments from October 2021*: 'How do we compost the problems to enrich the soil of possibility—so that we are not just eradicating problems, but generating new possibilities?') (personal communication, February 7, 2024)

jamal reflects on students' responses to their introduction and extension of the possibility tree pedagogical tool in their class:

> People have lowkey loved this activity with the tree. I think it does a really great job tying in the different levels of even the ecological systems theory to see how small roots can begin to flourish in new trees that create change. Love is already incorporated throughout each level as well and having the different sections with the roots being the foundational concepts, the large trunk of liberatory education, etc. provides a really great foundation to apply this tree to other fields like the Social Change Model we use for my class and more. ... I've also adapted some of the pieces we used from another course at the University of San Francisco with Dr. Emma Fuentes (on theoretical foundations of education) where she tied [Hantzopoulos & Bajaj's] tree to abolition. (personal communication, February 7, 2024)

While using the possibility tree in their work in higher education, jamal has also utilized the possibility tree framing for their dissertation research on restorative justice (RJ) in higher education. jamal states, "[I plan to use] it within my dissertation where love is intertwined throughout the tree to understand restorative and transformative justice in higher education" (personal communication, February 7, 2024). In a qualifying presentation for the department, jamal presented the research questions for their dissertation in a way that drew on the possibility tree to develop three levels of inquiry for their dissertation study (see Figure 4) to examine restorative justice through its praxis dimensions and the experiences of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) RJ practitioners in higher education.
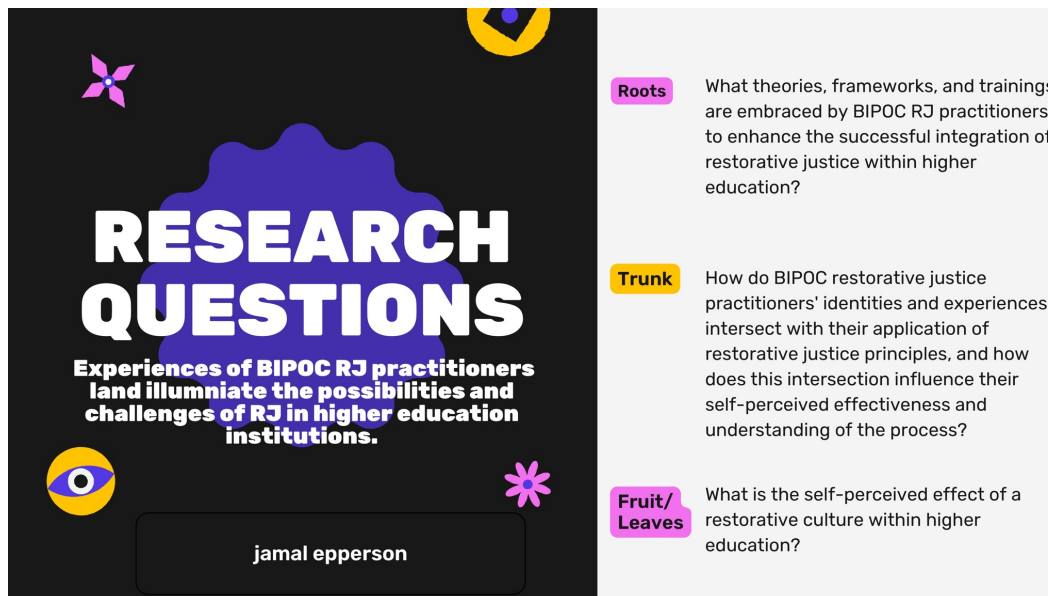
Figure 4: jamal epperson's Dissertation Research Questions and Framing

Nomisha Kurian, a researcher at the University of Cambridge, also has utilized the possibility tree both for framing new interdisciplinary research she has undertaken as well as in her higher education teaching. She shared the following:

> The biggest practical application I can name right now is that I'm using [the possibility tree] to talk about building more links between the world of artificial intelligence (AI)—the very technocratic technology-driven, engineering-dominated and scientific, paradigm-dominated world—and the world of children's rights and the work of educators, social workers, community workers and child psychologists. The image of the possibility tree is helping me in many different ways.

> First, it's putting forward this idea of two disciplines talking to each other. In the book, it's this beautiful link between peace education and human rights education and I'm trying to build on that and make a similar link between AI development and education, child rights, child well-being. It's helping me present a powerful ecological metaphor for the need to bring these two fields together.

Second, this image of roots and branches intertwining, there's a suggestion there of not just bringing two fields into conversation, but really thinking, do we actually have shared concerns? Are there maybe more shared histories than we think? Is there some unexpected common ground? And what happens if we try to grow together? It offers an opportunity to play around with possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration and actually being able to talk about practical possibilities for two or more fields growing together.

Third, it also provides a vocabulary to talk about the stakeholders in that ecosystem because if we're building on the metaphor completely, then we also have this chance to name everybody who's in the ecosystem around this possibility tree. In my case, it's everyone from robotics engineers, to software developers, to teachers, to community workers, to families, and to, of course, children. So overall, it works very well as a holistic metaphor. (personal communication, February 12, 2024)

In our conversation, Nomisha discussed how mapping the intersections of these two seemingly-disparate fields for her research has offered new ways of thinking for her and her collaborators.

Nomisha also discussed her teaching at the University of Cambridge and her integration of the possibility tree in a course she has designed on the ethics of AI and critical AI literacies. She used the possibility tree by placing an image of the tree from the book (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021) on the board, with a modified question, "what does an ethical AI future look like?" Nomisha reflected that the possibility tree "is such a fun tool to use in a classroom because it helps provide a hopeful atmosphere" and that she was able to use the tree as a "jumping off point to get students brainstorming about what ethical AI might look like" (personal communication, February 12, 2024). Nomisha found that students exercised their own "agency to develop more branches of the possibility tree," seeing "themselves as change agents" (personal communication, February 12, 2024). She reported that students had a stimulating discussion about questions and ethical dilemmas such as "Do we really need AI?" "Is it the best replacement for human-to-human interaction?" and "What are some positive or socially just uses of AI?" In reflecting

on her engagement with the possibility tree in both her research and teaching praxis, Nomisha shared that:

> Right now, with some of the most pressing global challenges, from poverty to the climate crisis to violence, there is a great need for research and knowledge to be deeply interdisciplinary. We simply can't afford to be in silos. I would love to see a copy of the possibility tree in every department at the university and every think tank, or anything at all that's been used to prompt people's thinking. (personal communication, February 12, 2024)

jamal and Nomisha's extension and application of the possibility tree framework in their teaching as well as research demonstrates how creative extensions of the heuristic are exemplifying what we have called for in terms of the continual renewals of the field – where ideas are built upon, refined, extended and made more relevant in the contexts in which individuals in the field are engaged in praxis.

At Boston College, two instructors of courses in the graduate school of education, Kiruba Murugaiah and Aaron Coleman, have integrated the problem tree and possibility tree with their students. Kiruba noted the following:

> In Spring 2023, I designed and taught an undergraduate course, *Reimagining School and Society*, for the Department of Formative Education at Boston College's Lynch School of Education. The course interrogates American schooling's formal and hidden curriculum of tacit norms, behaviors and values reflecting the dominant cultural ethos. We also think about ways to foster children and youth's learning and education to address the urgent need for justice and love for nature and humanity in contemporary U.S. schooling by drawing on cross-cultural wisdom. Students read and discussed original texts (e.g., Horace Mann's *12th report*, W.E.B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk*, Carter G. Woodson's *Miseducation of the Negro*, John Dewey's *School and Social Progress*, etc.) to develop their philosophical thinking on what it means to be an educated person. They also read empirical studies and critical essays from contemporary scholars like bell

hooks, Lisa Delpit, David Labaree, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Kevin Kumashiro, and others.

Facilitating in-class discussions around these texts was a daunting task. I kept asking myself, what is the best way to both capture the higher level ideas without losing sight of nuance over the course of the semester, and to do so in a collaborative manner. Throughout the semester, we problematized different manifestations of inequity and injustice in children's education and schooling. I used the problem tree to help students distinguish between root causes, what feeds a system of oppression, and how that manifests in the classroom and schools. It helped to make sense of a problem that at first seemed impossible to grapple with.

Towards the end of the semester, we shifted gears to "reimagining" by rooting ourselves in cross-cultural wisdom. For this, the possibility tree was useful in our visioning. During one of the classes, students collaboratively brainstormed on the question "How, if at all, can bell hooks' ethics of love, African conceptions of ubuntu, Indigenous knowledge, or other ideas inform an education toward a culture of peace?" Students generated and shared a plethora of ideas connecting these concepts to their own settings by thinking about curriculum, pedagogy, classroom practices, discipline, and school-community relationships. (personal communication, February 8, 2024)

Both Kiruba and Aaron discussed how the visual of the trees inspired discussion and application among students of different backgrounds from the U.S. as well as among international students who began to consider structural dimensions of schooling in their home contexts.

In the Spring of 2022, Maria also worked with another group of her students (Melanie Hidalgo, Arlene Chen, Samantha Cavagnolo, Jordan Shamoun, Lily Thompson, Cyan Jackson, Kevin McAuliffe, Valerie Munoz Gonzalez, and Felicity Rakochy) to partner with a local teacher, Shanna Andrawis, in her high school Economics class. Together, the group developed a six-week course on Human Rights, Migration, and the Economy for 12th

graders. While the goals of the unit were multifold,[7] the intent was to create a curriculum that allowed students to both make meaning of their own experiences, connect these to the distinct experiences of others, and use these as *catalysts for social change and action.* In their opening lesson, they used possibility trees to have the high school students think about what tangible items are needed to both live in dignity and justice and meet basic human needs (manifested in the leaves, fruits and flowers of the trees) while grounding the systems needed for these items in roots. This was a quick activity that opened up the class to thinking about "human rights" in general, even before introducing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In this case, it was used more as a warm-up, rather than synthesis of information, but definitely opened the way for more robust thinking.

Inspired by this activity, Shanna Andrawis, the teacher, decided to extend the possibility tree metaphor to another class, her 10th grade global history class, to open up a unit on human rights and specifically the UDHR. In this case, she augmented the process as a "recap" tool to think about what they had already studied that year, so that they could apply that knowledge to their understanding of human rights. For example, she gave her students three prompts:

- *Leaves, fruits, flowers: What rights do people need in order to live in dignity and justice? YOU DECIDE!*
- *Roots: What historical events or documents have you studied this year that have helped to bring about those rights? Prior Knowledge!*
- *Trunk: What people have we studied this year who have helped make those rights possible? Prior Knowledge!*

In this case, the tool wasn't just used for envisioning, but also for synthesizing what they had previously learned and applying it to the process to understand what human rights are more deeply. The students then worked in groups on creating their trees. However, Shanna added one more element to the process that she implemented a few days later. After studying the Rwandan genocide, she asked students to go back to their human rights

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trees, and to create "dead leaves" to describe the rights that were violated. The process is explained below:

- **Ask:** In your small groups, create a "dead leaf" for your human rights tree _describing_ **ONE** _human rights violation experienced during the Rwandan genocide._

- Sentence starter, "During the Rwandan Genocide, the right to _____ was violated."

  - _Write the right, not just the Article #_

  - _Explain how the human right was violated_

  - _Explain how the violation affected people_

By revisiting the tree that they made earlier, Shanna used this process to apply what they had just learned to something that they previously learned. In a way, she was able to engage them in a cyclical process of praxis and meaning-making, and inspire critical reflection on deeper issues about rights being violated and unmet. She was able to do this in an age-appropriate way for her 10th graders.

Concluding Thoughts

As we have seen from these examples, there are myriad ways to apply the possibility tree that we have developed (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021) to both learning, research and praxis. The prompts around cultures of peace, justice, and human rights that Maria's students utilized (see Figure 2) could be engaged or modified based on context. As we see in Poughkeepsie High School, it can be applied to understand what has been studied as well. Moreover, this type of pairing with something akin to the problem tree doesn't have to involve two trees, as we have seen in Shanna Andrawis' idea to add "dead leaves" or Margo Okazawa-Rey's call to compost and regenerate the problems into the soil upon which possibilities might grow and expand. Or similar to the way that jamal epperson has utilized the heuristic as a frame

for their dissertation, the possibility tree could engender new forms of thinking about issues, topics, or phenomena.

The problem tree activity, conceptualized by Freire as a means to understand the root causes of forms of violence and oppression, can be paired well with the possibility tree activity, where, once problems are identified and discussed, new practices and ways of being can be imagined and brought into focus to spur necessary action. In this way, the possibility tree can be a tool for "freedom dreaming" (Kelley, 2002; Love, 2023) and visioning beyond the present to preferred futures. This aligns with scholarship in the field of peace education that calls for "futures education" with scholars, such as David Hicks, stating that "A futures perspective is crucial to effective teaching and learning in peace education. By enabling learners to think more critically and creatively about the forces that create probable and preferable futures, they are able to engage in more purposeful and focused action for change" (Hicks, 2008, p. 132).

As a futures-oriented conceptual and pedagogical tool, we hope that the possibility tree inspires students, groups and communities to craft their own trees, tailored to their own realities, hopes, and visions. Such efforts can help "pluriversalize human rights education and peace education" in order to "recognize and include forms of knowledge that have been subjugated by modernity and coloniality... and to advance epistemic justice" (Zembylas, 2020, p. 23). With many trees of possibility sprouting across context, they can offer needed oxygen to fuel our efforts, movements, and imaginations towards envisioning greater peace and justice in our schools, communities, and across the world.

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A Human Rights Education Analysis of the 'Know Your Rights Camp'

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Abstract

This article analyzes the Know Your Rights Camp's "Speaking Out Against the Violence of Policing and Oppression: A Political Education Curriculum" from the campaign founded by Colin Kaepernick. The article evaluates the curriculum with a multifaceted perspective, specifically, the approach to inform learners about their foundational rights and lessons to politicize and empower them for social change through human rights education. A significant portion of this assessment is dedicated to examining the curriculum's inclusivity, ensuring the educational content is accessible. The analysis explores the curriculum's role in promoting learner agency and resistance, crucial for empowering students to navigate and challenge systemic inequities. This article contributes to the broader discourse on the importance of politically engaged educational practices, human rights awareness, and empowering Black and Brown learners in the fight against systemic oppression.

Keywords: human rights education, Colin Kaepernick, curriculum, political education, Black liberation

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Colin Kaepernick's activism transcends his identity as a professional American football player; he has utilized his visibility to highlight systemic injustices faced by Black and Brown communities. Kaepernick's decision to kneel during the national anthem in 2016 to protest racial injustice in the United States was calculated, using his platform to voice the struggles of marginalized groups. This choice reflected a long-standing tradition among athletes of African ancestry who have utilized their prominence to fight for justice—echoing the legacies of Muhammad Ali, Jesse Owens, and Eroseanna "Rose" Robinson, among others. His protest, while in alignment with a rich history of athletic activism, was not without personal cost. His stand was detrimental to his professional career, leading to what many perceive as being blackballed by the National Football League (NFL) because he was never signed again by a team after 2017. Nonetheless, Kaepernick's commitment to social justice has remained steadfast.

Following his protest, Kaepernick continues to dedicate himself to furthering the cause for which he kneeled. Since 2016, he has founded and funded three organizations: The Know Your Rights Camp (KYRC), Ra Vision Media, and Kaepernick Publishing. Through these ventures, he aims to empower Black and Brown communities by focusing on storytelling, systems change, and political education, thus channeling his efforts into creating sustainable impacts within these communities (Kaepernick, 2019). His actions during the pre-game ceremonies of the NFL were a catalyst for a larger conversation about racial inequality and police brutality in the United States. Initially, Kaepernick's protest during the national anthem did not attract widespread attention. However, once a photograph capturing his silent demonstration went viral, Kaepernick articulated the intention behind his actions, confirming that it was a deliberate protest against racial oppression and police violence (Boykoff & Carrington, 2019).

The Know Your Rights Camp, founded by Colin Kaepernick, emerged as a direct response to the tragic killings of Black people by law enforcement. Initially, the camp's primary purpose was to educate Black and Brown youth ages 12-18 on survival tactics, specifically focusing on how to navigate the racially hostile and unjust environment of the United States. According to

Kaepernick (2019), the camp's focus has since evolved from merely surviving to empowering youth to thrive, stating that doing otherwise is injustice. It strives to support young individuals by providing them with essential resources, access, and knowledge to enhance their future. This focus is emphasized in the camp's 10-point system, as listed below. These principles, framed as affirmations, form the core of the camp's philosophy and approach to empowerment.

KYRC is pillared around 10 fundamental human rights, in homage to the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Platform and Program. According to Kaepernick, the principles represent the types of affirmations and protections that ought to be enjoyed by Black people globally:

You have the right to be Free

You have the right to be Healthy

You have the right to be Brilliant

You have the right to be Safe

You have the right to be Loved

You have the right to be Courageous

You have the right to be Alive

You have the right to be Trusted

You have the right to be Educated

You have the right to Know Your Rights
(Bocicault et al., 2019, para. 7).

The KYRC, backed by the Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF) as its fiscal sponsor, is committed to educating Black and Brown communities about their paths to liberation and well-being. As highlighted on its website, a key part of the camp's mission is the preparation of the next generation of activists (Entertainment Industry Foundation, 2024). It seeks to equip them with the tools and knowledge necessary to challenge and overcome systemic oppression. Since the camp's inception it has had a profound impact, engaging over 1400 individuals and organizing eleven camps in seven different

cities to date. At the time of this writing, the most recent of these camps was held in Houston, Texas in December 2023.

The KYRC team has also developed an original curriculum: *Speaking Out Against the Violence of Policing and Oppression*. This curriculum serves as a supportive educational tool and is designed to prepare future generations of activists by teaching them the foundations of abolition activism, thereby continuing the camp's efforts of empowerment and education against systemic injustices.

In this article, I review and analyze the KYRC curriculum, *SpeakingOut Against the Violence of Policing and Systemic Oppression,*[1] which details the approaches and methodologies for the camp, dedicated to advancing the liberation and well-being of Black andBrown communities through a focused approach on education, self-empowerment, and mobilization. In the sections that follow, this article explores the historical context of Black liberation and its intersection with human rights and offers a critical examination of the curriculum's content and structure.

Human Rights Education and Black Liberation

The historical context of Black liberation is deeply intertwined with the struggle for human rights, marked by a persistent fight against the inferior status historically ascribed to people of African ancestry. This subjugation, rooted in a long history of racism and discrimination, has manifested in numerous dehumanizing practices. Chattel slavery, a cruel system where African people were treated as property, was just one of the many forms of oppression. This was accompanied by other egregious violations, such as sexual violence used as a tool of control and domination, lynching as a means of instilling fear and maintaining racial hierarchy, and economic exploitation. According to Hines, Hines, and Harrold (2019), formerly enslaved Africans did very little to trigger white violence, but whites were especially angered when Blacks began demanding political rights, which was met with violence.

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[1] For further information, please refer to the Know Your Rights Camp's curriculum, *Speaking Out Against the Violence of Policing and Oppression*, available at https://www.knowyourrightscamp.org/political-education-curriculum.

These practices not only denied basic human rights but also enforced a state of second-class citizenship, leading to systemic disparities in healthcare, education, employment, and housing. The cumulative effect of these injustices has necessitated a continuous struggle for Black liberation as a pathway to achieving human rights.

Historical efforts toward Black liberation have been in response to white terror, hostility, structural racism, state violence, and exploitation. As Sonebeyatta and Brooks (1971) note, various ideologies and movements have sought to change the circumstances of Black people in America. These include Garveyism[2] in the 1910s onward, the Civil Rights Movement beginning in the 1950s, The Nation of Islam beginning in the 1930s, and The Black Panther Party's (beginning in the 1960s) initiatives for community control of inner cities (Sonebeyatta & Brooks, 1971). These movements, each in their own way, have addressed the legacy of enslavement and ongoing challenges to improving the quality of life for people of African ancestry. This struggle against oppression has been continuous, transcending the fight for civil rights to encompass a broader struggle for societal transformation and racial equality.

The relationship between efforts towards Black liberation and human rights is fundamental. Black leaders and advocates have long fought to reframe the Black struggle as a fight for civil and human rights. Civil rights and Black Panther leader Stokely Carmichael emphasized the need to reclaim Black history and identity from the oppressive narratives of white supremacy (Carmichael, 1966). Similarly, scholar and public intellectual C.L.R. James highlighted the global impact of racial prejudice, not just as an issue for African Americans but as a problem poisoning the entire U.S. civilization (James, 1967). As Grant and Gibson (2013) suggest, the language of human rights has been a powerful tool in challenging U.S. inequities and injustices

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[2] Garveyism, within the Afrocentric context, views the liberation struggle in terms of African nationalism versus European nationalism. Garveyism seeks the total liberation of Africans and all African peoples; unity, stability, a Pan African nationalist mental commonality; a sense of self, community; African nationhood, self-determination, self-reliance and a common destiny; the creation of Pan African nationalist solidarity and confraternity among all African peoples; political, economic and psychocultural sovereignty for all African peoples; and cooperatism (UCLA African Studies Center, n.d.).

domestically and internationally. Malcolm X's distinction between civil rights and human rights further stressed this point as he encouraged Black people to do two things: to see and include their humanity with the larger global population and to extend their grievances beyond the U.S. to leverage the government of the United Nations through the activation of a human rights framework (Malcolm X, 1965, as cited in National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox). This broader framing has continued to influence contemporary movements, with the legacy of groups like the Black Panther Party informing current grassroots efforts such as the KYRC (Bajaj, Katz, & Jones, 2021).

Methods & Researcher Positionality

As an educator of African ancestry with extensive experience in Ethnic Studies and teaching in various educational settings from K-12 to college, my lived experience is a valuable tool in this analysis. While recognizing the importance of rigor and potential biases, my lived experience and proximity to the issues explored in the curriculum should be perceived as an asset rather than a detriment. In line with participatory action research[3] or collaborative community-based research,[4] my engagement with the subject matter provides an insider perspective that can reveal nuanced understandings often overlooked by detached research methods (Calderón et al., 2018; Maxwell, 2005). In analyzing the KYRC curriculum, my approach and the tools I employ are influenced by my understanding of the human rights education (HRE) framework and its application within the context of education. My methodology acknowledges the importance of examining human rights discourse critically, as suggested by Russell, Sirota, and Ahmed (2019).

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[3] Participatory action research (PAR) is a research approach that values experiential knowledge for addressing problems caused by harmful social systems.

[4] Community-based participatory research emphasizes collaborating with the community as co-researchers in the research process.

Understanding the perceived challenges and critiques of human rights education[5] is critical towards providing a lens through which the curriculum can be evaluated. HRE is touted as a means to promote human rights and address broader societal concerns (Andreopoulos & Claude, 1997), yet, as noted by Tibbitts and Katz (2018), while HRE can be a tool for emancipation, it is also susceptible to appropriation by authoritarian regimes seeking to entrench state power. This duality necessitates a nuanced analysis that considers how the curriculum navigates these potential pitfalls while striving to empower students.

My analysis of the KYRC curriculum is deeply rooted in the principles of human rights education, designed to empower individuals at the grassroots level (Meintjes, 1997). This type of education is essential for developing a universal culture of human rights, as defined by the United Nations (1998), focusing on the dissemination of knowledge, the development of skills, and the shaping of attitudes necessary for:

(a) reinforcing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(b) fostering the full development of the human personality and a sense of its dignity;

(c) enhancing understanding, tolerance, gender equality, and friendship among diverse groups;

(d) enabling active participation in a free, democratic society underpinned by the rule of law;

(e) contributing to the creation and preservation of peace;

(f) advancing people-focused sustainable development and social justice. (UN, 1998).

I incorporate a comprehensive understanding of these human rights frameworks in my scholarly and personal methodology for examining the KYRC curriculum. I am mindful of potential biases and concentrate on assessing the curriculum's effectiveness in promoting human rights, addressing societal issues, and fostering holistic development among learners. This

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[5] Human rights education is a "deliberate, participatory practice aimed at empowering individuals, groups, and communities through fostering knowledge, skills, and attitudes consistent with internationally recognized principles" (definition from Amnesty International, as cited in Bajaj, 2011).

approach reflects a commitment to engaged, rigorous research that values insider knowledge as a critical analysis component.

My passion for creating transformational learning experiences, deeply rooted in racial justice, drives my approach to evaluating and assessing educational curricula like the KYRC. With nearly two decades of experience in teaching and developing curricula across various academic disciplines including Africana and Black Studies, Ethnic Studies, History, Psychology, and Sociology, I've humbly collaborated and supported learners of the Black and Brown community. This experience gained across high schools, colleges, universities, and carceral spaces in the Bay Area equips me with a multifaceted perspective essential for athorough and informed assessment of such curricula.

The Know Your Rights Camp

Leveraging my multifaceted perspective, I assess the curriculum, focusing on several key aspects. First, I examine how the curriculum actively engages learners, particularly in fostering interactive and meaningful learning experiences. A critical part of this evaluation is understanding how the curriculum specifically addresses the learning needs of Black and Brown learners, ensuring it is inclusive and relevant to their social-cultural experiences. Additionally, I explore how the curriculum educates learners about their basic human rights, which is fundamental in HRE. Another important aspect of my assessment is determining how the curriculum promotes learner agency and resistance, enabling students to recognize and assert their identities, abilities, and voices. Finally, I assess the practices the curriculum introduces for learners to actively participate in activism while nurturing their wellness and protecting their humanity. These evaluation strategies aim to identify how the curriculum imparts knowledge and equips learners with practical skills, individually or collectively.

The KYRC Curriculum presents a transformative educational experience, spanning five days, each day with multiple fifty-minute daily activities; informed by the theoretical frameworks of human rights education and

critical race theory [6] this curriculum explores important socio-political themes such as identity and intersectionality, Black liberation, human rights, abolitionist perspectives, solidarity, community building, and restorative justice and healing. Black liberation refers to the socio-political movements and values aiming to secure freedom and racial equality for people of African ancestry, addressing systemic racism and its effects. Abolitionist perspectives advocate for the eradication of systems of oppression, such as slavery or the prison-industrial complex, identifying fundamental injustices, and advocating for radical change (Stovall, 2018). According to Delany (1853), Carmichael (1966), and Garvey (2009), it is imperative for people of African ancestry to employ political beliefs and practices to eradicate systemic oppression and engage in efforts to develop autonomous Black communities in the U.S., elsewhere in the African diaspora, or on the continent of Africa. Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw,[7] examines how various social and cultural categories, like race, gender, and class, interact on multiple levels to manifest in complex systems of discrimination and disadvantage. Meintjes (1997) suggested that human rights education is empowerment. Asante (2003) communicated the importance of African-centered thought while addressing the historical, social, and political experience of people of African ancestry, and Sonebeyatta and Brooks (1971) challenged people of African ancestry to leverage their collective power to fight oppression and their liberation; each center humanity and emphasis activism. These approaches, in addition to intersectionality, provide a nuanced lens to examine the curriculum while being thoughtful about the learners' experience.

The KYRC curriculum is structured around five key learning objectives:

1. Fostering critical reflection on personal identity and its influence on perceptions of oppression and racism.

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[6] The body of work by Critical Race Theory scholars Derrick Bell (1992), Richard Delgado (1999), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (2011) addresses the liberal notion of color blindness and argues that ignoring racial difference maintains and perpetuates the status quo with all its deeply institutionalized injustices to racial minorities.

[7] For more information about intersectionality please refer to this resource, https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf

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2. Deconstructing and reevaluating historical narratives to comprehensively understand race and racialization.
3. Envisioning and strategizing towards a prison-free society where abolition and justice prevail.
4. Identifying and enhancing individual roles in community accountability and organizing effective community campaigns.
5. Collaborating to facilitate restoration, repair, and healing within community spaces. (Osterndorf et al., 2021 p. 7)

This curriculum specifically seeks to educate learners from Black and Brown communities, deepening their understanding of human rights and empowering them toward liberation. In the following section, a description and analysis of the daily curriculum is provided.

Day 1: Identity and Intersectionality

The first day of the KYRC curriculum explores the complexities of identity and intersectionality—race, gender, sexuality, class, and more. The activities are designed to deepen learners' understanding of key concepts like power, oppression, privilege, and various domains of power, including structural, hegemonic, and interpersonal. Through group discussions, learners explore and provide examples of these concepts, gaining insight into how individual experiences perpetuate power structures. A significant focus is placed on recognizing the influence of language in shaping identities. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of respectful communication, particularly in linguistic violence[8] (Gay, 1998), thereby setting the groundwork for a deeper understanding of identity and intersectionality.

Moreover, the curriculum equips learners with the necessary tools and vocabulary to express their identities and experiences related to oppression. During the second learner activity, participants engage with Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, which invites them to reflect on their own

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[8] Linguistic violence refers to the use of language to harm, degrade, or devalue an individual or group. This can encompass a range of behaviors from slurs, insults, and hate speech to more subtle forms of language that perpetuate discrimination and social inequities. It is a concept that recognizes the power of words not just as tools of communication, but as instruments that can cause real psychological and social harm, contributing to the perpetuation of systemic oppression (Gay, 1998)

identities and how various forms of power intersect to influence the significance of those identities. In the subsequent third activity, the discussion evolves to incorporate Patricia Hill Collins's (1990) Matrix of Domination[9] (shown below), guiding learners to examine their identities further and lived experiences against the backdrop of a group's potential for experiencing domination, resistance, and privilege. It motivates students to identify and challenge systemic obstacles and empowers them to actively advocate for social change. Throughout the initial day, the curriculum offers practical lessons and resources that help develop a deep awareness of personal and social identities, intersectionality, and systemic oppression.

Figure 1:

"The Matrix of Domination" from the Know Your Rights Camp Curriculum (p. 16)

Day 2: Black Liberation and Human Rights Framework

The second day, the curriculum focuses on Black Liberation and the Human Rights Framework. Learners engage in reflective discussions about U.S. history, examining the narratives often marginalized in mainstream education. This portion of the curriculum is grounded in the teachings of influential figures like Paulo Freire,[10] Septima Poinsette Clark,[11] and James

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[9] For more information about the Matrix of Oppression, please view the link: http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/252.html.

[10] Paulo Freire was a transformative Brazilian educator and philosopher whose innovative educational theories have significantly impacted the pedagogy of developing and developed countries. His influential book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) is considered foundational in the field of critical pedagogy, emphasizing the role of education in fostering social justice and empowering the marginalized.

[11] Septima Clark was an educator and civil rights activist who championed racial equality through education and empowerment. Her work with the Citizenship School program helped many African

Baldwin.[12] It highlights the critical role of Black liberation movements in shaping human rights discourse, emphasizing that education has the dual potential to either uphold the status quo or to act as a powerful tool for liberation. An essay by Ronald Takaki (1993) serves as a basis for discussion, prompting learners to critique the 'master narrative' of the United States, which is rooted in Eurocentrism and whiteness. The day's activities include preparing a land acknowledgment, which recognizes the history of colonialism and stresses the importance of Indigenous humanity and rights. This day aims to broaden learners' understanding of history and its impact on present human rights issues.

Day 3: Abolitionist Imaginings

The third day, centered around 'abolitionist imaginings,' focuses on understanding the institutions of policing and the embedded history of anti-Black racism and racial capitalism, a term coined by Cedric Robinson (1983) and elaborated upon by scholars such as Melamed (2015) and Robin D.G. Kelley (2017) that asserts that "capitalism and racism … did not break with the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of racial capitalism dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism and genocide" (Kelley, 2017, para. 5). Learners read and discuss articles detailing the evolution of policing and the private, profit-seeking prison system. These discussions, in peer or small groups, help to contextualize these systems within broader societal frameworks. The curriculum encourages learners to envision a society free from oppressive systems, challenging them to think critically about the difference between reforming and abolishing these systems.

The curriculum is designed to stimulate critical thinking and personal reflection. An example of this is when learners are tasked with writing letters

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Americans gain the literacy necessary for voting at a time when discriminatory literacy tests prevented them from registering to vote.

[12] James Baldwin was a profound American writer and social critic who explored the intricacies of racial, sexual, and class distinctions in Western societies, particularly mid-20th-century North America. His works are celebrated for dissecting the complexities of identity and social pressures, and his notable contributions to literature include essays, novels, and plays that highlight critical themes of humanity and justice.

to their ancestors or future family members, exploring their perceptions of joy and resistance. This exercise links personal history and aspirations to the broader context of social justice and abolitionist movements. Such activities also embody what scholar Robin D.G. Kelley terms "freedom dreaming" beyond current oppressive systems (Kelley, 2003).

Day 4: Solidarity and Community Building

Day four emphasizes solidarity and community building. The curriculum encourages learners to dissect the meanings of solidarity and community, and to understand the importance of multiracial spaces in the movement for Black liberation. Discussions focus on the roles of various social groups, including white and non-Black people, in supporting this movement.

Activities for the day include recognizing various participatory roles in activism—actor, ally, accomplice, and co-conspirator—and understanding how to apply these roles effectively in real-world situations. Following an exercise where learners formulate and exchange their interpretations of these terms, they are guided to compare their definitions with those from Jonathan Osler (n.d.) While navigating through the site, students are encouraged to reflect on the provided definitions and to reflect the following:

- o What are your thoughts on these definitions?
- o Do these definitions prompt you to re-evaluate your actions or those around you that have been categorized as 'activism'? (Osterndorf et al, 2021 p. 32)

This day aims to foster a sense of collective responsibility and equip learners with the tools needed for effective community building and activism.

Day 5: Restorative Justice and Healing Justice

The final day is dedicated to restorative justice and healing justice. The curriculum guides learners to envision their ideal community, prompting them to consider its needs and how to address them. A significant portion of the day is devoted to discussing the concept of crime as a social construct and the various levels at which harm occurs. Learners explore restorative

justice and transformative justice, examining how these approaches can be applied to repair and heal communities. The curriculum explores the following quote of healing justice as presented by Cara Page and the Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective.

> Healing justice…identifies how we can holistically respond to and intervene on generational trauma and violence, and to bring collective practices that can impact and transform the consequences of oppression on our bodies, hearts and minds. (as cited in Hemphill, 2017, para. 5)

This aspect of healing justice involves developing practitioners skilled in navigating trauma, identifying institutions that undermine healing, and valuing emotional labor as central to sustainability and restoration of Black and Brown communities. The curriculum also introduces the concept of reparations, encouraging learners to think critically about accountability, healing, and the steps necessary to repair harm within their communities.

Each day of the curriculum is structured to build upon the previous one, culminating in some working understanding of social justice issues, community empowerment, and the importance of active participation in societal change. *The Know Your Rights* curriculum is a tool for educators to engage Black and Brown learners in lessons and activities to develop their political consciousness and empower them to advocate against systems of oppression. Over five days, educators guide Black and Brown learners in a collective learning experience, exploring themes of Identity and Intersectionality, Black Liberation Through History and the Human Right Framework, Abolitionist Imaginings, Solidarity and Community Building, and Restorative Justice and Healing Justice. The curriculum seeks to prepare Black and Brown learners with the information and tools to engage in social change.

BECOMING A DEFENDER

"Without healing there is no justice." (Dignity and Power Now, 2019)

As a class, host your own community care, wellness, and healing event to celebrate your campaign work. This event might include some or all of the following activities , based on learners' strengths and interests:

- Poetry reading, writing, and performance.
- Creation of abolitionist posters.
- Postcard writing to provide support to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated people.
- Restorative yoga.
- Sharing of cultural and personal artifacts.
- Campaign sharing and organizing tables.

Research and contact healers or counselors who can attend the event to provide emotional support. Ensure that the event also includes materials and kits to sustain participants and attendees, including water, snacks, and music.

Figure 2: "Becoming a Defender" from the Know Your Rights Camp Curriculum (p. 47)

A Human Rights Education Analysis

The KYRC curriculum utilizes a student-centered approach designed to align with the interests and needs of its learners. The approach of multi-modalities is innovative, for it considers the diverse learning preferences and requirements of the learners. A key feature of this curriculum is its intentional inclusion of texts and media authored by individuals from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. This choice not only enhances the curriculum with various perspectives but also ensures that the content is more relatable and reflective of the diverse experiences of the learners. Fostering an inclusive and representative educational environment, the emphasis on learner needs and diverse authorship are central to the curriculum's cultural responsiveness and effort to empower learners.

As a fundamental practice of HRE, the KYRC curriculum aims to redefine the dynamics between students and teachers. The curriculum initiates this shift through a letter addressed to teachers and educators in its early pages, inviting them to create and maintain a safe and trusting learning environment to explore human rights and Black liberation. This approach

aligns with the care components outlined in Hantzopoulos' (2016) work, *Restoring Dignity in Public Schools: Human Rights Education in Action.* Hantzopoulos identifies core aspects of care, including perceiving teachers as equals, family, and friends, and fostering a culture of critical care. This concept of care is crucial as it contributes to forming strong student–teacher relationships, which are instrumental in shaping students' educational experiences. The curriculum's emphasis on these relationships reflects an understanding that effective HRE extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; it requires a supportive, respectful, and empowering environment where the roles of teachers and students are reimagined and collaborative.

The KYRC curriculum extends its exploration of human rights beyond the initial letter to teachers and educators. A notable aspect of the curriculum is its introduction of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) through a critical analysis activity. This exercise allows learners to engage in a comparative analysis between the UDHR and the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program,[13] thereby deepening their understanding of human rights.

Additionally, the curriculum enriches this exploration by including supplemental articles about human rights efforts. However, it is noteworthy that the curriculum does not explicitly mention human rights education as a field or provide a definition for it. This omission presents an interesting point of reflection. Exploring HRE as a learning activity could foster a more transformative learning environment, reimagining the teacher-student relationship. As Hantzopoulos (2016) articulates,

> To resolve this tension, critical educators insist that the nature of the relationship must transform through critical dialogue so that power—once located solely in the teacher's hands—can shift to the students, reversing roles so that teachers can validate and affirm the knowledge of students. (p. 50)

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[13] The full 10-point program can be accessed here: https://www.pbs.org/hueypnewton/actions/actions_platform.html

Such an approach could have further supported a shared learning process, encouraging teachers and learners to envision and co-create an educational setting that is more collaborative, empowering, and attuned to human rights principles.

Exploring HRE within the KYRC curriculumoffers an invaluable opportunity to elevate the program's educational and liberatory effort, especially in critically examining the U.S. educational system's historical failings[14] towards Black and Brown communities. This critique is not intended to diminish the curriculum's value but rather to acknowledge the specific experiences of BIPOC learners and how the educational system has often failed them. The curriculum addresses historical atrocities in a manner that seems to act asa catalyst to engage learners in critical questioning, empowering them for liberatory efforts against oppressive institutions. However, its notable omission of a critical examination of the U.S. educational system itself, which has frequently neglected and harmed students from Black and Brown communities, is a missed opportunity. This oversight is particularly significant giventhe U.S. educational system's parallels with other oppressive institutions explored in the curriculum, such as police and carceral spaces, often perceived as part of the prison nexus[15] (Stovall, 2018). This aligns with Article 26 of the UDHR, which highlights as establishing "not only a right to an education for all children but an education directed towards the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (as cited in Bajaj, 2018). Integrating HRE

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[14] According to The National Center for Education Statistics (2019), there has been a general increase in high school completion rates in the U.S. From 2000 to 2016, the high school status completion rate for Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds increased from 64 to 89 percent, while the Black and white status completion rates increased from 84 to 92 percent and 92 to 94 percent. Although there is an increase in completion rates, reading and math scores for both Black and Brown students remain lower than white students. Some attribute this reality to the achievement gap. Weir (2016) outlines the disparities in schools, highlighting the inequities in standardized testing, discipline, and opportunities to participate in programs for gifted students. Please refer to the following resources for more information, https://edbuild.org/content/23-billion#CA and https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf

[15] In response to the limitations of the student to prison pipeline metaphor, which conceptualizes the relationship between schools and prisons as a unidirectional pathway, a small group of scholars has begun to refer instead to a school-prison nexus: a complex web of policies, ideas and institutional practices that converge to blur the boundaries between education and incarceration (Annamma, 2018; Meiners, 2007; Sojoyner, 2016).

to critique and improve understanding of the educational system could have significantly improved the curriculum and learning experience of the learners, furthering theKYRC's efforts towards human rights and liberation.

The KYRC curriculum can be examined through the lens of the three emerging HRE models outlined by Tibbitts (2002; 2017) in her seminal work *Emerging Models of Human Rights Education*. Firstly, the Values and Awareness Model, which aims to impart knowledge of human rights to learners, is somewhat reflected in the curriculum's focus on enlightening Black and Brown communities about their fundamental human rights. However, this model primarily serves as a foundational layer in the curriculum, as it goes beyond mere awareness—engaging learners in applying ideas and concepts and participating in action.

More prominently, the Accountability Model, intended to influence learners' knowledge, attitudes, and actions for respecting and promoting human rights in their professional roles, can be seen within the curriculum's emphasis on self-empowerment and mobilization. This model's influence is evident in how the curriculum encourages learners to become proactive advocates for human rights within their communities.

Of all the models proposed by Tibbitts (2017), the KYRC Curriculum most closely aligns with the Transformation Model. This model, centered on engaging learners in transformative and emancipatory learning through critical pedagogy, is at the heart of Kaepernick's initiative. The curriculum educates and empowers learners to explore human rights issues critically and engage in socio-political learning activities aimed at social and political change. The curriculum empowers learners to participate actively in social change by adopting the role of defenders. It encourages learners to engage in various activities that foster self-empowerment and advocacy for human rights. For instance, students are encouraged to learn about the First Nations' land on which they reside and to create a land acknowledgment for their class, school, or community. They are also prompted to write their narratives and to critically examine the history texts used in their schools by identifying and challenging any inaccuracies, myths, or stereotypes, and reporting these to school administrators. Furthermore, students are invited to reflect on their

school or community and to develop their own Five Point Program, grounded in human rights and core values. Furthermore, by centering the identity and role of the learner, these pedagogical principles foster an environment where students can critically analyze their realities, thereby catalyzing transformative change in their communities and beyond. This alignment emphasizes the curriculum's commitment to informing and empowering its learners to be agents of change in their pursuit of human rights and social justice.

The KYRC curriculum is positioned at the intersection of the fields of human rights education and social justice education. This positioning is evident through itsalignment with the four tenets of liberatory education (Bajaj, 2018), that include:

- Relevant curriculum and pedagogy
- Deep analysis of social inequalities
- Fostering critical consciousness
- Cultivating transformative agency

Notably, the curriculum adopts learning activities prioritizing social justice and liberation, positioning learners as defenders of human rights. Throughout its content, there is a recurrent use of the language of human rights and liberation. However, the nuanced differences in this language may be of secondary importance compared to the overarching goal of engaging learners in critical preparation for transformation and agency.

While thoughtfully incorporating Black liberation and human rights elements, the KYRC curriculum overlooks a crucial opportunity in its pedagogical approach. Notably, it references the influential efforts of Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik Shabazz) at the United Nations in 1964, where he endeavored to elevate the civil rights struggle to a global human rightsissue. Despite mentioning Malcolm X's contributions and highlighting the Black Panther Party's socio-political endeavors, the curriculum stops short of fully engaging learners in defining liberation. Such a definition, particularly in the context of civil rights and human rights, is often shrouded in ambiguity. The curriculum includes liberatory activities such as exploring identity, creating a land acknowledgment, and learning about the UDHR and important vocabulary. However, by not providing learners with the opportunity toconstruct their

definition of liberation, potentially through a design thinking activity, it misses a chance to deepen their understanding and empowerment. This oversight perhaps limits the curriculum's effectiveness in enabling learners to critically engage with and internalize the concept of liberation, a key element in understanding the historical and ongoing struggles for human rights and racial justice.

For many, the curriculum is perceived as empowering, but Meintjes (1997) suggests that a more structured approach is necessary to accurately assess empowerment. According to Meintjes, an evaluation tool is essential to determine a learner's ability to recognize human rights issues, express awareness or understanding of their role in protecting human rights, and critically evaluate to assess the empowerment of a learner. This implies that measuring how effectively the program equips learners with these skills is crucial for a curriculum like that of the KYRC.

Meintjes (1997) further discusses HRE as a form of empowerment, emphasizing that real empowerment can only occur if educators' and learners' knowledge and experience are integrated. This integration is necessary for the KYRC curriculum to ensure that it is both informative and transformative. Empowerment, as defined by Meintjes, is a process through which people or communities increase their control or mastery over their lives and the decisions that affect them. This definition underscores the importance of the curriculum in empowering learners to take charge of their lives and to make informed decisions about social issues.

Moreover, Meintjes (1997) states that human rights education as empowerment requires enabling each target group to acquire the knowledge and critical awareness needed to understand and question oppressive patterns of social, political, and economic organizations. This approach is necessary for the KYRC curriculum, as it aims to educate learners about systemic injustices while equipping them with the tools to challenge and change these systems.

Recognizing the value of Meintjes' perspective on empowerment and assessment within human rights education, it is important to note that while benefiting from such insights, the KYRC curriculum is not strictly beholden

to this approach. It is also important to acknowledge that the curriculum incorporates numerous empowering practices even without formal assessment methods. A recommendation for the camp might be to look at human rights-based approaches to assessment as scholars in the field have elaborated (Hantzopoulos et al., 2021).

Furthermore, it is important to note that the curriculum's authors did not explicitly state that an HRE approach informed the design and implementation of the curriculum. While the curriculum aligns with many principles of human rights education, its development may have been guided by a broader spectrum of educational philosophies and pedagogical strategies.

While the KYRC curriculum is a valuable educational resource, its ambitious scope within a limited timeframe raises concerns about its practicality and inclusiveness. Spanning a dense array of topics over five days, the curriculum overlooks its learners' diverse learning needs and processing speeds. For instance, the curriculum assigns areading of Ronald Takaki's "A Different Mirror," a substantial essay of twenty pages, without considering the feasibility of this task within the given time. This oversight suggests the curriculum needs to accommodate a broader spectrum of learners, particularly those who may require more time to absorb and reflect on new information. A potential solution to enhance the curriculum's effectiveness and inclusiveness would be to extend its duration. Transforming the five-day program into a five- to ten-week course at the high school and/or community college level would allow for a more scaffolded approach to learning. Such an expansion would provide ample time for learners to thoroughly engage withthe material, process new concepts, and foster a sense of community. This adjustment would accommodate a broader range of learning styles and ensure a deeper and more meaningful educational experience for all participants.

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout the textual analysis of the KYRC curriculum, coupled with critical reflections on HRE, resistance, and theoretical approaches employed to support students and learners with critical thinking and social transformation, I have been inundated with thoughts and content about the

safety of students and learners beyond the classroom as they advocate for justice. The stakes are exceedingly high, so students and learners must be educated about the realities of activism and its potential consequences. While it can be argued that there are consequences for not fighting for justice—a reality highlighted by the countless individuals whose lives have been taken prematurely[16]—it is equally important for educators to provide learners with practices to engage in social change efforts, as well as tools to protect themselves.

The Know Your Rights Camp curriculum meets the goal of furthering the understanding of human rights and liberation for Black and Brown learners and a broader audience. This curriculum is commendable for its humanizing approach towards historically marginalized communities. It enables learners to deeply explore the historical, social, and political experiences of Black and Brown communities, aligning with the core tenets of Black Studies and Ethnic Studies. By placing the experiences and voices of the BIPOC community at the forefront and acknowledging numerous historical atrocities, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of life and social justice—encompassing both physical and psychological safety for these communities.

Moreover, the curriculum prepares learners to become defenders against oppression, equipping them with the essential tools and perspectives needed for active advocacy in social change. Practices of dreaming and reimagining reinforce this advocacy, which is necessary for nurturing learners into agents of social change. The curriculum also promotes emotional intelligence and wellness, creating an inclusive and safe learning environment facilitated by teachers. Whether used as a stand-alone tool or integrated into other curricula focused on social justice activism and healing, the Know Your Rights Camp curriculum is a valuable and transformative educational resource that stands out for its depth, inclusivity, and potential for meaningful empowerment.

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[16] There have been several innocent Black, Brown, Queer, and trans people unjustly murdered by law enforcement; this practice of violence negated the humanity of many—Freddie Gray, Tony McDade, and Mario Gonzalez, to mention a few.

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UNRWA and the Education of Palestinian Refugees: An Interview with Anne Irfan

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Abstract

This article discusses the history and educational activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), an agency created in 1949 immediately after the founding of the state of Israel and the initial dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian people (1948). The trajectory of this organization and current uncertainty about its future, as well as how it has integrated human rights into its curriculum, sheds light on the rights and realities of Palestinian refugees.

Keywords: refugee education, Palestine, United Nations, conflict

Introduction

This article presents excerpts from a discussion with scholar Anne Irfan, Lecturer at University College London (UCL) and author of *Refuge and Resistance: Palestinians and the International Refugee System* (Columbia University Press, 2023), and the Editor-in-Chief (Monisha Bajaj) and Managing Editors (Jazzmin Gota and David Tow) of the *International Journal of Human Rights Education* (IJHRE). The conversation took place on January 17, 2024, with follow up correspondence afterwards.

Following the brutal events of October 7, 2023 in Israel and the ensuing bombardment of Gaza and horrific killing and displacement of its residents, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has been under heightened global scrutiny. This article aims to illustrate the history and context, as well as the mandate and complex work, of the organization. To that end, the article is organized into the following sections, prompted by questions from IJHRE's editors: (1) the history of UNRWA; (2) UNRWA's education programs; and (3) UNRWA's present and future. Since 1999, UNRWA has been implementing the Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Program,[1] developed by educators in collaboration with donor partners. We seek through this article to offer greater understanding of UNRWA, its history, and the realities Palestinian refugees

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[1] See: https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/human-rights-education

face in the distinct areas in which UNRWA operates: Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.[2]

Since it began operations in 1950, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has continuously provided essential services to Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip (the "five fields"). Formally classified as an aid agency, it has often been described as a "quasi-state" due to the nature of its role and services. UNRWA is mandated to serve registered Palestinian refugees in the five fields, where it runs large-scale health and education programs akin to those usually provided by national governments. It also issues officially recognized identity documents to stateless Palestinian refugees. Over more than seven decades, UNRWA's role has therefore, come to transcend that of an aid agency, evolving into an extensive and complex system that operates across international borders and rivals the scope of national governments in places.

The dynamics between UNRWA and Palestinian refugee communities reflect its quasi-state nature. Throughout their years and exile, Palestinian refugees have overwhelmingly resisted UNRWA's formal designation as an apolitical aid agency, instead insisting that its services are entitlements stemming from their political refugee status (Irfan, 2023, pp. 2-3).

Can you tell us about your background and how you became interested in this research?

Anne Irfan: It started out as my Ph.D. and before that, as a Master's project. I first spent time in Palestine in the West Bank as a volunteer teaching English in an UNRWA school. That was where I first engaged with UNRWA and became interested in it. I discovered over the course of my studies that UNRWA's archive was closed, and very few researchers have been able to access it. I also observed, hand in hand with that, that there was very little historical scholarship on UNRWA, and one of those things that at least

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[2] We are grateful to William McInerney and Basma Hajir for their advice on including an article about UNRWA in Volume 8 of the *International Journal of Human Rights Education.*

partially explains the other, so I became very interested in wanting to undertake a study of it from a historical perspective.

Most of what is out there about UNRWA is more in the field of international development, which is all important, but it has a very contemporary focus. I was interested in the historically framed context for UNRWA, and I was very lucky to get access to the archive which is in Jordan, and that was doubly fortuitous, because I was not allowed access to Palestine for the entirety of my research.

However, the archive in Jordan does contain materials relevant to all five of UNRWA's fields of operation, including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It also contains information relevant to Syria, because Syria is another field that for obvious reasons,[3] I was not able to visit and do research in. So I mostly worked in Jordan and Lebanon.

I think the other key factor in how this project came about is that in the second half of the project, the Trump Administration announced it was defunding UNRWA. That's obviously a decision that was later partially reversed by the Biden Administration,[4] but it suddenly threw UNRWA into the spotlight (Irfan, 2023, p. 199). It was... an agency that had been fairly below radar, at least in the Western media. The Trump defunding brought about a lot of interest in UNRWA and a lot of discussion about its significance, and in turn more discussion of the Palestinian refugees.

The History of UNRWA

Can you tell us about your recent book and the history of UNRWA?

The book, *Refuge and Resistance: Palestinians and the International Refugee System* (Columbia University Press, 2023),

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[3] Due to the ongoing civil war in Syria. For more information, see: https://www.usip.org/syria-timeline-uprising-against-assad

[4] On January 27th, 2024, Biden announced, as did several other donor states, the revocation of aid to UNRWA due to allegations by Israel (unsubstantiated by evidence at the time of this writing), that UNRWA staff members were involved in the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas. For more information, see: Al-Mughrabi & Farge (2024), Bigg (2024), Rogin (2024), and Crowley (2024).

tells the story of Palestinian refugees' relations with UNRWA in its early decades, from the initial aftermath of their dispossession in 1948 up until the collapse of the Palestinian national movement's refugee camp base in 1982. Within this time frame, I trace how Palestinian refugees across the five fields navigated their relationship with UNRWA. I show how they negotiated and even sought to leverage this relationship as they struggled for international recognition of their political and national rights. This often necessitated renegotiating their place and international politics, with UNRWA inadvertently taking on an added significance as a local address for the UN. As a result, [that]

Figure 1: Cover of Refuge and Resistance (Irfan, 2023).

UNRWA... came to develop as the Palestinian refugees' de facto quasi-state was not simply imposed by the international directorship of the UN; it was created through continual negotiations and renegotiations between institution and population. (Irfan, 2023, p. 3)

Irfan: When UNRWA was created it was not the only UN agency that had been created on the Palestine issue. UNRWA was created at the end of 1949 and started operations in May 1950. By that time, we've already had the creation of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP). The UNCCP's role was to find a political solution, and that's really important for understanding why, or one reason why, UNRWA was given its particular mandate.[5] It was not given a mandate to do anything around political solutions, because that was already the remit of another UN agency.

Now, obviously, in reality, UNCCP was ineffectual, and became dormant pretty quickly. But that was a key factor behind the setup. The

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[5] The agency and its purview are the product of UN General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), which articulated a "humanitarian and development mandate to provide assistance and protection to Palestine refugees pending a just and lasting solution to their plight" (UNRWA, n.d.).

official story behind UNRWA was always that it was apolitical and that it would set up to do "just humanitarian work;" but, we know from the behind the scenes communications that the United States and the United Kingdom, which were the main diplomatic and financial supporters of UNRWA in that early period, did not see its role as apolitical. I think there's a bigger discussion we could have here about the politics of humanitarianism itself, and the whole problem with conceiving of it as apolitical in the first place.

But nevertheless, I have a quote in the book that's from the British Foreign Office in 1974, where they're talking directly behind the scenes about "the need to 'reduce [UNRWA's] political overtones to the minimum' while admitting internally that it funded the agency for 'overwhelmingly political' reasons" (Irfan, 2023, p. 95).

In that early period, they were also actually writing to other states, trying to convince them to fund UNRWA. So the question is, what were those political purposes? One, broadly, was that we're talking here about the context of the late 1940s and the early 1950s, and the major concern for the UK and certainly the US at that time was communism. The major policy or global policy from the US in that period to combat or to try and combat communism was the whole approach of Marshall aid.[6] The idea that if you give people socioeconomic support, they will be less susceptible to communism. So that was definitely one factor, that they did not want this large dispossessed refugee population that was now across the Middle East to, "fall to communism."

But then the other thinking that was more specific to the Palestine situation was that UNRWA might be a way to bring about what was sometimes called "reintegration," the idea that Palestinian refugees could essentially be permanently settled in the Arab host states; this was never said publicly. There's a relationship here to the types of programs that UNRWA pursued in that early period. But unofficially, there was this idea that UNRWA might be a way to try and facilitate that resettlement.

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[6] The European Recovery Program, colloquially known as the Marshall Plan (after George C. Marshall, then-U.S Secretary of State), was a post-World War II program designed to transfer capital and material to Western Europe, promote trade with the United States, and prevent the spread of communism. For an exhaustive analysis, see McCourt & Mudge (2023).

In what ways are the experiences of Palestinian refugees in the 'five fields' (Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon) similar or different?

Irfan: I talk in the book about this combination of entitlement and suspicion that underpins historically a lot of the relationship that transcends the borders of the five fields. This is a dynamic whereby Palestinian refugees construct and conceptualize and understand UNRWA's work as essentially not charity, but as a right on account of the contravention of their political rights and their national rights in 1948 and ever since. That's been crucial to how they've understood UNRWA's role, the idea that it's not doing them a favor, to put it bluntly. And that's gone hand in hand with the suspicion often related to the fact that UNRWA receives a lot of its funding from particularly the United States, and generally from Western states that are politically aligned to Israel.

That being said, obviously, we're talking about 76 years at this point since the original dispossession of Palestinians and 74 years since UNRWA began operations. So in that time there has been a lot of divergence in the events across these nation-states, and that has had an impact on what role UNRWA has taken on.

For example, for a long time UNRWA's role in Lebanon was more akin to emergency relief, because for so many years Lebanon was essentially in a state of civil war, and more recently it's been in an ongoing, protracted crisis. Because of that, UNRWA's role has in many ways reverted to immediate emergency relief and away from the long-term development that character-ized its work more in Jordan.

The other key issue in determining the relationship has been what's been going on with Palestinian national politics. For a long time, the PLO[7] (Palestine Liberation Organization) was based in Lebanon, and it had a really established power base there, which gave the Palestinian people more lever-age with UNRWA and in demanding how they wanted UNRWA to change.

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[7] The Palestine Liberation Organization is a Palestinian nationalist group that has sometimes also served as the de facto international representative of the Palestinian people (Parsons, 2013).

That obviously collapsed in 1982, which is where I end most of the book's analysis. But then subsequently, we have the First Intifada in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip [from 1987 to 1993].

As a result, UNRWA begins to take more of an openly protection role in those spaces than it's ever taken before. It starts introducing officers who do things like observing rights violations. And then we have the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the 1990s in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and that brings out another shift where, in that early period of the PA, UNRWA is trying to work with the PA for an eventual handover. This is a period where there's more optimism that there's going to be a Palestinian state, and in that period, many Palestinians in, say, Syria and Lebanon feel that they're being left behind, and that their refugee status is not being part of the dynamic. The details or the nature of that relationship shift depending on what it is those refugees are experiencing.

The final thing I'd add that gets lost in a lot of these conversations is that since 2011, huge numbers of Palestinians in Syria have been displaced. They've either become refugees and sought refuge outside of Syria, or they've been internally displaced. That's had a big impact not only on UNRWA's role in Syria, but also on their relationship with UNRWA, because if they've been displaced to Lebanon or Jordan, they have at least, in theory, been able to continue receiving services from UNRWA. But some of them have been displaced to Turkey or to Egypt, or to places where UNRWA doesn't operate.

In your book, you describe that UNRWA was increasingly drawn into the UN's explicit engagement with the political dimensions of the Palestinian situation, especially in the 1970s. Can you discuss the impact of that?

Irfan: What happens in the 1970s is that the PLO brings its struggle very definitively to the UN. Arafat addresses the UN General Assembly in 1974 and the PLO gains a formal place in the General Assembly as an observer entity. It gains this new level of recognition in the General Assembly, and the General Assembly is the same body that mandates UNRWA, so this has a knock-on effect on UNRWA. The General Assembly recognizes the PLO at a

time when it is situated very much towards the politics of the Global South, towards anti-colonial politics. The PLO is invited to address the General Assembly when it is under the presidency of Algeria, which is in its immediate post-revolutionary phase.

The General Assembly is coming at the Palestine issue from that angle, and in the immediate aftermath of recognizing the PLO, it starts pushing for the UN to do more to engage with the Palestinian struggle and to recognize Palestinian rights. It starts requesting that the Security Council monitor this more closely, and that's where UNRWA starts to more explicitly be brought into the fray because it talks about things like drawing on UNRWA's reports as evidence for the violation of Palestinian rights.

Now this puts UNRWA in quite a difficult position, because, obviously, it's receiving most of its funding from the US, and the US continues to classify the PLO as a terrorist organization right up until the end of the following decade. So UNRWA has to walk this very delicate tightrope where, on the one hand, it's being requested to engage with the politics of the Palestine issue in a way that's more open than it has been before.

There's also a practical element that in the 1970s the PLO essentially runs parts of Lebanon – not the whole country but parts of it – so practically for UNRWA to work, it has to work with the PLO. The PLO is the de facto host state in parts of Lebanon. But at the same time it has to do that in such a way that's not going to aggravate the U.S. too much. You have UNRWA moving in the orbit of these different actors, and sometimes being pulled more into the orbit of one or more into the orbit of another. There are definitely communications in the archive that come from the U.S. towards UNRWA where they're warning and saying, "We're hearing reports of things like the PLO maybe using your facilities for arms training," and basically threatening to withhold funding if there's evidence found of anything like that.

UNRWA's Education Programs

Can you discuss the curriculum of UNRWA schools as a site of contestation across different periods?

Irfan: UNRWA management takes issue with even just the phrase "UNRWA curriculum," because there is not really any UNRWA curriculum; UNRWA schools use the curricula of the host states. So, Jordanian curriculum in Jordan, Lebanese curriculum in Lebanon, Syrian curriculum in Syria. In the West Bank, it used the Jordanian curriculum up until Oslo; in the Gaza Strip, they used the Egyptian curriculum up until Oslo;[8] and post-Oslo, the Palestinian Authority has had its own curriculum that's been used in those spaces.

At the same time, from the beginning, there's been an adaptation of those curricula to ensure they run along approved UN lines. There are materials that have been removed or taken out that were deemed incompatible with what's termed "UN values." The UN and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) were involved in this process for many decades. In the case of the West Bank and Gaza, the inspection process was stepped up after 1967 with the beginning of the Israeli occupation, as the Israeli occupying authorities intervened and wanted to directly sign off on the textbooks that were being used.

The other key point here is that more recently, UNRWA has introduced what's called human rights education in its school, which is supplementary material. This is again meant to be about essentially promoting those UN values in schools—things like peace, tolerance, international cooperation, respect for gender equality, etc. But what's been missing from a lot of those discussions and what's been a big issue for many Palestinians, pretty much from the beginning, is that this setup whereby UNRWA uses the host

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[8] The Oslo Accords, named such because of the role the Kingdom of Norway and the country's then-deputy foreign minister Jan Egeland in facilitating them, are two agreements between the PLO and the State of Israel in 1993 and 1995 that advanced a framework for a sustained peace process. (Shlaim, 2005; Waage, 2005).

state curricula has often meant that Palestinian refugee children are not being taught their own national history.

This is a subject of a huge discussion because it's not only seen as failing to respect Palestinian national rights, but it's also been seen as arguably a pedagogical failure, because it means that Palestinian refugee children are not being taught the background to understand their own situation. There's a quote I have in the book from Fawaz Turki, a Palestinian writer from Haifa who grew up in a refugee camp in Lebanon, where he says:

> ... the schools that UNRWA sponsored were designed—unwittingly or not—to raise Palestinian children on, and educate them in, accepting their plight of life as a preordained thing... No attempt was made to explain the situation and the forces behind it that ruled their lies, or how they were to respond to them. ... No courses were offered to show where they came from, the history of Palestine. (Irfan, 2023, p. 169)

There's a strong connection there; it's not only a political objection, but there's also a pedagogical argument for it. In the late sixties and early seventies, Palestinians in Lebanon, after decades of lobbying on this issue, finally had some success, and UNRWA modified its teaching in Lebanese schools, and it brought in the teaching of Palestinian history and Palestinian geography. That was done again in a supplementary way. So it didn't replace anything that was being taught, but it was additional subjects. It's quite an interesting case study for anyone who does work on the history of education because it was really this kind of Palestinian initiative.

What I found in the archives was correspondence between the Palestinian education consultants that UNRWA had hired, and they were writing and corresponding with leading academics all around the world trying to get advice on how to put together this curriculum. I saw correspondence in the archives of these consultants with leading scholars such as Albert Hourani of the Middle East Center at Oxford. They ended up with quite a developed set of materials. They had guidebooks for teachers, they had textbooks, and they also had all these things like historical maps they'd put together. They had their own notes that they put together, based on quite advanced academic

books that these consultants were using as the basis of it. This was all developed. and it was implemented in schools in Lebanon in the 1970s.

But what's not clear from the records and what I wasn't able to find is what happened to that, because at some point, that disappeared. It was initially talked about as potentially going to be rolled out across all the five fields, and that never happened. And more recently, Palestinian educators have again sort of raised this question of what's being taught, and that comes to the forefront, because whenever there are attacks on UNRWA, one element always focuses on accusations: that what's taught in UNRWA schools is violent, and that the textbooks are antisemitic—those things are very regular accusations for UNRWA.

Do you see tensions in regards to teaching the concepts and principles of international human rights, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Genocide Convention, considering that these foundational pieces were codified by the UN at the same time as the 1948 dispossession of Palestinians and the creation of the state of Israel?

Irfan: The main issue that's come up there is this feeling that first of all, many Palestinians are aware that human rights education, which UNRWA has been implementing since 1999,[9] is being taught often at the behest of the donor states, and it's sort of seen as something that's being imposed by the donor states. But there's also often a frustration for the fact that at the same time, any teaching around Palestinian national political rights is not allowed because that's seen as unacceptable. So again, that feeling of kind of selectivity or double standard definitely comes up.

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[9] UNRWA first began teaching supplementary content called Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Tolerance (HRCRT) in 1999, which hoped "to promote non-violence, healthy communication skills, peaceful conflict-resolution, human rights, tolerance, and good citizenship" (UNRWA, n.d.). The most recent update to the curriculum, published in 2012, seeks "to empower Palestine refugee students by encouraging them to know and exercise their rights, uphold the rights of others and be proud of their Palestinian identity." United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA, 2012; UNRWA, 2021).

And there's also one other criticism I've heard: that it can be a little bit disjointed, because with all of this on human rights—let's say you're at school in the West Bank, or, before recently, in Gaza, and you're being taught about human rights and your day-to-day life is so far removed from that in how you're being treated and how your family and your neighbors are being treated. It can be very abstract and disconnected from reality. That can also go hand in hand with this feeling that it's just something being imposed by the outside and that teaching about human rights is not aligned with living under occupation. But there are ways you can teach that.

How have Palestinians resisted the erasure of their culture, history, and identity in the type of education they receive?

Irfan: The main way this has come up has definitely been in the demands for the inclusion of Palestinian-specific subjects in teaching. It's important to keep in mind many Palestinians have been very aware of the political place of education, of precedents, like the one you mentioned, of how education was used in the genocide of Indigenous peoples in North America.

It's worth keeping in mind that the very first schools that were set up for Palestinian refugees were set up by Palestinians. They weren't set up by UNRWA. When UNRWA arrived on the scene, there were already schools there, maybe not schools in the formal institutional sense, but there were systems that had been set up predominantly by Palestinian refugees who'd been teaching in Palestine. Very soon after the *Nakba*,[10] many Palestinians prioritized education. Even when they were really struggling to survive, they prioritized education which I think is not uncommon among refugees. It was seen as essential and there are fascinating historical photographs of these early classes operating out of tents, or sometimes operating in the open air.

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[10] Nakba, which is Arabic for "catastrophe," refers to what is called the 1948 War for Palestine by Palestinians, and the War for Independence by the State of Israel. It describes the dispossession and displacement of Palestinians from land that became the State of Israel (United Nations, n.d.).
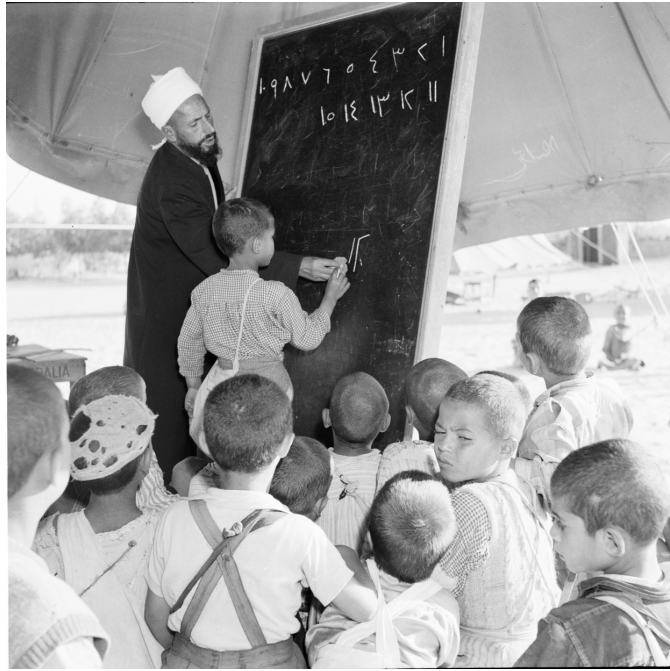
Figure 2: UNRWA Tent School in Khan Younis Camp, Gaza[11]
©1950 UNRWA Archive, reprinted with permission.

There's long been this understanding of education as power. The dedication to education was very closely connected to Palestinians' dispossession. For one thing, many of the refugees who ended up in the camp, the poorest refugees, had been farmers in Palestine. All of their wealth had historically been in the land, and they lost that land.

That was part of the impetus behind them then prioritizing education because they felt they needed to give their children some kind of capital that was portable. Having lost the land, it was a shift toward social capita from land capital. The other thing was, among some refugees, an assessment that they'd been at a disadvantage compared to Israel, because the Jewish community in Palestine had generally been more highly educated prior to 1948.

The point I'm trying to make is that the dedication to education was very closely entangled with the politics of the dispossession from the

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[11] This photograph was taken in 1950, one year before the adoption of the United Nations Refugee Convention in 1951. More on the convention: https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention

beginning. When UNRWA first arrived on the scene, it took over the schools, but they weren't its priority at all early on. And one of the reasons why UNRWA came to focus more on education was because the refugees were demanding it and were lobbying for it. Then, hand in hand with that from very early on, many Palestinian refugee teachers, students, and parents were lobbying for Palestinian history and geography to be taught in the schools. And often you would have teachers teach it informally themselves. There were many strikes by teachers in UNRWA schools over conditions and pay, and many times the teaching of Palestinian history was included as a demand in the strike. So it was integral to all of these conversations.

The vast majority of teachers in UNRWA schools are themselves Palestinian refugees. So I want to avoid giving any suggestion that this is a gift that the UN has externally given to Palestinian refugees. It's much more something that they've generated for themselves. Now, on that basis, education is widely seen as being critical in national identity building and in nation building. There's a lot of interesting work on how that applies in a refugee setting or in a setting of statelessness.[12]

In the Palestinian case what's significant is that the schools are set up as essentially Palestinian spaces. There are sometimes a tiny number of non-Palestinian students. But that plays a significant role, that it's Palestinian students being taught by Palestinian teachers. That creates its own dynamic for a community - who are stateless and who are in exile. In the second half of the twentieth century, probably at the period where Palestinians were sort of at the peak of their reputation as the world's best-educated refugees, it became quite a recognized phenomenon that you would have Palestinian graduates of UNRWA schools who would go on and get well-paying employment in the Gulf in general, and particularly in Kuwait, often as engineers, and then they would send remittances back to the camps. That also became economically very significant, and that played into all other kinds of political

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[12] For more on the education of refugees and how it connects to the building of national identity, see Dryden-Peterson (2020), or Shabaneh (2012) for the case of the Palestinians in particular. In addition, Kelcey (2020; 2023) and Kelcey and Irfan (2024a; 2024b) have also written on Palestinians in the context of UNRWA.

dynamics. Some of them would also then go on to financially support the PLO, or financially support Palestinian nationalist organizations.

There's also the element of education often giving people another tool with which they can push for their rights and campaign for their rights. The other thing is many Palestinian refugees came out [of UNRWA schools] with a very good standard of English as a result of their education. And that became significant when they were trying to make their case on the world stage.

A big part of education is designed to be preparing people for employment, and that really does vary a lot across the five fields. In Lebanon to this day, Palestinians are barred by law from working in most of the professions. So that's created this almost feeling of futility towards some of the education; they come out very highly educated, but struggle to get a job that matches their level of education.

By contrast, historically, prior to 2011, Palestinians in Syria had equal access to the job market and to higher education. The access was equal to that of Syrian citizens. So that was a very different setup. And then if you look at the West Bank and Gaza historically, it would depend on the time period, but if you look at the period of the first Intifada, there were widespread economic boycotts going on, and many people were not working as part of that activism.

The other element that can drive those dynamics is: What are your hopes? What are your prospects once you finish school? And say in Gaza, since the blockade,[13] there has been such widespread unemployment, that de facto, what are the prospects?

UNRWA's Present and Future

How has UNRWA responded (or not) to the demands of the Palestinian refugees? Can you talk about the staffing of UNRWA in this regard as well?

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[13] The current blockade began in 2007 after Hamas' electoral victory, though there had been other blockades, often limited and temporary, in 1991, 1993, and 2000 (UNICEF, 2022).

Irfan: First, there has never been a Palestinian head of UNRWA. They've pretty much all been Westerners, North Americans, and Western Europeans. There was one Turkish Commissioner General and that was it. All of the senior management are "international," which means non-Palestinian, which in practice really means Western. And that's another cause of huge resentment that the majority of UNRWA staff are Palestinian, but at the senior management levels, none of them are.

Figure 3: Four forces impacting UNRWA.

The bigger question about these tensions, I think this actually gets to the heart of understanding UNRWA, because it is, I call it in the book, a "hybrid organization" (Irfan, 2023, p. 91). It's caught up in these tensions. Sometimes, when I'm lecturing on it, I draw a diagram where I have UNRWA in the middle, and then I argue there are four forces that pull on it – the donor states, the Palestinian refugees themselves, the Arab host states, and Israel, and all of them are pulling on UNRWA. Those four actors have interests, motivations, and demands that might sometimes align in unexpected ways. Israel and the Arab host states are often actually quite aligned, and what they want from UNRWA at different times over history, depending on all kinds of political dynamics. UNRWA has moved or been pulled more into the orbit of one or of another, or maybe of two, and it moves in that space.

Recently, I would say it's moved in the last five years closer than ever to the orbit of the donor states. UNRWA's been struggling so much financially, and because the Trump administration made it this politically contested issue, it's been forced to prove itself to the donor states; so it's much more in that sphere now than it's probably ever been. But if you were to look at that period in parts of the 1970s, certainly in Lebanon, it was closer to the Palestinian refugees than it is now. So that's loosely how I see it. And I think that also reflects the setup because it's mandated and created by the General Assembly at the UN, but the General Assembly doesn't give it any money. UNRWA answers to the General Assembly officially, but unofficially, it's answering to the people who are actually funding it.

What has happened since October 7th, 2023 and how has it impacted UNRWA's operations and its mandate?

Irfan: Gaza is just one place where UNRWA operates. If we look at history over the last 74 years, UNRWA was set up immediately to provide emergency relief after the Nakba. And as the years passed and Palestinians remained in exile, it started to shift from that emergency relief to longer term, sort of almost development services. And then across all five fields, at times, crises have happened, and it's been pushed back into emergency relief mode. And those dynamics have happened across time and space in all five fields at different moments.

What's happening in Gaza now since October 7th is that dynamic, but in an incredibly acute form. The situation in Gaza is really akin to 1948, if not worse than 1948. More people have been displaced in Gaza since October than in the entirety of the Nakba, which initiated the Palestinian refugee crisis. So the primary answer to your question is that it's gone into the ultimate emergency relief mode, but it's done so at a time when, prior to October the 7th, UNRWA was probably facing its worst existential crisis ever, so it's in a very weak position to be doing so. It's incredibly overstretched. It's incredibly underfunded.

It's also facing serious political attacks on a level that haven't been seen previously. UNRWA remains the most significant relief actor in Gaza.

The other thing that I think often gets lost is that UNRWA is a major employer in Gaza. So the other issue here is how, whenever UNRWA faces financial crises, a large number of Palestinians either lose their jobs or risk losing their jobs. That's especially significant in Gaza because of the high unemployment rate.

So the Israeli war on Gaza since October has resulted in the deaths of more UN staff than any other war in history [at the time of this writing, the death toll of UN employees in Gaza stands at 178 as of April 19, 2024.][14] And they're all UNRWA staff. UNRWA is a UN agency. We often think of it as an external body operating in Gaza, but in terms of how its operations are run, it's local Palestinians. It's often local Palestinian refugees who are actually on the ground. So it's directly caught up in the war itself.

What do you see as the future of UNRWA given what's happened since October 7th?

Irfan: No one can give a firm answer to this question, but there are a lot of warning signs that the Israeli government may be seeking as part of this war to bring about the dismantlement of UNRWA, certainly in Gaza. There's been a strong propaganda campaign against UNRWA to discredit it through claims of things like claiming they've been finding Hamas hideouts in UNRWA installations and claims that UNRWA has essentially been aligned with Hamas. There are uncorroborated claims that have been made that some of the hostage takers were UNRWA teachers or employees.

UNRWA responded by requesting that the Israeli journalist who reported the story contact them so that they could investigate. The last I heard was that UNRWA said that the journalist had not responded to those requests (*see postscript for more updated information*). But there has been generally this rising discourse whereby UNRWA has been portrayed as more or

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[14] At the time of this writing, 1.7 million Palestinians are internally displaced, and more than 33,000 people have been killed (33,899+ Palestinian and 1,200+ Israeli.) See OCHA, 2024.

Data from UNRWA: https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports

Daily Palestinian and Israeli death tolls are updated here: https://www.ochaopt.org

less part of Hamas. The latest poll[15] that I saw said that the majority of Israeli people think that UNRWA should be dismantled, and that UNRWA is part of the problem.

There's also a bigger conversation going on about whether there are Israeli plans or moves to try and permanently displace and expel Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, possibly into Egypt, and that would in itself have major implications for UNRWA if that were to happen. UNRWA obviously does not only work in Gaza, but Gaza is one of the places where its work and its role are the most significant. We don't know at this moment exactly what's gonna happen in Gaza. But it seems increasingly clear that we're at a moment of transformational change for the worse in Gaza, and UNRWA is probably on the cusp of a major change itself as a result.

Your book came out a few months ago based on many years of research. How do you hope it contributes to current conversations about Palestinian refugees?

Irfan: In the current moment, there are a lot of discussions about UNRWA in particular, and Palestinian refugees in general. I've heard a lot of people asking, "Who are Palestinian refugees?" "Why are there refugees in Gaza?" "Why are they considered refugees?" I hope that the book goes some way toward answering those questions. I hope the book also illuminates things like why Palestinians respond to suggestions that they evacuate Gaza with such horror. The book can shed light on what the collective memory and the history are there and why that's such a loaded suggestion.

More broadly, I hope what the book does is also make the case for framing and understanding refugees not simply as people who receive services from international actors. I've tried to show in the book that we most accurately understand UNRWA as the product of these interactional dynamics between the refugees and the UN, rather than something that simply goes in one way that's imposed by the UN on the refugees. That's something that's

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[15] Survey results published through the Jerusalem Post, January 8, 2024, "76% of Israelis support removal of UNRWA" https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-781311

not unique to the Palestinian case, and and that's something that I hope will be of interest and relevance to people who are researching and interested in all kinds of regional cases that may be far away from Palestine, because that's a theme that is common across cases of displacement and refugee history.

> [R]efugees themselves are constructed within humanitarian regimes as mere aid recipients, lacking any agency or autonomy. The identity category of "the refugee" is stripped of political context and thus silences a critical part of what displacement means.
>
> Palestinian refugees themselves have long been in the vanguard of making such criticisms. From the beginning, Palestinian refugee communities across the Middle East have agitated for UNRWA's reform, seeking to counter the potential depoliticizing impact of humanitarianism. Their resistance on this front is part of this book's title: I use the word *resistance* to refer not only to the Palestinian's national struggle *for* statehood, but also to their struggle *against* depoliticized constructions of their displacement, as encapsulated by the UNRWA regime. In these ways, their refugeehood and their resistance have been inextricably linked from the beginning. (Irfan, 2023, p. 6)

Postscript

Since the conversation between IJHRE's editors and Anne Irfan on January 17, 2024, presented in this article, UNRWA has been increasingly visible in the news. The initial suspension of funding by major donor countries came after Israel made allegations against 12 members of UNRWA's staff in the Fall of 2023 and in early 2024 (Beinart, 2024; Democracy Now!, 2024a; Democracy Now!, 2024b; Reuters, 2024a; UNRWA, 2024b). As of this writing, there are pending investigations into these allegations by multiple countries and stakeholders (Beinart, 2024; Hilsum, 2024). However, there are also multiple reports challenging these investigations (Democracy Now!, 2024b; Sinmaz, 2024). A report from UNRWA in March 2024 claims the workers' admissions of connections to Hamas followed coercion by Israeli authorities (Reuters, 2024b). Since October 7, 2023, events in Israel and Gaza have been fluid, unclear, and muddied by both the fog of reporting from conflict zones

and the political challenges of the conflict, within which UNRWA has found itself to be an unwilling co-star.

In their research, Anne Irfan and Joe Kelcey (2024a) emphasize that UNRWA has frequently been the target of accusations - of intolerance, of hostility, of antisemitism. They remark that these accusations,

> that the PA curriculum promotes hatred and intolerance, have been stoked by such organizations as UN Watch and IMPACT-se, which have long demonstrated hostility to the UN, deny the applicability of international law to Palestinian refugees, and adopt dubious and unsound methodologies (including mistranslations, taking content out of context, and reviewing material that is not even taught in UNRWA schools). Moreover, these accusations willfully ignore the fact that UNRWA has a multitier curriculum review process. This includes examining all curriculum content to ensure that it aligns to UN standards and developing alternative teaching material and teacher guidance to address the small number of instances when it does not. Experts have also pointed to the lopsided and narrow obsession with Palestinian textbooks, which overlooks problems with the Israeli education system and the oppressive realities that shape Palestinian children's learning under occupation. (par. 13).

As mentioned in our interview, the precarity of UNRWA has been a longstanding issue stemming from its original mandate; its reliance on donor funding and the politics of that funding, the tense relationship between UNRWA and Israel, and the latter's stated intentions to abolish it (Beinart, 2024; Democracy Now!, 2024b; Irfan & Kelcey, 2024a; Irfan & Kelcey, 2024b; Lema, 2024).

While UNRWA acted immediately to address Israel's allegations of employee misconduct related to Hamas and the October 7 attack, including the firing of those accused even before the internal investigation was launched or concluded (Lema, 2024), many of the largest nation-state donors halted aid in January 2024, including the United States that has halted all aid through at least March 2025 (Reuters, 2024a). With little evidence provided to back up Israel's claims (Borger, 2024) and reports of UNRWA staff being waterboarded to extract confessions (Reuters, 2024b), Canada, Australia,

Sweden, and other nations resumed their funding of UNRWA in March 2024 (Ables et al, 2024).

Other nation-state donors, notably Ireland, Norway, Portugal, and Spain (Bigg, 2024), never halted but instead increased their contributions to UNRWA in light of the dire humanitarian crisis unfolding in the region (Fouche & Perry, 2024). Without the continued support of countries like the United States, however, UNRWA will be tasked with navigating this situation with a close to USD 350 million deficit, which, according to Bill Deere, the U.S. Congressional Advisor to the Washington, D. C. office of UNRWA, "will mean less food aid, lost jobs, and schools and health clinics will be shuttered in impoverished Palestinian refugee camps across the region, including in deeply unstable Lebanon" (Hauslohner, 2024, para. 17).

At the time of finalizing this article in April 2024, the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate, and UNRWA remains the best-positioned organization able to provide relief to the large numbers of starving, displaced people in Gaza. Throughout this crisis, it remains important to remember that UNRWA is responsible for the education of more than 500,000 students across its five fields of operation. As of early 2024, "Approximately 378 schools have been destroyed or damaged. The Palestinian Ministry of Education has reported the deaths of over 4,327 students, 231 teachers and 94 professors" (Desai, 2024, para. 3). This amounts to the destruction of 76% of schools in Gaza (Abu El-Haj et al, 2024). Irfan and Kelcey (2024) observe,

> ...No thought has been given to what could replace UNRWA. The suggestion that UNHCR could take over not only is based on a flawed misunderstanding of the right of return in international law and the two agencies' mandates, but also fails to account for the fact that UNRWA educates more than half a million children, provides basic health services to almost 6 million people, and employs more than 30,000.
>
> Far from perpetuating the conflict and reflecting a bias toward Palestinians, UNRWA's longevity and anomalous status as a service provider reflect the failure of the parties concerned to engage in good

faith, legally grounded discussions about the refugees' future. Arguably, the biggest irony in this tragic situation is the in-built mechanism to disband UNRWA: to find a just and durable solution to the Palestinian refugees' protracted crisis. (para. 15–16)

Refuge and Resistance opens with the description of the self-immolation of 23-year-old Palestinian Omar Khudeir outside of a UNRWA health care clinic in southern Lebanon in 2016 (Irfan, 2023, p. 1). On February 25, 2024, 141 days after the events of October 7, 2023, the deaths of an estimated 29,594 Palestinians, the loss of 128 UNRWA staff, and the internal displacement of 1.7+ million from Northern Gaza to the besieged south (UNRWA, 2024a), 25-year-old U.S. Air Force serviceman Aaron Bushnell self-immolated in front of the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C., in protest of his country's support of Israel's actions in Gaza (Kim, 2024).

After three failed and one successful ceasefire resolution at the United Nations (with the United States' abstention), and an International Court of Justice ruling which Israel has failed to comply with, alongside continued protests calling for the resignation of the Netanyahu government in Israel, even if there were a speedy end to the conflict, the seriousness of the situation in Gaza would be far from resolved (AFP, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024; United Nations 2024). Amidst these massive human losses, social and political turmoil, and hostages still being held (at the time of this writing), the tremendous impact of the current crisis on educational opportunities and the abrogation of the basic rights of Palestinian refugees will be felt for many decades to come.

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Basic Needs Insecurity in U.S. Colleges: Human Rights Unfulfilled

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Abstract

There have now been fifteen years of research on the basic needs of college students in the U.S. The studies have primarily focused on assessing the prevalence of food and housing insecurity. Determining who is responsible and finding solutions have been less emphasized. The scholarship has also not framed the problems of students' basic needs insecurity (BNI) as human rights violations. This article argues that applying a human rights lens to the issue reveals that the rights to education, food, and shelter are not being realized, but further, higher education institutions bear considerable responsibility for addressing BNI. Human rights education will also be shown to have a role in empowering students themselves to right these wrongs.

Keywords: human rights education, basic needs insecurity, college students, higher education, human rights

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Introduction

Students arrive in our classrooms filled with enthusiasm and potential. As faculty, we aim to ensure they thrive academically. And yet, every faculty member has had bright students who underperform in their courses. We know that far too many college and university students leave without completing their degrees. In the United States, 40% of students who start college or university as freshman never graduate (Kirp, 2019, p. 5). We may have some ideas about students' struggles, but much of the time our focus is on their educational needs, and we miss understanding the environmental, social, and economic factors that influence their educational journey. Since, as will be shown below, over a decade of research demonstrates that possibly millions of students do not have enough nutritious food to eat or a stable place to live, so-called basic needs insecurity (BNI) may play a significant role in drop-out rates. Yet there has been little scholarly emphasis on determining who has responsibility for ameliorating the needs insecurities of students. Further, the human rights lens has not been used to shed light on causes or solutions. We argue that the "rights and responsibilities" framework developed by Kathryn Sikkink (2020) provides the analytical tool for applying human rights to the problem of student basic needs insecurity. This framework illuminates the responsibility borne by higher education in addressing student BNI. Our findings also have implications for the field of human rights education (HRE). The rights of college students themselves should be included in the mandate to teach *through* HRE, and human rights educators can empower students to advocate for their own rights as part of the mandate to teach *for* human rights. We will present qualitative data from a statewide study on BNI in higher education to provide support for the argument to view BNI as a human rights issue. Student experiences revealed in the data provide a more in-depth understanding of students' struggles to obtain their education.

This article will a) provide definitions and a description of the state of the problem, b) provide a description of our analytical tools and study

methods, c) discuss the application of Sikkink's framework and present the qualitative data, followed by d) the conclusion and implications of our argument.[1]

Definitions of Basic Needs Insecurity

Most studies have defined basic needs insecurity among college students as not having adequate food or stable housing. In the U.S., food security has widely been measured using a scale developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA recognizes four levels of food security: high food security, marginal food security, low food security, and very low food security (USDA, n.d.). People who score "high" and "marginal" are considered food secure, which is defined as having no disrupted food intake. Those who score "low" and "very low" are considered food insecure, which is defined as having "limited or uncertain access to food." The difference between "low" and "very low" food security is that if "low," one might have enough calories, but they are not all nutritious. Having "low" food security contributes to a multitude of health problems including obesity and diabetes. Having "very low" food security entails not having enough calories and skipping meals. People who score as "marginal," "low," and "very low" food secure likely experience anxiety about accessing adequate and nutritious food, thereby indicating the connection between food insecurity and its effects on mental health.

There is no widely accepted definition of housing insecurity in the U.S. because federal agencies use different definitions. We rely on the following definition: "housing insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of access to stable, safe, adequate and affordable housing, or the inability to acquire that housing in a socially acceptable way" (Cox et al., 2017, p. 7). This definition encompasses a range of practices such as "couch-surfing" (defined as staying temporarily on the sofas in other people's homes) on one end to homelessness on the other.

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[1] IRB approval: # 2 2 1 1 0 2 3 8 5 3

State of the Problem

The first study on food insecurity among U.S. students was published in 2009 at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (Chaparro et al., 2009). This study found 21% of students were food insecure compared to 10.9% for US households in the same year. Since then, numerous small studies on individual campuses assessing food insecurity, housing insecurity, or both food and housing insecurity have been published (Gaines et al., 2014; Silva et al., 2015; Davidson & Morrell, 2020; Smith & Knechtel 2020; Coakley et al., 2022). Multiple larger multi-site studies have been conducted by The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. Their 2020 study included 202 academic institutions and found 39% of students at 2-year institutions and 29% of students at four-year institutions were food insecure and a total of 14% were homeless (McKibben et al., 2021). The first U.S. nationwide educational survey assessing food security and homelessness was released in 2020. This study had 2,000 participating institutions and found undergraduates had 23% food insecurity and 8% homelessness while graduate students had 12% food insecurity and 5% homelessness (McKibben et al., 2023). A scoping review of fifty-one studies focusing on food security among college students determined a weighted estimate of 41% food insecurity (Nikolaus et al., 2020). They also reported that many studies found students had higher rates of very low food security compared to low food security. A review article on homelessness and housing insecurity in higher education concluded nearly 1 in 10 college students were not at risk for being homeless in the previous year and almost half of college students were housing insecure (Broton, 2020).

Research on BNI students has focused on two outcomes: health and academic success. That is, studies have assessed the relationship between insecurity and health outcomes and insecurity and academic outcomes. El Zein et al. (2019) found food insecure students had higher odds for disordered eating behaviors. Huelskamp et al. (2019) revealed food insecure students practiced obesogenic coping, which included overeating when there is more available food. Bruening et al. (2016) found food insecure students had higher odds of depression. Smith and Knechtel (2020) reported homeless students

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had a significantly higher chance of being asked to exchange sex for basic needs, and in two time periods of their study, 18% and 13% had done so.

Several studies found food insecure students had greater odds of having a reduced course load and lower GPA than their food secure counterparts (Phillips et al., 2018; O'Neill & Maguire, 2017; Weaver et al., 2020). Mechler and colleagues (2021) reported "food-insecure students were over 1.6 times as likely to withdraw from or fail multiple courses compared to food-secure students." It is clear that BNI is associated with poorer health and academic outcomes.

It has also become evident that food insecurity is consistently higher among college students than U.S. households as measured by the USDA, which was 10.9% in 2009 and 10.5% in 2020 (Chaparro et al., 2009; Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Students of color experience more BNI. Several studies reveal being Black, Hispanic, Native American or of two races increased the likelihood of being food insecure (Morris et al., 2016; Martinez et al., 2018; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019; Cargas et al., 2021). Though it is not a focus of this article, a review article analyzed multiple studies of BNI in Australia, Canada, and Poland suggests needs insecurity are an international concern (Dawn Lee et al., 2018).

A serious gap in the U.S. literature is the lack of a clear articulation of the responsibility colleges and universities have for addressing BNI. Numerous recommendations for addressing BNI have been offered, but they do not directly declare that higher education institutions bear primary accountability. Many recommendations are at a general level, stating for example, "upstream solutions starting at the local and statewide levels are imperative" (Nazmi et al., 2019, p. 1); and that "continued efforts of other community agencies such as churches and social service groups" are needed (Bydalek et al., 2020, p. 552), or that "food insecurity could be addressed with a combination of federal government programs, student education, and on-campus food pantries" (Maroto et al., 2015, p. 524). More specific recommendations include expanding access to food programs such as SNAP, using technology to reduce food waste on campus, and increasing student awareness and normalization of resources (Laska et al., 2021 Hagedorn-Hatfield et al., 2022).

Academic researchers have noted that colleges and universities demonstrate a weak response to BNI as evidenced by the prevalence of food pantries on campuses. In fact, pantries are the number one solution proffered and there are at least 800 of them on campuses (Hagedorn-Hatfield et al., 2022; College and University Food Bank Alliance, n.d.). However, pantries are often not provided sustainable funding, and were designed as emergency aid rather than intended to provide a systemic solution (Riches, 2018, p. 9; College and University Food Bank Alliance, n.d.).

The fact that there is a gap in scholarship about who should take responsibility for ameliorating student food insecurity might be explained by the complexity of the problem. The largest association of food banks in the U.S., Feeding America, cites poverty, chronic health conditions, and systemic discrimination as causes of food insecurity (Feeding America, n.d.). Perhaps because many actors are causing the problem, it is hard to say who should address it. At the beginning of her book, *Feeding the Hungry: Advocacy and Blame in the Global Fight Against Hunger* (2020), Michelle Jurkovich explains:

> Hunger has, in many ways, become an "orphaned" issue....agreement on a desired goal or objective (that all people ought to have enough to eat) does not mean it is clear *how* that goal should be attained, or perhaps more importantly for the purposes of understanding social pressure, *who* should be obliged to ensure the goal is met. (pp. 5-6) [Emphasis hers]

She concludes her book by stating: "an essential impediment to effective hunger reduction is still the unresolved question of who societies believe is ultimately responsible for ensuring everyone has adequate food....One cannot solve the hunger problem if it is unclear who is ultimately obliged to do so" (p. 137). Jurkovich's solution is that policy makers, activists, and academics need to construct "social understandings of responsibility for ensuring the right to food" (p. 137). Sikkink's (2020) framework does just that.

The issues that surround food insecurity are also true for housing insecurity as claims about complexity and lack of responsibility are cited by

those working on the housing crisis in the US and globally (Hohmann, 2013; Madden & Marcuse, 2016).

Analysis Framework

In her book, *The Hidden Face of Rights: Towards a Politics of Responsibilities* (2020), Kathryn Sikkink, a Harvard professor of human rights policy, describes responsibilities as the neglected aspect of human rights. The human rights movement has historically emphasized the rights of individuals rather than duties or responsibilities. However, if rights are going to be respected, then the movement needs to also focus on the question of who has responsibility to stop the violations of human rights. Though states (and in this article we use states and governments synonymously) are the primary duty bearers for promoting and protecting rights (Donnelly and Whelan, 2018, p.28), putting all the onus on governments is not enough. Partially, this is because government has retreated from higher education. A degree has gone from being a public good to a private good (Daniels, 2021, p. 72, 74). That is, after WWII the GI Bill was created to help war veterans go to college and increase the number of graduates because an educated citizenry was thought to be good for the country (though white males were the primary beneficiaries of the bill). This was followed by the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s, which is now dominant in political and economic thinking and dictates government's withdrawal from public investments.

Sikkink (2020) argues, "even if the state were to completely fulfill its responsibilities under human rights law, the rights still could not be fully implemented unless other actors stepped forward and did their share" (p. 7). Governments do not control everything and everyone that affects people's rights. For example, governments alone cannot solve discrimination because it often happens at the level of individual behavior. Sikkink explains the human rights movement must develop stronger norms for developing a wider circle of responsibility. Sikkink created a "rights and responsibilities framework" for determining which actors are needed to address a problem and correcting the human rights regime's overemphasis on rights over duties (p. 1). This understanding of responsibility is forward-looking rather than

backward-looking in the legal sense of determining who is liable for the problem. She writes: "This type of responsibility asks not 'Who is to blame?' but 'What should we do?'" (p. 3). The framework is defined by applying a set of questions to a problem to determine who is responsible for addressing it and what solutions can be applied to it. They are a) What are the human rights at stake? b) Who are the relevant "agents of justice"? That is, who is connected to the problem? c) What can we do together? And concomitantly, what are the most effective tools for action? (pp.126-127). Again, the problem we want to solve is student basic needs insecurity. In short, we seek to clarify which rights are involved, who is responsible, and what can be done.

A note on terminology: when we talk about looking at BNI with the "human rights lens," we are referring to the overarching human rights regime, (i.e., the UDHR, conventions and their monitoring bodies, international organizations associated with the United Nations such as the Food and Agricultural Organization, and human rights non-governmental organizations). We will reserve the phrase "human rights framework" to specifically refer to Sikkink's rights and responsibilities framework. We will also refer to human rights education (HRE) because our findings could have far-reaching implications for HRE as explained below.

Study Methods

In addition to applying the rights and responsibilities framework, we present qualitative data to illustrate student thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs as they relate to Sikkink's framework. The qualitative data shared is part of a larger Statewide Basic Needs Survey conducted with 27 public institutions of higher education from one U.S. state and included participation from students, staff, and faculty. Responses from students only will be used here and include students who are 16 years of age and older and currently enrolled as a part-time or full-time student. The survey took place in 2023 using Qualtrics, a web-based software program used to administer surveys, as well as paper surveys if academic institutions requested them. Once the data were collected and cleaned, participants were categorized as students (full-time or part-time undergraduate, graduate, or professional

student). For the purpose of qualitative analysis, student information was not divided into categories.

The total number of student responses were 9995 with 346 students from three tribal institutions, 6146 students from seventeen two-year institutions, and 3503 students from seven four-year institutions. The majority identified as in-state residents (88.9%), female (65.7%), heterosexual/straight (72%), and either Hispanic (31.0%) or White (29.4%). Undergraduate students made up 92.2% of the sample, and graduate students accounted for 7.8% of respondents. Most students were enrolled in associate (34.2%) or bachelor (27.5%) degree programs and 11.9% were enrolled in high school equivalency/GED programs. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 34 years (46.2% were 18-24 and 24.3% were 25-34). More than 60% of students were employed either full-time (33.8%) or part-time (29.0%). Although the majority of students did not have child dependents (73.1%), many respondents reported making financial contributions to someone else, such as parents, siblings, or spouses (51.9%). Half of the respondents stated they are living with some type of disability; the most commonly reported disabilities were mental health conditions (27.6%) and learning disabilities (10.2%).

The open-ended questions used for this analysis included: a) "There are many reasons why people are food insecure. Please share an obstacle (or two) that affects your ability to access healthy food"; b) "Please share a personal experience where food or housing insecurity had a direct impact on your ability to go to class or work, focus, study, or complete assignments"; and c) "What more could your college or university do to address food and housing insecurity? Please share a solution(s)." Nvivo was used in the analysis process and two researchers analyzed the data by question. A codebook was created for each question using relevant themes and quotes were selected that illuminate the themes.

Application of Framework and Qualitative Data

Which human rights are at stake?

Sikkink's first task in analyzing a problem is to establish exactly which human rights are at issue. Using the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), we determined that the rights being violated by BNI are the rights to education, food, and shelter. In addition to the rights to food and shelter (UDHR, art. 25) not being fulfilled, the right to education (UDHR, art. 26) is also at stake given the high drop-out rate of college students. While a causal relationship has yet to be established between BNI and student achievement, an association between those who are BNI and lower academic outcomes has been made (Phillips et al., 2018; O'Neill & Maguire, 2017; Weaver et al., 2020; Mechler et al., 2021). The association can also be explained by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This theory states that stages of development have an order where some have to be met first before others can be reached. Higher psychological needs cannot be met before securing the physiological needs of food and shelter first (Maslow, 1943). Table 1 offers the perspectives of students from the statewide study of basic needs. Their lived experiences demonstrate how food and housing insecurity interfered with student success.

Table 1: Lack of Basic Needs Impact on Education

"There were times after my SNAP benefits ran out where I was hungry enough that I chose to rest instead of doing homework assignments."
"Fainted in class because I was hungry, luckily people just thought I was taking a nap."
"Without having eaten a decent meal in the past few days, I failed one of my final exams and couldn't show up to take another because I also couldn't afford gas."
"Once I was so hungry that I did not have the energy to go to class, and I took a failing grade for the week."
"I had to miss class on more than one occasion to sell plasma so I could buy food."
"Going hungry for a full day, at least twice a week, makes studying very difficult. The worry of skipping meals to spread out food for the family, and have 1 small meal a day the rest of the week is taxing. It does not allow me to care for myself properly and it is very scary."

"I have not been able to go to school, because I need to work. I am currently worried about obtaining food when I start to school because I will not be working as much. I am a type one diabetic and cannot go without medications and food."
"My [apartment] isn't the safest, and sometimes I just don't feel safe and have lots of anxiety, which affects my ability to do assignments."
"I did not have a place to stay for a while, so I dropped out last semester."
"Since becoming homeless, I could not study in my car, which is basically my home. And most nights I was scared to turn on my computer, because people would try and break in my car to get to me or my laptop. Other days I could not make it to class due to hygiene, or I would wake up ill due to not having food and my body would become weak at times."
"I have issues with heating in the place I'm staying. It makes it hard to get enough sleep, and I wind up missing school or doing poorly on homework at times."
"2 times, [my] house was cold. [I] did not have money to pay for firewood to keep the house warm. [This] makes online schooling difficult due to being very cold (winter months)."

These quotes illustrate that the students' rights to food and housing are not being met, thus affecting their right to education.

Let us examine the rights in order of the UDHR (mirroring Maslow's hierarchy). First, we examine the rights to food and shelter and then the right to education.

UDHR article 25 states "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing…" However, as a declaration, the UDHR does not have the force of law. Conventions and treaties have turned the various articles of the UDHR into international law. Of the seven main human rights treaties, four mandate a right to food (the first three also include the right to shelter). They are the Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The U.S. has not ratified any of them. Conservative factions in the U.S. have argued that the government does not need to be party to international law because it infringes on U.S. sovereignty. Critics also cite specific aspects of treaties as not aligning with their values such as conservative parents' objections to the CRC (Cohen, 2006).

Additionally, the global human rights movement is not guided only by conventions and treaties because, as Eleanor Roosevelt is credited with saying, "A right is not something that somebody gives you, it something that nobody can take away" (Riches, 2018, p. 123). The UDHR is the foundational document and is used widely as a touchstone. In fact, the U.S. Department of State's website for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor has a picture of Eleanor Roosevelt holding a poster of the UDHR on its homepage, implying endorsement of universal human rights even though the government has not signed other treaties (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, n.d.). Non-governmental human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, recognize rights to food and shelter, as do the majority of philosophers writing about human rights, including Thomas Pogge (2008) and Henry Shue (2020) in his seminal book, *Basic Rights*. And in fact, most of the world acknowledges the rights to food, shelter, and education. Countries have signed one or more of the treaties mandating them and have legislated them further in domestic law. Further, those mandates which are not legally binding, or so-called "soft law," also state that there is a right to food. A relevant example is the 1996 draft of the Right to Food Guidelines endorsed by over 1,000 organizations. In 2004, it was adopted by consensus by the Council of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2005). The U.S. is a member of the FAO, thereby acknowledging the "guidelines" for achieving the right to food. This has led the FAO to state:

> Considering the wide recognition in international and national laws as well as States' commitments through soft-law instruments, there is a view that at least freedom from hunger can be considered a norm of international customary law, which is binding on all States, regardless of whether they have ratified specific treaties. (p. 9)

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that of the rights discussed in this paper, the right to food is firmly accepted as one of the most widely acknowledged universal human rights even by the U.S. government.

Sometimes, human rights obligations are thought to be about ensuring minimum standards, such as a minimum amount of calories per day.

They are indeed instructions for taking care of those less able to take care of themselves, including children or the elderly. But they apply to "everyone" as it is the first word in the article of the right to food and shelter. Therefore, they also apply to college students and imply a duty to protect and respect their rights. Though students are often in the prime of their life and could presumably obtain adequate food and shelter if they dropped out of school and worked full-time, in a country where the wages of almost everyone except the very wealthy have stagnated, a full-time job does not guarantee needs security (Desmond, 2023, p. 50). Further, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2022) reported that in 2022, 74% of students held jobs and 40% of part-time students work over 35 hours a week as do 10% of full-time students, but students often work in low-wage industries (Mechler et al., 2021). The quotations from students in Table 2 illustrate the difficulty of paying for school, food, and rent while working demonstrating that the rights of students are not being protected.

Table 2: Working Students Views on the Financial Status
and Access to Basic Needs

"I am a full-time student and work 20 hours a week. I also take out loans to cover living expenses. Groceries, rent, gas, and utilities have all gone up. My hourly pay and loans have stayed the same. My school will not let me work more than 20 hours a week."
"Had to go down to part-time work in order to maintain my schooling requirements. Limited income meant I didn't have as much to purchase necessary items."
"I had to cut my hours at work to attend school. This meant also taking a cut in my paychecks and after paying bills I often don't have enough for groceries."
"My income does not provide enough money to purchase enough food sometimes."
"School would take too much time, so I couldn't work full time and pay bills and would only have enough for bills and gas. So, I skipped a few meals."

> "I don't make enough money to access healthy food. And my parents are also struggling with money and bills, so we usually don't have much food at home, much less anything healthy. The fact that I'm a broke 20 year old paying for my college myself along with working to support myself."

> "While I do make enough to pay my bills and such. I don't make enough to safely feel like I can eat healthy meals at home. After all bills are paid ,I have about $100 to last two weeks for food. The cost of meat is outrageous so to get enough food it's usually best to get microwave meals or ramen."

> "I am a worker and an immigrant student, and my husband is a student. All the money we save up in our jobs is to pay for tuition and housing. Sometimes what we eat is not a priority."

Even with jobs students are not able to access adequate food and housing. Additionally, we learned that for students living in rural communities, employment is not always available. One student explained, "Livable wages are not offered to undergraduates and individuals in rural areas such as myself." Rural students often have to travel long distances. One student shared, "[I] have to travel 40 miles for class and work and often will choose to pack a lunch, because I can't afford to buy a meal. I also have to pay for gas as well as any groceries I may need. (Such as feminine products)."

UDHR Article 26 states: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. ... higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit." Despite the inclusion of higher education in Article 26, the scholarship on the right to education neglects analysis of the rights of college students to obtain a credential. Most of the global discussion is on ensuring primary and secondary education. For example, The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which are meant to guide global investments for progress in developing and developed countries, includes a goal (Goal 4) for achieving education for all. It has seven targets for reaching the goal of "inclusive and equitable quality education" but they are primarily focused on the need to educate young children (United Nations, Global Goals, n.d.).

There is some scholarship focused on inequality and higher education specifically and it does find a college degree is not equally available to all.

Thomas Piketty (2022), the French expert on global inequality, has written about the importance of equal access to higher education and decries that "inequalities of access…remain very deep" (p. 176). He also reports in the U.S., "the probability of being admitted to an institution of higher learning is scarcely 30 percent among the top 10 percent of young adults whose parents have the lowest income, increasing linearly to more than 90 percent for young adults whose parents have the highest incomes" (p. 176). Students from lower income communities and students of color are those more likely to never enroll, or if they do, not complete a degree (Daniels, 2021, p. 74). This reveals the extent to which there is a lack of equal access. Specifically, higher education needs to do more than simply enroll students; it needs to support them in completing their degree programs. Ronald Daniels (2021), president of Johns Hopkins University, in his recent book, highlights the "profound" racial education gap in the U.S. reinforced by higher education (p. 38). He goes so far as to quote experts who label higher education "engines of inequality" (p. 274.) We are not going to reach racial and economic equality in the U.S. without equality in higher education.

Amartya Sen's (1979) capability approach helps explain why the right to education extends to higher education, especially in wealthy countries which can afford to support it. His theory promotes the idea that a country ensures freedom and equality when it provides enough for people to reach their full capacity. He wrote, "Capabilities reflect a person's freedom to choose between different ways of living" (p. 5). Having the freedom to choose requires a full array of opportunities and having an education creates opportunities. In resource-rich countries, access to advanced education is necessary to achieve equality of capabilities and the freedom that ensues. Sen explained, "The ability to exercise freedom, may, to a considerable extent, be directly dependent on the education we have received" (p. 12). Education leads people out of poverty. With a bachelor's degree, one is twice as likely to be employed compared to those that only hold a high school diploma, and "three and half times more likely to avoid poverty" (Daniels, 2021, p. 36). In the U.S., without access to higher education, individuals are more likely to live in poverty, thereby not being able to fulfill their potential and enact their freedom. As the Princeton sociologist Matthew Desmond (2023) has written,

"poverty is the dream killer, the capability destroyer, the great waster of human potential" (p. 136). Poverty equals inequality of capability.

Students surveyed in the statewide study understand the need for education to overcome poverty and fully realize their potential. They shared the sacrifices they made for their futures. One student explained "out of interest for my long-term goals. I focus on school." Another shared they remain in school "to create a better future for myself." Yet another student continued their education in hopes to "increase my earning potential and a better future for myself and my child." The quotations in Table 3 are representative of how other students talk about their hopes for what a degree can bring them.

Table 3: Student Voices on Their Hopes for a Better Life

"The main obstacle is that my husband and I don't have degrees. I think that there's difference between those who eat well and those of us who don't. It's the quality of education that separates us. This is why I'm trying to get my nursing degree so I can better provide for my family. So we never have to desire for something that should be easily attainable - food."
"My husband is the only one working, so I can hopefully complete school and get us in a better financial situation for the future."
"I went back to school full time to get a better job."
"I lost my job after Covid. I work full time and make less than half of what I used to. I went back to school in hopes that a degree would help me become financially secure again."
"I got laid off when the pandemic started 3 years ago and decided to go back to college full time."
"Living off of social security isn't enough. That is why I went back to school."

These students clearly understand that education is required for them to achieve what they are capable of, just as Sen argues. Education will allow them to realize the rights of food and shelter. We further see from the quotes how rights are interrelated, which illustrates other fundamental human rights principles, namely that all human rights are indivisible and interrelated (World Conference on Human Rights, 1993).

Agents of Justice

The second set of questions in Sikkink's rights and responsibilities framework are: Who is connected to the problem and who are the agents of justice? She defines agents of justice as those who have an ethical and political forward-looking ability to do something. Everyone involved in higher education has a role in the rights violations and, therefore, has responsibility to take steps to mitigate them. Legislators at the state and federal level can increase funding and lower barriers for accessing benefits, for example, but the higher education institutions must also take action. One reason the government alone cannot solve the problems of food and housing insecurity on campus is because it does not control institutional policies on what they charge and how they spend. Academic institutions play a significant role in basic needs insecurities with what they charge in tuition, additional fees and choices about how they distribute their resources.

On the matter of tuition, a Wall Street Journal journalist found it has risen faster than inflation and family incomes. The cost of tuition has fallen hardest on the poorest families (Mitchell, 2021, p. 127) as "colleges have abused their tremendous pricing power" (p. 5). They are the third biggest employer of lobbyists who have helped them fend off federal regulators (p. 8). Congress has supported higher tuitions by setting higher educational loan limits (p. 71). A 2020 article by Gruber and Scherling explains the neoliberal agenda including in higher education: "All parts of life are being measured in economic terms and metrics. Within this 'neoliberal rationality' individuals are only exemplars of the homo oeconomicus (Brown, quoted in Gruber & Scherling, 2020) and productive human capital becomes the only legitimate goal of education and educational programs." The student is seen as principally important to the bottom line of the institution whose goal, in turn, is to generate productive individuals for the economy. This neoliberal reality prevents social justice from being at the fore of institutional agendas.

The UN Food and Agricultural Organization states that food must be available, accessible, and adequate and "Individuals should be able to afford food for an adequate diet without compromising on any other basic needs, such as school fees, medicines or rent" (Food and Agriculture Organization

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of the United Nations, p. 2). And yet, as this student explains: "The price of school, the hours of school. Where wages are currently at it is hard to work enough to afford both [tuition and books] and still afford housing and food." The cost of tuition and other associated academic costs directly disrupt students' ability to attend and remain in higher education as well as provide for their basic needs, especially food and housing. Students need to make difficult choices and often opt to give up food as demonstrated by students' reflections in Table 4.

Table 4: The Difficulty of Paying Tuition

"I have to choose from food or rent/ I pay for school classes."
"All of my money goes towards school fees and housing expenses…"
"I cannot afford to pay for food AND my bills/tuition. So, I choose the latter."
"Trying to pay tuition, living costs, and food was not the first on the list. My children never went hungry, only me."
"Paying for college expenses and purchasing food can be challenging in terms of price, especially now that food is expensive …"
"My tuition keeps going up, I can barely afford much…"
"A huge obstacle for me is the amount I pay for school and my other bills, so much so that food feels like it comes last."
"Not always having disposable income after paying rent, utilities, and tuition."

Because higher education institutions determine tuition, these quotes illustrate their role as agents of justice.

Further, higher education must bear some responsibility for the more than 10% of Americans (34 million) who have some college credit but no degree and debt. They are worse off economically for having attended college (Kirp, 2019, p. 3). Taking the risk of pursuing higher education proved harmful, and institutional recruitment materials do not carry a warning about it. Stephanie Land eloquently captures the risk in her memoir, *Class: Motherhood, Hunger, and Higher Education* (2023), when she stated: "I was really getting an advanced degree in irony. A degree had been waved in front of my face like a certificate out of poverty. The fact that

loans sank me further into poverty wasn't lost on me..." (p. 39). For those who withdraw without a degree, there is even less of a chance to get out of poverty. In fact, for many, quitting college with no credential and debt contributes to downward mobility.

Institutional administrators are not the only potential agents of justice. Everyone constituting a higher education community bears responsibility. Accrediting bodies that determine practicum and internship requirements could review their policies and require academic institutions and placement sites pay students for their time in training. As illustrated in Table 5, students experience undue burdens when going to school and pursuing unpaid practical experience. These requirements contribute to greater BNI.

Table 5: Practicums, Internships, Work-study

"I choose to go to school and work part-time. My choice to go to school full-time has had a negative [effect] on my financial status. Attending school is a big obstacle and sometimes I dream about dropping out, so I can go back to work full-time. School and the hours required to complete my practicum are unrealistic for me and for others to achieve due to the lack of time to be able to work full time and go to school full time."
"I've spent the last two years focusing on school work and 2 unpaid internships. Unpaid internships are unethical. I cut back on my hours at my only job so I could complete my course work and internship requirements. I earned less than $6000 in 2022."
"Part-time classes and part-time intern[ships] make me struggle to buy food and basic hygiene stuff that I need."

Other potential agents of justice include governing boards, because they set budget priorities; the frontline staff who are providers for student needs; the faculty who can do more to respect students' lived experience; and students themselves, because they can be their own most powerful advocates.

We agree with Matthew Desmond about the action needed by all of us to end poverty in America:

> There are a good many challenges facing this big, wide country, but near the top of the list must be concerns about basic needs....Every person, every company, every institution that has a role in perpetuating poverty also has a role in ameliorating it. The end of poverty is something to stand for, to march for, to sacrifice for. (2023, p. 189)

Everyone associated with higher education is part of the network of responsibility needed to address basic needs.

Effective Tools

In answering who is responsible for making change, we have touched on the answer to Sikkink's last set of questions: "What can we do together?" and "what are the most effective tools for action?" Obviously, increased government spending would be an effective tool in achieving students' human rights, but we will continue with our focus on higher education institutions. Governing boards could wield enormous influence in support of basic needs, as they have done in the University of California system. The University of California Regents set a goal of reducing basic needs insecurity by half by 2025 (University of California, 2023). They have instituted increases in the institutional investment in supporting basic needs as well as successfully advocated for state investments. The University of California system has established metrics for assessing progress, including how many students are receiving emergency aid; using food pantries, food vouchers, and grocery cards; and using their housing services.

College and university administrators can also create policies and increase funding for staff to oversee the distribution of funds for all the above-mentioned activities. Currently, the number one response to needs insecurity is to have a food pantry on campus (Hagedorn-Hatfield et al., 2022). They are often not provided institutional funding beyond the space they are in (Price et al., 2020). Because pantries are the most common response, they are not likely to disappear anytime soon, so institutions should fund and improve them. Recommendations from students in the statewide survey include requests to "create food pantries or food banks on campus" where there are none. Suggestions for improvements to pantries were: "extend the hours of on campus food banks and pantries, include weekends," "ensure food banks and pantries are in accessible locations," "provide options to obtain food from on campus food banks for those who are embarrassed," and "increase nutritious food options at campus food banks and pantries."

Another obstacle students face in using pantries is stigma (El Zein et al., 2018; Peterson et al., 2022; Idehai et al., 2024). We asked students who did not use a pantry why and an oft-cited reason was "I don't want other people to see me and know that I am food insecure" (Cargas et al., 2024). As dignity is a bedrock principle of human rights, the human rights lens applied to pantries would suggest there are better ways of addressing food insecurity.

A more promising intervention is the establishment of a fully staffed (by social workers or case managers) basic needs center in a centralized location where students can go seek help with any resource question. In the words of one student, "Develop resource centers that are safe, non-judgmental, and easily accessible." These centers could address these requests by students to "improve outreach to students regarding basic needs," "increase advertisement for available services – food, housing, and other services/resources," and "advertise community-based programs that offer services needed by students." We also recommend that staffing include students with some training in trauma-informed care and resource navigation, as institutions could do much more to provide outreach and benefits application assistance. Students aiding students could reduce the stigma of asking for help. Other actions administrators can take should include establishing a campus-wide basic needs task force with the mandate to create a strategic plan. The state of Washington has legislated task forces and strategic plans in some of its public institutions (H. B. 1559, 2023).

Sikkink (2020) argues a system of networked responsibility is needed; therefore, staff from across campus should be engaged in addressing BNI. Libraries have some of the highest traffic on campus and can do more to create awareness about both the problem and solutions. Academic departmental staff can create free snack cupboards for the students in their departments. Campus police can share ideas for making housing safer. Cooperation is required from facilities managers to provide space and adequate water for campus gardens and greenhouses, so students can grow food. IT departments can create mobile applications that help students locate food leftover from campus events or assist with finding housing.

Administration can require staff sensitivity and trauma-informed care training to better support students experiencing poverty. Amarillo College in Texas closed the entire campus for a two-day Poverty Institute which provided "lessons on defining poverty, confronting myths and stereotypes about poverty, [and offered] approaches for communicating across difference" (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2018). A student shared with us how a financial aid officer simply refused to believe the student had no family to turn to for financial help. Another shared their embarrassment at being turned away from the pantry because he had used it "too often" that month when it was his lifeline at the time. Sensitivity training would prevent such unfortunate interactions.

Human rights educators can play a significant role at an institution, especially in terms of teaching *through* and *for* human rights. According to the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, in addition to teaching about human rights, we should ensure:

> Education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners; Education for human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others. (United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Education and Training, 2011)

Respecting the rights of learners requires we do not actively violate their rights. Human rights educators can push schools to do more to uphold rights by addressing BNI. As for teaching *for* human rights, Bajaj (2011) found in a survey of human rights education (HRE) models that they aim for "transformative action" (p. 481). Teaching advocacy to students is way to operationalize empowering our students for transforming their own communities (Cargas, 2020).

All faculty should become more aware of and sensitive to students experiencing food and housing insecurity. Increasingly, syllabi statements are recommended by those working in basic needs. Providing a few sentences stating one is aware that some students may be experiencing basic needs insecurity, followed by a list of available resources on campus and an invitation

to talk to the faculty about their situation, would be helpful to students. Faculty can also lead in applying their expertise to teaching about and researching needs insecurity. In addition to HRE faculty teaching students about their rights, nutrition faculty can highlight the health-related outcomes of being needs insecure, fine arts faculty can create awareness campaigns, sustainability courses can focus on creating and managing gardens, and those teaching statistics can use the data when illustrating mathematical tools, to name only a few possibilities.

Teaching support centers can lead conversations about the consequences that result from how much students work at paying jobs. The accrediting bodies for colleges and universities can emphasize the federal regulations stating that students should be required to do a minimum of two hours of homework for every hour of faculty instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). If students are taking 15 credit hours that would mean 30 hours of academic work are expected each week. Research shows that students are doing far less homework (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2022). Reasons could include that a typical 20-hour work study job means students would be working 50 hours a week. Additionally, students are told extracurricular activities are essential to their resumes. Accrediting bodies can insist that institutions do more to help students have more time to study. Specialized accrediting bodies often determine the practicum and internship requirements. As we have seen, they can be burdensome, but that could be addressed with steps such as paying students a wage.

Especially in light of HRE's call to empower people, students themselves can take steps for addressing the problem. At larger institutions, student governments manage budgets in the millions of dollars. Thus, students can redirect some of their spending towards addressing basic needs security. Students can also organize to advocate to administrators and legislative bodies to address the problems. Lastly, they can submit communications about BNI to human rights treaty monitoring committees.

Conclusion

In applying the human "rights and responsibilities framework" and presenting qualitative data from the statewide study, we have demonstrated that the "rights at stake" are education, food, and housing. Specifically, we have shown that these rights of college students are not being addressed and further, colleges and universities have a responsibility (as change agents) to address them. Tools for fixing the problem include emergency responses such as pantries, short-term shelter, helping students with benefits applications, and offering food scholarships. Systemic changes are needed to create a cultural shift to uphold human rights. One suggestion is to educate the entire higher education community on BNI and empower students in the process of teaching faculty, administrators, and legislators about the extent of the problem and solutions. Other systemic responses include paying students more for graduate and research assistantships, internships, and practicums, reducing tuition and fees, and reallocating resources towards basic needs initiatives.

In taking these steps, it is also likely there would be a significant return on investment for institutions. Many more students will complete their degrees and will achieve upward mobility, thereby contributing economically to society while avoiding poverty. Most importantly, institutions would live up to their commitment to being socially responsible for the communities they are in (Brock & Zhong, 2021) by not being complicit in the violations of students' human rights.

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Critical Language Education for Peace:
On the Significance of Communicative Agency
for Education for Human Rights, Peace, and
Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This conceptual paper explores the intersection of human rights, children's rights, and peace education, and language education. Languages, communication, and dialogue play a crucial role in international understanding and cooperation towards human rights, children's rights, and peace.

This contribution recognizes communicative competence as inclusive of ideology-critical abilities (Delanoy, 2017) and begins by arguing that for students to become "agents of change and protagonists of their future" (UNESCO, 2024, p. 5), their communicative agency must be considered an essential aspect of transformative education. The discussion will focus on the field of English (as a "foreign," second or additional) language education, as English is one of the lingua francas used in global discourses on human and children's rights, peace, and sustainable development.

This paper will take a dialogue-based and interdisciplinary approach and will be developed in two steps: first, it explores how language education can provide a unique lens for educating on

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human and child rights, peace, and social sustainability. Second, it explores the dimensions by which a critical approach to language education for peace can promote transformative communicative agency in the pursuit of social objectives. It will argue that through its focus on languages, cultures and literatures, the "foreign" language classroom is uniquely positioned to engage with the stories and people of the world; further, a critical language education for peace can empower learners to take communicative action for their own rights and to protect the rights of others.

Keywords: communicative agency, critical peace education, human rights education, language education, sustainability

Introduction

Critical peace education (CPE) has a long tradition as an interdisciplinary field (see, e.g., Bajaj, 2008; Reardon, 2021; Wintersteiner, 2022).[1] As it "utilizes teaching and learning not only to dismantle all forms of violence but also to create structures that build and sustain a just and equitable peace and world," (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016, p. 1), it is transformative in nature and closely connected to both human rights education (HRE), children's rights education (CRE) and education for sustainable development[2] (ESD).

In the recently published report *Revised recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms*, UNESCO (2024) emphasizes this connection, clearly illustrating that all these educational approaches can be viewed as an indivisible whole. It stresses that all member states should "support the development of contextualized curricula, for all subjects and topics" (UNESCO, 2024, p. 10), and explicitly mentions history,

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[1] This contribution is firmly grounded in critical approaches to peace education and in an understanding of the concept of peace as outlined by Galtung (1969). While softer approaches, which focus on inner peace and emotional regulation, certainly have their merits, they do not aim for transformative agency and critical praxis as envisaged, for example, by the UNESCO's recommendations on education for peace and human rights (2024; for a more in-depth discussion see, e.g., Cook, 2008; Matz, 2023).

[2] In line with Misiaszek (e.g., 2018, p. 10) we recur to the use of lower-case letters for education for sustainable development throughout this chapter to indicate that capitalization signifies hegemony and top-down power relations, while the lower-case version signifies empowerment and bottom-up transformative praxis.

social sciences, and STEM subjects, but not second/additional or "foreign" languages. Regarding this recommendation, but also other contributions in the field of education for human and children's rights, peace, and sustainable development—both theoretical and practical—it is notable that the area of teaching and learning languages remains curiously absent [see, e.g., Bajaj (2008); Jerome & Starkey (2021)].[3]

Education is and continues to be political and we as educators must continuously raise the question of how we are "to teach young people to see and act on a global rather than local or regional stage" (Jackson, 2023, p. 22) within our respective disciplines. This is why this article begins by reformulating this question to ask: How can language educators teach young people to see and act communicatively on a global stage?

At first glance, it may not be immediately clear why 'foreign' language education should be included in addressing issues of peace, violence, human rights, and environmental justice. There certainly are several reasons for this, two of which are discussed in more detail below.

One the one hand, it may certainly lie in the perception of the field itself: for a long time and despite efforts from scholars such as Allen Luke [see, e.g., Luke & Dooley (2011)] or, on a more general level, Norman Fairclough [see, e.g., Fairclough (2010)] language learning and teaching has largely been conceptualised in functional[4] terms as simply acquiring linguistic communicative competence, despite its inherent "moral and even political dimension" (Starkey, 2023, p. 65). As scholars appropriately point out, this functional understanding of language education bears similarities to the Freirean idea of a banking model of education (Oxford et al., 2021, p. 57), with students developing functional communicative competences and linguistic

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[3] The authors' background is in English as a 'foreign' language (EFL) education, more specifically the German context. However, this article's central arguments are generalisable and may apply to other 'foreign' language education contexts. To better reflect the multilateral process that language teaching and learning is, we use the term language education synonymously to EFL (also see footnote 9).

[4] 'Functional' here refers to both goals associated with traditional understandings of literacy education, i.e., being able to read and write, and to education models that are dominated by structuralist and discrete ideologies of literacy and learning practices that are decontextualized, highly reductive, and assumed to be universal.

awareness. A language, however, "is never 'just' a set of sounds, symbols or rules to be memorized with no connection to cultural context, real life, meaning, or actual communication" (Oxford et al., 2021, p. 57). Instead, language learning is inherently linked to socio-cultural learning and can encourage learners to appreciate and reflect on the social embeddedness and connectedness of their own experiences, while language use, and thus learning a language, is always also linked to identity construction (see Delanoy, 2023, p. 132). However, this needs to be reflected in curricular designs and frameworks such as, for example, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001, 2020) or national curricular frameworks. Interestingly, though, frameworks such as the CEFR have not adopted human rights approaches or peace education perspectives, nor do they reflect concepts of global or cosmopolitan citizenship in education [see, e.g., Matz (2020), Römhild et al. (2023)].

On the other hand, it might also lie in (the lack of) both theoretical and practical contributions the field of language education has made to CPE so far.[5] In the context of the English language classroom, for example, conceptualizations for a human rights-informed curriculum for peace education in language education remain scarce. Early attempts to promote such perspectives [see, e.g., Diehr (2007); Ghait & Shaaban (1994); Wintersteiner (2022)] have not been pursued on a wider scale [for a notable exception, see Mochizuki & Christodoulou (2017)], and while ESD as well as approaches such as global education and issues of social justice seem to be bearing fruit [see, e.g., Lütge (2015); Cates (2022); Lütge et al. (2022); Surkamp (2022); Bjerregaar Sørensen and Bolander (2023), Hoydis et al. (2023), Lønstrup Nielsen (2023); Römhild (2023a), Römhild et al. (2023), Burner and Porto (2024)], an explicit critical focus on CPE is still dependent on grassroots initiatives.[6] However, while contributions in the fields of HRE approaches to language education and, more specifically, CRE remain scarce, interest in language

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[5] The reasons for this can only be speculated and there is a need for further research.

[6] The same is true for HRE, which remains a desideratum in the field of 'foreign' language education both in theory and practice.

education for peace seems to be growing [see, e.g., Matz (2023), Oxford et al. (2021); Tulgar (2017); Vasisopoulos et al. (2019); Yastibaş (2021)].

From our point of view, "foreign" language education is in a unique position to contribute to the social aims that form the core of HRE, CRE and CPE, as languages play a vital role in human communication, international understanding, and cooperation. Like the strive for human rights, pursuing peace and sustainable development is "a cosmopolitan project," and enables students to take part in this project, "to make links between their struggles and those of people in distant places, whom they have never met" (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 69); to do so, they need to communicate in one or more shared languages. Language education is meant to support learners in learning to listen, in making connections, and in responding in critically reflected ways; moreover, its aim is to enable learners to partake in (global) discourses which surround them in their everyday lives. This requires a change in perspective from the functional understanding of communicative competence as outlined above to a recognition of communicative competence as "inclusive of ideology-critical abilities" (Delanoy, 2017, p. 170). Language education informed by this understanding should aim "for a dialogue-friendly language use and power-critical language awareness" (Delanoy, 2017, p. 163).

This theoretical and conceptual contribution takes this aspect as a starting point and argues that if students are to become "agents of change and protagonists of their future" (UNESCO, 2024, p. 5), their communicative agency must also be considered as an essential aspect of transformative education. As a diverse range of global discourses regarding human and children's rights, peace and sustainable development are held in English, the discussion that follows particularly focuses on the field of English language education. Taking a dialogical and interdisciplinary approach, this article first explores the ways and dimensions in which language education can offer a unique perspective to education for human and children's rights, peace and, (social) sustainability. This discussion chiefly revolves around the cultivation of transformative communicative agency in the context of the pursuit of social aims in language education. The article also includes an investigation of the intersections between the fields of language education and HRE, CRE and

CPE as well as education for sustainability. Along this trajectory, the article also discusses a more holistic understanding of language education, one that is embedded in efforts for education for sustainability and peace, one that transcends banking models of education (Freire, 1970) and moves towards critical language education for social aims rather than for functionality. It thus follows a humanistic, rooted, and critical cosmopolitan notion of language education, to encourage learners to reflect on their own positionality in global contexts and discourses (Siepmann et al., 2023; Starkey, 2023).

Critical language education for transformative communicative agency

Language education should foreground students' "ability to find and raise one's voice in all matters" (Diehr, 2024), and it can contribute to providing young people with the communicative resources they need to develop their own agency. As language education is "not a single subject" (Tulgar, 2017, p. 72), it can include a myriad of topics and themes and therefore be shaped according to students interests and needs and respond to current societal changes and developments. Considering the present challenges, which "call for peace education to be broader and deeper, comprising even more diversity" (Reardon, 2021, p. viii), this certainly also encompasses issues of violence and peace, human rights, and sustainability. As part of the child advocate community, language educators thus also need to be constantly engaged in addressing these challenges, developing concepts and approaches to both protect and empower their students. In doing so, it is paramount to recognize that supporting children and young adults in developing communicative agency is an inherently humanistic and interdisciplinary task.

Critical competencies are part and parcel of this approach to language education and should be developed alongside communicative competencies "because young people should become able to use their knowledge and their languages to shape the world and to initiate important transformations" (Diehr, forthcoming; Marxl & Römhild, 2023). To conceptualize the fields of language learning and teaching and peace education together, it is helpful to turn to the concept of *transformative agency*. Although this concept has not

yet been more widely discussed in this context and has not been adopted by frameworks such as the "CEFR" (Council of Europe, 2020), reframing it for the field of "foreign" language education may help to develop concepts that encourage students' participatory engagement across languages and discourses.[7]

In envisaging an education for peace and human rights, Hantzopoulos and Bajaj (2021) stress "the importance and transformative potential in honoring the dignity of youth and offering them the ability to cultivate their own agency through critical analysis of power relations, collective civic engagement, and long-term strategic thinking for their future" (pp. 112-113). Transformative approaches such as theirs draw on "Freire's notions and cosmopolitan ideas of global citizenship" (Bajaj, 2017, p. 8) and thus, in its ideal form, they encourage learners to

- "*learn* about a larger imagined community where human rights offers a shared language,"
- "*question* a social or cultural practice that does not fit within the global framework," and
- "*identify* allies (teachers, peers, community activists, NGOs) to *amplify their voice*, along with other strategies for influencing positive social change" (Bajaj, 2017, p. 8).[8]

As agency is foregrounded in both HRE and CPE, this means students are not just encouraged to learn about *structural* and *cultural violence*, but to also be critical and analytical about these forms of *indirect violence* and—with help—act upon it (Galtung, 1969).

This transformative approach can be adapted for the language classroom with the overall goal of supporting students' communicative agency in a transformative sense. In line with Bajaj (2017), this requires rethinking

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[7] There are some conceptualizations in the field of English as a 'foreign' language at a more general level (see, e.g., Luke & Dooley, 2011, Marxl & Römhild, 2023), as well as in the context of critical race theory (see, e.g., Crump, 2014) or CPE (Yastibaş, 2021), to name but a few, that can serve as starting points and also provide examples for classroom praxis.

[8] For a more in-depth discussion of this concept please see, Bajaj (2018) and Hantzopoulos & Bajaj (2021).

language education in terms of the three aspects outlined above, which, in the following section, are conceptualized as three dimensions in reverse order:

1) The Participatory dimension

Learning languages could be reframed with a particular perspective on participation and dialogue, which, again, is unique to language education. If learners are to be encouraged to speak out, to "amplify their voice" (Bajaj 2017, p. 8), to speak up for their own rights and the rights of others, to argue against forms of violence and for peace, then a different understanding of communicative competence is needed. Delanoy (2012; 2017) focuses on language learning in the sense of communicative competence as the learners' ability to respond. He stresses the importance of grasping one's own role within this world and that this "personal responsibility implies accountability for issues of translocal/global relevance" (Delanoy, 2012, p. 163). He recognizes that learners "as social beings need to articulate and negotiate their needs and interests in their decision-making processes, and that these responsibilities are connected to "response-abilities", i.e., to communicative competences" (Delanoy, 2012, p. 163). Such a critical reframing of language education thus stresses the need to help students in becoming response-able, so that they are able to participate in a critically reflective way in shared discourses, to raise their voice and gain communicative agency across languages (Marxl & Römhild, 2023).

2) Cultural dimension

In terms of a *cultural dimension*, language learners should not only be able to perceive themselves as rights holders, who can engage with members of the larger imagined community using their shared languages, but also should also be encouraged to understand human and children's rights as a common language that they share. Whether and in how far learning and teaching languages can be conceptualized as critical language education for peace and sustainability thus "hinges on concepts of cultural diversity, hybridity, and plurality—all of which are central to language learning—but,

crucially, whether one is aware of one's own place within the net of global connections make all the difference" (Siepmann et al., 2023, p. 3). Thus, instead of viewing "foreign" language learning as "education in otherness,"[9] which appears to still be a prevailing underlying concept, it could be considered as "education in human dignity" (Matz, 2023).

3) Cognitive dimension

Language education is unique in that it not only uses languages as mediums of instruction and classroom discourse, but also focuses on them as the central subject of learning and critical inquiry. Thus, on a *cognitive dimension*, language learners could on the one hand, learn (to speak) about forms of indirect violence which are expressed through language and to identify them in the discourses in their own life-worlds. As language is also an object of enquiry, they could also be encouraged to deconstruct the mental categories which are transported through language (Diehr, 2007). This would support them in becoming aware of, analyze and question both structural and cultural violence both in their own communities and in more national, regional, and global contexts.

On the other hand, though, language education offers a "futures dimension" (Hicks, 2008, pp. 127-128). This might be less pronounced or missing altogether in other subjects, but it is inherent to language education. While education on a more general level "is rooted in what has gone on before, or knowledge that exists" (Gaudelli, 2023, p. 46), language education is often concerned with "visions of the future" (MSB, 2019). It can hence provide "a form of education which *promotes the knowledge, understanding and skills that are needed in order to think more critically and creatively about the future*" (Hicks, 2008, p. 127-128). Following and extending the line of thought presented thus far, the future might be one in which students engage in the

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[9] Denominations matter. It is exactly this notion of 'education in otherness' which, in our eyes, is perpetuated by the term 'foreign' language education. This is why we refrain from using this term as much as possible, and only employ it sporadically and in inverted commas to help re-situate and recontextualize this article in what is commonly known as 'foreign' language education.

process of "learning to live together," perceiving themselves as "interdependent beings" (Gaudelli, 2023, p. 39).

As an interim conclusion, then, rethinking learning languages as developing transformative communicative agency and "response-ability" can support language learners "in learning *about* peace-related discourses as well as in learning how to participate in those discourses to advocate *for* peace"(Matz, 2023, p. 190). To illustrate how this might be achieved in a curriculum geared towards the cultivation of transformative communicative agency in the context of human and children's rights and peace, the following section suggests a progression for critical language education.

From CRE and HRE to critical peace education:
Designing a curriculum for critical language education

When envisaging a curriculum for critical language education for human rights, peace, and sustainability it is important to recognize that both children and adolescents are "are not objects of education, they are active participants in their own learning through collaboration with adults and peers" (Lyndon, 2021, p. 51). As such, the language classroom should not only be adaptable and responsive to the challenges faced by young learners, but also recognize "*children as citizens*" (Jerome & Starkey, 2021, p. 4). Children and young adults are global and cosmopolitan citizens and rights holders *now,* and need to be supported in perceiving themselves as such (Lundy & Brown, 2020).

As Yastibaş (2021) demonstrates in his study, this iterative process of language education for peace can begin at the primary level on the very basic competencies and skills of learning to talk about oneself, family, and friends, expressing likes and dislikes and treating each other in a respectful manner. Thus, early language learners can engage in a learning process *for* peace on a discursive level. They can explore these relevant word fields and lay the foundations for a language of peace as well as a language of advocacy (Mochizuki & Christodoulou, 2017; Römhild, 2023b). Furthermore, language learning always requires students to be curious and willing to engage in respectful dialogue; it requires "a language of peace," which language learners need to learn

to use if they "are to bring about peace" (Mochizuki & Christodoulou, 2017, p. 154).

On a conceptual level, learners can also be encouraged to progressively engage with their own rights as children and the rights of others by learning about, through, and for children's rights. In terms of materials, they can, for instance, engage with storybooks that deal with social and environmental justice, while gradually learning the necessary language. Thus, they can also get gradually involved in learning *about* peace on a conceptual and cultural level.

As students progress and become more fluent, the language of advocacy, as well as the language of peace and violence, can increasingly become an object of inquiry. For example, Tulgar (2017) suggests that students can engage with expressions of peace and violence in both their own and target languages, not only to develop the vocabulary and grammar necessary to speak about such aspects, but also to gradually engage in analytical and critical enquiry of the discourses relating to these topics. This illustrates the unique aspect of language education, as it is always a combination of learning *from* a language as well as learning *about* a language (Diehr & Matz, forthcoming).

At a more advanced level, teachers and learners can also directly address cultural violence which expressed through language, as well as indirect violence in relation to their cultural manifestations (Diehr, 2007). An understanding of positive peace in terms of human rights, and the ability to challenge hurtful language use, stereotypes and "othering" is essential to participate in these discourses. The principle of action orientation is a fundamental basis for language teaching and it provides unique conditions for transformative language learning based on the participatory, cultural and cognitive dimensions outlined above.

In sum, the language classroom can serve as a safe space for students to develop transformative communicative agency, to explore and practice language of and for peace and advocacy. Thus, a critical language education firmly grounded in the principles of HRE and CRE can encourage children and young adults to learn both for and about peace and is thus an essential

part of an education that aims to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (UN, 2014).

Twin goals: Language education for peace and sustainability

For successful, sustainable implementation of the principles discussed thus far, educational approaches in the language classroom need to move beyond the odd, isolated lesson unit on human rights and peace in a curriculum filled with other relevant topics. Instead, engagement with issues of human and children's rights and peace need to be further embedded in the larger context of educational efforts towards sustainability and global citizenship as, for instance, promoted by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2024). As such, this section zooms out, seeing critical language education for peace and sustainable development in the bigger picture, thus further substantiating its place among the educational disciplines that pursue social aims, rejecting a banking model of education that exclusively focuses on the development of functional-communicative competence.

The concept of language education for sustainable development aligns with this notion by offering a platform to thoroughly explore these inquiries in the language classroom. When discussing human and children's rights and peace education in the context of education for sustainability and global citizenship, it is helpful to remember that the "field of peace education is not new to the task of linking peace education to economic, social, and environmental education in a comprehensive approach" (Brantmeier, 2021, p. 110).

In terms of topicality, teaching and learning languages involves selecting current trajectories as thematic fields. It is safe to say that both the current climate emergency and violent conflicts will remain some of the greatest challenges in the future lives of our students. Therefore, in line with Bajaj and Chiu (2009), we hold that:

> Educators [in these fields] have a common goal of stopping violence, but in human communities there will always be conflicts, and humans must consume natural products. The challenge is to learn to resolve conflicts non-violently, to share limited resources equitably, and to live within the limits of sustainability. [...] Peace will require

environmental sustainability and environmental sustainability will require peace. (p. 444)

This notion of mutual dependence and interrelatedness of social and environmental issues can be corroborated with two lines of thought, both of which help frame human and children's rights and peace as inherently linked to the social dimension of sustainability—and even beyond.

The first line of thought is summarized by Smith and Pangsapa (2008) and presented as a crucial premise for a discussion of obligations, responsibility, citizenship, and the environment in the introduction to their book *Environment and Citizenship* (2008). The authors state,

> Right from the start we want to emphasize the importance of recognizing that environmental issues cannot be separated from questions of social justice—that there is no contradiction between addressing environmental issues and social inequalities. These are necessarily complementary issues, not contradictory ones. (p. 1)

Social inequalities, power imbalances, and injustices include questions of peace as well as human and children's rights. It is well known that environmental circumstances contribute to conflict and war, for instance in terms of droughts and the consequent scarcity of drinking water (UNFCCC, 2022). For instance, the civil wars in Sudan and Syria are often cited as prime examples for conflicts that have at least partly been fueled by environmental hardship and threat. Oftentimes, indirect pathways lead from environmental issues to a violation of peace. A UNFCCC report argues, "It makes the most vulnerable even more vulnerable" (UNFCCC, 2022). The fact that environmental issues and their consequences are directly linked to the outbreak of conflict and, in this context, human and children's rights violations have been discussed particularly in the context of the climate crisis (Knox, 2009; Levy & Patz, 2015; OHCHR, 2015).

The second line of thought expands Torres' suggestion that there is an "elective affinity between global citizenship and sustainability" (Torres, 2023, p. 21), resulting in peace and human and children's rights being referred to by Torres as "twin sisters" (Torres, 2023, p. 21) of education. According to

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Torres (2023), the concept of elective affinity dates to Max Weber's *The protestant ethic*. While Weber does not define it, Lówy (2004) suggests that it denotes "a process through which two cultural forms [..] who [sic] have certain analogies, intimate kinships or meaning affinities, enter in a relationship of reciprocal attraction or influence, mutual selection, active convergence and mutual reinforcement" (p. 6). For instance, in the context of pedagogy of hope for social justice, Torres (2023) argues that "If we are in the century of sustainability and wish to achieve the seventeen global goals [UN's Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs], we must achieve the twin goals of sustainability and global citizenship" (p. 21).

To elaborate on this thought and link it to human and children's rights and peace education, it is helpful to consider SDG 4.7, which specifies what constitutes Quality Education in the 21st century:

> By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
> (United Nations, 2015, p. 19)

Through this goal, peace, human rights, global citizenship, and sustainability are inseparably linked. Thus, to fully achieve this goal, education needs to offer learning opportunities which help learners engage with all of these themes, topics, and philosophies.

From the perspective of language education, the appreciation of cultural diversity is a clear indicator that the field has a role to play here as well, since language education (in our understanding) is not only occupied with the acquisition of functional language skills but also offers unique opportunities for cultural learning. However, in addition, communication in global discourses is key to achieving any and all of these goals since learners need to be enabled to (communicatively) work towards transformation with others. Therefore, we would argue that we need to expand the family picture, as

it were, to include language education alongside the 'sisters' of GCE, ESD, H/CRE, and peace education.

Although language subjects are still missing from important policy guidelines (as was discussed in the introduction to this article), the idea that communication plays a vital role in GCE, ESD, H/CRE and peace education has recently taken root in policy guidelines, which also advocate for a more integrated view of these related fields, such as UNESCO's updated *Recommendations concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms* (UNESCO, 2024). An optimistic commentator might interpret it as a long-overdue milestone achievement, certainly from a language education perspective, that the role of communication and language is now at least implied. The milestone achievement might be found in the provision of a definition from one of the most central global players when it comes to education policy which includes hints at the importance of language in all of this. Referring to another UNESCO (2013) publication, the updated recommendations define Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as follows:

> GCED aims to equip learners with the following core competencies: a) A deep knowledge of global issues and universal values such as justice, equality, dignity and respect; b) cognitive skills to think critically, systemically and creatively, including adopting a multi-perspective approach that recognizes different dimension, perspectives and angles of issues; *c) non-cognitive skills including social skills such as empathy and conflict resolution, and communicative skills and aptitudes for networking and interacting with people of different backgrounds, origins, cultures and perspectives;* and d) behavioral capacities to act collaboratively and responsibly, and to strive for collective good. (p. 4, italics added)

While this definition certainly invites scholars and practitioners in the field of language education to critical engagement and discussion (for instance, as has been proposed in this article, language education does not only involve the development of communicative competence but moves far beyond that), the inclusion of the vital role of language in building networks and thus collaboration for transformation is to be celebrated as an important

first step. Furthermore, by virtue of this definition being included or referenced in the recommendations on education peace and human rights, the link between language and the related fields of GCE, ESD, and H/CRE has been made extremely apparent (UNESCO, 2024).

The notion of language education for sustainable development or, to revert to the title of this article, language education for peace and sustainable development, highlights that the related fields are not merely to be considered topics in the language learning curriculum but that, in fact, language education can make unique contributions to the larger projects of peace, human and children's rights, global citizenship, and sustainability.

In terms of cultural learning, it has already been stressed in the context of SDG 4.7 that the language classroom lends itself to engagement with questions of cultural diversity. However, moving beyond the cultivation of empathy, openness, and tolerance and towards more hard-edged, critical learning objectives in the language classroom, Delanoy argues that:

> [the] link between responsibility and 'response-ability' makes communicative competence a major objective for all education. [...] Also, because of an increase in global interconnectedness those languages become particularly important which permit decision-making on transnational levels. Here, English is of particular relevance. Finally, the need to communicate in a dynamic and globally connected world entails forms of language education where the learners are given insight into the complexity of contemporary living conditions, and where language and thought are used creatively to meet situation-specific and changing demands. (Delanoy, 2017, p. 169)

This cultivation of a shared sense of responsibility in combination with the communicative ability to respond, to speak out against injustices and for the protection of the rights for all ("response-ability") is central to cultural learning in the language classroom. It requires learners and educators to consider themselves part of a larger, global community of rights-bearers. This type of language pedagogy transcends socially constructed, regional and cultural borders; it promotes culture-transcending ways of seeing and

being in the world and in discourses on peace, human and children's rights, and socio-environmental justice.

In the cognitive domain, the language classroom can become a space of learning about peace and human rights, thus contributing essential knowledge and skills for learners to become "response-able." It is particularly the so-called "foreign" language classroom, which, with its inherent outward focus, makes contexts and phenomena from across the world accessible to learners. With human and children's rights and peace being ubiquitous topics, the opportunities for contextualized learning are endless. However, it is paramount not to fall victim to a fallacy observed by Hahn (2020), who reports that schools in European countries tend to teach learners about human rights violations in other countries, often countries in the Global South, and do not offer opportunities for reflection of the human rights situation in their own countries. To avoid soft, potentially harmful approaches to H/CRE and peace education in the language classroom, it is important to also reflect on one's own positionality in the respective discourses and one's own role in the upholding and protection of rights and peace, including one's own community, region, or country.

In terms of its participatory dimension, the central goal of language education is mutually reinforcing with both the cultural and cognitive dimensions discussed above and the development of discourse literacy, that is an ability to actively participate in the (global) discourses of our times. This notion has been explored in the context of sustainability and continues to attract attention among scholars (Diehr, 2021; Diehr, 2022; Römhild, 2023a). In the context of critical and transformative language education for peace, the concept of discourse literacy brings an inherent action-orientation. Rather than reproducing functional knowledge (including vocabulary) on peace and human rights, the ability to participate in discourses requires the construction of one's own standpoint, the production of one's own language of peace—in other words, it requires and at the same time promotes communicative agency.

Conclusion

Reardon states that concepts of peace education should encourage educators "to teach *about* peace as well as to teach *for* peace" (Reardon 2000, p. 399). In our understanding, this includes active participation in discourses and, thus, represents a call—even a task—for language education to focus on the cultivation of transformative communicative agency. Language and communication play a vital role in efforts of education for human and children's rights, peace, and sustainability, but language education needs to open itself for the big social questions of our times to step up to the task and unfold its great potential.

The segue into the discussion was provided by an exploration of the inherent connection between the protection of human rights, peace, and sustainable development, reflecting the argument that "there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (UN, 2015).

An educational philosophy that is both informed by and does justice to this premise is deeply rooted in human rights discourses, as it also entails supporting learners in defending their own rights and the rights of others. This has been discussed as an urgent and necessary task, as children and young adults "have an integral role to play in creating solutions to the challenges and crises we face. They are present and future innovators, leaders, climate activists and peacemakers. The future may be deeply uncertain, but it is theirs" (Russell, 2022, p. 3). So is the present.

The notion of transformative communicative agency centers students as active change agents in the present, encouraging them to explore, analyze, and reflect on the complex nature of communication in their everyday life. It is the role of educators to support them in navigating different forms of discourse. Conceptual frameworks that facilitate students' engagement in meaning-making practices and critical inquiry are therefore needed in language teaching.

Language education can help learners empower themselves to take communicative action for their own rights and to protect the rights of others, but it can only do so if CPE is recognized as a fundamental pedagogical

perspective. The "foreign" language classroom is uniquely positioned to engage with stories and people around the world through its unique focus on languages, cultures, and literatures. As such, it can also be embedded in transformative approaches, which—per Bajaj—aim at supporting students in learning "about a larger imagined moral community where human rights understandings offer a shared language," a language of peace (Bajaj, 2017, p. 8). This, however, can only ever work if the learners acknowledge themselves as active agents of change and "protagonists of their future" (UNESCO, 2024, p. 5), a future of human rights, peace, and sustainability.

However, the question posed in the beginning of this contribution remains too large to be answered in one article: *How can language educators teach young people to see and act communicatively on a global stage?* There is much more work to be done, not only in terms of HRE, CRE, and CPE, but also with regards to related fields, such as social justice, anti-racist, and decolonizing movements in "foreign" language education. What is needed is both more interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars and practitioners, more research, and more recommendations for praxis, accompanied by education policy change to better reflect the needs of our youth in this world.

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Curriculum Development in
Human Rights Education:
Teacher Candidates and Faculty Members' Views

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Abstract

Human Rights Education (HRE) is believed to be crucial in teacher education as it equips teacher candidates (TCs) with the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors to contribute to the establishment of a human rights culture. However, there is little evidence of HRE curriculum development in Turkish Teacher Education Programs (TTEP). Unfortunately, HRE is not specifically mentioned as a distinct subject or area of study in TTEP. This convergent mixed methods research (MMR) study aimed to understand TCs and Faculty Members' (FMs) views on identifying HRE curriculum components in TTEP. The study merged quantitative survey and qualitative interview data to provide an in-depth confirmatory and complementary explanation of curriculum components in TTEP. Descriptive statistics and the Chi-square test were employed to identify relationships between FMs' and TCs' views on the HRE curriculum, and the qualitative data analysis framework proposed by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2019) was used for deductive and inductive coding and comprehension of the statements. The results, which were also discussed in a recent article in Human Rights Education Review (see: Abedi & Fer, 2023), revealed that the participants support an HRE curriculum to raise human rights awareness among FMs and TCs, empower them to advocate for fundamental rights and freedoms, and support learner-centered and interaction-centered learning and effective evaluation processes. The implications for practitioners and researchers, along with the limitations, are discussed.

Keywords: human rights education, Turkey, curriculum development, teacher training

Introduction

I f the main goal of Human Rights Education (HRE) is to teach students solely about human rights instruments, it may not be effective in empowering them for human rights advocacy. HRE is definitely more than just information about rights, as the United Nations (2011a) describes it as education about knowledge, through skills, and for values, attitudes, and behaviors related to human rights. Therefore, HRE is a transformative process in which educators and learners engage in personal and social transformations. It involves learning to value oneself and to recognize and value others (Magendzo & Pavez, 2017), and cultivating self-empowerment for action-oriented empathy and solidarity (Zembylas, 2016). In the transformative model of HRE, Tibbitts (2017) advocates teaching social members about human rights and empowering them to defend those rights. The transformative vision of HRE challenges injustice and supports social transformation, especially the emancipation of marginalized communities. However, human rights knowledge is

a prerequisite for recognizing and protecting these rights (Bajaj, 2011; Flowers, 2000; Waldron et al., 2011). The desired outcomes of transformative HRE are cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral or action-oriented (Bajaj, 2011; Tibbitts, 2017), and they incorporate participatory instructional processes that expose students to the gap between human rights ideals and realities. According to Osler and Leung (2011), teachers and students actively and critically advocate for transformative human rights.

The human rights vision can help teachers understand the "humanizing and dehumanizing nature of schooling"(Jennings, 2006) and advocate for themselves, their students, and their communities. Robinson et al. (2020) presented a robust HRE framework for teachers: knowledge and values, attitude and environment, and agency and action. Further, Bajaj et al. (2016) define a set of principles of transformative HRE as endeavoring to awaken people's critical consciousness, engaging participants and educators in collaborative learning about their social reality through entertaining, experiential, and participatory methods, working in different educational settings such as formal, non-formal, and informal, giving people access to possible new ways of being, and leading to individual and collective action. This definition provides a theoretical background for the study.

The Turkish educational context

The Turkish National Committee on the United Nations (UN) Decade for Human Rights Education was established in 1997 to provide advice during the UN Decade and to create a national program for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating HRE. The result was that 7th and 8th graders started to study "Civics and Human Rights Education" (CHRE) for one hour per week starting in 1998-1999 (National Committee on the Decade for Human Rights Education, 1999). Since 2018, HRE has been a required subject in 4th grade and taught for two hours per week. Şen (2021) asserts that while HRE should be taught in elementary schools to cultivate values, the recently established ten values to be taught in education do not include human rights, democracy, the rule of law, respect for diversity, or tolerance, indicating a failure in HRE practice in Turkey and recommending more inclusive, participatory, and

flexible curriculum development. In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2018) has added HRE to the primary school curriculum and organized in-service training on human rights, democracy, and children's rights (Gömleksiz, 2011; Karaman-Kepenekci, 2005); however, these projects are likely insufficient (Çarıkçı & Er, 2010), and teachers report their ineffectiveness in the classrooms (Akar, 2016; Balbağ & Bayır, 2016; Burridge et al., 2013; Dündar & Ekici, 2019; Karakuş Özdemirci et al., 2020; Kaymakcı & Akdeniz, 2018; Şahin et al., 2020). For example, while Sahin et al. (2020) suggested a democracy and human rights elective course to be implemented at the associate, undergraduate, and graduate levels, Dündar and Ekici (2019) suggested training be held to enhance teacher candidates' attitudes toward democracy and HRE. However, there is currently insufficient data on HRE implementation in the Turkish Teacher Education Program (TTEP). As Sirota and Mitoma (2022) propose integrating HRE into global, intercultural, and social justice education in teacher education programs, TTEP is also expected to add HRE to its programs.

Therefore, this Mixed Methods Research (MMR) study focused on identifying the four components of the HRE curriculum in the TTEP: objectives, content, teaching-learning, and evaluation. Since we did not have access to any existing curriculum in Turkey to analyze, and did not intend to design a new one, our aim was to provide a framework for future research on HRE curriculum development by identifying the curriculum components with the intention of empowering faculty members (FMs) to internalize human rights and help teacher candidates (TCs) internalize human rights knowledge, skills, and values to transform their future primary and secondary teacher practices. Since no survey instrument and interview protocol were found during our literature review to address the issue in the TTEP, we, as two authors, developed the Human Rights Curriculum Design Survey (HRCDS) and a semi-structured interview protocol, which are original to the TTEP, to answer the following research question:

1. What are the faculty members' and teacher candidates' views on identifying the a) objectives, b) content, c) teaching-learning process, and

d) evaluation process of curriculum development for human rights education in Turkish teacher education programs?

Methods

We employed a convergent mixed-methods design (Figure 1) to address the research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2017).
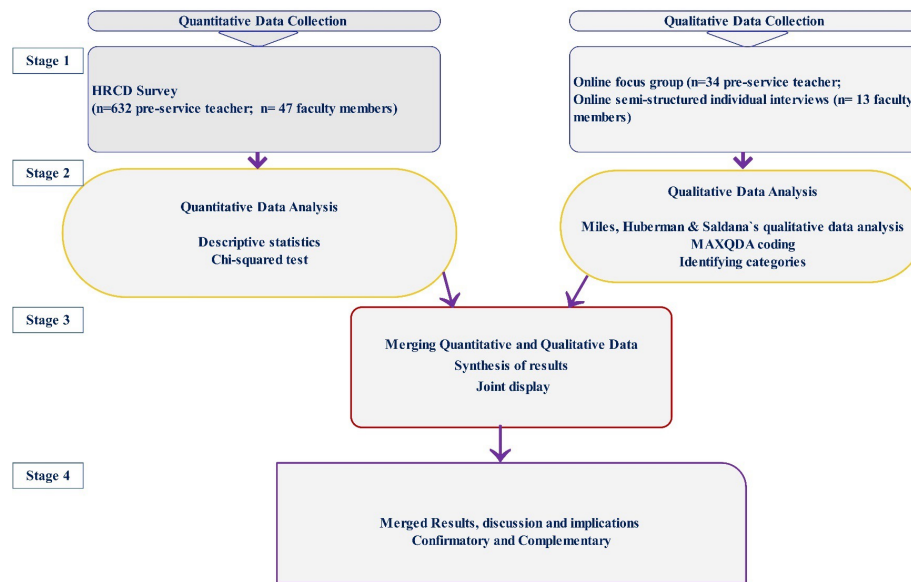
Figure 1: Convergent Mixed Methods Design Procedure

This study was a part of a PhD thesis and built on previous research about HRE in TTEP done by Abedi and Fer (2023). The study highlighted the importance of HRE in TTEP and the lack of teacher knowledge in this area in Turkey. That study evaluated the state of HRE in TTEP and emphasized the need for its inclusion. The current study goes further by providing a framework for developing HRE curriculum in TTEP. It offers new insights by focusing on curriculum components and practical application in the TTEP context. Overall, this study reinforces the importance of HRE in TTEP and adds new data and analyses to better understand how to integrate it effectively. In our study, we aimed to identify the components of the HRE curriculum and to develop a framework for HRE curriculum development in the TTEP. This required us to draw precise conclusions from faculty members

and teacher candidates. To accomplish this, we used the MMR approach, which allowed us to combine quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a more complete picture of FMs' and TCs' opinions on TTEP HRE curriculum components. The first author collected quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to maximize time and resources during the Covid-19 pandemic. We also avoided bias and inconsistencies by using multiple data types.

In our study, we calculated faculty-to-student ratios at four major Turkish universities for Turkish Education Association (TED) University approximately (43 FMs and 127 TCs), Ankara University (35 FMs and 213 TCs), Başkent University (45 FMs and 170 TCs), and Hacettepe University (48 FMs and 288 TCs) to understand the representativeness of our sample. Our sample was specific to four universities in Ankara, not representing the entire national or international context in teacher education. We viewed our sample as engaged and interested in HRE, providing insights within TTEP. We acknowledge the limitations of our convenience sampling method, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, which may have introduced selection bias due to voluntary participation. While our findings provide valuable insights, they should be interpreted with caution considering these methodological constraints. The limitations are discussed in the implications section. We collected both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Quantitative data were collected through the HRCDS from FMs (n=47) and TCs (n=632), while qualitative data were collected through individual and focus group interviews with FMs (n=13) and TCs (n=34) to understand their views on the HRE curriculum components in the TTEP. To obtain confirmatory and complementary data, we compared and merged quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2017, 2019). We employed a joint-display approach (Guetterman et al., 2015) to integrate both data types and interpret the results through meta-inferences (Tashakkori et al., 2021) for a more comprehensive understanding than either method alone could offer. This design helped us save time and resources while ensuring that both quantitative and qualitative data were given equal priority. It also enabled us to compare and contrast quantitative and qualitative findings and identify the areas of convergence and divergence between them to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the HRE

components in the TTEP. We also aimed to investigate potential differences in views between fourth year TCs, who are expected to have sufficient knowledge of curriculum development, and faculty members (FMs) from four universities: Hacettepe and Ankara (state universities), TED, and Baskent (foundation universities). We included these universities in our study to achieve a diverse sample of educational contexts based on their institutions' success in TTEP and to explore potential differences in the participants' views. Meanwhile, the first author's affiliation with a private university and continuing his PhD at a state university provided him with an opportunity to closely monitor the data collection process. We selected four departments that were consistent across all four universities and could incorporate HRE into their curriculum: Psychological Counseling and Guidance (PCG), Mathematics Teaching (MT), Pre-School Teaching (PST), and Classroom Teaching (CT). We two authors developed the HRCDS and the interview protocol because no existing survey and interview protocols were found to address the issue in the TTEP, and we used them to collect quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. The survey enabled us to identify participants' views on HRE curriculum components, and the interview process expanded their views. After a thorough narrative literature review, we defined HRCDS categories using the existing HRE curriculum development principles (Rasmussen, 2012; Tibbitts, 2015; United Nations, 2016). We used a 5-point Likert scale to rank the HRCDS from 1 (strongly opposed) to 5 (strongly favored). We developed survey questions, reviewed them, and piloted the survey. The research question guided the formulation of the interview questions. Nine faculty members - one HRE, three measurement and evaluation experts, three curriculum development experts, one social sciences expert, and one Turkish language teaching expert - rated and commented on the HRCDS items and the interview questions for content validity (Creswell & Clark, 2017). We reviewed the survey questions and piloted the survey with 212 TCs from Hacettepe University for a week to ensure content validity and clarity. Based on their feedback, we removed repeated items, revised a few, and finalized 62 HRCDS items. We discuss data collection and analysis in the next section.

Quantitative Data Collection & Analysis

Due to time constraints, limited access, and potential respondent reluctance during the Covid-19 pandemic, we opted for a convenience sampling method to collect quantitative data. We employed various methods to contact participants, including department emails, academic social media portals, and departmental secretary offices, to ensure the highest possible participation rates. To address potential non-response bias, we followed up with reminder emails and phone calls to the related departments. Of the 46 FMs who participated, 38 (82.6%) were female and 8 (17.4%) were male. FMs were selected from the PCG (13), MT (9), PST (14), and CT (10) departments of Hacettepe (22), Ankara (3), TED (9), and Başkent (12) universities. The TCs included 632 participants, with 444 (70.3%) females and 188 (29.7%) males, from the departments of PCG (241), MT (40), PST (153), CT (198), Hacettepe (216), Ankara (257), TED (45), and Başkent (114) universities. The survey questions aimed to elicit participants' preferences for HRE curriculum components considering their desired outcomes. We provided clear instructions and a consent form to ensure that participants understood the study and felt comfortable answering the questions honestly. We also stressed the importance of truthful responses. The data was collected in an environmentally friendly manner using Google Forms. We used descriptive statistics and the chi-square test to identify relationships and possible differences between FMs' and TCs' views on HRE curriculum components. To measure inter-rater reliability, we used Fleiss' kappa statistic, which indicated a substantial agreement[1] among nine raters regarding the consistency of their ratings (Fleiss, 1971).

Qualitative Data Collection & Analysis

We used the same methods for contacting participants in the qualitative stage as we did in the quantitative stage due to the Covid-19 pandemic constraints and limited access to participants. Thirteen FMs (n=13) and 34 TCs (n=34) participated in semi-structured individual and focus group

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[1] The Kappa was found to be Kappa = 0.65 (p <.0.000), 95% CI (0.52, 0.78).

interviews, respectively. The interviews focused on the participants' deep understanding of the HRE curriculum components. Of the 13 FMs, 11 (85%) were female and 2 (15%) were male students from PSG (3), MT (2), PST (4), and CT (4) departments, and from Hacettepe (4), Ankara (4), TED (1), and Başkent (4) universities. The 34 TCs comprised 9 (27%) female and 25 (73%) male participants from PSG (8), MT (8), PST (8), and CT (10) departments, and from Hacettepe (11), Ankara (8), TED (8), and Başkent (7) universities. After completing the interviews, we transcribed, reduced, coded, and organized the data using Miles et al.'s (2019) Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) framework, including the data collection, reduction, display, and interpretation stages, and combining deductive and inductive coding. The deductive process involved creating a preliminary codebook based on the research questions to save time and cover all HRCDS domains, while the inductive process involved developing emergent codes by re-reading and taking notes. To ensure that the identified elements were aligned with human rights standards and to minimize bias, the coding cycle involved an in-depth reading and coding by one QDA and one HRE expert. We carried out this procedure to maintain the internal validity of the coding process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). We assessed intercoder reliability (ICR) to enhance the internal reliability of the research. We calculated ICR by having two independent coders and using the coding reliability formula 'simple percentage agreement'[2] (Miles et al., 2019) and achieved intercoder reliability percentages of 90%, 90%, 86%, and 84% for HRE objectives, content, teaching-learning, and evaluation, respectively. Finally, direct quotes provided transparency and allowed readers to verify the research findings, thus ensuring external validity. Table 1 illustrates the survey items used in the quantitative stage and the frequency of qualitative data obtained from the interviews.

Table 1: Survey Items and Code Frequencies

HRCDS categories	Survey items	Codes	
	Being able to:	Confirmatory	Complementary
Objectives	Have awareness of basic HR principles.	Have awareness of basic HR principles=152	Internalize HR=135

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[2] Agreement Percent: 80%

9

	Give importance to HRE.	Advocate for fundamental rights and freedoms=89	Advocate for multiculturalism=60
	Understand the basics of HRE.	Give importance to HRE=73	Stand up against discrimination=35
	Evaluate HRE models.	Dedicate oneself to act for justice=28	Empower empathy=31
	Value democracy culture.	Contribute to democratic participation=20	Advocate for equity=29
	Act democratically		
	Have democratic citizenship awareness.	Understand the basics of HRE=17	Advocate for children and women rights=24
	Contribute to democratic participation.	Contribute to the development of pluralistic culture=10	Empower critical thinking=17
	Respect fundamental rights and freedoms.	Apply the reconciliation process=7	Advocate for animal and environmental rights=9
	Explain basic rights and freedoms.	N/A	
	Advocate for fundamental rights and freedoms.	N/A	Advocate for refugee rights=4
	To identify rights violations and restrictions.		
	Explain the relationship between justice and rights.	N/A	N/A
	Compare issues of justice and injustice.	N/A	N/A
	Act justly	N/A	N/A
	Dedicate oneself to act for justice	N/A	N/A
	Define public interest.	N/A	N/A
	Link pluralism, diversity, and human rights.	N/A	N/A
	Adopt a pluralistic lifestyle.	N/A	N/A
	Contribute to the development of pluralistic culture.	N/A	N/A
	Explain the reasons for disagreement.	N/A	N/A
	Value reconciliation.	N/A	N/A
	Identify the benefits of reconciliation.	N/A	N/A
	Apply the reconciliation process.	N/A	N/A
Content	Fundamentals of HRE	Fundamentals of HRE=56	Multiculturalism=54
	Democratic life	Democratic life=17	Equity=30
	Rights and freedoms	Rights and freedoms=84	Discrimination=29
	Justice	Justice=26	Refugee rights=3
	Pluralism	Pluralism=10	
	Reconciliation	Reconciliation=6	
Teaching-learning	Organizing teaching in line with students and their needs	Case studies on human rights=59	N/A
	Organizing learning experiences in line with the needs of society	Implementation of HR debates=42	N/A

	Organizing activities that motivate students for HR advocacy	Implementing HR drama/role playing=42	N/A
	Organizing learning experiences that encourage discussion	Organizing teaching in line with students and their needs=30	N/A
	Organizing learning environments that encourage students to defend HR	Organizing learning experiences in line with the needs of society=22	N/A
	Working on HR problems.	Working on HR problems=21	N/A
	Working on HR stories	Organizing activities that motivate students for HR advocacy=0	N/A
	Implementation of HR debates	Implementing group work on HR=0	N/A
	Implementing group work on HR	Field-trips, observations and investigations on HR issues=11	N/A
	Case studies on HR	Inviting relevant people to classes for HR=0	N/A
	HR drama/role playing	Watching movies about HR=10	N/A
	Field-trips, observations and investigations on HR issues	Working on HR stories=10	N/A
	Inviting relevant people to classes for HR	Organizing learning experiences that encourage discussion=0	N/A
	Presentation on HR	Organizing learning environments that encourage students to defend HR=0	N/A
	Organizing HR conferences	Presentation on HR=0	N/A
	Organizing HR panel discussions	Organizing HR conferences=0	N/A
	Watching movies about human rights	N/A	N/A
	Preparing short films	N/A	N/A
	Preparing brochures	N/A	N/A
	Preparing diagnostic branched tree	N/A	N/A
Evaluation	Assessment tools in line with the objectives	Assessment tools in line with the objectives=3	Process evaluation=24
	Written tests	Written tests=18	Case study analysis=19
	Multiple-choice tests	Multiple-choice tests=4	
	Portfolio	Portfolio=16	N/A
	Rubrics	Rubrics=2	N/A
	Self-assessment	Self-assessment=7	N/A
	Peer assessment	Peer assessment=14	N/A
	Teacher evaluation	Teacher evaluation=0	
	Dairy writing	Dairy writing=3	N/A
	Reflection	Reflection=13	N/A
	Observation	Observation=11	N/A
	Interviews	Interviews=8	N/A

Note. HRs = Human Rights, N/A= Not Applicable

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of HRE, categorizing HRCDS survey items and detailing their associated codes, which are split between confirmatory and complementary responses. The table shows the frequency of specific responses that align with different aspects of HRE.

Results & Discussion

Objectives

Quantitative Result. Descriptive statistics and chi-square findings are presented in Table 2, followed by an interpretation and discussion of the key findings.

Table 2: Descriptive and Chi-Square Results for Objectives (N = 678)

Item	Faculty member			Teacher candidate				
To be able to:	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	χ^2	p
Have awareness of basic HR principles.	46	4.96	.21	632	4.98	.14	-	-
Give importance to HRE.	46	4.85	.47	632	4.96	.23	-	-
Understand the basics of HRE.	46	4.89	.45	632	4.97	.22	-	-
Evaluate HRE models.	46	4.40	.86	632	4.97	.16	55.37	0.01*
Internalize democratic culture.	46	4.86	.31	632	4.98	.15	-	0.00*
Act democratically	46	4.92	.25	632	4.97	.16	-	
Have awareness of democratic citizenship.	46	4.89	.31	632	4.98	.14	-	0.00*
Contribute to democratic participation.	46	4.94	.21	632	4.98	.15	-	-
Respect fundamental rights and freedoms.	46	4.94	.21	632	4.98	.14	-	-
Explain basic rights and freedoms.	46	4.86	.31	632	4.98	.14		0.04*
Advocate for fundamental rights and freedoms.	46	4.92	.28	632	4.98	.13		0.01*
To identify rights violations and restrictions.	46	4.92	.28	632	4.98	.16	-	-
Explain the relationship between justice and rights.	46	4.92	.25	632	4.98	.15	-	-
Compare issues of justice and injustice.	46	4.94	.21	632	4.97	.19	-	-
Act justly	46	4.97	.33	632	4.98	.18	-	-
Dedicate oneself to act for justice	46	4.75	.51	632	4.98	.16	18.54	0.00*
Define public interest concept.	46	4.61	.60	632	4.93	.37	25.87	0.00*
Link pluralism, diversity, and human rights.	46	4.89	.35	632	4.89	.51	-	-
Adopt a pluralistic lifestyle.	46	4.78	.59	632	4.89	.51	-	-
Contribute to the development of pluralistic culture.	46	4.75	.60	632	4.89	.51	-	-
Explain the reasons for disagreement.	46	4.78	.51	632	4.96	.24	25.87	0.00*
Value reconciliation.	46	4.87	.40	632	4.97	.19	-	-
Identify the benefits of reconciliation.	46	4.89	.40	632	4.97	.19	-	-
Apply the reconciliation process.	46	4.93	.33	632	4.96	.21	-	-

Note. HRs = Human Rights.

Table 2 presents descriptive and Chi-Square results for various objectives related to HRE among FMs and TCs, indicating that there are varying levels of understanding or emphasis on these areas between the two groups. While FMs strongly supported "advocate for fundamental rights and freedoms" ($\overline{X}$=4.92) and "contribute to democratic participation" ($\overline{X}$=4.94), TCs rated "to internalize democratic culture" ($\overline{X}$=4.98) and "contribute to democratic participation" ($\overline{X}$=4.98), "have awareness of democratic citizenship" ($\overline{X}$=4.96) and "advocate for fundamental rights and freedoms" ($\overline{X}$=4.96) as strongly supported. However, while FMs rated "evaluate HRE models" ($\overline{X}$=4.50) "define public interest concept" ($\overline{X}$=4.67) and "contribute to the development of pluralistic culture ($\overline{X}$=4.76) as the least supported objectives, the TCs underrated the "adopt a pluralistic lifestyle" ($\overline{X}$=4.89). The chi-square results revealed differences between the views of FMs and TCs on some HRCDS items.[3] The findings suggest that both FMs and TCs agree on the importance of acquiring the knowledge needed to advocate human rights, but they have different views and priorities regarding HRE objectives. FMs prioritized the internalization of democratic culture and democratic participation, while TCs emphasized the awareness of democratic citizenship, advocacy of basic rights and freedoms, and adopting a pluralistic lifestyle. These differences may be attributable to the different levels of exposure and experience that FMs and TCs have with human rights and democracy concepts as well as their views on the importance of certain HRE concepts.

Qualitative Results. Both confirmatory and complementary results for the HRE curriculum development objectives are shown in Figure 2.

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[3] 'to evaluate HRE models' (X^2(3) = 55.37, p < .05), 'to appreciate democratic culture' (p = [0.007*]), 'to have democratic citizenship awareness' (p = [0.005*]), 'to explain basic rights and freedoms' (p = [0.004*]), 'to be responsible for protecting fundamental rights and freedoms' (p= [0.015*]), 'to devote oneself to ensure justice' (X^2(2) = 18.54, p < .05), 'to explain the concept of public interest' (X^2(3) = 25.87, p < .05) and 'to explain the reasons for disagreement (X^2(3) = 14.27, p < .05).

Confirmatory

1. To gain human rights awareness
2. To advocate rights and freedoom
3. To internalize HRE
4. To behave just
5. To participate in a democratic way
6. To understand HRE basics
7. To internalize plulalistic life
8. To advocate for conflict resolution

Complementary

1. To internalize human rights
2. To advocate multiculturalism
3. To oppose discrimination
4. To empower empathy
5. To advocate equity
6. To advocate children and women rights
7. To empower crtitical thinking
8. To advocate animal and enviornment rights
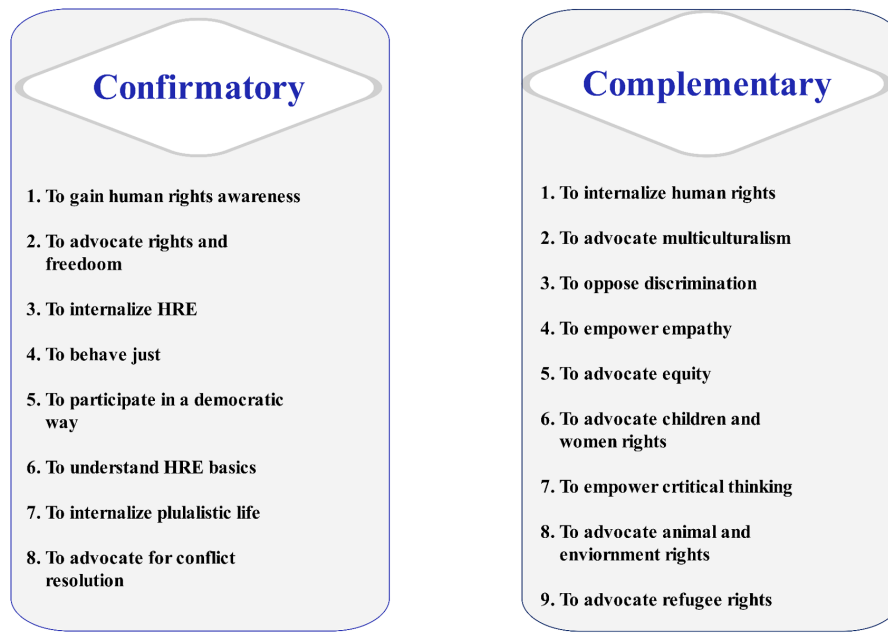9. To advocate refugee rights

Figure 2: Confirmatory and Complementary Objectives

Figure 2 shows how participants affirmed HRDCS objectives primarily as gaining human rights awareness to advocate rights and freedom, participating in democratic life, valuing pluralistic life, and supporting tolerance and reconciliation. One FM participant, by expressing, "unfortunately, the level of human rights understanding is not at the expected level; thus, I believe the teacher must have learned this knowledge earlier," makes clear that the lack of human rights awareness is a significant challenge in teacher education. One TC added, "fundamental human rights and freedoms knowledge, skills, and values must be taught in teacher education; otherwise, there will be no ground to discuss human rights in social life." Moreover, they provided complementary remarks on objectives such as internalizing human rights, advocating multiculturalism, opposing discrimination, empowering empathy, advocating equity, advocating children's and women's rights, developing critical thinking, advocating animal and environmental rights, and advocating refugee rights. One FM emphasized the need for teachers to internalize human rights mentioning that "the teachers must internalize human rights values to be a good role model." Another FM said, "living together and appreciating multiculturalism must be among the objectives."

Similarly, one FM echoed, "objectives must emphasize prejudice and discrimination," drawing attention to multiculturalism and anti-discrimination curriculum objectives. Another TC highlighted racism as a global issue mentioning that "equity is one of the critical issues to fight against racist movement around the world." One TC highlighted violence against women, saying, "as violence against women rises in Turkey, empowering individuals to fight against it must be included as one of the objectives." One TC highlighted Turkish teacher education's lack of critical thinking, asserting, "unfortunately, we cannot train teachers 'outside-the-box thinking.' Teacher education should therefore incorporate critical pedagogy enabling them to think and act for transformation." Lastly, one TC draws attention to refugee rights mentioning, "teachers require internalizing and advocating human rights to deal with refugee children's education in our country."

Figure 3 presents a joint display integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings on objectives and highlighting the meta-inference; the purple color represents the quantitative findings, and the blue color reflects the qualitative findings, providing a meaningful representation of the key findings.
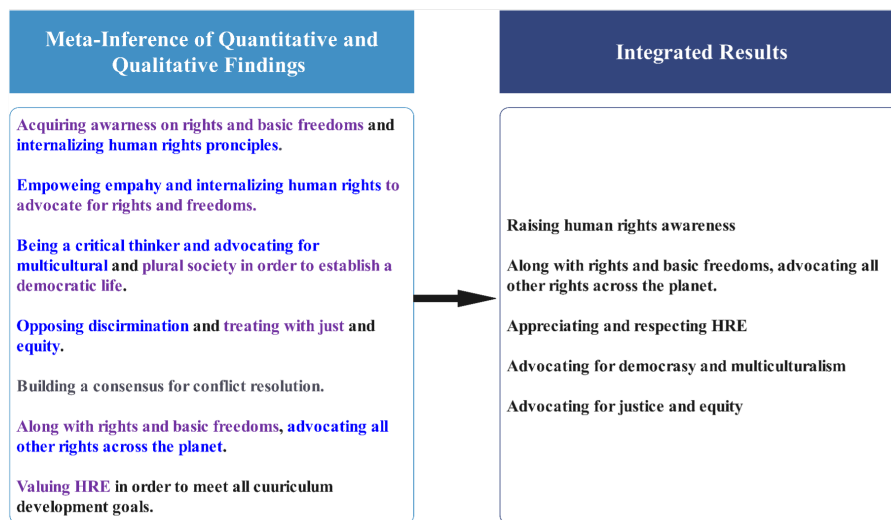

Figure 3: Meta-Inference of HRE Curriculum Development Objectives

It is clear from Figure 3 that acquiring human rights knowledge is essential for advocating all rights, democratic participation, and justice. The

quantitative results suggest that TTEP should emphasize internalizing human rights values, advocating multiculturalism, opposing discrimination, empowering empathy, advocating equity, advocating children's and women's rights, developing critical thinking, advocating animal and environmental rights, and advocating refugee rights, whereas the qualitative data reveal that the lack of human rights awareness is a significant challenge in TTEP. FMs emphasize the need for TCs to internalize human rights values as good role models, and they believe that living together and appreciating multiculturalism must be among their objectives. Moreover, TCs draw attention to global issues, such as equity and racism, violence against women, and refugee rights. They also highlight the lack of critical thinking in TTEP, which requires critical pedagogy, enabling students to think and act for transformation.

The results align with the recommendation of the United Nations (2011a) that teacher education should focus on human rights knowledge. Similarly, Brander et al. (2020) also emphasized that raising awareness should be at the core of any human rights curriculum development, and Merey and İşler (2018) argued that teachers should internalize human rights before beginning their teaching practicum to serve as effective role models. The curriculum objectives highlighted by (Öztürk et al., 2015; United Nations, 2011a) emphasize respecting rights and freedoms to empower teachers' experiences. Yemini et al. (2019) highlighted that developing empathy as an essential element of HRE should be internalized before the teaching practicum. In terms of specific rights, the MoNE (2018) underlined the importance of women's and children's rights in the "Human Rights, Citizenship, and Democracy" curriculum, but Merey and İşler (2018) argue that teachers should adopt a right-based approach to human rights before teaching to effectively convey these concepts. Benedek (2012) agreed that women and children should have access to rights-based education, and the HRE curriculum should reflect this. Öztürk et al. (2015) suggest that a complete curriculum development should be considered to empower students on all human rights issues, including refugee, women, and animal rights.

Robinson et al. (2020) advocate for democratic principles and values objectives in HRE to strengthen teachers' skills and responsibilities, which

supports the study's results. Ferguson Patrick et al. (2014) highlight the need to include multicultural concepts in the objectives, and Polat and Ogay Barka (2014) note the lack of multicultural education in TTEP and the need to include multiculturalism in TTEP HRE curriculum objectives. Regarding including anti-discrimination among the objectives, Koşan et al. (2018) assert that TTEP should align with the anti-discrimination curriculum and include it in the curriculum objectives. Bajaj (2011) argued that HRE teachers need knowledge, skills, and attitudes to promote sustainable development and social justice. Similarly, Kukovec (2017) underlined the necessity of providing TCs with skills for conflict resolution, reconciliation, and human rights awareness, taking a holistic approach. In conclusion, the TTEP should equip teacher candidates with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to advocate for human rights and democratic values in their classrooms and communities.

Content

Quantitative Results. Descriptive statistics and chi-square findings are presented in Table 2, followed by an interpretation and discussion of the key findings.

Table 3: Descriptive and Chi-Square Results for content (N = 678)

Item	Faculty member			Teacher candidate			χ^2	p
	n	$\overline{\text{X}}$	SS	n	$\overline{\text{X}}$	SS		
Fundamentals of HRE	46	4.71	.69	632	4.97	.16	9.13	0.01*
Democratic Life	46	4.91	.35	632	4.97	.16	-	-
Rights and Freedoms	46	4.89	.38	632	4.97	.16	-	-
Justice	46	4.87	.40	632	4.97	.18	-	-
Pluralism	46	4.76	.48	632	4.88	.53	-	-
Reconciliation	46	4.85	.47	632	4.97	.18	6.38	0.01*
Fundamentals of HRE	46	4.71	.69	632	4.97	.16	-	-
Democratic Life	46	4.91	.35	632	4.97	.16	-	-
Rights and Freedoms	46	4.89	.38	632	4.97	.16	-	-
Justice	46	4.87	.40	632	4.97	.18	-	-
Pluralism	46	4.76	.48	632	4.88	.53	-	-

Table 3 presents descriptive and Chi-Square results for various content items related to HRE among FMs and TCs, indicating that there are differences between the two groups in their perspectives on the fundamentals

of HRE and reconciliation, which suggests these concepts may be interpreted or valued differently. While both FMs and TCs highly support "democratic life" ($\overline{X}$=4.91), "rights and freedoms" ($\overline{X}$=4.89), and "justice" ($\overline{X}$=4.87), TCs rated "HRE basics" ($\overline{X}$=4.97) as strongly supported. The chi-square results revealed differences between the views of FMs and TCs on some HRCDS items.[4] Both groups strongly support the core elements of curriculum content, such as democratic participation, basic rights and freedoms, and justice. However, FMs prioritize objectives related to pluralistic culture and evaluating HRE models lower than TCs. These differences may be attributed to the increased vulnerability of Turkish society to political polarization, which could impact how individuals view the importance of pluralism and critical evaluation. It is clear that political polarization significantly impacts educational priorities and the promotion of pluralism within educational contexts. Somer (2016) highlights the profound impact of political polarization in Turkey, particularly how it affects social cohesion and the public's approach to democratic values and human rights. This polarization often aligns with differing educational priorities and perceptions of pluralism. This finding is also supported by Martin (2023) who underscores the challenges polarized political cultures introduce to education's core objectives, such as fostering pluralistic societies. These findings point to the importance of addressing political polarization to safeguard educational goals related to pluralism and democratic participation. These differences may also suggest that FMs and TCs may have differing views and priorities regarding HRE, which may be influenced by their backgrounds and experiences. However, their preferences suggest a solid willingness to establish a democratic and just human rights-based society.

Qualitative Results. Both confirmatory and complementary results on HRE curriculum development content are shown in Figure 4.

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[4] 'human rights and the fundamentals of HRE' ($X2(2)$= 9.13, p <.05) and 'reconciliation' ($X2(2)$ = 6.38, p <.05).
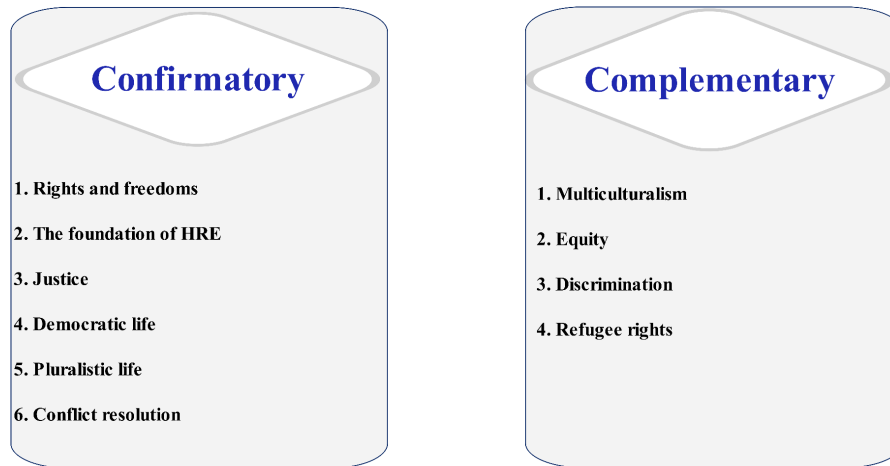
Figure 4: Confirmatory and Complementary Content

Figure 4 illustrates that participants placed high importance on HRDCS content related to rights and freedoms, justice, democratic life, pluralistic life, and reconciliation. One FM participant highlights social problems mentioning, "considering our recent problems and issues, the content should be chosen around rights and basic freedoms." Another FM agreed by saying "rights and freedoms should be prioritized before other issues." One FM, by saying, "HRE fundamentals will help students obtain a wide and diverse insight into the situations," notes that learning about HRE itself is an important content area. While another FM states, "without internalizing HRE principles, human rights advocacy among students lags." One TC complaining about justice issues acknowledges that "our country needs justice; thus, it should be included in the content to enable TCs to raise awareness and take actions to their best." Another TC adds, "the students should internalize democratic life," appreciating the democratic premises of the HRE process. However, another TC discusses, "without basic human rights and freedom, democratic existence is impossible." Pluralism is another prerequisite where "diversity and respect for minority rights and preserving them" is highlighted by a TC.

Moreover, they provided complementary remarks on content, such as multiculturalism, equity, discrimination, and refugee rights. One respondent proposed that "TCs should gain multicultural communicative skills" followed by "acquiring the necessary multicultural awareness" of another participant's

view. Most interviewees emphasized the necessity of equity-related content as "the inevitable component of the curriculum" and anti-discrimination as "we must learn not to discriminate." Lastly, a respondent urged the inclusion of refugee rights in the content by mentioning, "there are now refugee students in our schools who need inclusion." Figure 5 presents a joint display integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings on content and highlighting the meta-inference as the purple color represents the quantitative findings and the blue color reflects the qualitative findings, highlighting the key themes that emerged.
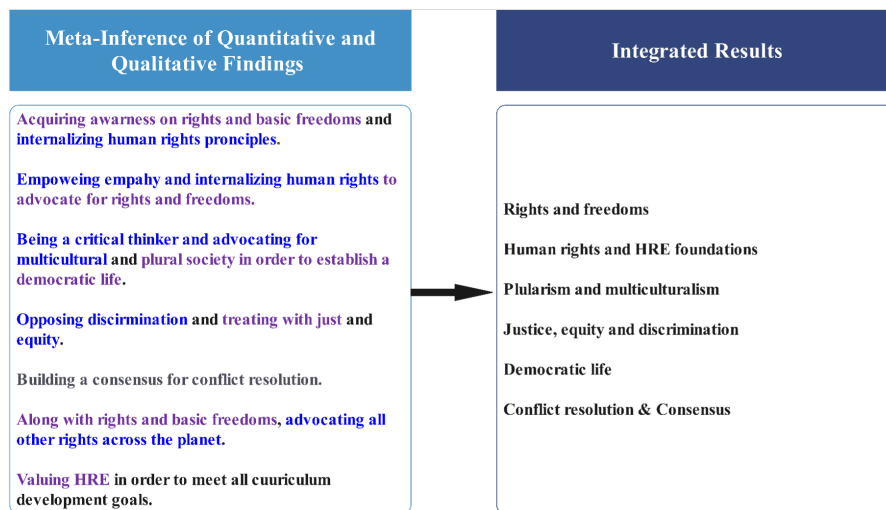

Meta-Inference of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings	Integrated Results
Acquiring awarness on rights and basic freedoms and internalizing human rights pronciples. Empoweing empahy and internalizing human rights to advocate for rights and freedoms. Being a critical thinker and advocating for multicultural and plural society in order to establish a democratic life. Opposing discirmination and treating with just and equity. Building a consensus for conflict resolution. Along with rights and basic freedoms, advocating all other rights across the planet. Valuing HRE in order to meet all cuuriculum development goals.	Rights and freedoms Human rights and HRE foundations Plularism and multiculturalism Justice, equity and discrimination Democratic life Conflict resolution & Consensus

Figure 5: Meta-Inference of HRE Curriculum Development Content

It is clear from Figure 5 that both FMs and TCs strongly support the core elements of the curriculum, namely democratic life, rights and freedoms, justice, and HRE basics. However, there were differences between the two participant groups in terms of their ratings of HRCDS items related to human rights and the fundamentals of HRE and reconciliation. The qualitative findings further elaborate on the support for the core curriculum elements and reveal additional content areas suggested by the participants, including children's, women's, and environmental rights, violence, multiculturalism, equity, discrimination, and refugee rights. The participants emphasized the importance of teaching human rights and HRE principles, as they provided students with diverse insights into social issues and fostered

advocacy for human rights. They also highlighted the necessity of justice- and equity-related content in the curriculum to raise awareness and act on social issues. The participants recognized that democratic life is a prerequisite for human rights and freedom, and that preserving minority rights is important in promoting pluralism. The participants' suggestions for additional content, such as multiculturalism and refugee rights, indicate the need for a curriculum to address the changing social landscape and diverse needs of students.

The results align with the emphasis of United Nations (2016) on strengthening and integrating respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms into higher education curriculum content. This is further supported by Öztürk et al. (2015), who argued that knowledge of fundamental rights and freedoms is crucial for enhancing the teaching experience of TCs. Additionally, Brander et al. (2020) stated that HRE aims to create a culture in which human rights concepts are accurately recognized, understood, respected, and defended, and that pre-service teacher education in HRE is essential. Regarding pluralism and multiculturalism, Coysh (2014) highlighted that HRE is a pluralistic process that shapes teacher-education HRE content based on different contexts, people, and experiences. In the "HRE Model for Coexistence," Bajaj (2011) emphasizes the importance of conceptual knowledge, skills, and attitudes for learners to internalize pluralism. Therefore, it is an essential area that should be acquired by TCs before teaching practice. Furthermore, the results highlighted justice, equity, and discrimination as critical content areas to be included in the TTEP HRE curriculum. Gündoğdu (2011) stressed that teachers are essential in ensuring human rights and social justice in democratic societies, while Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010) asserted that anti-discrimination educators should have relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Thus, the TTEP HRE curriculum should cover important topics and themes to empower TCs in their future practice. Finally, the study agrees with the United Nations (2019) in that higher education HRE can promote participatory democracy and sustainable development to prevent violence, resolve conflicts, and achieve reconciliation.

Teaching & Learning process

Quantitative Results. Descriptive statistics and chi-square findings are presented in Table 4, which is followed by an interpretation and discussion of the key findings.

Table 4: Descriptive and Chi-Square Results for Teaching-Learning (N = 678)

Item	Faculty member			Teacher candidate				
	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	χ^2	p
Organizing teaching in line with students and their needs	46	4.87	.40	632	4.96	.21	-	-
Organizing learning experiences in line with the needs of society	46	4.76	.64	632	4.96	.23	12.61	0.00*
Organizing activities that motivate students for HR advocacy	46	4.87	.45	632	4.96	.23	-	-
Organizing learning experiences that encourage discussion	46	4.93	.25	632	4.95	.29	-	-
Organizing learning environments that encourage students to defend HR	46	4.85	.42	632	4.96	.22	7.90	0.01*
Working on HR problems.	46	4.85	.42	632	4.95	.29	-	-
Working on HR stories	46	4.65	.67	632	4.93	.35	21.72	0.00*
Implementation of HR debates	46	4.83	53	632	4.93	.35	-	-
Implementing group work on HR	46	4.76	.64	632	4.95	.26	10.80	0.01*
Case studies on HR	46	4.91	.35	632	4.93	.32	-	-
Drama/role playing	46	4.74	.53	632	4.94	.30	14.57	0.00*
Field-trips, observations and investigations on HR issues	46	4.65	.79	632	4.87	.45	12.56	0.01*
Inviting relevant people to classes for HR	46	4.71	.58	632	4.25	1.06	30.26	0.00*
Presentation	46	3.80	1.22	632	3.09	1.68	51.93	0.00*
Organizing HR conferences	46	4.17	.95	632	4.16	1.39	28.62	0.00*
Organizing HR panel discussions	46	4.35	.87	632	4.50	.98	20.80	0.00*
Watching movies about HR	46	4.57	.62	632	4.51	.81	-	-
Preparing short films	46	4.57	.81	632	4.66	.67	-	-
Preparing brochures	46	4.50	.89	632	3.48	1.25	53.67	0.00*
Preparing diagnostic branched tree	46	4.41	.88	632	3.29	1.39	46.57	0.00*
Organizing teaching in line with students and their needs	46	4.87	.40	632	4.96	.21	-	-
Organizing learning experiences in line with the needs of society	46	4.76	.64	632	4.96	.23	-	-
Organizing activities that motivate students for HR advocacy	46	4.87	.45	632	4.96	.23	-	-
Organizing learning experiences that encourage discussion	46	4.93	.25	632	4.95	.29	-	-

Note. HRs = Human Rights.

Table 4 presents descriptive and Chi-Square results for various content items related to HRE among FMs and TCs, indicating differences in

opinions on organizing teaching in line with students' needs and organizing learning experiences in line with the needs of society, with TCs showing a stronger preference for these strategies than FMs. FMs were strongly in favor of "organizing learning experiences that encourage discussion" ($\bar{X}$=4.93) and "case studies in human rights" ($\bar{X}$=4.91). Whereas TCs rated "organizing instruction based on students' needs" ($\bar{X}$=4.96), "organizing learning experiences in line with the needs of society" ($\bar{X}$=4.96), and "organizing learning environments that encourage students to defend human rights" ($\bar{X}$=4.96) as highly supported. The findings suggest that FMs support encouraging debate and case study analysis, while TCs support organizing instruction based on students' and society's needs and providing a learning environment that encourages advocacy for human rights. The chi-square results indicate the differences between the views of the participants regarding learning experiences such as organizing based on society's needs, encouraging advocacy for human rights, storytelling, group-work, drama/role-plays, field trips, inviting related individuals, presentations, conferences and panels, posters, and diagnostic decision tree items.[5] These findings suggest that educators should consider these factors when striving for effective learning experiences.

Qualitative Results. Both confirmatory and complementary results on HRE curriculum development teaching-learning are given in Figure 6.

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[5] 'organizing learning experiences based on society`s needs' ($X^2(2)$= 12.61, p <.05), 'organizing encouraging learning environments to advocate for human rights' ($X^2(2)$=7.90, p <.05), learning through story-telling ($X^2(4)$=21.72, p <.05), learning through group-work ($X^2(3)$=10.80, p <.05), use of drama/role-plays ($X^2(3)$=14.57, p <.05), go on field trips ($X^2(4)$=12.56, p <.05), inviting related individuals to the class, ($X^2(4)$=30.26, p <.05), use of presentations ($X^2(4)$=51.93, p <.05), organizing conferences ($X^2(4)$=28.62, p <.05), organizing panels ($X^2(4)$=20.80, p <.05), use of posters($X^2(4)$=53.67, p <.05) preparing diagnostic decision tree ($X^2(4)$=20.80, p <.05) items
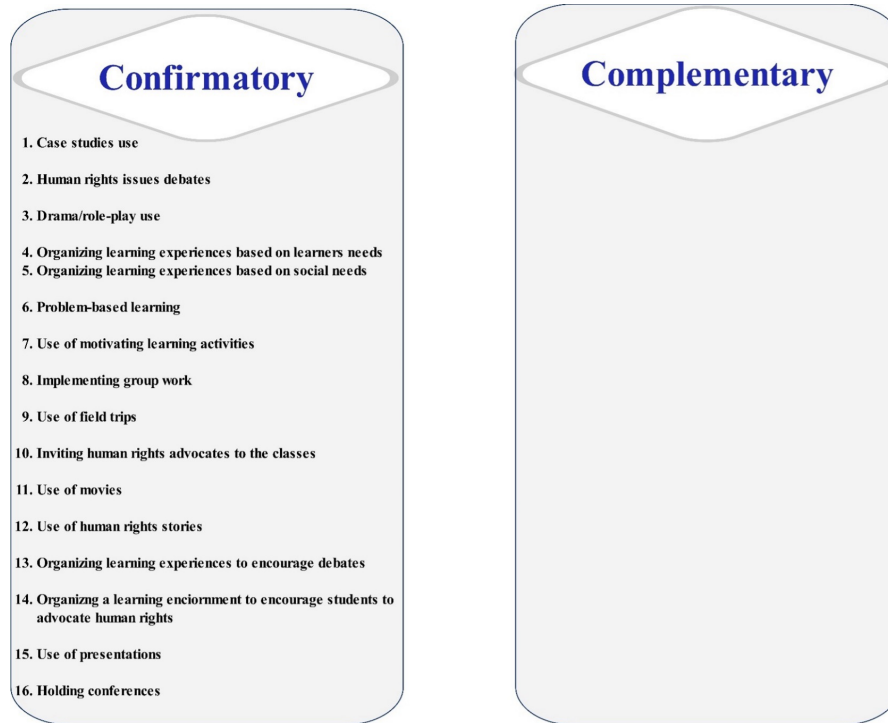
Confirmatory

1. Case studies use
2. Human rights issues debates
3. Drama/role-play use
4. Organizing learning experiences based on learners needs
5. Organizing learning experiences based on social needs
6. Problem-based learning
7. Use of motivating learning activities
8. Implementing group work
9. Use of field trips
10. Inviting human rights advocates to the classes
11. Use of movies
12. Use of human rights stories
13. Organizing learning experiences to encourage debates
14. Organizng a learning enciorment to encourage students to advocate human rights
15. Use of presentations
16. Holding conferences

Complementary

Figure 6: Confirmatory and Complementary Teaching-Learning Process

According to Figure 6, participants agreed that case studies could be effective in teaching human rights. One FM mentioned that "case studies with engaging, real-life challenges and scenarios should be used." Another FM emphasized discussion and debates as "the students do research among articles and debate over them in the class." Role-plays can help the process, as a TC mentioned that "role-plays both raise awareness and help the students develop their empathy." However, one TC stated that "the human rights curriculum should go beyond theoretical content and address students' needs and interests," stressing that all processes should center around student needs. Social needs should be considered along with individual needs, as highlighted by a TC saying, "human rights content should be shaped around societal consensus among diverse groups." Lastly, problem-based learning, field trips, movies, and real-life narratives were highlighted by both groups to strengthen the teaching-learning process. Figure 7 presents a joint display integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings on the teaching-learning process and highlighting the meta-inference, as the

purple color represents the confirmatory findings, providing a meaningful representation of the key findings.
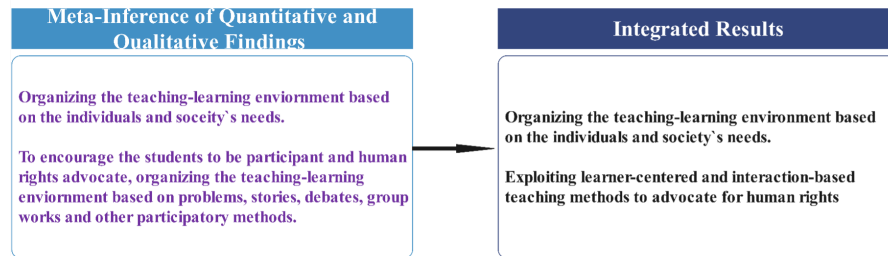

Meta-Inference of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings	Integrated Results
Organizing the teaching-learning enviornment based on the individuals and soceity`s needs. To encourage the students to be participant and human rights advocate, organizing the teaching-learning enviornment based on problems, stories, debates, group works and other participatory methods.	Organizing the teaching-learning environment based on the individuals and society`s needs. Exploiting learner-centered and interaction-based teaching methods to advocate for human rights

Figure 7: Meta-Inference of HRE Curriculum Development Teaching-Learning

Overall, Figure 7 reveals that both FMs and TCs prioritize individual and social needs when creating interactive and learner-centered learning environments. The study highlights the differences in the approaches of FMs and TCs towards HRE instruction and the need to improve the TTEP HRE curriculum to better meet the needs and preferences of both groups. The disparities in their approaches could be attributed to their educational backgrounds, teaching practices, and cultural and social contexts. The chi-square results suggest conflicting views on the most effective instructional methods, such as drama/role-plays, field trips, presentations, and posters. The United Nations (2011b) emphasizes empowering communities and individuals to identify their human rights needs and claim them effectively, while Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) recommend a problem-based curriculum that addresses social life issues, and Tibbitts (2015) suggests organizing the HRE curriculum based on individual-society needs. The study recommends teaching methods like case studies, discussions, drama/role-playing, field trips, and inviting relevant people to classes to enhance TCs' success and productivity, foster supportive and committed relationships, and boost mental health, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence. Benedek (2012) supports the Participatory, Interaction, Reflection, and Anticipation (PIRA) multi-methodical approach in the HRE process, which aligns with the study's results. The United Nations (2016) also highlights the need for practical, participatory-oriented HRE instruction to strengthen professional self-esteem and enable colleagues to learn from each other. In conclusion, the recommended teaching methods aim to enhance TCs' success and productivity, foster supportive

relationships, and develop decision-making skills, comprehension, empathy, respect, and personal responsibility before their teaching experiences.

Evaluation process

Quantitative Results. The descriptive statistics and chi-square findings are presented in Table 5, which is followed by an interpretation and discussion of the key findings.

Table 5: Descriptive and Chi-Square Results for Evaluation (N = 678)

Item	Faculty member			Teacher candidate				
	n	$\overline{X}$	SS	n	$\overline{X}$	SS	χ^2	p
Assessment tools in line with the objectives	46	4.91	.28	632	4.94	.29	-	-
Written tests	46	3.46	1.57	632	3.70	1.48	-	-
Multiple-choice tests	46	3.11	1.52	632	2.32	1.52	12.80	0.01*
Portfolio	46	4.70	.63	632	4.65	.90	18.28	0.00*
Rubrics	46	4.44	.96	632	4.38	1.05	33.67	0.00*
Self-assessment	46	4.44	.96	632	4.38	1.05	15.07	0.00*
Peer assessment	46	4.61	.88	632	4.90	.42	37.51	0.00*
Teacher evaluation	46	4.33	1.06	632	4.90	.41	65.55	0.00*
Dairy writing	46	4.11	1.06	632	4.91	.36	30.63	0.00*
Reflection	46	4.33	.99	632	4.87	.51	16.37	0.00*
Observation	46	4.59	.91	632	4.77	.64	27.18	0.00*
Interviews	46	4.39	1.02	632	4.81	.60	33.86	0.00*

Table 5 presents descriptive and Chi-Square results for HRE evaluation process among FMs and TCs, indicating differences across various evaluation methods that reflect divergent perceptions or implementations of these assessment tools between the two groups. While FMs rated "the appropriateness of evaluation tools" ($\overline{X}$=4.91), "portfolio use" ($\overline{X}$=4.70) and "self-evaluation" ($\overline{X}$=4.70) as highly supported, TCs rated "the appropriateness of evaluation tools" ($\overline{X}$=4.94), "teacher evaluation" ($\overline{X}$=4.91), "self-evaluation" ($\overline{X}$=4.90) and "peer-evaluation" ($\overline{X}$=4.90) as highly supported items. The chi-square test reveals the differences between the views of FMs and TCs on HRCDS items[6] including the use of multiple-choice questions, portfolios,

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[6] *'use of multiple-choice questions' ($X^2(4)$= 12.80, p <.05), use of portfolios ($X^2(2)$=18.28, p <.05), use of rubric ($X^2(4)$=33.67, p <.05), use of self-evaluation ($X^2(3)$=15.07, p <.05), use of peer evaluation ($X^2(3)$=37.51, p <.05), use of teacher evaluation ($X^2(4)$=65.55, p <.05), dairy writing ($X^2(4)$=30.63, p <.05),*

rubrics, self-evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher evaluation, diary writing, reflective evaluation, observation form, and conducting interviews. According to the results, FMs and TCs had different views related to the use of evaluation tools. FMs rated the appropriateness of evaluation tools, portfolio use, and self-evaluation as highly supported, while TCs rated the appropriateness of evaluation tools, teacher evaluation, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation as highly supported. The differences can be due to several reasons. For example, FMs may have more experience with specific evaluation tools or methods, or they may have a different view on what constitutes effective evaluation. On the other hand, TCs may have a more practical view of evaluation methods and prioritize those that are more commonly used and have been found to be effective in their experience.

Qualitative Results. Both confirmatory and complementary results on HRE curriculum development evaluation process are given in Figure 8.
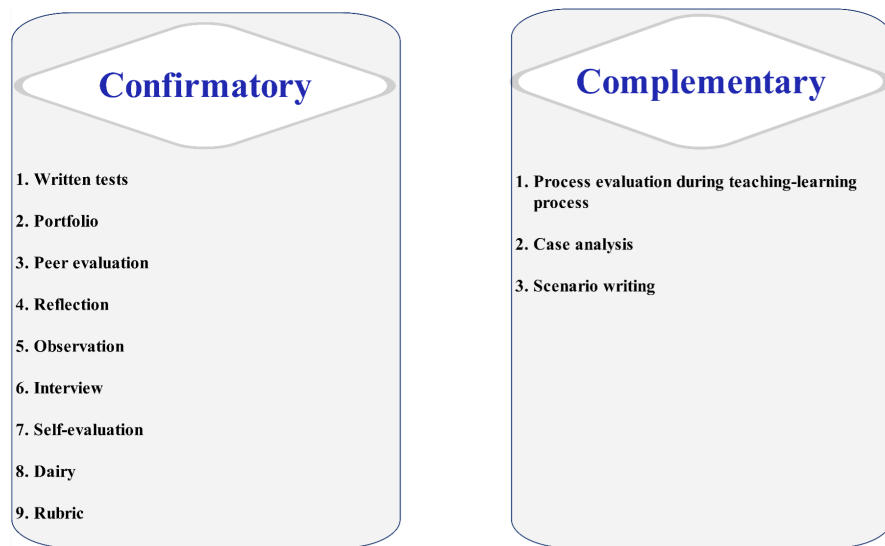
Figure 8: Confirmatory and Complementary Evaluation Process

As Figure 8 shows, the participants supported HRDCS evaluation methods as the less traditional but alternative and learner-centered tools to

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reflective evaluation $(X^2(4)=16.37, p <.05)$, use of observation form $(X^2(4)=27.18, p <.05)$ and conducting interviews $(X^2(4)=33.86, p <.05)$

be implemented along with the teaching-learning process. While a FM mentioned that "tests can be used for certain types of knowledge issues," one TC posited that "tests fall behind when the aim is to evaluate the deeper learning to take actions." Portfolios for "self-assessment" peer evaluation for "reflection" and other tools were also supported for inclusion in the HRE curriculum evaluation process by both participant groups. Moreover, both groups provided complementary remarks on the need for process evaluation such as "process evaluation tools seem to be more effective" case analysis "to encourage a deeper learning and internalization of human rights issues," and scenario writing "to analyze personal and social life experiences." Figure 10 presents a joint display integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings on the evaluation process and highlighting the meta-inference.
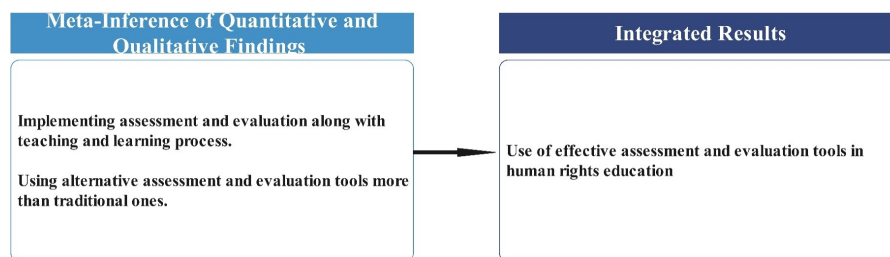
Figure 9: Meta-Inference of HRE Curriculum Development Evaluation

Figure 9 illustrates that FMs and TCs prefer effective evaluation tools, albeit with varying priorities. The significant differences in their preferences on several HRCDS items imply that educators should be aware of the strengths and limitations of various evaluation tools and employ a variety of them for a comprehensive and accurate evaluation of TCs' performance. These findings align with the recommendation of United Nations (2011a) that both quantitative (standardized tests) and qualitative (in-class observation, teacher self-evaluation, self-assessments, peer evaluation, etc.) methods should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher education HRE curriculum. Brett et al. (2009) suggest that HRE evaluation should assess knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and tendencies as a whole process, going beyond measuring the acquisition of pure knowledge. Similarly, Flowers (2000) suggests using interview, observation, case study, and project evaluation methods throughout the HRE learning process. The study participants

supported the notion that the teaching-learning and evaluation processes should be interconnected.

Implications

This study offers valuable insights into the specific components of the HRE curriculum deemed important by both FMs and TCs. By incorporating the perspectives of both groups, TTEP educators can create a curriculum that meets the needs of a diverse population of TCs and fosters human rights and social justice values in TTEP. However, TTEP educators should consider these findings during the planning and design of the HRE curriculum to ensure its effectiveness and relevance for all TCs, regardless of their backgrounds and experiences. While our study did not directly involve HRE in Turkish schools, the findings can still have implications for the development and implementation of HRE in schools by informing the training and education of future teachers responsible for teaching HRE. The findings are significant for TTEP educators, policymakers, and researchers, as they provide valuable information for planning and developing the HRE curriculum in Turkey. We recommended designing an integrated HRE curriculum in TTEP, enriching TCs' knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors through various curricular and extracurricular activities. This aligns with the observation that TCs who view HRE positively are more adept at incorporating its elements into their future teaching through various extracurricular activities, effectively imparting knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors associated with human rights. Their approach demonstrates the vital role of TCs' attitudes in the successful integration of HRE, suggesting the potential impact of a well-designed, integrated HRE curriculum in nurturing a holistic educational experience.

Given the identified HRE objectives, HRE practice within TTEP appears limited, indicating a need for more comprehensive training in HRE. This training should engage stakeholders in diverse extracurricular activities, fostering a deep understanding and advocacy for human rights. FMs emphasized the importance of democratic participation, suggesting that TCs' awareness in this area should be strengthened to foster societal

transformation towards a democratic vision. The findings also reveal that participants value HRE highly, suggesting that educational policies should ensure that all stakeholders appreciate and integrate HRE into their educational culture. Regarding content, it is essential that the organization of HRE content in TTEP aligns with the identified objectives. Priority should be given to topics like "fundamental rights and freedoms," as supported by all participants. Additionally, "human rights and fundamentals of HRE" should be included in the curriculum, as frequently discussed by FMs. Despite "pluralism" receiving a lower emphasis in the quantitative data, the frequent mention of "multiculturalism" indicates the importance of fostering a multicultural vision in TTEP. The emphasis on "justice" in both quantitative and qualitative data suggests incorporating anti-discrimination activities that reinforce justice-related issues. In teaching-learning, it is advised that TTEP organizes experience-based environments, tailored to learners' social needs, enhancing TCs' knowledge and skills in HRE. FMs should enrich the HRE teaching-learning process beyond classroom hours, encouraging participation in extracurricular activities. TTEP should support TCs in achieving HRE objectives by facilitating events both inside and outside the university. Additionally, TTEP should assist TCs in developing their human rights advocacy awareness and democratic participation skills. For evaluation, alternative methods should complement traditional evaluation methods in assessing the TTEP HRE curriculum.

Future research should focus on enhancing the reliability and validity of HRE studies by adopting other MMR designs, such as observing TCs' practices and involving a broader range of stakeholders. The significant statistical difference in views between FMs and TCs on the objectives of teacher education HRE, notably more favorable among TCs, warrants further exploration using different MMR designs and data collection methods. The use of convenience sampling in this study limits the generalizability of the findings, suggesting that future studies should adopt varied sampling strategies to improve reliability and validity. Expanding the scope of the study to include analyzing TCs' journals, observing HRE practices, and interviewing diverse stakeholders like policymakers or NGOs could enhance the study's reliability and validity. MMR studies involving long-term

observations in TTEP are recommended to determine the effectiveness of learner-centered, participatory, and interactive HRE teaching-learning practices. Regarding evaluation, the results suggest ongoing evaluation as an integral part of the teaching-learning process, and conducting long-term observational MMR studies in TTEP and other contexts could help determine the effectiveness of evaluation methods in HRE practice.

Conclusion

Human Rights Education (HRE) plays a crucial role in promoting human rights values in all aspects of human life. Therefore, developing a comprehensive HRE curriculum is essential for Turkish Teacher Education Program (TTEP). This study aimed to gather the views of Faculty Members (FMs) and Teacher Candidates (TCs) to inform the development of HRE curriculum components in TTEP. While our study was not intended to analyze or design a curriculum, it provides valuable insights into the participants' views on the HRE curriculum components, objectives, content, teaching-learning, and evaluation processes they supported. By using a convergent mixed-methods research design, our study identified the main HRE curriculum components required to train TCs effectively in the TTEP. One of the main contributions of our study is that it guides future research and curriculum development efforts. However, the study had some limitations. Due to the pandemic and availability problems, we had limited participation, which hindered us from obtaining more views. Our study was also limited to four universities in Ankara, Turkey, and it would be more comprehensive to gather views from FMs and TCs across all teacher education programs in the country. Finally, we collected data using one survey and individual and focus-group interviews, and future studies could use alternative designs and data collection instruments to expand knowledge in the HRE field. In conclusion, our study provides a significant contribution to the field of HRE in TTEP by identifying key curriculum components and views from FMs and TCs. We hope that our findings will inform future curriculum development efforts and inspire further research in the HRE field globally.

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Making Curricular Space for Critical Media Literacy and Human Rights Education in the United States

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Abstract

This essay draws from a study conducted as part of graduate thesis work at George Mason University. The thesis examined the purpose of human rights education and critical media literacy, and the international inducements to include these subjects in the national education systems of United Nations (UN) member states. It compared the United States (U.S.) educational system to those of other, similarly developed UN member states that have successfully implemented human rights education and critical media literacy into their national education. The comparison revealed a lack of implementation in the U.S. despite its member state status and agreement to do so. The study also looked at decades-long appeals from U.S. educators and scholars to embed these subjects into curricula, and the impact this education may have on protecting and advancing democracy. Based on the findings, a new undergraduate college course was designed. The essay that follows describes the structure, design, learning objectives, and expected outcomes of the course.

Keywords: critical media literacy, human rights education, civics, democracy, social justice, citizenship

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Introduction

According to the firmly established 1992 definition, media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act through all forms of communication (Aufderheide, 1993), including mass communication and media, popular culture, and digital technologies. Incorporating Paulo Freire's pedagogical work (Freire, 2000), critical media literacy takes media literacy further by teaching learners to interrogate and challenge dominant power dynamics, themes, and narratives (Kellner & Share, 2007). Because human rights education is meant to foster conscientious world citizens, ready and able to steward more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies (Tibbitts, 2017), the two disciplines together may be understood as a form of intellectual, moral, and social self-defense against divisiveness and disinformation in a nation rife with political and media hostilities, and economic, educational, and digital inequities.

With political extremism on the rise in the United States, agencies ranging from the international to the United States Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2022) have warned that democracies around the world, including the United States, are in danger. Larger, more existential crises, such as climate chaos, war, and pandemics only compound the situation. These factors set the stage for research that led to the design of an interdisciplinary undergraduate course that combines critical media literacy and human rights education. Realizing the negative impacts that miseducation and disinformation have on sociopolitical stability, economics, and public health, this study sought for educational intervention, beginning with basic assumptions about the institutions of media and education.

The first assumption is that media and education are public goods, and in theory if not practice, available to all members of society. The second is that media and education are society's primary ways of obtaining and exchanging information. Ideally, learners of any age are equally and equitably informed and prepared for responsible, engaged citizenship. Far from being mutually exclusive, both media and education can either progress or obstruct human rights and democracy; hence, education and media communications

are central to civic engagement, democratic governance, and to solving some of the 21st century's most pressing problems. The study assumes that societies functioning on human and civil rights principles and justice-oriented objectives equate to more equal, equitable socioeconomic opportunities that include quality education and contemporary literacies.

Several key facts further inform the rationale for this project. In 2022, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) warned that the world had entered a new era of polarization and extremism perpetuated by widespread media illiteracy and misuse. Their annual *World Press Freedom Index*, which assesses press freedom in 180 nations, and ranks them according to five indicators—political, economic, sociocultural, legal, and safety—showed that the United States had dropped from 17th position in 2002 to 42nd position in 2022 and 45th in 2023 (RSF, 2023). If press freedom is a hallmark of democracy and vice-versa, then a compromised press compromises democracy. Without independent, pluralistic, accessible information, citizens are deprived of the knowledge and skills needed to participate in fair civic debate, and to hold their government to account.

Dr. Sylvie Briand, Director of the Department of Global Infectious Hazard Preparedness at the World Health Organization (WHO), made similar public statements on the globalized "infodemic" that surged with COVID-19. The term "infodemic" captures the enormity of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation that floods through online spaces and throughout the public sphere (WHO, 2021). To clarify, misinformation is false information that is unwittingly passed on; meaning the sender is unaware that the information is incorrect. Disinformation is an intentional spreading of false information, and malinformation is factual information that is removed from its original context and disseminated in such a way as to purposely cause confusion or harm (Media Defence, 2023). The infodemic, asserted Briand, proliferates largely unchecked in environments in which critical thinking, norms-centered discourse, human and civil rights, and media literacy skills are lacking and/or underprioritized in national educational systems (WHO, 2022).

Factoring into the development of the course is the nearly worldwide migration patterns that show few signs of slowing down. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, at the end of 2022 the number of people worldwide forcibly displaced from their homes was 89.3 million (UNHCR, 2001-2024). The sources of mass migration include war and violence, climate catastrophe, poverty, and public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 40 percent of those displaced are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2001-2024), pointing to interrupted and/or inadequate education for many school-age persons. This matters on multiple levels, not the least of which is that some of those displaced individuals inevitably land in U.S. classrooms as "third culture kids," that is, children reared in a culture different from that of their parents' or their own place of birth (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Depending on the circumstances leading to third culture kids' relocation, they may arrive in their new schools with some degree of trauma. Educators and student peers alike need a more thorough and critical understanding of these causes and effects. A critical literacies and rights-based educational foundation can assist students, educators, and practitioners to better engage in multiple realities, including those within marginalized and resettlement communities, as well as in a democracy (Bajaj, 2015).

Migrants and displaced persons depend heavily on mobile devices and applications for communication and information, further indicating the importance of critical media and information literacy and knowledge of rights (Bruinenberg, et al, 2021). Considering Russia's war on Ukraine that began in early 2022, protracted conflicts in the Middle East, Central Asia and on the African continent, increasingly extreme and frequent weather events, economic turmoil, and transnational corporate decisions that prioritize the few above the many, international and internal migration and displacement will likely continue. Accordingly, the demand for education and critical literacies will also continue.

This study assumes that educating citizens and residents of any nation in human rights education (HRE) and critical media literacy (CML) may aid in advancing civics and citizenship education, empowering learners with the

knowledge and skills to engage in community action and civic duties, and to demand transparency in government. The learning outcomes and long-term potential of both human rights education and critical media literacy highlight the value of these subjects in national educational systems, and explain the decades-long appeals from educators and scholars to include them in U.S. curricula. As a noteworthy aside, this exploration into HRE and CML uncovered appeals from scholars of civics and citizenship education. The case for embedding contemporary civics learning into U.S. curricula at all levels reveals learning objectives and outcomes similar to that of HRE and CML, and have factored into the content and construction the course.

International educational standards

The United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have long issued international standard-setting instruments on education. Considered "soft laws," these declarations, charters, conventions, recommended directives, and normative frameworks are not legally binding. Nonetheless, member states are expected to enforce them through their national systems (UNESCO, 2024a).

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) upholds that the relationship between human rights and democracy is mutually reinforcing, and contributes to a just society (OHCHR, 1996-2024a-b). In an effort to oblige countries to adopt a human rights framework, the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education drafted the *Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* which was adopted in 2011, instructing governments on how to provide and institutionalize human rights education within national education systems. This includes public and private schools, colleges, and universities; formal and informal sectors; vocational training, teacher education, continuing professional development education; and public awareness education (Cargas, 2020). As with the assertion by the UN World Programme's training manual that critical human rights education is integral to solving our world's most pressing and ongoing crises (2011), UNESCO's *Media and Information*

Literacy Curriculum for Educators and Learners contends the same with regards to critical media literacy. For citizens to fully participate in a rights-based democracy and address many of the issues facing humanity today, they must be explicitly educated and equipped to interrogate media messaging and information (Grizzle, et al., 2021).

UN guidelines on HRE and CML tie into a fundamental rationale for the course proposed in this article. They assert that when institutions, policies, laws, and societies are grounded in human rights, a democracy is better held in check, opportunities are more equally available across societal stratospheres, and that socioeconomic equity is more achievable. The premise of critical media literacy is to engage with media through an analytical lens, identifying systems and structures of power, ideologies, and images of groups and individuals that ultimately produce what becomes public or common knowledge and assumed to be true in culture and society. Media education expert David Buckingham argued in *Media Education Manifesto* (2019) that simply knowing how to access or send information or to use a digital device is a bare minimum as compared to an in-depth understanding of what stories are told, who gets represented in media, how media are produced, and to what end.

In the United States—a UN member nation—education is decentralized, and curricula are primarily set by state and regional school and college boards. After examining the directives put forth by the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education, UNESCO, and other UN departments that seek to induce UN member states to include HRE and CML in their national educational programming, this study found that the United States educational system has incongruencies between agreements "on paper" versus enactment of prescribed approaches and curricula.

The study compared the United States to other similarly developed UN member nations, such as Finland and the United Kingdom, that have successfully implemented HRE and CML into their national curricula. Contemplating the longstanding appeals from U.S. educators and scholars, this study continues those appeals, and provides an intervention in the form

of the course. A literature review showed that no one degree-seeking program or college course specifically combines and teaches critical media literacy and human rights education. Of the approximately 5,000 colleges and universities across the United States, less than ten offer stand-alone bachelor or master degrees in human rights (Halperin, 2020). Some form of media literacy may be found as a minor track within communication and journalism programs, as an online certificate program, an elective course, or optional professional development workshop (Butler, 2020). Aspects of critical media literacy and human rights education may be seen embedded in degree-seeking programs that concentrate in law, peace, security, or justice studies (Bajaj, 2015). These efforts, however, are too few and far between to adequately accomplish the educational goals set forth by the United Nations or those called for by U.S. educators, scholars, and proponents of human rights education, critical media literacy, and civics.

Background

Curricula update appeals are not new. In the past, national educational changes have occurred in response to events such as those during and after the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the 9/11 attacks in the United States. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, January 6th 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, and subsequent actions like voter suppression and restrictions, gerrymandering, reversal of Roe v. Wade, and the rise of artificial intelligence have sparked educational appeals anew (McCartney, 2019). These events reassert the value of critical media literacy and human rights education for cultivating an informed, engaged democratic citizenry and next generation of innovative problem solvers and leaders who are equipped to take on the crises facing our planet.

Sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO's Global Education Cooperation Mechanism was launched as a further push toward learning that involves critical media literacy and human rights education. As part of the UN's sustainable goals, "Education 2030" established additional inducements for member states to "transform" their national educational systems. The thematic focus on digital learning asks member states to teach responsible

digital citizenship, including online well-being, privacy, and security. Other themes focus on areas such as inclusive, equitable education, gender rights, and environmental sustainability (UNESCO, 2024b). Embedding critical media literacy and human rights education into U.S. curricula would help the country reach its commitment to these newer, as well as previous, educational goals.

Increasingly, corporate consolidation dominates the media and education landscape. Media ownership consolidation that has curtailed and eliminated many local reporter jobs, news stations and publications is counterproductive to democratic principles (Pickard, 2019). According to research by the Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media, Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, "[M]ore than 200 of the nation's 3,143 counties and equivalents have no newspaper and no alternative source of credible and comprehensive information on critical issues" (Abernathy, 2020). What's more, our nation's students and the general public are largely unaware that giant corporations, hedge funds, and private equity groups own most media, decide on what gets reported, and impact what gets taught in U.S. classrooms.

<div align="center">

**A Course on Critical Media Literacy
and Human Rights Education**

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Conceptual framework for the course

Because this course is designed to be interdisciplinary and introductory, it presupposes that students' knowledge of the core subjects may be minimal. Each of the core disciplines—media and information, critical theories, human rights education, and journalistic ethics—easily stands on its own, and is worthy of study beyond one semester. On the surface, this presents as a potential limitation to the course objectives. However, because each subject shares learning goals and outcomes and approaches to literacy, introducing them as intersecting may lay the groundwork for students' further interdisciplinary pursuits.

Ascertaining the similarities in learning goals and outcomes between the two subjects, this introductory, interdisciplinary, 16-week, seminar style, three-credit course is aimed at first and second-year college undergraduate students. The course could serve as an undergraduate general requirement, or it could work into degree programs focused on communication, journalism, ethnic and gender studies, education, social justice, public policy, history, and/or writing.

The course could feasibly be adjusted for high school learning, as well as worked into basic adult learning in civics, social studies, and English language arts. Because learning objectives of both critical media literacy and human rights education align with the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2021), and with relevant state anchor standards in English language arts and literacy, reading, writing, speaking, social studies, and history, curricula implementation is wholly plausible.

The course construction borrows from the educational framework published in the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training manual. Teaching *about, through,* and *for* human rights provided the foundation upon which the course is designed, marking intersections among human rights education, critical media literacy, and ethics. Designed to foster an appreciation and understanding of human rights, teaching and learning *about* human rights as expressed in the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights, as well as *for* (in support of) rights, and *through* rights is the rights-based pedagogy that links to critical thinking and democracy. This rights-based pedagogy incorporates human and civil rights attitudes and values, and can empower learners with the agency to take responsible, respectful action in civil society (OHCHR, 1996-2024b).

Table I. Course framework

Theoretical element	Teaching method	---------->	---------->
	ABOUT	*THROUGH*	*FOR*
human rights education	providing information on human rights to help with understanding fundamental principles, values, and means for their defense	teaching and learning in ways that are respectful of the rights of all participants in the educational process	empowering individuals to access and exercise their rights, as well as uphold the rights of others

critical media literacy	acquiring necessary knowledge and skills to interpret media messaging	analyses of means of media production, representation, language, audience, distribution, funding, and power structures	instilling intellectual, moral, and social self-defense, and conscientious communication
journalism ethics	Understanding main differences between law and ethics: laws are minimal standards of conduct; ethics are maximal	calls for higher order and critical thinking, higher level moral determination, and multiperspectivity	making decisions in ethical dilemmas that rise above baseline legally permissible conduct
critical pedagogy	employs inquiry, self-reflection, and authentic dialogue	teaching and learning is happening simultaneously	creating opportunities to recognize dynamics of power and equity, and to act on that recognition for self-development and that of others

Course learning objectives

The purpose of this course is to provide students with knowledge and competencies to:

- understand international human rights concepts, and their compatibility with education and media policies and democratic practices in the United States;
- apply self-reflective practices to written and verbal communication, making connections between disciplinary knowledge and civic life
- demonstrate understanding and ability to deconstruct and create media messages;
- examine diversity of values, identities, and individual agency in various contexts with particular attention given to who or what is not being represented, and who has the right to be included and belong;
- examine propaganda tactics, and discern fact from opinion and fiction;
- synthesize lateral reading, critical and comparative thinking, and analytical skills to examine ethical dilemmas, power structures, civic duties, rights, and responsibilities.

Practical application synopsis

Designated High Impact Educational Practices, such as critical analysis, writing, class discussions, small group discussions, pair-sharing, experiential learning, peer and instructor feedback, and public demonstration of learning (Kuh, 2008) will be accomplished in this course as explained throughout the syllabus and week-by-week outline of assignments. All readings and media will be provided to students at no cost. Those materials, along with class discussions and assignments, will be grounded in historical theories, yet applicable to contemporary contexts. Abstract concepts will be explored in tandem with current events and media to help bridge to modern day relevance.

The syllabus introduces the topic for the week, which may be accomplished in one three-hour class meeting, or in two one hour-and-half class meetings per week. Classes may take place in person or online, synchronously or asynchronously through the use of a learning management system. Each class session is enriched by video, images, film clips, podcasts, and guest speakers. The syllabus' weekly calendar divides in-class learning from assignments to be done outside of class time. Larger assignments are meant to be explained during appointed class meetings. Further instructions for those assignments would be provided through handouts, online links, or attachments in the learning management system. Student progress shall be assessed by their participation, assignments, and projects.

Weekly discussions require full student participation, and account for 20 percent of the final grade. Employing multimodal learning strategies, students will be expected to engage with assigned readings on each week's or the following week's topics, which will be supplied as online documents or handouts. Topical podcast episodes, videos, and web-based learning activities would be linked and accessible through the learning management system, or through web addresses provided on the syllabus. The aims of these modal variations are to help quicken and deepen learning.

Four, short reflection papers, assigned at intervals throughout the semester and pertaining to the material leading up to the assignment date will make up 20 percent of the overall grade. A larger, mid-semester writing

assignment worth 30 percent and meant to encourage students to dive deeply into their topic through critical thinking and analysis provides an opportunity for students to express original thought and demonstrate academic writing skills.

The final "culture jamming" project, also worth 30 percent, may be assigned individually or as teamwork. It will ask students to analyze and respond to a message or signage that may be prevalent or commonly known in a community, among certain groups, or broader society. The message might be commercial, consumeristic, or political in nature, part of political canvassing, an advertising campaign, public service announcement, or a sign or symbol that can be critically interpreted or decoded, and reconstructed. The student will alter the original message to create something new, formulating a different or contrary statement. The last class calls for students to display their culture jam projects for peer feedback and discussion by way of a gallery walk—either online or in-person.

The final project reaches the top of Bloom's Taxonomy pyramid, activating creation (Armstrong, 2010). As media producers, each student will send an original message that exemplifies a command of their chosen subject, interrogation of the structures that have supported it, deconstruction of its messaging, and ultimately, creation of a new message that confronts a problem, dilemma, or injustice, and advocates for something else. The critical lens employed through the final project and throughout the course in its entirety, is meant to help students see the world differently, and feel empowered by a greater sense of personal and collective agency (Bajaj, 2018), increased civic mindedness and concern for the social contract, and fresh ideas for working towards a world founded on rights, equity, and justice.

The purpose of this course derives from the premise that the future of democracy, human rights, and crises intervention rests heavily with the students of today. Concurring with those scholars, educators, and practitioners who have long advocated for providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the complexities and responsibilities of negotiating societies led by governments that profess equality, justice, and liberty for all, the proposed course offers a practical tool.

As scholar and cultural critic Henry Giroux (2022) has argued, democracy, rights, and freedoms, in and of themselves, are uncertain. They require a critically educated and engaged citizenry willing to commit and uphold the ethos of the common good. In that regard, the course's learning outcomes expect to equip learners with a new skillset useful for navigating a pluralistic yet polarized civil and global society, and critically engaging on issues that affect the entire planet, such as climate change, public health, and regional conflicts.

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The View from *Norge*[1]: Rights-Based Discourse and Human Rights Education in Norway

David Tow[*]

Abstract

This paper uses the author's time as a Fulbright Roving Scholar in American Studies to Norway as an entrée into exploring human rights discourse and Human Rights Education in Norway, a country that is often thought of as one of the centers of human rights work in Europe—and appreciates this association. It begins by situating human rights in Norwegian law and history, connecting it to the author's home and teaching context. It then recounts the experience of serving as Roving Scholar, connecting it to observations both positive and potentially detrimental within Norway, concluding with some brief thoughts on a balance between Norwegian and American education systems.

Keywords: human rights, human rights education, international education, public education, teaching and learning

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"**D**o you find it ironic to be an American lecturing us about human rights?" was the first question I was asked in a room of sixteen-, seventeen-, and eighteen-year-old students in Kongsbakken *videregående skole*, an upper-secondary school in Tromsø, the largest city in Northern Norway. It was the tail end of winter, but the nights were still long and there was a freezing wind buffeting me as I made my way up the hill from my hotel to the upper-secondary school. There, I met students and families who had lived in and around Tromsø for generations, new internal migrants to the region, drawn by the growing aquaculture and seafood industries, and students who moved from elsewhere in the world to Norway—families of diplomats or business executives as well as those fleeing conflict, political instability, or persecution and hardship. In this classroom, there were over a dozen national origins represented. I was there to conduct a workshop on American politics and political identity, but something in my background, biography, and research interests gave one student pause.

It was a fair question. "If that's what I was here to do," I answered, "then yes, absolutely." I agreed that the United States has a poor track record of protecting and guaranteeing rights, and that while it was not alone in this, it was certainly not a good role model in many ways. However, I suggested, I would rather us look together and see what we can learn together from Norwegian and American history about human rights and identify ways we can further ensure rights for all. "Might you all be interested in that instead?" I asked. The class agreed, and we spent the next hour unpacking barriers to rights in our respective contexts, leaving American politics for another day. In my role as a Fulbright Roving Scholar in American Studies to Norway for the 2022–2023 school year, these kinds of split-second pivots were quite common and necessary.

This essay aims to recount my overall observations about human rights discourse and human rights education (HRE) from my time with Norwegian students and teachers. First, I will sketch some of the human rights and HRE landscape in Norway, situating it in relation to my home context and research. Then, I will summarize my work as a Roving Scholar in American Studies and describe the program. Finally, I will explore some of

the positive qualities and potential challenges I witnessed in Norwegian schools, ending with some notes on a balance between the Norwegian and American systems.

Background and Context

In the United States, I am an English and social science teacher at a medium-sized public high school located in Northern California. My educational philosophy, as well as my site and district leadership roles, revolve around empowering students and advancing rights-based discourse. In many ways, my teaching environment reflects larger trends occurring across the United States.[2] The demographics of my school are changing, having been predominantly white for much of its history but now becoming much more representative, with no single racial or ethnic group a majority. However, also like the rest of the United States, policy is slow to catch up to the needs of these students. My school, Terra Linda High School, has around 1150 students and 55 faculty members. Over 47% of our students identify as Hispanic, 38.7% identity as white, 6.2% of our students identify as Asian, 5.2% identify as biracial or multiracial, 1.7% identify as Black, with less than a percent each identifying as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and Indigenous American. Close to 20% of our students are designated English Language Learners, while more are recently redesignated English Language Learners. 41% of our students are reported as economically disadvantaged and 39% are free-lunch eligible (California Department of Education, 2023). Although the electoral map of my community may look politically uniform, local politics and grassroots justice movements highlight previously unseen divisions and prejudice. As a graduate student in International and Multicultural Education with an emphasis on Human Rights Education, I am interested in school reforms that build diverse and inclusive communities and center human rights with an eye towards social change. I am also

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[2] For more about how race, power, and privilege manifest in my region, see Rainey (2019), who reports on the continued efforts to desegregate local schools, and Perez (2018) who analyzes systemic barriers hindering Latinx academic success. For a broader conversation of how changing school demographics, race and racialization, and teacher education interact with conversations around school reform, see the new academic journal *Whiteness and Education*.

invested in finding ways that human rights instruments, especially those protecting children and marginalized communities, can lead to binding policies that positively impact school life in the United States.[3] For these reasons, I was eager to see where these paths led in one of the world's wealthiest nations, Norway.

Part of my goal for applying as a Fulbright Roving Scholar had to do with a desire for inspiration—like many educators, teaching during the heights of the pandemic had been exhausting—but I was also eager to witness how their vocational training other non-academic trajectories served students' and communities' needs, as well as how all schools foster students' sense of civic engagement and how human rights are taught and supported in schools. I was also interested in comparing education systems. Like the United States, Norway is a wealthy liberal democracy, and is also deeply enmeshed in global affairs and political unions—it is a member of NATO and the Council of Europe—but also like the United States, it does not subscribe to these partnerships wholesale—it does not use the Euro, is not a member state of the European Union, and is experiencing a recent upward trend in Euroscepticism and right-wing political movements (Duxbury, 2019; Poll of Polls, 2024). The country spends nearly as much in education per student as the United States and, like the United States, seems to be amid a rightward drift (relatively speaking). Norway is almost the same size as California, my home state, but with a population of 5.4 million—to the 7.75 million that live in the San Francisco Bay Area (opendatatsoft, 2024). And like the United States, Norway continues to grapple with migration and diversity in some exclusionary and xenophobic ways and is facing a reckoning about its ongoing unequal treatment of the Indigenous population of northern Fennoscandia, the Sámi.[4]

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[3] For more about how these values might be manifest in classrooms, see Bajaj & Tow (2021).

[4] In Norway, there is no nationwide definition on who qualifies as Sámi, making exact populations difficult. However, it is estimated that there are between 40,000 and 60,000 Sámi in Norway—just over 1% of the Norwegian population—making Norwegian Sámi the majority of the estimated 100,000 Sámi worldwide—Norway, Sweden, Russia, and Finland primarily (IWGIA, 2023).

The Human Rights Peaks and Valleys in Norway

As a teacher and researcher interested in human rights, I was first drawn to Norway when I learned that human rights were enshrined in the *Grunnlov*—the Norwegian Constitution, both in its original form in 1814 and additional enumerated protections added on its bicentennial. These include an obligation on behalf of the state to recognize and defend human rights, both those explicitly named within the Constitution and those guaranteed by human rights instruments to which Norway is a signatory (Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway, § 92). The document also establishes equality under the law (§ 98), the right to a healthy environment (§ 112), and other protections. It was also among the first to ratify the European Convention on Human Rights. Meanwhile, The Human Rights Act of 1999 not only granted some human rights conventions—including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)—the full weight of Norwegian domestic law, but also granted them supremacy over other policies and laws. Norway has also ratified more than a dozen international human rights treaties.[5] Section 109 of the Norwegian Constitution articulates a universal right to an education that, among other things, inculcates ideas of human rights, while section 104 asserts the rights of children as full citizens and protects their speech and agency in public decision-making. Similarly, the 2016 Norwegian Institution for Human Rights Act, established the *Norges institusjon for menneskerettigheter* (NIM—the Norwegian National Institution for Human Rights), a national organization tasked with advising the Norwegian and Sámi Parliaments, monitoring human rights, promoting and teaching about human rights, and connecting political authorities and civil society (§1-3).[6] In sum, the idea of human rights as such are present in legal theory,

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[5] Rosas (1986) provides useful background on pan-Nordic ratification of human rights and other rights-based treaties, and Keskinen (2019) helpfully situates rights discourse within broader colonial and racial discourses.

[6] In Norway, the Sámi Parliament (*Sametinget* in Norwegian and *Sámediggi* in Northern Sámi, the most widely spoken Sámi language in Norway) serves two functions: as the constituent assembly of Norwegian Sámi and as an institution protecting cultural autonomy. While the Sámediggi exercises a significant amount of authority over Sámi culture and territory, the Norwegian national parliament, the *Storting*, has the final legal and political say for matters of national policy.

documents, and policies throughout Norway, and rights as a framework appear to help drive policies forward.

There are also a robust network of policies and curricula emphasizing rights throughout Norwegian education. The Ministry of Education and Research largely accomplishes this through two avenues. First, they work to develop curriculum guides, standards and learning objectives, and assessments—these former two done in collaboration with Norwegian school teachers and educational researchers. Second, they support independent foundations and advisory boards that, "promote democratic values and attitudes" (European Commission, 2023) with a particular emphasis on intercultural awareness and tolerance. Amnesty Norway, the country's branch of the international organization, has several ongoing projects aimed at embedding human rights throughout compulsory Norwegian education and, indeed, advancing models of HRE as well (Amnesty International, 2019).[7] There are two universities offering graduate degrees in human rights: University of Oslo (which also houses the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, an organization that designs materials and courses that emphasize human rights) offers a master's degree in Theory and Practice of Human Rights, while the University of Southeastern Norway (which houses an international journal, the *Human Rights Education Review*) offers a master's degree in Human Rights and Multiculturalism. Beyond these two graduate programs and two human rights and HRE-oriented bodies, there is a climate friendly to HRE in Norway. A 2017 Council of Europe report on the state of citizenship and HRE in Europe makes repeated reference to progress in Norway—collaboratively-created learning objectives about democracy, rich connections with human rights and HRE initiatives, bi- and multilateral seminars and conferences on HRE and democratic culture (p. 21, 68, 74). In a 2015 report following the Constitution's bicentennial, a report from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) described the many organizations creating materials that educate on human rights, the

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[7] Indeed, Amnesty International was the most active and consistent non-governmental organization advocating for universal human rights during my year in Norway. Student members and young activists were present, campaigning, and advocating at nearly every civil celebration, including May Day, the Nobel Peace Festival, Norway's Constitution Day, and others throughout the year.

new regional bodies that disseminate these materials, and the newly empowered role of schools and regional administrators to ensure that education in Norway centers human rights (see: Lile, 2019a). Throughout my visits, I saw upper secondary teachers in English language, Norwegian, history, and Religion and Ethics point to textbooks that included education about human rights, their history, and case studies from around the world that invited students to explore the contrast between the promise and implementation of a universal human rights regime.

There is a body of research suggesting, meanwhile, that while Norwegian government and agencies engage in human rights discourse as frameworks and objectives, the aspiration of human rights does not necessarily penetrate to civil society writ large. Vesterdal (2016) argues that "through educational steering documents... human rights are positioned as fundamental values of education" but that "there seems to be a gap between promotion and implementation of human rights education" (pp. 246-7). In a careful examination of this gap, Lile (2019b) identifies a similar weakness, concluding:

> Norway is a country with a strong commitment to human rights abroad, in its foreign policy. It is regarded as the most developed country in the world according to the UNDP. A majority of Norwegians are very proud of their country and regard the Norwegian culture as superior to that of others. I think this proudness affects the country's commitment to HRE. The aims and values of HRE are superimposed on to the system without encouraging any deeper changes. Human rights are seen as part of Norwegian values, and thus HRE is not seen as necessary in itself—or, more accurately, promoting Norwegian values is seen as the same as HRE. (p. 160)

In these readings, Norway's relationship with human rights refigures them as a matter of national identity, pride, and patriotism (Vesterdal, 2019). While the consistent recognition of human rights is admirable, the unreflective elevation of them occludes many critical possibilities. This relationship is illustrated on the Norwegian government's website, where human rights is housed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasizing "the promotion of human rights" as "a key component of Norway's foreign and development policy" rather than something that must first be protected domestically. This

helps illuminate that while human rights are key to Norwegian national identity and policy, it primarily first functions as a lens to view the world at large.

Despite this dedication to the principles of human rights, there are also well-mapped canyons in Norway's human rights landscape. The 1814 Constitution contained a so-called "Jew clause," an extension from Danish law, which prohibited Jewish people from living in Norway (see: Abrahamsen, 1968). After multiple attempts at repeal, it was finally removed from the constitution in 1851—only to be briefly reintroduced by the Quisling government, who were Nazi collaborators during World War II. There is a long history of discrimination, marginalization, cultural erasure, and colonization against the Sámi, best embodied by the 18th and 19th century policy of Norwegianization, whereby the Norwegian government used religion, education, agriculture, and other arms of the state to forcibly assimilate the Sámi and Kven [8] populations into a nascent national "Norwegian" identity. [9] "[T]here are still challenges," the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples (2016) concluded, "with respect to adequately defining and recognizing the S[á]mi people's rights over their land and related resources, and that further efforts are needed to advance and strengthen S[á]mi rights, particularly in the face of increased natural resource investments in the Sápmi region" (p. 1). This observation is

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[8] A Western Finnic ethnic minority in Norway, comprised of descendants of Finnish migrants to Norway throughout the 18th and 19th century, who have specific protections as a minority population with a nationally recognized minority language (Norske Kveners Forbund, 2014).

[9] It is important to note that the Sámi have a long history of resistance to historical Norwegianization and contemporary erosion of their self-determination. One important episode is the Kautokeino Rebellion in 1852, where Kautokeino residents attacked the non-Sámi Norwegian merchant, sheriff, and newly arrived pastor. For more on the Kautokeino Rebellion, see Kristiansen (n.d.). In 2019, the Sámi parliament in Sweden requested a truth and reconciliation commission be formed, and since 2021, Sámi activists in Norway have continually protested the government's continued development of their lands used for reindeer herding for wind farms, despite the Norwegian Supreme Court declaring the development unconstitutional (United Nations Regional Information Center for Western Europe; AP, 2024). For more on the ongoing Sámi activism in Norway, see Hess (2023) and the 2023 movie portraying the Norwegian government's 1978 construction of a dam in Sámi territory, *Ellos eatnu la elva leve* (Let the river flow). Though there are many books about Northern European history that deal peripherally with the history and experiences of the Sámi, one good but not perfect volume that focuses on the Sámi across Fennoscandia is Neil Kent's (2019) *The Sámi peoples of the north: A social and cultural history*.

echoed in NIM's 2024 report arguing that climate change in the Arctic is exacerbating violations of the Sámi's rights.

Recent research and observations point to additional, broader inadequacies in the protection of rights in Norway. In 2015, a report by the Commissioner for Human Rights from the Council of Europe, Nils Muižnieks, noted that while Norway had a strong framework protecting people with disabilities, it did not translate to meaningful self-determination in many circumstances, especially as concerns involuntary mental health placements. He also found that the Roma and other Norwegian Traveler communities are disproportionately subject to interventions from child-protective services, law enforcement, and mental health services, concluding "the human rights of Roma should be fully respected without discrimination" and that "Education is of key importance to the empowerment of Roma and their enjoyment of human rights" (§ 76-77). As recently as 2021, in fact, the Norwegian government's child protection agency had been accused of aggressively separating children from their families, most often single mothers and refugees (Quell, 2021).[10] The United States Department of State also found inadequacies with access to asylum for refugees, perceived limits on free discourse for religious minorities (especially Muslim communities), and poor communication with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or gender expansive, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) communities in Norway, among other issues.[11]

Overall, Norway has protected universal human rights by including them in both their founding documents and through myriad organizations and governmental bodies but does have continued failures to ensure that all those living in Norway have access to them equally. Civil society possesses the means and the literacy to engage in conversations about human rights but tends to consider them either superficially or else merely as a normative

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[10] One such case became the subject of *Mrs. Chatterjee vs. Norway*, a 2023 legal drama.

[11] To their credit, many Norwegian teachers and students were often aware of these systemic injustices, though they did not frame them as such, and often compared them to analogies in the United States. The latter issue became prominent in Norway shortly before my arrival after a June 2022 mass shooting in Oslo during the city's Pride celebrations.

framework. Norwegian education addresses rights throughout compulsory schooling and curricula frequently contain elements of HRE, but primarily uses rights as a lens to compare Norway's preservation of rights to other countries' violations of them.

Experience as a Fulbright Roving Scholar

Although it is under the umbrella of the Fulbright Scholar program, a United States Cultural Exchange program focusing on intercultural relations and competence as well as cultural diplomacy, the Roving Scholar program is unique to Norway.[12] For nearly 40 years, the program has sent American professors, teacher-educators, or classroom teachers like me to Norway, where we conduct workshops with students, teachers, teachers-in-training, and others across the country over the course of an academic year. Unlike traditional Fulbright Scholars, Roving Scholars are not affiliated or placed at a single academic institution. Instead, we are supported by the Fremmedspråksenteret (Norwegian Centre for Foreign Languages in Education) at the Østfold University College in Halden. For the 2022-2023 cycle, there were four Roving Scholars.[13] One was a teacher-educator who

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[12] Although there is much criticism of the Fulbright Program, both as a mechanism of American foreign policy and as an ineffective method of international diplomacy, as well as robust responses to those criticisms, this ongoing conversation is beyond the scope of this short paper. Lally and Islem's (2023) mixed-methods study probes the long-term effectiveness of the Fulbright Program. For more about the origins of the Fulbright Program and reckoning with it today, see: Fischer (2023), Lebovic (2013), and Garner and Kirkby (2019). For a broader analysis of the function, utility, and impacts of international scholarship programs like the Fulbright Program and others, see the early and incomplete but incredibly elucidating Cormack (1968), as well as Scott-Smith (2008), Keilson (2004), Snow (2008), and Perna et al (2014). Brogi, Scott-Smith, & Snyder (2019), in their excellent edited volume, engage deeply with both threads of this conversation, especially Garner and Kirkby's (2019b) analysis of how scholars' identity figures within the broader changes in the Fulbright program and Lebovic's (2019) exploration into the geopolitical stances throughout the 20th century contrast the internationalism inherent in the Fulbright Program. For more detail about the nature, scope, and impact of the Fulbright Program in Norway in particular, see Røsdal et al (2014). Finally, for more about the Fulbright Roving Scholar program, see Jaquette, Fairbanks, and Cohen's (2019) examination of their experiences as Roving Scholars and how it impacted their subsequent teaching and Virtue's (2010) reflection as a middle-school teacher.

[13] In the time since my tenure as a Fulbright Roving Scholar, the U.S.-Norway Fulbright Foundation for Educational Exchange, the managing organization of American Fulbright grantees in Norway and Norwegian Fulbright grantees to the United States, has added an additional Roving Scholar position which specializes in elementary-level school visits.

visited schools of all levels in Østfold, a part of the fylke called Viken which is east of Oslo and along the Swedish border. Another was a middle school social science and English teacher who focused on ungdomskolen (lower secondary schools), for students between 12 and 15 years old and is most like American middle school or junior high. During this year, there were also two Rovers who focused on videregående skole visits—a professor of dance history and me.

I was based in Oslo but spent most of my time traveling outside of the capital to cities and towns in all 15 fylker (the Norwegian equivalent of states or provinces), where I mostly visited upper-secondary schools and worked with students studying both *yrkesfag* (vocational training) and *studieforberedelse* (general academic subjects). During my time in Norway, I visited small schools and conducted workshops with a single student and spent time in some of the largest schools in the country, leading sessions of nearly 200 students. By the year's end, I had worked with thousands of students, teachers, and other participants over the course of more than 250 workshops. Although I arrived in Norway with nearly two dozen ideas, there were four student workshops that comprised the overwhelming majority: "A History of America Through 10 Songs," a workshop that tried to examine historical trends and themes through music, often associated with justice movements, culminating in participants telling history through their own playlist; "American Politics—Contest or Conflict?" which aimed at exploring the American political landscape and its many ruptures while also drawing parallels to Norwegian politics; "No One America," a workshop that illustrated the degree to which the United States is a collection of diverse regional, cultural, economic, religious, and other social identities, encouraging students to explore regional identities in their own lives; and "The Long Road to Social Justice," which focused on grassroots organizations and movements throughout American history to build a counternarrative to dominant perceptions of the United States. Similarly, there were three workshops of my dozen options that were most requested by Norwegian teachers: "Teaching Argumentative Writing in a Divisive Age," which draws on my nearly two decades as a composition teacher and offers some frameworks on teaching argumentative and persuasive writing in a way that

maximizes understanding and community-building; "Human Rights Education—Teaching About, Through, and For Human Rights," a workshop whose focus might be self-evident to readers, helping support Norwegian teachers in developing or refining HRE and HRE-informed methods and curriculum; and "Centering Critical Thinking in Teaching and Learning," a teacher workshop that tried to complicate and disrupt narrow conceptions of critical thinking and advance a variety more compatible with culturally sustaining practices. Regardless of topic, my workshops were designed to challenge superficial, flat, or incomplete understandings of Norway, the United States, and the world, instead leaning into complexity, historical and critical thinking, and personal reflection.

Strengths of the Human Rights Regime in Norway

Through conducting my workshops with students, teachers, teachers in training, and others in the Norwegian education system around the country, I came to realize three major strengths as pertaining to rights and HRE. First, human rights are ubiquitous in the discursive landscape in Norway. As discussed above, there is a consistency with which rights appear and are discussed throughout civil society. Similar conditions can be found in Norwegian upper secondary and vocational schools. Students and teachers seemed to understand human rights as universal and supranational, transcending any conditions or limits on the part of the state. For example, students across the country engaged deeply in the broader social and historical context of my workshops on the march for social justice in the United States, recognizing that grassroots movements were really aimed at bringing national law in line with universal human rights and deontological ethics. Teaching materials, especially those in upper secondary English- and Norwegian-language classrooms, both those created by teachers and those extracted from national curriculum guides, are explicit in their goals of having students understand rights as a normative framework for society—both within and beyond the borders of Norway. During my workshops on HRE in Drammen, decolonization in Kautokeino, and diversifying reading lists in Ski, teachers in Norway readily addressed human rights issues and

protections relevant to the project, whether it was a letter-writing activity protesting new regulations for cruise ships or an autobiographical poetry unit. Students in vocational programs, meanwhile, were similarly able to discuss how economic and social rights overlap with their future union membership.[14] For example, my workshop on American history through music often prompted students in electrical, technical, and construction programs to discuss protest music and its role in building solidarity. Teacher educators and teachers in training demonstrated the deepest understanding of human rights, but also the widest range of positions on human rights, with those studying or lecturing in HRE programs having the most robust understanding. Both young students and adult learners who were new to Norway appeared comfortable talking about a right to a national identity, to education, and to participate in civil society, as well as rights protecting discrimination or prejudicial treatment, even when those rights were infringed upon by individuals or government agencies. I fondly remember workshops in Levanger in central Norway with recent migrants where our conversations on regional American identity grew to expand how local governments in the United States, Norway, and their countries of origin offered unique sites of resistance against abuses by national governments. And this trend continues into young adulthood outside of compulsory schooling; young adults in university, in the workforce, and in military service seemed at a bare minimum literate in rights and able to discuss rights and the lack thereof, especially when it comes to rights protecting free speech and expressions of identity.

Second, schools foster political engagement. Very early on in my time in Norway, I was intrigued by the political engagement of young people. Of course, I am accustomed to student activism, which is a part of daily life in my California high school, but in Norway student political engagement was more clearly connected to partisan political apparatuses and to policy and decision-making in communities. For example, students in Bergen and Stavanger—larger cities on the western coast—described their involvement

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[14] Around 50% of Norway's workers are union members, while over 70% are covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) (ETUI, n.d.).

in youth party leadership and often examined social issues that their American counterparts were experiencing through that lens. Party-based political engagement looks different from its analogue in the United States. Not only are there more national parties, but because their parliamentary system and voting blocs require greater collaboration than the United States—as well as other parliamentary democracies—the political distance between most political groups are minimal. Moreover, even among the fringe parties, there is still a prima facie dedication to democratic norms and principles. Within this environment, politically engaged students are often comfortable voicing their positions on policy debates. I observed classes in English and Norwegian language, as well as ethics and history, where students would default to identifying common ground and had a much harder time sketching the extremity of the debate than my students in California. This is doubly true in matters than concern school life such as national examination policies or attendance requirements. While this might be true of my students back home as well, I found their understanding of the broader conversations around these topics more sophisticated. While I spent much less time in lower-secondary and elementary schools, from what I experienced the importance of concepts like consensus-making and the value of a strong community prime young learners for applying these principles in their later years of schooling. Teacher educators in the northern Norway city of Tromsø who specialized in training new elementary and lower-secondary teachers spoke at length about community rules and norm-building through play and creativity. While this does not always translate to voting—teachers often decried the precipitous drop in voting among young people—they were uniformly informed.

Third, Norwegian schools encourage a critical stance that is oriented towards internationalism. Throughout the language and social science classrooms I visited, students were nearly always thinking about Norwegian politics, economics, and society in terms of broader international terms. Sometimes it was in strictly comparative or bilateral terms, typically between Norway and either the United States or Sweden. More often than not, these conversations would either start or end either tautologically proving Norwegian superiority in some dimension—civil liberties, an independent

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press, supports for refugees, or consistency with human rights, for example— or as an opportunity to denigrate what limited view of the United States— and it was quite commonly the United States—they had at the time. However, it was not every conversation I had, and there were plenty of students and adults capable of discussing the nuances of American, Norwegian, and global political life. I also found people who identified as non-white Norwegians or recent immigrants to Norway, Jewish and Muslim students, and the Sámi students I spoke with to be more reasonable and reflective in terms of comparative analysis between Norway and the United States, as well as multilateral discussions of global affairs. Conversations about migration, borders, and national sovereignty, though, were characterized primarily by nuance: students and their teachers understood the myriad push and pull factors involved in regional and global movement, and they also articulated the challenge to both support new migrants or minority groups while also giving them the tools and access to navigate society fairly. Other times, students were engaging in regional or global geopolitical analysis that situated Norwegian interests within trends or events. During my year, the sabotage of a Nord Stream pipeline[15] was one such event, where students understood it as a part of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Another is the entrenched dependency on oil wealth in Norway, what kind of economic compatriots it forces the country to associate with, and the long-term prospects for a viable alternative economic model.[16] I also found that these conversations did address rights, the rule of law, and international order quite regularly, especially for the older students who were usually

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[15] Nord Stream is a network of offshore gas pipelines running from Russia and Germany through the Baltic and North Seas to support Western Europe's natural gas needs. On 26 September 2022, there were a series of underwater explosions which damaged two of the pipelines. The perpetrator is, as of this writing, uncertain. For more, see Bowden (2023).

[16] It is important to note that oil wealth transformed Norway from the poorest country in Europe to one of the wealthiest in the world in less than one generation. Nearly three-quarters of the earnings from the country's oil go into the sovereign wealth funds, colloquially called the "Oil Fund," which combined own about 1.5% of all publicly traded companies globally (Norges Bank Investment Management, 2024). As a result, conversations about moving away from fossil fuels and climate change, while urgent and existential for every living thing on earth, are uniquely associated with material wellbeing and sovereignty. For those who want more about how oil has changed Norway, see Cleary (2017) or Røste (2021), both of which are uniformly positive about Norway's relationship with oil but are informative nonetheless.

heading either to university or compulsory military service the following year. Mostly, I was impressed that Norwegian students were aware of and deeply committed to some kind of global rule of law resulting in durable peace and were able to anchor what they saw in a universal rights paradigm.

Pitfalls to Norwegian Human Rights Progress

Although these are major successes to be praised, I did also discover three major potential hazards, not just to human rights and HRE, but to the continued health of Norwegian society. First, Norwegian society struggles to have sustained productive conversations around race and racialization. Although the narrative of Norway as exclusively white has been false for decades,[17] the idea that in some way race is a proxy for national identity—and vice versa—has proved resistant and particularly toxic. I met Norwegians whose families immigrated to Norway from Vietnam or Somalia sometimes as early as the 1970s, but who are still described as "being of an immigrant background," when the same might not be said of people who immigrated from Poland or Hungary. Some white Norwegian students were quick to fall back on national mythmaking concerning race. Several of these conversations developed following a 2022 racist incident in an Oslo bar, where a white Norwegian comedian confronted a Black Norwegian journalist in a hijab, suggesting that she was "too Black" to be in the bar—and in the country. Those white Norwegian students, more often young men, were quick to minimize the confrontation or chalk it up to mere comedy. This was not the only such episode during my time in Norway. Others , however, were more interested in unsettling this semantic shorthand for national identity. Many white Norwegians often responded to challenges by comparing racism in Norway to racism in the United States. While the same regular threat of vigilante and state violence does not exist to the same extent in Norway, the daily effects of racism and marginalization impacted students and their

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[17] Norway is over 80% ethnically "Norwegian"—a vague term that includes the Sámi and other minority groups, nearly 9% other European extraction, and nearly 10% other race or ethnicity. However, these national statistics obscure the reality of diversity in Norway, which can be found in the biggest cities, which while not nearly as multicultural as San Francisco, but are, in large part, not that far off.

families in real, tangible ways. These conversations are complicated by role dialects of the Norwegian language play in identity. In addition to having two nationally recognized written forms of the language, there are six major dialects and over a hundred local forms. Furthermore, there are the many dialects of indigenous Sámi languages—and the Kven language, which is a Finnish dialect spoken in northern Norway. Considering that Norwegian is a difficult (but not impossible) language for non-native speakers to master, Norwegians are keenly aware of imperfections in spoken Norwegian, and that dialects quickly identify the community from which a speaker hails, matters of language, race, and identity as a Norwegian are tightly intertwined. The same can be said of religion. I met several Jewish Norwegian students who explained that their Norwegian identity was what could be best described as contingent—they felt Norwegian up until the point when they were made to feel Jewish.[18] The legacy of the Norwegianization of the Sámi in Norway casts a shadow upon others in Norway who are aware that their position as Norwegians may be called into question.

Second, the labor conditions of teachers in Norway are changing amid broader changes in education. Shortly after I arrived in Norway, teachers across the country began a series of rolling strikes to protest wage stagnation, accreting workloads, and a lack of qualified teachers ("Teacher strike in Norway!," 2022). The strikes continued throughout most of the fall, and I did my best to complete my duties as a Roving Scholar without functioning as a strikebreaker or scab. In my conversations with teachers in Norway before, during, and after the strikes, several common themes arose. As expected, teachers resent the relatively low wages and contract agreements that do not keep up with the cost of living. Several midcareer teachers described comparing their salaries with others in the private sector and finding little justification to stay other than job satisfaction. Most teachers I met who shared their annual salaries earned between 500,000 and 600,000 Norwegian Kroner—the equivalent of $47,000 to $56,000 USD per year. While this is

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[18] Aside from the dreadful history of the "Jew Code," the few Jewish people in Norway—around 1,200—and the deportation and extermination during World War II make Jewish Norwegians aware of their positionality. For more on the Jewish people in Norway, see the Oslo Jewish Museum's exhibition guide "What Happened in Norway?"

much less than the average salary in my California school district, Norwegian teachers benefit from the robust social welfare system and a supplemental pension plan (in addition to public transit and infrastructure), whereas many teachers with whom I work are rent burdened, spending 30% or more of their monthly net salary on rent. Accompanying flat pay is a gradual increase in workload and duties. During the early years of the pandemic, many occupations within Norwegian society were called upon to do their civic duty, but while nurses and others were compensated with increased wages or other benefits, teachers' contracts were repeatedly deferred.[19] Norwegian teachers described, variously, feeling like they were being taken advantage of, that policymakers did not respect the profession, and that their job was being devalued. Additionally, teachers across the country discussed the increase in duties, responsibilities, teaching loads, class sizes, and other elements that indicate a slide towards the structural overwork that characterizes, among other things, the neoliberalization of education—efficiency-oriented reforms and austerity. This frustration was even more pronounced in academic subjects that were not a part of vocational tracks, and in some of the most competitive schools in the country where teachers felt a palpable pressure to perform. Schools in Norway do wear many hats, especially in rural municipalities where they are the surest path towards a lucrative career, but the increased workload for teachers and demands on schools is taxing.

Lastly, I observed a generalized aversion to self-criticism.[20] In my conversations with Norwegians across the country, I found an atrophied willingness to critique and criticize their country, to draw parallels that were not flattering to Norwegian society or the state. It is not that people were not able to point out weaknesses or flaws in Norwegian system—they were, in fact, and often did criticize the Norwegian state or society when they were

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[19] It is important to note that there are really two major teacher unions in Norway: one serving teachers in the capital, Oslo, and one serving the rest of the country. Oslo teachers had a renegotiated contract in 2022, resulting in some increased compensation and improved pension disbursements. The rest did not.

[20] For more about the social psychology of Norway in the context of Northern Europe, see Carlquist, Nafstad, & Blakar (2007).

not in mixed company, I learned towards the end of my time as a Roving Scholar—but that it was considered *mean-spirited* to do so. Norwegian students were quick to point out problems in the United States—systemic racism and police violence, the gun violence epidemic, the extreme cost of healthcare, consumerist culture—and happy to wallow in what sometimes became mockery. But when asked to turn the mirror back on their own history and environment—Norwegianization, the high rates of heart attack and stroke, public surveys on racism, their welfare state subsidized by oil wealth—most would balk and end the conversation, equivocate by saying the two countries were impossible to compare, or redirect.[21] Again, this was not true of every conversation, but it was common enough to justify inclusion here. Those most willing and able to meaningfully criticize Norway for its legitimate failures were teachers living in a region other than where they grew up or students (including adult learners) who were new to Norway. I do think that my presence as an American and perhaps a representation of the influence the United States has on Norwegian domestic politics and foreign policy prompted local teachers and some Norwegians to leap to the country's defense. Teachers in Norway from the global south described experiencing similar reactions, though not necessarily as severe as mine at the end of my 90-minute lessons. I expect someone from elsewhere in Europe would experience the same. Partially, I suspect that the Norwegian national narrative—of a country dedicated to human rights, founded in response to hundreds of years as a vassal state, that awards the Nobel Peace Prize in its capital's city hall—produces dissonance for the average Norwegian.

Of all the structural potential hazards to human rights I witnessed in Norway, this one seems the most serious. An unwillingness to criticize one's own nation, in public or private, in mixed company or among family and childhood friends, belies a greater dedication to orthodoxy than to the right thing. It concerns me in Norway and when I see it in the United States too.

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[21] I do not often say it, but it was one of the few times I felt proud to be an American. For all our many faults, American society does tend to air its dirty laundry in public. Our political conversations are heated and contentious, but they are also public. I have also found that no one criticizes the United States like an American, aware of its potential and possibilities as well as the moral compromises and turpitude it spent to get partway there.

Steps Towards Growth

There are opportunities for the Norwegian system, where I spent time teaching and learning, and the American system, where I call home, to learn from each other. I think a dedication to diverse local, national, and international civic identities that transcend mere patriotism would help foster the kind of cosmopolitan stance that I admired in Norwegian young people. However, it would be best married with a ubiquitous critical stance, like that I admire in my students in California, but one pointing towards a shared investment in a national project. I think my students and those across the globe would benefit from the multiple flexible educational trajectories used mostly to reach personal goals. In both the United and Norway, a rededication to the ideals and reinvestment into the coffers of public education and the public sphere it often represents are much needed.

Of all the things I learned and saw in Norway, the aspect of Norwegian society that most primes it for the kinds of changes offered by and resulting from HRE was a single word: *dugnad*. The word is untranslatable, but most closely means help or support. It refers to large local coordinated voluntary community work.[22] When our neighborhood record store moved into a larger space in the middle of winter, the patrons and nearby businesses helped them move every record and piece of furniture into the new space. That was a dugnad. The nearby elementary school knit and crocheted wool tubes to keep neighborhood plants warm over the winter, that was a dugnad. And if we can forget our parochial interests and look forward to an expansive idea of human rights as a big tent with room for everyone, every step closer to that mission is a dugnad.

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[22] This concept is closely related to, though not identical to, mutual aid practices of voluntary and collaborative exchange for common benefit that stem from Kropotkin (1902) and others, and which Kaba (2023) argues "has to do with changing the social relationships that we have amongst each other, in order to be able to fight beyond this current moment, beyond the current crisis, beyond the current form of a disaster that we're trying to overcome." Some examples include the Black Panthers free breakfast program in Oakland or Food Not Bombs, a cooperative food bank and meal distribution program that I participated in with my mother when I was growing up.

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Hopelessly AroAce: An Exploration in the Margins

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Abstract

Individuals identifying as aromantic asexual face challenges living in predominantly heteronormative societies. This essay explains the challenges encountered living in India, a society known for its unique cultural and social structures. The authors use the oral history story-telling technique to understand the lived experiences of being an asexual aromantic. An analysis of the oral history highlights four key themes: liberation from structures, solidarity in the community, the perils of Amato normativity, and awareness of self. The authors call for increased access to mental health support systems in schools and beyond.

Keywords: asexuality, gender identity, LGBTQIA+, acceptance

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Introduction

Imagine we are all on a journey, a steep, mountainous ascent with its temporal milestones. These milestones are entrenched in normative structures that elbow us into closets and force conformities without our consent. The protracted struggle for liberation lies amid this struggle and an uphill journey.

This struggle is enhanced for some people, especially sexual minorities, asexual-neurodivergent, and others in the spectrum of the queer community (Borgogna et al., 2019). Although the landmark verdict decriminalizing homosexuality in India in 2018 led to the protection of the rights of the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual) community, the quality of their lives has not improved in a significant manner. Many challenges persist concerning basic human rights, such as housing (Chandran, 2014), accessing public spaces in India (Gupta, 2022), and abandoning homes due to lack of acceptance by family members (Gupta, 2017). This leads to significant mental, emotional, and physical trauma to living in the Indian society as an openly LGBTQIA+ person (Gaur et al., 2023). The journey of asexuals is an arduous one due to the accompanying loneliness, a sense of inadequacy, feelings of isolation and shame, and other mental health risks (McInroy et al., 2022). The inheritance of loneliness by people who identify on the asexuality-aromantic spectrum seems to stem from the constriction of sexual and romantic norms that are laid down by the structures of society. For example, the prospective bride or groom search by the family begins when one turns twenty-five, often without the individual's full consent to be married. This often places the ace perspective (the ability only to experience non-traditional forms of love) as an outsider, even within larger queer spaces (Simon et al., 2022). Thus, the burden of these collective narratives invisibilizes many voices to the point of exclusion, even within marginalized spaces.

International laws enacted for the protection of gender minorities include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1948, which advocates for the protection of individuals against discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil

and Political Rights (1976) that defends dignity, self-determination and the freedom of association with others, and finally, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) that promotes equality amongst all and protects individuals from cruel, inhuman treatment or punishment. In 2023, the United Nations Human Rights Council appointed Graeme Reid as the UN independent expert for protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual and gender identity to conduct independent investigations into the protection of the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community (United Nations, 2023). On a national scale, the Transgender Persons Act (2019) defends certain fundamental rights of the community in India.

According to the Pride 2021 Global Survey Report, 17% of the Indian population is not heterosexual (Gaur et al., 2023). Despite the large numbers of the gender minority population in recent times, there is a lack of literature about asexual people within gender and sexuality studies in academia, and the few scholarly studies that exist often center Eurocentric, white experiences only (Abreu et al., 2022; Chakrabarty, 2023). Many subgroups of the LGBTQIA+ community have inadequate representation in research (McInroy et al., 2022; Simon et al., 2022; Wandrekar & Nigudkar, 2020). Thus, we need a space that brings language, expressions, and narratives about asexual individuals that augment awareness and fairness in the conversations of romance and attraction. This narrative aims to bridge this gap in the literature by exemplifying the lived experience and reality of an asexually identifying individual from the cultural context of the Indian subcontinent.

To bring focus within the vastness of the gender and sexual identity spectrum, we used oral history as a method to highlight a story submerged within dominant narratives. Oral history pivots the stage from the powerful and the privileged and directs it toward people whose stories deserve attention (Cliff & Claire, 2018). The narratives below offer the unique positionality of both authors, followed by an interview analysis, and closes with some reflections.

Positionality

Agharsh (they/them) and Shruti (she/her) have been childhood friends and have known each other for 26 years. Shruti has seen Agharsh find their identity and has accompanied them on this journey through support across distances. This shared personal bond influenced the comfort levels and rapport through the dialogue, enabling deep conversations. While Shruti assumes the researcher's position as a doctoral student in the United States, Agharsh faces the duality of the researcher and narrator, who primarily reflects on their lived experiences in India. This oral history and conversation rests upon mutual feelings of trust, respect, and a deep sense of gratitude.

Being an aromantic asexual

We approached the analysis of oral history intending to highlight important topics about being an aromantic asexual. A series of conversations while reviewing the interview led to the emergence of four themes, namely, (1) liberation from societal structures, (2) solidarity in community support, (3) Amato normativity,[1] and (4) the need for awareness. The analysis is written in the first-person narrative, depicting Agharsh's emotions behind their lived experiences. The article's structure from here onwards uses quotes from the interview and academic citations and weaves in Agharsh's voice. The narrative below quotes excerpts from the oral history interview under each theme to guide the readers through their journey of self-discovery and strength. The analysis findings also connect with expert voices who have conducted similar studies in the scholarly realm.

Liberation from societal structures

The heteronormative cultural setup within Indian society served as a barrier to the recognition of non-dominant gendered individuals and reflects a deeply embedded cultural practice of stigmatization and homophobia (Gaur et al., 2023). Particularly, within the school system, I experienced

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[1] Amato normativity, a term coined by Elizabeth Brake assumes that all human beings are meant to pursue love or romance in the form of long-lasting relationships (Brake, 2011).

name-calling, bullying, and verbal abuse as a student. An underlying need to fit in made it "very hard to have open conversations."

This set-up of the societal structure inevitably caused a privilege of heteronormative individuals over other minority-gendered individuals (Gupta, 2017). According to Chakrabarty (2023), asexual people face double invisibility - both from the people who consider heteronormativity as the norm and also from the queer community, many of those who value compulsory sexuality.[2] As a result, loneliness is a constant feeling, as I felt like society "discounted people like me who identified as asexual."

This perceived privilege of both the heteronormative and queer community is a double-edged sword. It forces people who may not want to enter a heteronormative relationship to remain in sexual relationships that are considered "normal" according to the standards of the dominant society. For example, often, parents themselves force their children into relationships or marriages so that they are partnered or coupled, and women have a place in society only when they are partnered with a man. These forced activities perpetuate a culture of hegemony that reproduces asymmetrical power favoring heteronormative individuals (Freire, 2007).

This dominant cultural narrative creates a fear amongst the asexual community to express themselves and speak out freely due to the fear of rejection, physical assault, and bullying (Gaur et al., 2023). "When I was in school, the culture thrived on queerphobia. I experienced a lot of name-calling and bullying, which left me isolated with feelings of rejection. Despite my parents being empathetic, I think there was complete ignorance from the school authorities, and it was hard to navigate these surroundings as a child."

Solidarity in community support

There is a constant need for spaces and people where asexuals are in complete control of their actions and feel fully empowered. On the contrary, my conversations with family members often involve "questions that breach

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[2] Compulsory sexuality is an extension of the theory of compulsory heterosexuality by Adrienne Rich in 1980 which refers to norms and practices that persuade women to participate in heterosexual activities.

personal boundaries." Within Indian society, when a man or a woman is between the ages of 25 and 30, parents must begin their search for a prospective bride or groom. Youth in India face many challenges conversing with their parents or support system while disclosing their identity (Tripathi & Talwar, 2022). Especially for those people with non-dominant gender identities, there is a constant battle with one's needs, parental expectations, and the tangible pressure created by society.

According to Snapp et al. (2015), support from the community, family, and friends positively affects the self-esteem and confidence of gender minority youth. My definition of community changed once I began to find new ones that supported my struggles. I connected to like-minded people experiencing similar struggles through a professional therapist. This experience was "comforting, very therapeutic as it showed solidarity, which meant having something in common."

These informal spaces within an urban city like Bengaluru have created opportunities for growing relationships. According to Chakrabarty (2023) and Gupta (2017), connections within the aromantic asexual community serve as an antidote to the loneliness that these individuals experience due to the nature of their personal journeys. "My exploration started with therapy. My wonderful therapist gave me a lot of direction as a queer and gave me a lot of access to very, very useful resources which have become a huge part of my life today." These friendships are long-lasting as each has developed purely based on vulnerabilities. "I am building a circle of my queer friends; these connections have made my life so much easier. It has made me feel validated and cared for. These kinds of connections and building this space have really helped me a lot."

According to Gaztambide-Fernández (2012), "transitive solidarity" is an action always directed towards others, defined by such relationships, and based on acts of self-love. This act of existing in transitive solidarity started with one person and expanded to knowing many people virtually and in person. "I think that it is so important because our friendships are from our most vulnerable spaces, which is our whole queer journey. These friendships cemented so quickly, and they offered me an immense amount of support."

The community exposed me to various types of people who experience asexuality in different ways. I understood that asexuality is a spectrum; each feeling comes with its own set of challenges and experiences that led them on this journey. "Another way I cope with societal pressure is through reading. It has been a huge coping mechanism in addition to building a circle of queer friends." I believe this has helped me overcome feelings of pathologization, social isolation, and relationship conflict that asexuals often face in their lives (K. Gupta, 2017).

The perils of Amato normativity

Previously, we discussed the heteronormative structures that promote a particular way of life in Indian society. I realize between "the kind of love deemed normal and my perceptions." As an aromatic asexual, I do not experience the "traditional" love that is mandated by society. My definition of love involves gestures that convey concern and care and non-hierarchical, equitable companionship with mutual respect. Actions that one would consider as part of the routine, such as going alone to a movie or inviting a friend to an event, are viewed differently by society. This is where "possibilities became a distant dream." In dating, there is a definite pattern or structure to approach dating, which makes it difficult to break for people on the asexuality spectrum. Individuals who identify as asexual need to communicate more and convey their personal boundaries to disrupt normativity (Gupta, 2017). As a result, asexuals develop a tendency for LGBTQ-phobia while navigating the gender minority spectrum (McInroy et al., 2022). "Larger LGBTQIA+ spaces can be very triggering and unkind as there is severe misinformation filled with marginalization and suppression. It is still a space that is not very ace-aware. So, it is a challenge for an ace person to make meaningful connections within the queer community because asexuality is a minority within a minority. There is a lack of connection for ace people in queer spaces, and connection forms the base of a relationship." As I consider myself as aromatic and asexual, finding a date or trying to partner with an individual is extremely hard as there is a need for

either romance or sex. This increases my feelings of perpetual loneliness and abandonment.

Awareness begins with oneself

Walking down memory lane, I vividly remember how I felt as a child – helpless and alone. "As a child, I was gender fluid, but I did not have the language or the vocabulary to articulate it all." When I came across labels, it served me in a positive way to normalize my feelings about myself and those around me. Labels have helped me communicate with peers, convey my true identity to my parents, and for my own education. "As a child, it was a very transgender experience where I was assigned male at birth, but I did aspire to be or identify as a woman. And then, there was a phase where I did identify with my given biological gender. For the last many years, I've been identifying as an a-gendered person. I stumbled upon these labels only about 2-3 years ago. I now understand that gender and sexual orientation can be very different parts. They don't have to coincide so as far necessarily always as my ace-aro[3] identity was concerned." Using labels for self-learning increased my awareness. I developed a sense of "transformative agency" (Bajaj, 2018), a collective sense of self that elevates one's critical consciousness and makes way for individual change.

Schooling was my biggest struggle as queer-phobic culture was prevalent among peers and teachers. "There were many moments that confused me, befuddled me, and made me feel like I was a very broken person or emotionally unavailable." Furthermore, a complete lack of awareness and misinformation on how to support a child going through a queer experience caused trauma and repressed emotions (Borgogna et al., 2019; Mayo, 2022). "There was this deeply bound insecurity of 'What if I'm not accepted because I was trying to fit in?' I was trying to conform with a bunch of cis-het[4] kids.

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[3] An abbreviation of asexual aromantic.

[4] The term cishet (pronounced sis-het) refers to a gender identity as well as a sexual identity. This two-part identity means that a person is both cisgender and heterosexual. A cishet person identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth, and they choose romantic partners of the opposite sex.

At that age, with the rising anxiety, being blindsided by the school authorities, or the lack of psychological help added to the existing troubles." The presence of school health professionals or counselors could have addressed the adverse impact on mental health by creating emotionally supportive spaces in homes and schools (Patwa et al., 2019).

Reflections

Reliving a historical experience, this essay aims to stand as a testament to the trauma experienced by gender minority individuals in India during their schooling and beyond. This essay also highlights the evidence gap at the intersection of school psychology and gender identity in India (Patwa et al., 2019). There is a need for streamlined counseling and therapy options for students who are trying to navigate a queer experience in educational systems. It is clear from the interview that a lack of access to mental health services in schools increases feelings of isolation and shame. In addition, fostering more community spaces (nonformal and informal) will illuminate a feeling of solidarity and nurture the rights and dignity of gender minorities. This can move us towards more holistic ways of living, especially for those living on the margins.

For those who are privileged to be on the other side, we must view the half-lives of asexually identifying individuals through their own lenses. We close with a poem written by Agharsh:

I wish the largesse of a well-lived life,

being green, being an aromantic ace,

I lust for acceptance from myself and the world,

I am green and purple on this spinning color wheel,

the opposite of red.

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Learning Stories and Children's Rights: Reimagining Assessment in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

The essay explores the role of Learning Stories in early childhood education and the connection to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989). The paper highlights the use of Learning Stories in a teacher preparation program and student perspectives on the value of narrative assessment in their work with children, their mentors, and families.

Keywords: Rights of the Child, Learning Stories, observation, narrative assessment, New Zealand Ministry of Education, Te Whāriki

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Introduction

E arly childhood is a significant time for children's development, and early childhood educational environments play a critical role in forming children's identities. Young children's earliest years are the foundation for physical and mental health, emotional security, cultural and personal identity, and developing competencies (United Nations, 1989). Educators maximize the opportunities for each child to achieve their full potential when they engage in practices that honor children's culture, language, family, and communities (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2022). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) aims to maintain children's rights by shaping the perspectives of those who work with, care for, and engage with children, and influencing how they interact with and treat them and what they expect from them (Smith, 2016). Early childhood education can be a force for achieving social justice and children's rights (Smith, 2016), and I argue one way is through narrative assessment in early childhood programs.

Positionality

I am a white, cisgender female who works as a teacher in the Child Development and Educational Studies program at a community college in California. My racial identity plays a role in how I interact with my students, as well as in how I design and teach my curriculum. These factors can have an impact on our students and the communities we serve. As the practicum instructor, I support students studying to become early childhood educators. As Flowers and Shiman (1997) note, teacher education can play a key role in advancing human rights education: "The teacher education program itself must stand for human rights principles in an explicit, public way. It needs to encourage students to see themselves as human rights educators and urge them to act accordingly" (Flowers & Shiman, 1997, p. 164). As global citizens, all children have the right to be protected and have their health and well-being promoted. They should have equal opportunities to learn their language, culture, and identity and have agency in their own lives (Ministry of Education, 2017). One way that teachers can uphold these specific rights

in their teaching practice is through Learning Stories, a narrative assessment that captures significant moments in children's daily interactions and experiences and values the voices of children and families in the documentation process.

What are Learning Stories?

Learning Stories are a commonly used method for child assessment in New Zealand. It is a narrative assessment approach that honors what children can do rather than what they cannot do (Carr & Lee, 2012). This approach provides a unique way of assessing learning that recognizes the whole child, including family, culture, language, and identity (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al., 2015). Learning Stories present children as competent learners and transform teacher practices and relationships with children, families, and communities. They are observations revised as stories and help teachers understand the path of the child's learning and the pattern of their learning dispositions (Hargraves, 2020). The documentation written to children and families highlights the nature of learning over time and includes the voices of educators, families, and community members.

I teach about Learning Stories in our fieldwork courses as an alternative approach to traditional observation and assessment methods. Students learn how to observe and assess children to gather information about children's learning and development. Observing and assessing children is an integral part of teacher training and practice in early childhood education and can be challenging as assessment practices are often rooted in specific cultural goals and practices, such as Euro-Western ways of knowing and goals for children's development that do not consider the uniqueness of all children (Ball, 2021; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). When educators complete a conventional assessment, they observe children to collect information about what they know and can do. The goal is to assess children in regard to developmental standards, the means to evaluate children based on predetermined stages (White, 2019). These categories or domains include social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development and

determine what a typical child should be capable of doing at a particular age based on their levels of mastery (Dahlberg et al., 1999).

Observation practices in this standardized approach to assessment often exclude child, family, and community voices and, from a modernist perspective, "assume objective truth can be recorded and accurately represented" (Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 145). Denying such voices and perspectives diminishes important participation rights as outlined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989). It is necessary to show respect towards children, even the very young ones, and recognize them as individuals with their own rights. It is important to acknowledge that young children are active members of families, communities, and societies who have their own interests, concerns, and perspectives (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005).

Teachers are also encouraged to be objective and separate their emotions and feelings from what is being observed (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Traditional observation tools discourage emotional attachment, but objectivity is impossible. "We can never stand outside our perceptions and values when we observe" (Hatherly & Sands, 2002, p. 10). We cannot observe human behavior objectively without personal values influencing the observation. Hatherly and Sands (2002) argue that our observations are inherently subjective and influenced by our social experiences and thought processes.

With traditional tools, teachers offer informed opinions on children's growth, development, and progress without always acknowledging parents' perspectives on their children (Escamilla et al., 2021). According to Varga (2011), developmental science observations and data recording procedures are systematic and standardized. Standardized observation and recording have objectified childhood, valuing only certain features, "these procedures of, and underlying beliefs about child study observation, [that] made and remake children as colonized subjects" (Varga, 2011, p. 138). The colonial element refers to the power dynamic between the observing expert and the observed child and the disconnection resulting in removing findings from their context. Parents can passively receive explanations regarding the

interpretation of results and the meaning of children's behavior (Varga, 2011). This involves rejecting cultural and historical contexts that are not part of dominant childhood and parenting scripts, which are recognized as crucial in human rights frameworks.

Ball (2021) states the demand for early educators to use standardized assessment tools is part of a neoliberal regime that seeks to advance all children according to universalized Euro-Western norms of development that believe "all children should develop evenly across all domains according to a homogenizing universal standard" (p. 4). Standardized tools do not acknowledge the cultural differences, contexts, and experiences of all children as they are developed for the general public (Ball, 2021). This contrasts with the CRC, which emphasizes the importance of education in promoting respect for the cultural identity, language, and values of children.

Learning Stories can provide educators the opportunity to highlight significant learning moments in children's daily experiences and acknowledge children's strengths, interests, and growth. Learning Stories align with the goals of the CRC (1998), which provides that education must aim to develop the child's full potential. When using traditional assessment tools, teachers offer their informed opinions on children's growth, development, and progress without always acknowledging parents' perspectives on their child. Learning Stories are meant to be shared and capture children's voices and those of their families (Escamilla et al., 2021). A narrative approach to assessment can document children's interests, progression, and stories and can be a helpful approach to support children's identity and overall development (Ball, 2021). And including the voices of children and families "allow[s] children to share meanings and ownership of their learning" (Smith, 2016, p. 56).

The History of Learning Stories

In 1996, the New Zealand Ministry of Education introduced a new national early childhood education bicultural curriculum, Te Whāriki, firmly grounded in the local sociocultural, bicultural, and ecological context (Ministry of Education, 2017). The curriculum focuses on children's and

family voices regarding children's learning (Smith, 2016). Te Whāriki was developed when the Ministry of Education placed significant pressure on the early childhood sector to develop a curriculum of its own (McMillan et al., 2023). The partnership with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust was essential to the revitalization of the Māori language and culture in New Zealand. Tilly Reedy and Tamati Reedy, two Māori leaders and writers, traveled throughout Aotearoa, the indigenous name for New Zealand, to gather the aspirations of the Māori people (Lee et al., 2013). They used this information to develop a curriculum for Kōhanga Reo that nurtured Māori beliefs. Dialogue between all parties was organized, and "representatives from all national early childhood organizations, government agencies, universities, and research and teacher training institutions gave feedback on all the papers" (p. 17).

The Te Whāriki document is written in both English and Māori.[1] Four guiding principles establish this concept of curriculum. The first principle is Empowerment (Whakamana): the early childhood curriculum empowers the child to learn and grow. The second principle is Holistic Development (Kotahitanga): the early childhood curriculum reflects the holistic way children learn and grow. The third principle is Family and Community (Whānau tangata): the wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum. The fourth principle is Relationships (Ngā hononga): children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things (Ministry of Education, 2017). The Learning Stories approach was developed to align the assessment process with the principles of Te Whāriki (Lee et. al., 2013).

Learning Stories and Children's Rights

Learning Stories can support children's rights and social justice in early childhood settings in three ways: (a) by encouraging educators to reflect on their practices and beliefs regarding children's development and learning; (b) by acknowledging children's agency and participation; and (c) by respecting children's identity, language, and culture.

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[1] The document can be accessed at: https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/te-whariki/

Children's rights are shaped and intimately connected to their educators through responsive, reciprocal interactions, nurturing, and emotional relationships (Smith, 2016). For example, in CRC Article 5, the role of adults, such as parents and teachers, is to provide guidance and direction while respecting children's interests and agency. The learning stories process provides educators, as researchers, with an opportunity to analyze the observations they collect and challenge dominant ideologies and biases. "By exploring how we make sense of these observations," Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015), explain, "we can gain a better understanding of how to disrupt these hegemonies of knowledge" (p. 124).

Learning Stories do not measure performance goals and school readiness but involve "collaboration with families, high expectations of confidence in the children, and multiple opportunities for children to tell their stories" (Carr, 2001, p. 203). Educators offer opportunities for children to construct their identity and acquire culturally valued skills and knowledge in a secure relationship (Smith, 2016). Learning Stories are useful to educators in helping children learn and grow by allowing educators to examine their preconceived ideas regarding children and their development (Carr, 2001). Teachers who research their classrooms are deliberate in their use of observation and reflection to make sense of what is seen or experienced. Reflection allows teachers to question "their points of view, rooted in personal and formal theories, culturally learned ways of seeing, and personal core values" (Meier & Stremmel, 2010, p. 250).

According to Lee et al. (2013), the assessment process can either hinder or support the curriculum. Learning Stories aim to highlight the multifaceted nature of learning, encompassing social, emotional, and motivational components. Traditionally, formative assessment approaches focus on identifying gaps in children's learning and development, whereas Learning Stories capture children's strengths, interests, abilities, and dispositions (Carr, 2001). As the learning community discusses and makes decisions about children's learning, teachers give attention to and aim to highlight key dispositions (Carr, 2001).

In the Te Whāriki curriculum, educators notice and observe children, what they are interested in, and how they are learning. The approach takes the time to see and acknowledge children's interests, skills, and abilities, celebrating each child's personality and talents (Ministry of Education, 2017). Learning Stories are one way to document teaching and learning that go beyond objective information used to assess a child against a set of norms. They view the "whole child as a person rather than fragmenting the child into separate parts based on predetermined assessment measures" and levels of mastery (Escamilla et al., 2021, p. 16). Educators are creating new theories as they interact with children and families, resisting dominating systems of assessment (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). For example, Angela, an educator in California using the Learning Stories method, notes the following:

> My experience writing this first learning story is beyond anything that I had initially imagined. I am grateful that I was given the opportunity to observe, capture, and highlight the unique personality, growth, and interests of this child. I was able to give a voice to her abilities and learning. This story allowed me to connect with the child in a respectful way, as well as create a bond with her family. These moments are what I think make learning stories meaningful and special. (personal communication with Angela, October 2, 2023)

Smith (2016) argues that there is a common belief that young children lack the ability to participate in their early childhood education environments. This perspective suggests that children are seen as passive individuals in their learning experiences. However, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment (2005), highlights that young children are highly attuned to their surroundings and acquire an understanding "of the people, places, and routines in their lives, along with awareness of their own unique identity" (p. 7).

CRC Article 29 insists that young children enter childhood settings with rich funds of knowledge from their families (United Nations, 1989; Smith, 2016). According to Hedges et al. (2011), funds of knowledge can help us understand how children acquire knowledge and develop interests through their daily experiences and activities. These funds of knowledge are

shaped by children's social relationships, which play a crucial role in their learning process and in shaping their understanding of the world (Hedges, et al. 2011). According to the United Nations General Comment (2005), "Through these relationships, children construct a personal identity and acquire culturally valued skills, knowledge, and behaviors. In these ways, parents (and other caregivers) are normally the major conduit through which young children are able to realize their rights" (para 16, p. 8).

Culture is a central aspect of children's experience at home and a significant factor in influencing children's identity development. Children from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds often learn in cultural environments that differ from those they have experienced in their families and communities (Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010). Early childhood programs may be the first setting where children are exposed to mainstream norms of the dominant U.S. culture, which can be inequitable when those in power believe their understanding of the world is the only legitimate one (Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2020). Many teachers may not have had the opportunity to gain knowledge or experience to prepare them for working with culturally and linguistically diverse children. There is a need to improve teachers' abilities to understand, respect, and engage with young children who bring many home cultures and values into the classroom (Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2020). Learning Stories cultivates respect for human rights and cultural identity and honors the call that many have made for a more human rights-based approach to assessment (Hantzopoulos et al., 2021). Another teacher utilizing the Learning Stories framework, Delfina, noted the following:

> I loved writing the story of the child I observed during my student teaching class because through observation I was able to evaluate the child's development and see the great qualities she had. It gives the child the opportunity to believe in themselves, and the story helps the child build good self-esteem because the child can see all the good qualities that he/she possesses. When we highlight the beautiful things that every human being possesses, especially children, we help them grow and believe in themselves. This will open doors for children to experience new opportunities in the world

around them. (personal communication with Delfina, September 29, 2023)

Article 29 and Article 30 in CRC (1989) assert the importance that education shall direct the development of respect for the child's parents and their own cultural identity, language, and values of the country in which the child is living, and the country from which the child originates (Smith, 2016). Learning Stories can capture teachers' deep regard and respect for children's cultural identities. According to Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015), educators can expand their perspectives by recognizing the multiple meanings embedded in a single moment of practice, helping them become aware of their implicit assumptions about children: "through these awakenings, educators come to consider hidden assumptions and act to interrupt injustices" (p.130) in early childhood programs.

Culturally responsive caring binds individuals to their society, communities, and each other; therefore, moral, and social pedagogy is necessary (Gay, 2002). Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework emphasizes the value of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and relationships that marginalized children possess and bring into the classroom. These strengths often need to be recognized in the dominant mainstream culture (Erdemir, 2022). Educators can better serve children by acknowledging and appreciating their strengths and the richness of their cultural heritages. Learning Stories are a way for teachers to know the communities where they work and dignify the children's cultures and the people in their lives. They celebrate children's culture by incorporating families' values and aspirations while including families' language and voices. Learning Stories promote the interests and strengths of children with the family context woven into the process (White, 2019). Family engagement is critical to positive learning outcomes for children. Families are considered intellectual resources in the Learning Stories context, no matter their social, linguistic, religious, economic, or cultural background (Escamilla, 2022). An educator, Sandra, who is using Learning Stories, offered the following:

Learning Stories bring the child's learning to life. Storytelling is a beautiful way to highlight all the wonderful things children are and can do through words and pictures. I believe children's families are

an important part of the child's learning; after all they are the child's first teacher. Sharing learning stories with families helps build a sense of community and belonging between all partners in the child's learning. This sense of community and belonging then contributes to a child's positive sense of self as they hear and see the learning, they have actively participated in. As the child learns through the story all the amazing things they have participated in and how they challenge themselves, it builds the child's confidence and contributes to further exploration and mastery of skills. For caregivers, it gives them insight into the child's learning and development using a story that highlights all the competencies, capabilities, possibilities, wonders, excitement, and active learning of their child, rather than a report or word sharing "they are doing great." It is a way to connect home and school. (personal communication with Sandra, October 1, 2023)

A framework to begin the process of incorporating Learning Stories in educational settings is provided in Appendix A. To further exemplify how Learning Stories uphold the rights enshrined in the CRC, sample narratives of my community college students utilizing the framework are provided in Appendix B and C (with the explicit permission of the educators and students featured in them).

Conclusion

Documenting children's unique dispositions, competencies, and interests is a way to uphold children's rights. These stories are introduced to students to help capture the learning that occurs consistently, moment by moment, through everyday experiences. Our role as educators is to focus on the learning happening now, rather than where the child needs to be.

Learning Stories are also utilized to highlight the qualities of children, family, language, and culture, especially as the narrative is written in the child's language of love. This approach has enabled students to form closer relationships with children, considering their families while developing a curriculum tailored to their needs and interests. Learning Stories captures the meaning of children's lived experiences and the meaning with teachers and families.

In Te Whāriki, children's rights to express and share their views are embedded in the curriculum along with the importance of children's and families' voices being included in the narrative assessment process (Ministry of Education, 2017). It is believed that there is no one path to learning and that culturally rich settings provide different pathways for learning.

Ball (2021) emphasizes that a good assessment should not rely solely on one source of information but should involve observing the child's strengths and challenges, considering their cultural context. According to Ritchie and Rau (2010), educators influence the lives of children as they set cultural values and priorities in their environments. Narratives provide a strategy for generating new possibilities that move us beyond colonist patterns of dominance and marginalization. "We need to show that we value diversity, not only in our rhetoric but in our everyday practices, including how we assess children's learning and development" (Ball, 2021, p. 8).

Appendix A: Key Concepts of Learning Stories

Learning Stories are narratives created from structured observations designed to provide a cumulative series of pictures and written text about a child's learning. They are observations made into stories for the child and their families (Carr & Lee, 2012).

- o Learning Stories enhances children's sense of themselves as capable, competent learners.
- o Learning Stories reflect the holistic way children learn and engage in their cultural contexts.
- o Learning Stories reflect reciprocal relationships between the child, people, and the learning environment.
- o Learning Stories involve the perspectives of the child, parents/guardians, and extended family.
- o Learning Stories honors the family, culture, language, and community.
- o Learning Stories represents a moment in time.
- o Stories are formative and strength-based.

Learning Stories are a narrative assessment that honors children's competence and confidence (Carr, 2001). The method includes documenting children's learning experiences and written observations as "stories" written directly to the child about the child (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012). Learning Stories are meant to be written in the child's home language and shared with families who contribute to the story.

Learning Stories include:

- o Descriptions of crucial behaviors or dispositions.
- o What learning is taking place?
- o What steps might be taken to extend and support learning?
- o Children's interests, skills, knowledge, and working theories.
- o The child's voice and the teacher's response.
- o Multiple perspectives.

o Links to the child's family context.

o Cultural knowledge and ways of learning.

Components of a Learning Story include: (Escamilla, et al. 2021)

1. **The story: Always focus on the child's strengths or interests;** write directly to the child; the details of what happened; include the child's voice. Add photos. ***Noticing**

2. **What learning is happening?** Take time to consider the child's learning process of meaning-making. Reflect on what you know of this child yet stay open to discovering something new. This section describes what the child does and says from your perspective, paying close attention to observable details. Remember the story should be written in the child's language of love. Share thoughts with others. ***Recognizing**

3. **Opportunities and Possibilities:** ideas about possible next steps. "What we will do to strengthen, support, and extend learning?" ***Responding**

4. **"What is the Family Perspective?"** Provide a copy of the story to the family. The family members may have things to say to the child and the teachers. You might prompt them with questions and even offer to write up any comments they care to provide.

Appendix B: Sample Learning Story: "Gather Around Class"

Date October 30, 2023
Storyteller: Gigi Pearce

Dear Luna,

Today while we had indoor play time, I was able to observe you engaging and interacting with your peers during pretend play in the area where group meetings are held. I watched you walk over to the whiteboard and the chair Mrs. Angelica uses. Soon you sat down in the chair, pointed with one finger towards imaginary children seated on the circular carpet, and said, "Sit down." This began your play.

You were pretending to be teacher Angelica, with a smile on your face. You started to re-enact the daily routine of group meetings for two of your classmates after they joined your play. A few minutes later the roles of your play shifted to further include June and Bella. You all took turns being the teacher and students. Luna, when it was June's turn as the teacher, you helped Bella go through the daily routine by responding yes or no to all the questions when asked if you had done the morning activity or had breakfast yet. A while later another classmate Maria joined your play when it was her turn to be the teacher. She decided to read a book to the class. While this occurred Luna, I watched as you sat on the carpet waiting to hear the story then directed your gaze back toward Maria as she said, "All eyes on me," getting ready to go over the schedule again. Then Luna, when it was your turn to be the teacher once more, you asked, "What do community helpers do?" You turned to the whiteboard with a marker in hand and wrote their responses down on the board.

What learning is happening?

Luna, over the last few months I have seen how your creativity and ideas for pretend play have continued to expand as you've gotten more familiar with the environment. During today's activity, I saw you were confident, self-assured, and connected to your peers. Luna, your engagement in today's activity showed me that you feel safe in your surroundings. You are not afraid to speak up for yourself and have the initiative to seek adult help in resolving conflicts as they occur.

Luna, I saw your confidence and safety in your surroundings shine as you walked toward the whiteboard and chair to begin your pretend play. You showed self-assurance in your ideas of your play when you asked students to sit down so you could teach them about community helpers and go over the daily schedule.

Luna, you also showed me that you are connected to your peers while playing when you shifted the roles of your play to include June, Bella, and Maria when they wanted to join you. This allowed you to all have turns being teacher and students. I saw you are not afraid to speak up for yourself when you got up from the carpet during play and told June, "No, I'm the teacher." Additionally, Luna, I saw you seek adult help in resolving conflicts when you and Y had different ideas of who was going to be the teacher reading a story to the class since you both wanted to do that. Mrs. Angelica came over and said you can take turns reading, teachers need an audience when reading stories.

Opportunities and Possibilities?

Luna, during the past months I've been in the classroom I have truly enjoyed seeing you grow, and engage in many different forms of pretend play. One next step to support you is to incorporate more school items into the dramatic play center so that when you want to be the teacher leading a class while playing there's another area for you to engage with if the carpet where group meetings are held is being used by other classmates or teachers. Another step to support you is to ask you more questions when you are playing, about different things that are done in group meetings and by

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teachers when I notice that you are having trouble thinking of different activities teachers do with students such as reading stories. In this way, your play can build on what you already re-enact through incorporating storytelling or having your class get ready to go outside to play.

Luna, it has been a pleasure to be part of your educational journey. I remember the first day of student teaching I was so nervous, then you came up during outside play and said hi, and my nerves went away. Thank you for reminding me to never stop asking questions. I look forward to each new question you have for me every time you see me; they've become a highlight of my day. I have really enjoyed seeing you learn and grow throughout the past months in all areas, especially creatively. I know your future contains endless possibilities and I cannot wait to see the next lesson Teacher Luna has planned.

Sincerely, Gigi

The Teacher Voices

Ms. Luna,

I recall the first day you entered the Preschool so unsure of yourself and if this was a safe space for you. You stayed next to your mother for security. When your mom said goodbye, I reassured you I would keep you safe and you said with a smile "Okay teacher." As the school days passed, you became more and more confident in your social skills and often would play teacher sitting in my chair. This gave me insight as to how my students view me. One day long after I retire, I would love to know that yes you would be the Teacher sitting in the chair you love so much. I wish you much success as you embark on your Educational Career.

Respectfully,

Teacher Angelica

Dear Luna,

Oh, the places you'll go. I remember the first few weeks of school you were somewhat shy. However, as the weeks progressed you gained security,

independence, and curiosity. You always ask, "Why teacher?" This kept us teachers always thinking to give you a response. You are full of curiosity and questions. You are very kind and loving to all. Thank you for being you. It has been a pleasure working with you and seeing the growth you have made. Wish you well in your journey to come.

Kindly,

Ms. Ana

Dear Luna,

From the moment I met you I knew you were going to be so much fun to get to know. You came in ready to explore every corner of the classroom and be everyone's best friend. I love how you're welcoming to your friends and how you're always ready to learn something new. You have such an inquisitive mind that watching you blossom in just three months has been a pleasure to witness. Please continue to ask questions and continue to get all the answers. Your mind is a sponge! I can't wait to see what this year will bring you.

With love,

Miss. Sandra

The Mother's Voice

She loves to role-play her day at school while playing with her dolls. Her favorite teacher to act out is Ms. Angelica. Luna has always been very social when it comes to people including both children and adults. She loves making new friends. She has a huge imagination and loves to act out people in her life or characters she sees on television. Luna has such a huge personality that makes her such a joy to be around. Both children and adults tend to get drawn to her. I would describe Luna's personality as strong, confident, and determined. Since Luna started school, I have seen her grow and advance in so many different ways. She will come home singing new songs, practicing writing her name, becoming more interested in storytime,

and reading books. She is also learning how to ask the other children if they want to play with her and how to share.

August 18th was Luna's first day of the program. I remember her being so excited. That morning Luna woke up and couldn't wait to be on her way to school. I was very happy to see her excitement and the bravery that she had for a new environment. Luna went to school ready to play and make new friends. When I think back from Luna's first day of school to where she is now, I see so much growth. She comes home to tell me about her day with all of her friends. She tells me how they play together on the playground, in the sandbox, and with the other toys. Luna's favorite friend seems to be Edward. Edward has given Luna two flower bouquets. Luna says that Edward said he is going to marry her (lol). Luna also enjoys her teachers Ms. Angelica, Ms. Sandra, and Ms. Ana.

I think Luna is very smart and gets the hang of things very quickly. She is a fast learner when she is willing to take the time to be patient as she figures it out. I am so proud of the little girl she is becoming, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds for her.

Appendix C: Sample Learning Story "Once Upon a Buggy"

Dear Vienna,

Today while we were outdoors, I was able to observe you and your peers interact and make discoveries in Mrs. Terri's garden. It was bright and sunny outside as I watched you immediately go past the gate and head straight towards the shed to grab one of the shovels that was sitting against the wall. You picked one up and carefully walked back to stand in front of one of the garden boxes.

With a smile on your face, you reached inside and began digging away with your yellow plastic shovel. Suddenly, you stumbled upon a tiny gray-looking creature that was trying to wiggle its way out of the piled soil. As its antennas started to move around, you took a step back. Then, you closed your eyes and shouted "BUGGY!". As some of your peers gathered around to take a peek, you opened your eyes and proceeded to gently pick up the roly-poly from the dirt. You observed as it curled up in a ball and let out a giggle.

"Ivan, Ivan, Ivan, look what I found," you announced out loud while stretching your hand out to show him. Then, you passed it over to him and the both of you observed as it crawled around on your hands. "It tickles!" the both of you exclaimed. Then, the roly-poly fell into the garden box and crawled away beneath the soil. You pointed at it and waved goodbye. When

I asked where he went you responded, "he left with his family, I miss him already."

After that, you continued to explore the garden and found a different creature crawling around in the soil. You found a long worm at the bottom of a hole and tried to help him out. You directly looked over at Phoenix and asked for a turn with his shovel. You tell him, "Phoenix, can I have a turn?" and he replied, "okay, when I am done." Shortly after, you both traded shovels with each other and exchanged a polite "thank you." With the worm hanging over your shovel, you ran over to the camera and posed for a picture.

As the activity came to an end, you put your shovel away and hurried over to pick up the two baskets you used earlier to collect flowers in. With one in each hand, you rushed over to line up near the gate. You waited there and shouted "over here" to direct your friends.

What Learning is Happening?

Vienna, this outdoor activity has allowed us to see so much about who you are. You were self-assured, curious, determined and socially connected with your peers all throughout this learning moment. Today, you demonstrated your confidence and outgoing personality by getting straight to digging and going up to the camera to have a picture taken of you. Your participation in this activity also shows that you are comfortable in your space and have the will to participate and interact with the people around you. You and Ivan formed a strong duo and partnership to explore and gain a better understanding of your observations and your surroundings. You were able to take the initiative in navigating your exploration into one of your

interests and also exchanging words with your peers to work around the shared space you were in.

Opportunities and Possibilities

Vienna, during this time, I have had the opportunity to observe you develop and strengthen new skills day by day. Thank you for allowing me to see you unfold and be part of your learning experiences. A next step in helping support you is to provide more moments like these for you to engage in your interests and continue demonstrating your strengths. I will continually observe and ask questions to obtain a better understanding of your learning progress.

Sincerely, Angela

Letter From Mrs. Terri

Vienna, you are the youngest and smallest preschooler but you are mighty. You have so much knowledge and many skills you share with your peers. I know your older sister, Isabelle, has helped you with skills to grow into a confident preschooler you are today. Your voice was so soft when you first came here. You have grown into a louder voice to be heard by all of us.

You know how to share, ask and wait for turns and negotiate to get your needs met. I love your enthusiasm, curiosity and kindness. You have a wonderful giggle that fills the room. You are such a good friend to everyone. It is such a pleasure being your preschool teacher! You warm my heart,

Mrs. Terri

Letter From Mommy

Vienna, you are an independent, can-do girl. Throughout this preschool year, you have gained more and more independence in wanting to do more things on your own. You were nervous at the idea of going to school like sissy but once you went to visit, you were excited to go and learn each day. You forget to give hugs because you are ready to learn and grow. You now get a jacket and shoes on by yourself along with buckling yourself in

which has caused grandma to be late dropping you off without proper Vienna independent time accounted for. You are a little explorer who loves looking for bugs and learning about which ones are OK to touch and which ones we look at from a distance. You are not too sure about flying bugs like mosquito eaters. You are brave and strong which gives mom some scares when we need to be independent and zipline across the yard. You are my brave, fierce, independent girl and I cannot wait to see what you grow into as you learn more and more.

I love you,

Mommy.

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The International Journal of Human Rights Education honors the lives and contributions of the following scholars and human rights advocates who recently passed away: Betty Reardon, Ian Harris, Johan Galtung, and J. Paul Martin.

Betty Reardon (1929–2023)
By Nancy Flowers[*]

Human rights and peace education recently lost one of its earliest and most influential champions, Betty Reardon. Perhaps best known as a founder of the field of peace education, she regarded "Human rights education [to be] as fundamental and constitutive to peace education as human rights are to peace." Her book *Educating for Human Dignity: Learning about Rights and Responsibilities* (University of Pennsylvania, 1995) was one of the first resources offering both guidance and materials for teaching human rights in schools.

Dr. Reardon held prominent roles in the establishment of key institutions in the field of peace studies, including founding the Peace Education Center and Program at Teachers College, Columbia University and the International Institute on Peace Education. She was also an accomplished scholar with numerous publications not only on peace education, but also on the intersection of peace with human rights and gender.

Betty Reardon believed in education as the key to a just and peaceful world. A beloved teacher, she inspired a generation of educators and activists. She herself never stopped learning, continuing to research, write, and teach well into her last decade.

[*] **Nancy Flowers** is a writer and consultant for human rights education. She has worked to develop Amnesty International's education program and is a co-founder of Human Rights Educators USA. As a consultant to governments, NGOs, and UN agencies, she has helped establish networks of educators, develop materials, and train activists and professionals in many countries. nancymaryflowers@gmail.com

Ian Harris (1943–2023)
By Edward J. Brantmeier[**]

Ian Harris, influential scholar and co-leader in developing the field of peace education, passed away in May of 2023. Ian was born in New York City in the middle of World War II. He started his educational career as a biology, chemistry, and physics teacher at an alternative school in Philadelphia. He served on faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee from 1976-2007. As Chair, he helped create gateway opportunities for nontraditional students to matriculate and earn college education for their life experiences and through coursework.

In the early 2000s, Dr. Harris served as the President of the International Peace Research Association Foundation; he was also pivotal in launching the *Journal of Peace Education in 2004.* Ian published eight books, including *Peace Education* (2013); *Messages Men Hear: Constructing Masculinities* (1995); and *Peace Education from the Grassroots* (2013). He served as a peace education book series co-editor for Information Age Publishing from 2006-20016. He won multiple awards, including Peace Educator of the Year from the Consortium of Peace Research.

Ian lived a life of selfless service to others, dedicating time and effort to social justice causes in his local community and through his mentoring of countless graduate students, and junior faculty, in the field of peace education. In his retirement, he worked with incarcerated youth on peacebuilding efforts.

[**] **Edward J. Brantmeier** is a Professor in the Learning, Technology, and Leadership Education Department at James Madison University (JMU). He has worked in teacher education, educational leadership preparation, and university faculty development for over 20 years. His research interests include contemplative pedagogies, cultural competency, critical peace education, innovation, and future studies. Ed has co-learned alongside adult learners in his leadership, foundations, multicultural, and peace education courses for decades. brantmej@jmu.edu

Johan Galtung (1930–2024)
By Monisha Bajaj[***]

Johan Galtung, known as the "father of peace studies," recently passed away at the age of 93. Galtung was 12 years old during World War II and saw his father arrested by Nazis in Norway; he committed his life to advancing peace and non-violence through his work. His first published book in 1955 was entitled "Gandhi's Political Ethics." Galtung founded the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in 1959 and served as its director until 1970. In 1964, he helped found the International Peace Research Association and, in the same year, established the first academic journal in the field of peace studies, the *Journal of Peace Research*. In a seminal and widely-cited article in that journal, Galtung elaborated his concept of the "Conflict Triangle," distinguishing between distinct forms of cultural, structural, and direct violence. He theorized the differences between 'negative peace' (the absence of war or direct violence) and 'positive peace' (the structures, policies and institutions that address injustices resulting from cultural and structural forms of violence). He also is credited with coining the term "peacebuilding." Such concepts have become the core of peace and conflict studies and peace education, and have also been utilized by scholars and practitioners in many other fields.

Galtung was generous with his time and mentorship of scholars around the globe. He received the Right Livelihood Award (known as the Alternative or People's Nobel Prize) in 1987. In 1993, he founded the

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[***] **Monisha Bajaj** is Professor of International and Multicultural Education at the University of San Francisco as well as a Visiting Professor at Nelson Mandela University in South Africa. She is the editor and author of eight books and numerous articles on issues of peace, human rights, migration, and education. Dr. Bajaj has developed curriculum and teacher training materials—particularly related to human rights, racial justice, ethnic studies, and sustainability—for non-profit and national advocacy organizations as well as inter-governmental organizations, such as UNICEF and UNESCO. In 2015, she received the Ella Baker/Septima Clark Human Rights Award (2015) from Division B of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). mibajaj@usfca.edu

TRANSCEND International, a training center and entity involved in advancing peace and reconciliation in conflicts around the globe; TRANSCEND believes that "to prevent violence and develop the creative potential of a conflict, there has to be transformation" (TRANSCEND, n.d.).[1] Galtung's legacy will live on among new generations that encounter his rich conceptual contributions to the field and in those who take inspiration from his engaged efforts for peacebuilding across the globe.

J. Paul Martin (1936–2024)
By Frances Vavrus[****]

Professor J. Paul Martin had a distinguished career at Columbia University and left an indelible mark on the interdisciplinary field of human rights. He served as the first executive director of Columbia University's Center for the Study of Human Rights from 1978 until 2007, after which he directed the human rights program at Barnard College. Besides teaching human rights courses at those institutions, he developed training programs for experienced human rights advocates from and in developing countries, including in 1989 the ongoing annual Human Rights Advocates Program at Columbia.

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[1] https://www.transcend.org/tms/2017/11/conflict-transformation-by-peaceful-means-the-transcend-method

[****] **Frances Vavrus** is Vice Provost and Dean of the International Division at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She began her career as a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University followed by 15 years at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She has published numerous books and articles on secondary and teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa, and has advised more than 30 doctoral and 70 master's students. fvavrus@wisc.edu

Paul had a particular passion for human rights education and African studies, informed by his years as Dean of Students at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. His scholarship on human rights education and religious rights is well known, and it brought together theory and practical training in a manner that helped to set the stage for many subsequent scholar-practitioners in the field. When I was still a relatively new professor at Teachers College, I sought Paul's advice on the development of a course on human rights education in Africa. His enthusiasm and support for this proposal were critical to its success as it drew students from across the Columbia campus. Paul was a generous colleague who, in this case, offered readings, advice on the course structure, and volunteered as a guest speaker.

Paul's numerous publications, including a recent article, "Evaluating the Past and Charting the Future of Human Rights Education,[2] in this journal, cover human rights education as well as religions and human rights. His legacy of scholarly excellence, practical sensibility, and commitment to human rights around the world will not be forgotten.

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[2] See: https://repository.usfca.edu/ijhre/vol7/iss1/6

Unsettling Settler-Colonial Education:
The Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model

By Cornel Pewewardy, Anna Lees, and
Robin Zape-tah-hol-ah Minthorn (Eds.)
Teachers College Press, 2022, 240 pages
$130 (Hardcover), $44.95 (Paperback)
ISBN: 9780807780954
Review by jamal epperson[*]
University of San Francisco

*U*nsettling Settler-Colonial Education: The Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model, edited by Cornel Pewewardy, Anna Lees, and Robin Zape-tah-hol-ah Minthorn, is the third book in the Multicultural Educational Series that focuses on the education of Native American students. The editors remind educators that Indigenous education existed well before settler colonialism and that Indigenous educators and communities have consistently worked to undermine settler colonialism for centuries. As settler colonialism has continued to silence, hide, and erase Indigenous history, languages, culture, and education, this book plays a vital role in sharing examples of educators reclaiming and naming Indigenous histories, stories, and culture through the power of storytelling through the

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testimonies of educators who have utilized the Transformational Indigenous Praxis Model (TIPM), a framework developed by the lead editor, to further this progress.

The editors intentionally included 28 contributors to share their stories, connections, and ways to incorporate TIPM throughout four formal segments of education: (1) *Birth to Grade 12 Education*, (2) *Teacher Education*, (3) *Higher Education*, and (4) *Educational Leadership*. Showcasing TIPM in these various components of education highlights the versatility of TIPM and the ways it can holistically be incorporated into various spheres of formal education. The beginning of each chapter details a title, the authors, and their ties to Nation(s), Tribe(s), or their settler lineage in a way that honors the ancestral knowledge the author brings into their writing, which has shaped their experience. Highlighting the authors' narratives through poems, storytelling, pictures, autoethnographies, and collective storytelling, each section upholds the importance and tradition of Indigenous ways of knowing (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). While settler colonial education forces many to focus on individuality, self-promotion, and neoliberalism, the themes throughout this book highlight the need to abolish settler colonialism through community, love, and reciprocity.

Adding to the breadth of Indigenous critical frameworks, such as TribCrit (Brayboy, 2005), the contributors of this book showcase the simplicity and versatility of TIPM and how it can be utilized through various aspects of education to create change. To better understand TIPM, the editors describe their previous scholarship, which further details how TIPM is used to describe the various layers of Indigenous consciousness and how one can develop critical consciousness and promote action for social transformation (Pewewardy et al., 2022). TIPM breaks down four approaches to unsettling settler colonialism and potential resistances educators may face when promoting action within these levels. The first approach, the *contributions approach*, describes the level of critical Indigenous consciousness where educators still need to develop their consciousness to examine curriculum content and school structures critically (Pewewardy, 2022). The second level, the *additive approach,* describes the level where

educators begin to recognize structures rooted in settler colonialism are harmful to Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) children (Pewewardy, 2022). At this stage, educators may be overwhelmed by organizational structures, but they begin incorporating multiple critical perspectives and information into their curriculum.

The *transformative approach* describes the third stage of this model, where educators have a deep awareness of how settler colonial policies impact BIPOC children, incorporate critical and decolonizing pedagogies into their curriculum, and begin mentoring others on how to do the same (Pewewardy, 2022). Finally, *cultural and social justice action* is the final stage of TIPM where educators demonstrate a deep understanding of critical consciousness and promote both theoretical and concrete actions to decolonize their curriculum and school-wide policies and procedures (Pewewardy, 2022). Although there may be more minor setbacks within cultural and narrative change, they remind us that progress is still being made and resistance should not deter educators but reinvigorate their work and generate creativity to create change through new avenues.

At the end of the book, the editors share their collective closing, bringing the various contributors together for a discussion about the various needs for this work to continue and ways they can partner moving forward. Throughout their dialogue, three significant themes arose: decolonization and Indigenous reclamation, land recognition and relations with the land, and an intentional movement toward healing (Pewewardy, 2022). Closing this section, the editors share a song, *Comanche Beloved Song*, composed and translated by Dr. Cornel Pewewardy, highlighting the love, care, and action needed from within and outside of this community. Through this practice, they instill TIPM through their praxis by incorporating song, collectivity, and unity despite how academia can silo people.

While most of the book discusses the importance of education at various levels, Michael Yellow Bird describes the importance of tying this work to human rights in the *Afterword*. Yellow Bird (2022) shares the work Canada has done to recognize and address the harms that Indigenous communities have experienced. With the establishment of a Truth and

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Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the signing of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the experiences of the communities were shared and utilized to create a TRC strategic plan that highlights various strategies to unsettle settler colonialism within education. Yellow Bird (2022) calls for the United States to do the same work as Canada to move beyond much of the performative action that has taken place.

While this book has done substantial work promoting TIPM, this book can be expanded in some ways. First, this book strongly needs to acknowledge the linear progression of TIPM as a framework. While we are consistently learning and understanding the impacts of settler colonialism and how to abolish it from our systems and practices, we may internalize settler colonialism without realizing it and further do harm to ourselves and our communities. Second, this book substantially emphasizes formal education without fully highlighting the impacts of co-curricular education outside the classroom. While policies, procedures, and curriculum can transform the realm of education, some aspects of learning in communities outside of the classroom have not been explored. Co-curricular education can also lead to a substantial impact on educators and communities outside of education. Finally, this book places a significant emphasis on the United States. While contributors highlight the importance of solidarity, community, love, and healing, there are opportunities to expand this work to include Indigenous communities that have also suffered from settler colonialism throughout the world. Connecting TIPM to UNDRIP and TRC can further promote global human rights education.

Overall, this book substantiates the vital role TIPM as a framework can play in unsettling settler colonialism. For centuries, the voices, stories, and experiences of Indigenous communities have been silenced due to settler colonialism, white supremacy culture, and more. This book serves as one of the many ways communities can work together to ensure these stories and histories are not lost but centered when radically reimagining what the future of education can and should look like. Through the substantial use of Indigenous ways of knowing, the need for collective communities that

promote healing, and the power of radical reform, the contributors and editors have highlighted the vital ways TIPM can help progress unsettling colonial education throughout various levels within formal education.

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Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal

By Bettina L. Love
St. Martin's Press, 2023, 352 pages.
$29 (Hardcover), $14.99 (eBook)
ISBN: 9781250280381
Review by Brian Davis[*]
University of San Francisco

Bettina L. Love's *Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal* (2023) perspicuously describes the epistemological and ontological violence Black children in the United States (U.S.) school system endure because of white supremacy, white rage, institutional racism, neoliberalism, and the school-to-prison pipeline. Love makes this clear in her articulation of the educational survival complex:

> … the exploitation of compulsory education by the ever-expanding carceral state, private corporations, wealth managers, philanthropy, education reformers, local and state politicians, real estate, the testing industry, and each U.S. President to fill school buildings with Black

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children who are educated to make profits for the uber-rich and to undo American's democracy. (p. 9)

Here, Love shows how the education survival complex centers (and recenters) all stakeholders responsible for disrupting Black children's quality of education and right to dream.

Love begins *Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal* by identifying the entry point on the assault of Black education: white rage after *Brown v. Board of Education*. Drawing on Anderson's (2016) work, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, Love emphasizes white rage is what built America's institutions, cunningly crafting laws, policies, covenants, and approaches that undercut democracy, halt Black advancement, and cage Black bodies while leaving white supremacy intact and often even stronger. Anderson argues the trigger of white rage, inevitably, is Black advancement. It is not the mere presence of Black people that is the problem; rather, it is Blackness with ambition, with drive, with purpose, with aspirations, and with demands for full and equal citizenship. Throughout the first chapter, Love encapsulates how Black individuals faced repercussions. Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, over 38,000 Black teachers lost their jobs, signaling systemic challenges. Love details how white rage evolved to hinder Black progress. From 1975 to 1985, Black teachers dwindled by 66% due to legal displacements and certification demands.

Love then delves into systems and laws responsible for the punishment of Black children and the schools they attend. She highlights how, for example, in 1991, U.S. President George H. W. Bush launched "America 2000: An Education Strategy" focusing on school choice and standardized testing. Love continues with a critique of the promise of school choice, noting its damaging effects on Black children attending majority-white schools. Despite seeking better education opportunities, Black children face soul-crushing social challenges. Similarly, Dumas (2014) portrays schools as sites of Black suffering. While at face value, many of these schools felt like great opportunities and moments of temporary advancement of potential life chances, Love emphasizes:

the burdens of choice, travel, and risk falling on non-white families. Then, as now, school choices rely on Black resiliency, Black ambition, and Black people's relentless pursuit of education to create a facade that our children have choices in life to mitigate racism and anti-Blackness. (p. 67)

In the following chapter called "Scraps," Love jarringly describes the extent to which the burdens of school choice, travel, and risk impact Black families seeking an equal and equitable education. Love illustrates how the intersections of neoliberal educational policy, private corporations, and the federal government work strategically to siphon public money and sell Black children's education. Love urges readers to reflect on the role private corporations, neoliberal policies, home and virtual schools, and vouchers have served in funneling out public funding from public schools populated by Black students; Black students and families are left with educational scraps.

Throughout the next chapter, "No Entrepreneur Left Behind," Love meticulously exposes the individuals and institutions responsible for disrupting Black education and the right to education. Teach for America (TFA) is highlighted as a central agent in this destruction. Love illustrates how TFA experimented with placing uncertified teachers in classes with vulnerable students, ultimately jeopardizing Black children's lives and education. Love also discusses the transformation of white rage into white paternalism and a savior complex, demonstrating the direct link between white supremacy and Black educational abandonment over recent decades, asserting that such disparities are not accidental. She underscores the disparate treatment within education, noting the scarcity of TFA teachers in suburban schools and the absence of uncredentialed teachers in predominantly white, middle, or upper-class institutions.

Love subsequently underscores the theme of erasure, examining white resistance to accountability and culturally responsive pedagogy, and revealing how lawmakers – like former President Donald Trump and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis – have enacted bans on books, theories, and even words while attacking positions like directors of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Love depicts these actions as contemporary manifestations

of decades of organized, well-funded, and cruel educational white rage, resulting in Black erasure.

Towards the book's end, Love uncovers the contradiction between what DEI is on paper versus what is in practice. In practice, as Love puts it, the result of DEI and anti-racism amounts to attempting to help white people learn to be less racist. While she attacks the symbolic approach to DEI, Love also emphasizes how real, meaningful, and substantive equity work attempts to repair, undo, heal, and atone for generations of violence, trauma, and racial, educational, and economic inequities while simultaneously recognizing Black people as a mighty people with a beautiful history of resistance, refusal, strength, and creativity. One compelling illustration is through the experience of Lia, a DEI director at a predominantly white school in Virginia, whose job is supporting students of color who deal with racist incidents in school and helping white teachers, donors, and parents understand why equity and inclusion work is important. Love shows the hypocrisy of the DEI position, not for the work itself, but for its limited capacity to uphold and transform:

> Black people are confronted daily by a world in which the systems of education, health care, criminal justice, social services, housing, transportation, climate change, and the economic development of urban areas cause racial health disparities…imagine facing these deadly disparities and your job is to heal this nation's school as a DEI worker. (p. 232)

In the closing pages, Love presents a solution-oriented approach grounded in love, joy, and justice, emphasizing the need for healing, repair, and acknowledgment of Black humanity. She challenges readers to consider what is owed to Black children and families harmed by systemic violence in education. Reparations, she argues, are deemed necessary to address the enduring impact of racism and white supremacy. Love collaborates with experts to quantify reparations for Black people, highlighting the ongoing struggle for freedom and justice. Love ends the book with a powerful message:

> Repair and transformation are the hope for the future, a future where Black folx are safe and where we all thrive together. Repair, healing,

and transformation are the only hope for our crumbling democracy. The path to and through repair and transformation is long overdue, but it is possible. Possible if we see a future where "Black children dream weightless, unracialized, and human." This is our dream, a dream that heals this entire nation. (p. 288)

Punished for Dreaming; How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal brought me to tears. This is a must-read book for all educators in the fields of education, education policy, and parents. For myself, it brought to reality all my experiences growing up in the Philadelphia School District. I, too, was the subject of many policies, reforms, charter schools, and the defunding of public education in real-time. Bettina Love's *Punished for Dreaming; How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal* is a book readers will continue to revisit as it is packed with so much insight, data, and experiences that cannot be overlooked.

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The Human Rights Imperative in Teacher Education: Developing Compassion, Understanding, and Advocacy

By Gloria T. Alter & William R. Fernekes (Eds.)
Rowan & Littlefield, 2023, 314 pages.
$95 (Hardback), $39 (Paperback), $37 (eBook).
ISBN: 978-1-5381-6193-7
Review by Cristian Aguilar Valverde[*]
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We have a responsibility as educators to help students make sense of what is happening around them and give them tools to transform the world they live in. We must build educational spaces that uphold and promote peace and human rights. Educators across the globe have a moral imperative to help students develop compassion, understanding, and advocacy. Teachers, in particular, are uniquely positioned to inspire students and instill a sense of responsibility to fight for the rights of others. It is, therefore, critical that teachers begin to see themselves as human rights educators and "develop a common responsibility to make human rights a reality" (Hopkins, 2011, p. 73).

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Gloria T. Alter, Associate Professor at Northern Illinois University, and William R. Fernekes, founding member of Human Rights Educators USA, take on the groundbreaking task of making human rights education (HRE) a central focus of global teacher education in their book, *The Human Rights Imperative in Teacher Education: Developing Compassion, Understanding, and Advocacy* (2023). The editors bring together prominent scholars in the field of HRE to offer teacher educators, researchers, and students an essential resource to transform teacher education and place human rights at the center of educational settings. This book is an essential contribution to the field of human rights, providing teacher education programs and their students with opportunities to understand the theoretical foundations of HRE and offering resources for practicing teachers who desire to integrate HRE into their daily practice.

Section I: Human Rights Education and Global Teacher Education

The first section places the development of HRE within the global movement for human rights and discusses how HRE can transform existing global teacher education (GTE) by integrating critical and decolonial perspectives. Chapter 1 authors Felisa Tibbitts and Sandra Sirota set the stage by defining HRE and its three essential dimensions – education *about*, *through,* and *for* human rights. They argue for an HRE-integrated teacher education curriculum that critically examines oppressive systems and structures limiting human rights. The authors propose that teacher education institutions take on the responsibility of including HRE in their curriculum and advocating for "HRE that is current and relevant for classrooms across the globe" (p. 21).

In Chapter 2, Nancy Flowers and Abraham Magendzo provide an extensive historical and global overview of HRE. The authors provide an overview of HRE in Latin America, Europe, and the United States (U.S.), drawing attention to recent HRE developments. Notably, HRE in the United States has received hardly any support from the public school establishment and thus continues to have little impact on U.S. schooling. The authors outline critical factors for the appropriate development of HRE: (1) an urgent

need to train more human rights educators, (2) furthering research in the field, (3) building networks, and (4) maintaining integrity.

Chapter 3 reviews the interconnections between global citizenship education and HRE. Authors Osler and Hugh Starkey provide an overview of citizenship education and elaborate on education for cosmopolitan citizenship. They proceed to a discussion of children as citizens, arguing for recognition that "children are equal political beings with political rights...this includes a right to 'participate in procedures whereby order is constructed, maintained, and changed'" (p. 65). The chapter concludes with a proposal for how schools can become sites for the renewal of a democratic process through their commitment to human rights and citizenship education.

In Chapter 4, Adaobiagu Obiagu highlights the importance of reassessing GTE using critical and decolonial perspectives, particularly from the Global South and the field of HRE. Obiagu discusses how GTE is tied to neoliberalism and Western-Eurocentric perspectives. The author emphasizes that decolonial perspectives can help transform GTE by interrupting Western ideas of individualism, along with addressing the goals, principles, and challenges of implementing HRE. Obiagu concludes by providing an example of global education content in teacher education curricula.

Section II: Teaching About Global Human Rights—Applying Principles and Practice

The second section discusses rights-based education for children and the applications of HRE at all grade levels. Chapter 5 authors Katherine Covell and R. Brian Howe incorporate human rights documents and related resources to provide unit examples addressing critical current human rights issues. They provide a conceptual foundation for how human rights can frame K-12 teaching and learning and discuss the guiding principles of provision, protection, and participation embedded in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child. The authors highlight the obligations of school authorities responsible for children's education: ensuring for every child (1) the right to education, (2) rights in education, and (3) rights through education. The lessons of this chapter are critical for

teachers and school administrators to understand so that they can uphold their responsibilities as educators.

In Chapter 6, Alter offers resources for LGBTQ+ education and advocacy. The author examines worldwide data that suggests the increased population and growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ people; yet, LGBTQ+ people continue to face discrimination in schools. Alter points out how this reality is both critical and alarming since teachers should know how to protect and support LGBTQ+ students. The chapter offers teachers opportunities to learn how to teach about LGBTQ+ human rights through an inclusive curriculum and supportive school policies. It concludes with unit examples of elementary school scope and sequence.

Chapter 7 authors Kristi Rudelius-Palmer and Page Hersey focus on teaching and learning about global migration from an HRE perspective. They offer seven guidelines for teaching and learning about global migration that are helpful for all teachers, especially preservice teachers learning new skills. The authors provide a unit on the United States-Mexico border that applies these guidelines as well as ideas for instruction and resources for teachers. They conclude with four recommendations for teacher preparation programs: (1) developing and adopting program guidelines; (2) providing mentorship programs; (3) fostering training and experience in collective action with human rights organizations; and (4) offering ongoing fellowships to reinforce personal and collective learning.

In the last chapter in section two, Fernekes offers pathways for the curricular integration of HRE within existing programs in U.S. public schools. Addressing the challenges of integrating HRE in public school curricula, he offers different pathways educators can take, such as a district/community-wide initiative and/or an individual classroom-based approach. Fernekes presents readers with an overview of International Human Rights Curriculum Unit Objectives that teachers can adopt as a model for curriculum development. The chapter closes with suggestions for teacher education programs to consider if they want to prepare preservice teachers to meet the current needs of students.

Section III: Conclusion and Recommendations

In the final section, Glenn Mitoma and Sandra Sirota discuss the future of HRE in GTE and offer sound recommendations for teacher educators, teachers, researchers, and advocates committed to HRE. The authors call for fostering a broad professional, personal, and civic identity for teachers rooted in human rights by looking at the lessons learned throughout the text. Based upon the shared understanding of HRE as developed in UN international standards among all contributors to this book, the authors recommend a variety of practices that can help pre-service (and veteran) teachers meet the challenges of our time. They also suggest introducing HRE to future school administrators through their university's educational leadership program. As a current assistant principal in a predominantly low-income and immigrant community, I found this chapter especially helpful since HRE is fundamental to my work and commitment to my students and their families. It is imperative that school administrators truly understand HRE so that they can support teachers in implementing HRE practices.

The last chapter provides readers with application strategies and activities for advocacy in conjunction with the book or in professional development for HRE. The authors end by centering HRE as critical to the support of human life and the survival of the planet. We must, as the authors suggest, "create a less individualistic, more caring society" (p. 243).

As I conclude this review, I'd like to take us to the core of this book which is to reimagine new possibilities for the future of teacher education and the future of our children. It is our responsibility as educators to inspire our students and instill a sense of responsibility to fight for the rights of others. We cannot simply sit by while hospitals, universities, and entire communities continue to be bombed. We must stand in solidarity with communities across the globe, such as in Palestine, in their struggle for human rights and liberation. As educators, we have a responsibility to help students uphold peace, and protect and promote human rights.

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Emancipatory Human Rights and the University: Promoting Social Justice in Higher Education

By Felisa Tibbitts and André Keet (Eds.)
Routledge Press, 2024, 227 pages.
US$42.36 (eBook), US$136.00 (Hardback)
ISBN: 978-1-032-13861-9
Review by Megan Patterson[*]
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T he Right to Education[1] is a human right that sits as a cornerstone of international development, education, and the advancement of social justice, but what exactly does it mean in practice? Many debates have risen from the logistics of accessing schooling for basic skills in literacy and numeracy to the responsibility of educational institutions to enfranchise students with not only human rights but increased life possibilities and the shaping of a more just world (Hartley, 2015). With an increasingly professionalized world and the global dominance of neoliberalism, is higher education becoming a basic need of learning? If so, what role does the

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[1] The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) defines the Right to Education in Article 26 as universal and should be free and openly accessible to all through at least an elementary level. Higher Education is noted as needing to be 'equally accessible' based on merit, and that all learning must advance the development of the whole person while respecting and promoting human rights.

university play in delivering human rights and justice to students, faculty, and communities impacted by research? Editors Tibbitts and Keet (2024) open *Emancipatory Human Rights and The University: Promoting Social Justice in Higher Education* asking just these questions, considering both the practical and radical possibilities of higher education spaces to expand access to human rights and, in practice, act as a facilitating forum for the right to education and beyond. As this book speaks directly to educators, administrators, and staff within higher education institutions globally, the frameworks, field notes, and empirical research curate a narrative of how much work and reform are needed for higher education to be truly emancipatory.

Twenty-five scholars in the field of Human Rights Education (HRE) and higher education provide a lens into the values, responsibilities, and true motivations of higher learning. The book's twelve chapters are divided into three sections: *Theory*, *Looking Inside the University*, and *Looking Outside the University*. Editors Tibbitts and Keet explain how this organization helps give a broader view of higher education for its complex positioning as academic institutions – credited and often responsibilized with thought leadership on topics like human rights and social justice – and the practices and impact broadly of institutions on societies. Addressing the historic and ongoing role of higher education institutions in the colonial project and ongoing exploitation of Indigenous lands, the book opens with a tone of self-awareness, and expresses clear desire to elevate diverse perspectives and offer an expanded lens into the state of the field to include global north and global south scholarship. This book attempts to disrupt the structural violence of the university and historic western elitism of scholarship, which pervades publication about, among other topics, higher education.

In the first part entitled *Theory*, Tibbitts opens the section by analyzing what emancipatory human rights really mean, debating if higher education must be free to be included in the right, discriminatory practices of evaluating 'merit', and how higher education institutions must navigate international law and proceedings. Keet et al. then complicate the notion of *human rights*, noting its colonial roots and legacy of 'enforcement' projects

that have furthered both neo-liberalism and colonial agendas. Glasberg and Hughey, in Chapter 3, expand on Keet et al.'s contemplation on decolonization in the university by considering the epistemological forms of violence within the classroom, and Zembylas, in Chapter 4, suggests that perhaps a truly decolonial and emancipatory approach to higher education requires a complete rethinking of the institutions themselves and a de-romanticizing of the academy. Setting the stage for emancipatory human rights practices in the later sections, it is evident that there is no perfect model for how to (re-)structure higher education so that it may be a practical right for all in the advancement of rights and social justice, nor a way to absolve the inherent violence within the current university systems in regard to student exploitation and discrimination.

In Part Two, *Looking Inside the University*, the authors explore how the university's administrative and classroom dynamics interact with the advancement of social justice and equity. The chapters explore themes of responsibility, as Fisher and Gilbert in Chapter 5 evaluate how universities often reinforce structural violence through interactions with student activists while claiming justice-centered pedagogy. Gready et al. invoke the theme of 'protection' in Chapter 6 while exploring policies surrounding gender violence on campuses in South Africa and Uganda, evaluating performative policies and how 'protection' can defend students' rights or the reconstruction of colonial paternalism. Cortina and Quezada, in Chapter 7, evaluate discrepancies in women's representation in research and tenured positions in a university in Mexico as indicative of the university's shortcomings in facilitating gender equity in staff. Karnoff and Keet close the section with an evaluation of curricula in 24 universities across South Africa for how they explicitly interact with HRE and themes of 'social justice'; the authors note how South Africa has become something of a model for the rest of the world on how to implement human rights as a core tenet of socio-political structures post-apartheid, yet few substantive updates to curricula in higher education have taken place.

Looking Outside the University, part three of the book, examines communities impacted and included in university research, programs, and

professional fields like law, social work, psychology, and nursing. Cherry and Prevost in Chapter 9 and Pak and Moser-Mercer in Chapter 10 call forward how the university's responsibility to be emancipatory must reach beyond the classroom into research methods, from participatory action research to community-driven evaluation. Dijkstra and Hagenaars in Chapter 11 and Ramires and Rowthorm in Chapter 12 note the need to expand HRE and the emancipatory responsibilities of higher education to professional degree programs as well, identifying how core values of human rights are aligned with ethical obligations of fields like law, nursing, and social work. Each chapter shares common themes – highlighting the neoliberal overtones of higher learning both within traditional degree programs as well as professional licensure programs, calling forward the contemplations of the first part of the book: is an educational system permeated with structural violences which seeks to capitalize on learning and commodify the exploitation of often marginalized communities ever capable of being emancipatory?

The book advances a rigorous overview of current debates and theories within HRE and higher education, giving valuable insights into reformative work to increase the emancipatory capacities of the university while also providing practical insights into its shortcomings. Attempting to deliver on a challenging goal of giving a global perspective through dialogue between scholars of the global south and global north, the discourse and vision-setting of higher education as a human right is still western-dominated. While the authors expand the lens of learning to include programs in South Africa, Uganda, and Mexico, vital perspectives nonetheless are missing from the conversation, such as independent universities and tribal colleges, that could expand our understanding of how higher education can facilitate decolonization, social justice, and human rights. Most poignantly, however, this book calls forward an urgent need for increased scholarship and debate on the necessity of access to meaningful higher education in delivering on the right to education.

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Teaching for Peace and Social Justice in Myanmar: Identity, Agency, and Critical Pedagogy

By Mary Shepard Wong (Ed.)
Bloomsbury, 2022, 234 pages.
$130.00 (Hardback), $39.95 (Paperback), $35.95 (eBook).
ISBN: 978-1-3501-8407-7
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The power and potential of the intersection of peace education with human rights education shines through in *Teaching for Peace and Social Justice in Myanmar* (2022), edited by Mary Shepard Wong. Presented in three sections entitled Agency, Identity, and Critical Pedagogy, this book describes how various actors design, implement, and interpret peace education in Myanmar. The book has a distinct spotlight on intersectionality and addressing who is missing, why they are missing, and what is next if we fail to teach peace and human rights. Another theme centers on critical education, which Wong contends is foundational to peacebuilding as it "interrogates inequalities, examines power structures, and acknowledges and unleashes agency to teachers and students" (p. 3).

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A key premise of the book focuses on valuing diversity and prioritizing social justice to reduce armed conflicts within Myanmar. Each chapter provides localized examples centered on the praxis of teaching for peace and contributes to a growing body of knowledge on how peace education efforts are understood by educators and learners (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016). Almost half of the contributors are from Myanmar, with the intentional inclusion of young and marginalized educators from diverse regions of the country. Each chapter begins with a personal narrative on how each author came to their peace education work and the local context, challenges, and breakthroughs they have experienced. These narratives pull the reader in to grasp the agency and positionality of the contributors toward peacebuilding and human rights education.

The first section includes three chapters dedicated to the agency of educators and learners. Practitioners seeking to incorporate peacebuilding exercises into praxis could find these examples insightful. Chapter 1 documents the journey of 16 teacher participants seeking to develop agency or "pro-social capital" (p. 28) in their students through participatory and problem-posing lessons as a mode of sustainable peacebuilding. The next chapter describes the conditions, highlights, and recommendations for effective dialogue between diverse ethnic groups and the promotion of engaged learning, including designing projects, addressing time constraints, determining target areas and participant selection, and recognizing learning styles and cultural issues. This section closes with a chapter outlining two case studies that illustrate the opportunities and challenges of generating self-awareness and conflict responses through creative dialogues by effectively setting the stage and encouraging an enabling environment for participants engaged in peacebuilding praxis.

The middle section of the book focuses on how identity informs peace education. In opening this section, Chapter 4 outlines the historical, ethnic, and religious identities that impact education and peacebuilding in the state of Rakhine. This overview sets the frame for the stories of two young educators who were first students and then teachers in a one-year college-level nonformal peacebuilding program established by a civil society

organization with the overall objective of developing youth as peacemakers for change through participatory educational practices. The next chapter explores the role of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) and first language-based MLE, as compared to ethnic language-based multilingual education (ELB-MLE), in improving the access and quality of education to support peacebuilding and democratization. In uplifting MTB-MLE, the authors work with two teacher-training MLE projects that promote community building and sustainable peace and demonstrate that MTE-MLB allows a better understanding of personal identities and fosters skills needed for interpersonal relationship-building. Finally, this exploration of identity closes with a chapter describing the collective experience of three practitioners implementing the Learn and Share Together (LST) initiative in both community-level and formal school settings. From their experiences with LST, the authors offer four principles in curriculum development and implementation: conflict sensitivity, contextualization, collaboration and co-creation, and centering local wisdom and voices. They also provide recommendations to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grant donors who seek to re-evaluate their awards determination process, timeline requirements, and cross-sector connections, as peacebuilding is not necessarily a linear project.

The book's final section addresses critical pedagogy's role in peace education. First, Chapter 7 examines the specific function of curriculum and pedagogy in middle schools to determine the extent and effectiveness of peace education. The chapter outlines a qualitative study that sought to answer questions on how curriculum addresses knowledge of the human rights of children, diversity, and conflict resolution skills. Based on the results, the authors conclude that there was no integration of human or child rights in the curriculum, a lack of promotion of teamwork, over-influence of one ethnic group, and discrimination among students for ethnic, gender, and other identity differences. The authors suggest opportunities for curriculum and textbook revisions or supplementation and pedagogical change to promote cooperation and respect for differences. The following chapter continues the application of critical pedagogy by outlining the use of applied theater in secondary social studies school curricula to foster critical thinking

and reconciliation with painful and contentious topics from Myanmar's history. Through role-playing activities involving primary source documents, secondary social studies teachers and students in separate workshops explored alternative perspectives that honor the dignity of others, foster empathy for differences, and search for commonalities. The section's closing chapter analyzes Myanmar's donor-centric system and the nature of "moral imagination" within peace research (p. 192). This donor-centric research system reflects Western values, practices, and languages, often resulting in policies looking for evidence to support them and based on the preconceptions of donors on the form of peace best for Myanmar. This type of investigation limits researchers' ability to pose unique and probing questions about peacebuilding possibilities in Myanmar. The author argues for realigning peacebuilding research to reflect how the people of Myanmar view their issues and uplift their values and the "soul of the place" (p. 198).

Overall, this volume extends the scholarship that examines peacebuilding within education and educators' potential contributions, including examining challenges and complexities of peace education work. All contributors believe education is crucial in promoting positive peace and unity within Myanmar. Each chapter in this book offers practical, on-the-ground examples of how peacebuilding education functions in various formal and informal settings with supporting theoretical frameworks. While the specific enactment of each program may be unique to the conflicts within Myanmar, the hope and promise that others worldwide engaged in peace and human rights education could take the lessons and apply them in their specific cases shines through each chapter.

An intriguing follow-up to this book would be examples of locations where peace and human rights education intersect in other nations and how this occurs. Peace education practitioners should gain a deep appreciation for the practical models outlined in each chapter. However, the challenges of implementing the ideas presented in the book include the extent to which they could be applied in other locales and the rapid pace of political climate changes in Myanmar. Wong (2022) notes that peace education requires opportunities for local actors to formulate responses to how cultural,

political, and economic factors drive conflict or promote peace. She rightfully concludes that envisioning peace and socially just systems can lead to powerful peacebuilding acts.

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