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Building tolerance through human rights education: The missing link

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Abstract

Human rights education (HRE) is an emerging practice across formal and informal educational sectors worldwide. However, most literature and theory on HRE emphasize the importance of imparting knowledge about human rights. In this paper, we argue that increasing tolerance among students is a vital but understudied aspect of HRE. This paper is based on the results of a mixed methods longitudinal study conducted in three classrooms across two New York City public high schools. Our methods include a pre-/post- survey, classroom observations, and semi-structured individual and group interviews. The findings indicate that merely teaching about human rights issues is necessary but not sufficient to shift deeply embedded attitudes that contribute to the transformative nature of the human rights framework. We present tolerance as a necessary precursor to positive social change and sustainable human rights implementation.

Keywords

human rights education, mixed methods, social change, tolerance, transformative education

Human rights education (HRE) is an emerging practice within the formal and informal sectors of education intended to strengthen human rights (HR) implementation and advocacy across the globe. The Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004) defines HRE as 'training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of HR through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the molding of attitudes' (p. 5). In addition to promoting knowledge of HR and skills to promote HR, the plan also calls for the importance of promoting understanding and *tolerance* across different racial, ethnic, national, religious, and linguistic groups. While some studies assume that there is a relationship between HRE and promoting tolerance (Fritzsche, 2006; Van Driel et al., 2016), few studies have empirically examined the extent to which HRE is linked to promoting tolerance across different groups (for exceptions see Bajaj, 2011; Bajaj et al., 2017).

While HRE is now recognized as a widespread and global phenomenon (Ramirez et al., 2007; Russell and Suárez, 2017), the majority of studies focus on knowledge and attitudes related to HR (Bajaj, 2011; Gaudelli and Fernekes, 2004; Tibbitts, 2002). Most literature and theory on HRE emphasize the importance of imparting knowledge around HR (Bajaj, 2011; Tibbitts, 2002, 2017).

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However, we argue that increasing tolerance among students is a vital but understudied aspect of HRE. The HRE for Coexistence framework (Bajaj, 2011) focuses on fostering values and skills related to conflict transformation and mutual understanding, with a goal of achieving greater coexistence and social cohesion. While this approach specifically focuses on the role of minority rights and pluralism in post-conflict settings, we apply this perspective to the case of diverse schools in the New York City (NYC) context. Our findings suggest that greater knowledge about HR does not necessarily align with increased tolerance about other groups, which we argue to be vital to the long-term sustainability of the HR framework.

In order to explore the relationship between HR knowledge and tolerance, we draw on student data collected from a mixed-methods longitudinal study of a year-long HRE program implemented in two high schools in NYC. We ask the following questions: To what extent are knowledge and attitudes about HR related to tolerance levels among students? How do levels of tolerance vary by student background characteristics? Through an analysis of survey, interview, and observation data carried out over the course of an academic year, we find, although HR knowledge increases over the year, tolerance levels appear unaffected by the HRE course. Evidence from our qualitative data suggest that even if students have knowledge about HR and HR violations, they continue to hold stereotypical views of different groups. We argue that these prejudices weaken the sustainability and influence of a HR based framework. Our study calls into question the link between HRE and increasing tolerance. Our findings show that merely teaching about HR issues is necessary but not sufficient to shift deeply embedded attitudes that contribute to the transformative nature of the HR framework. This points to the need to investigate the mechanisms through which individuals shift attitudes and beliefs about others and how this may lead to a HR outlook that endures in the long-term. In order to fully achieve the long-term goals of HRE for promoting awareness and advocacy, the intersection with tolerance and changing values must also be attended to.

Defining and measuring tolerance

UNESCO defines tolerance in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (1995) as ‘respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s culture, our forms of expression and ways of being human. . .Tolerance is harmony in difference’. In the literature, tolerance is viewed as both a necessary aspect of a democratic polity (Sullivan and Transue, 1999) but also as an important antidote to social discrimination (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999). Mummendey and Wenzel (1999) conceptualize tolerance as the psychological understanding of different groups pertaining to a higher inclusive category in which the differences between the groups become normalized. Fritzsche (2006) distinguishes between different degrees of tolerance ranging from a pragmatic approach of passive acceptance of difference to a more active approach of creating a tolerant environment. This view of tolerance does not focus on the way groups are connected but rather on the internal attitudes of a person and the external environment that shapes the way people interact.

Several studies attempt to measure notions of tolerance and diversity among adolescents. For instance, through an analysis of cross-sectional survey data, Stringer et al. (2010) measure social attitudes among Protestant and Catholic students in Northern Ireland and find that parental attitudes, group membership, and cross-group contact explains differences in students’ attitudes. Kokkonen et al. (2010) measure Swedish citizen high school students’ tolerance of immigrants; their findings indicate that students’ views about interethnic tolerance are not related to ethnic diversity in schools. However, another study drawing on the ICCS data conducted by Janmaat (2012) investigates the relationship between classroom diversity and tolerance in England, Sweden

and Germany and finds that classroom diversity is positively related to tolerance in Sweden and Germany but not in England.

Other studies investigate the relationship between intergroup contact and changes in tolerance levels. In a study of tolerance of 13–15 year old Finnish students toward foreign students, Liebkind and McAlister (1999) find that tolerance levels were improved through intergroup contact in school. In a related study, Gieling et al. (2014) use real-life situations to gauge Dutch adolescents' tolerance toward Muslim immigrants through fictional scenarios around the headscarf, Islamic schools, female Muslims not shaking hands with males, and public shaming of homosexuality by imams. Their results demonstrate that intergroup contact within schools is related to higher levels of acceptance of these practices. While these studies provide insight into how attitudes toward tolerance and diversity are measured among youth, they do not specifically address the relationship between HRE and tolerance.

HRE and tolerance

One underlying assumption among many scholars and practitioners examining HRE is that HRE is a means to promote a strong democratic society and that part of its role can be to improve social relations and increase tolerance (Fritzsche 2006; Froumin, 2003; Tibbitts and Fernekes, 2011; Van Driel et al., 2016). However, few studies have sought to directly explore the relationship between HRE and students' tolerance levels. For instance, while the majority of studies on HRE discuss knowledge and attitudes, they rarely focus on the fundamental role of tolerance in contributing to the broader goals of HRE.

In her study on 8th grade students in a 3-month HR course in a poor area of Santo Domingo, Bajaj (2004) measured students' attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge before and after the course. She found that after taking the course, more students were able to recognize HR violations against discriminated groups both within Santo Domingo and internationally. While we conceptualize tolerance as going beyond mere recognition of intolerant situations to a more critical application of tolerance both at the individual, group and societal levels, Bajaj's research suggests that students, having taken a HR course, are at least better able to apply knowledge of these violations to identify real-world situations in which HR are violated. It gives us little insight, however, into a more direct measure of tolerance and its relationship to HRE.

Bajaj (2012) also studied a HRE program led by a non-governmental organization (NGO) in India and how it impacted students as moderated by household- , school- , and community-level factors. She found that one of the principal categories of impact was in the area of shifting personal behaviors and attitudes that contributed to greater respect for HR. Students were able to apply knowledge about HR issues to transform their own viewpoints and actions indicating that HRE can be associated with increased tolerance levels.

Most recently, Bajaj and colleagues conducted a two-year ethnographic study to learn about how HRE shapes youth identity among immigrant and refugee youth (Bajaj et al., 2017). They led and observed an afterschool HRE program at a high school in California and explored student responses to the program. They found that students gained a deeper understanding of HR as connected to social justice; however, the research did not explore the link between ideas about HR and equality and the application of these ideals in relation to others in practice.

While civic education is not entirely transferrable to HRE, HRE is often a part of civic education courses. Thus, with little empirical research directly focused on HRE, we also reviewed studies on civic education and tolerance. In one study analyzing civic education in South Africa, Finkel and Stumbras (2000) found that weekly civic education courses had a strong association with political knowledge but almost no influence on norms and values, including tolerance. Contrarily,

Claassen and Monson (2015) found that in a university civic education course at the university level, both political knowledge and tolerance grew over the semester at both conservative and liberal campuses. These differences in findings are unsurprising because different implementation of curriculum and teaching styles – such as teachers who are tolerance versus equity-focused (Martell and Stevens, 2017) – have been found to change the outcomes of civic education courses (Gainous and Martens, 2016). If civic classes are appropriately designed to improve tolerance and implemented effectively, they can achieve an increase in tolerance among students (Iasha et al., 2018). Amidst a lack of research exploring the link between HRE or civics education and how they influence tolerance, we examine how exposure to issues around HR and HR violations changes ideas about tolerance.

Conceptualizing tolerance and HRE

The existing frameworks around HRE, such as the model developed by Tibbitts known as the *Value and Awareness-Socialization Model*, primarily aim to transmit information and knowledge about HR (Tibbitts, 2002, 2017). Other models such as the *Activism-Transformational Model* (Tibbitts, 2002, 2017) or the *HRE for Transformative Action Framework* (Bajaj, 2011) seek to empower students to promote transformative action. Both of these models aim to educate the individual to recognize HR violations and to act to prevent them. Bajaj's (2011) *HRE for Coexistence Model* focuses on developing values and skills for mutual understanding and respect for differences among marginalized groups in post-conflict settings.

While the majority of existing HRE frameworks aim to foster awareness and action around HR, they do not explicitly focus on developing tolerant attitudes toward others, which we argue is necessary to support students in maintaining a HR perspective in the long-term. To do this, we draw on self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), which explores ideas about the self in comparison to other people (i.e. within social interaction) to understand tolerance within the context of HRE. The theory defines self-concept as the multifaceted cognitive element of the psychological system.

According to self-categorization theory, at least three levels of abstraction are important to distinguish in relation to the self-concept. The first is the superordinate level of the self as a human. The middle level involves in-group/out-group categorizations that incorporate social similarities and differences that define one as member or outsider of certain social groups. The third is the subordinate level of the self as a unique person. These three levels incorporate 'one's "human," "social" and "personal" identity respectively, based on inter-species, intergroup (i.e. intra-species) and interpersonal (i.e. intragroup) comparisons between oneself and others' (Turner et al., 1987: 45).

We use self-categorization theory to show the importance of tolerance for HRE and to demonstrate how students internalize the higher category of being human. We propose a framework for HRE that shifts from an individual/intra-group focus to an inter-personal/inter-group focus to a broader common idea of humanity. In Figure 1, at the bottom level – Individual/Intra-group – students understand HR and HR violations by thinking of themselves first as individuals or as a part of a particular group. In this case, they might think of HR violations that directly affect them as individuals or as a part of a group. As students progress through the abstractions of self-categorization, they can move to the interpersonal/intergroup level. Here, students understand HR and HR violations thinking of other individuals or groups with whom they did not originally associate themselves but with whom they now see a shared link. In this paper, we define increasing tolerance as shifting from an individual focus to an inter-personal/inter-group focus as students internalize the higher category of being human.

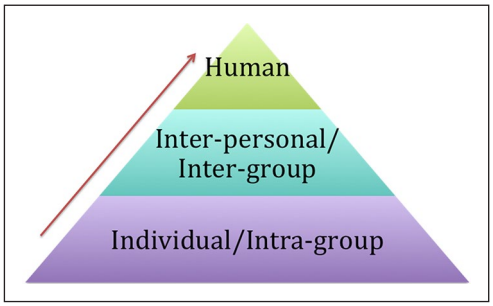

Figure 1. Conceptualizing tolerance using self-categorization theory.

In this paper, we conceptualize tolerance as a fundamental goal of HRE; thus, we seek to explore how the course is associated with student tolerance levels. With the HR framework emphasizing the rights of each individual, acceptance of this individual as an equally important member of society must be attained. If there are groups of individuals against which many hold discriminatory views, it is unlikely that advocacy for the realization of their HR will be upheld in the long-term. In the case of an HRE class, the goal would be to facilitate students' ability to reach the human level of abstraction, and in order to do this they must embody the medium level, or the interpersonal.

Thus, we argue that a tolerant view and inclusive understanding of oneself in relation to others strengthens the implementation and maintenance of HR for all groups and allows for increased recognition of HR violations. Tolerance is an important part of and a necessary precursor to a pathway toward positive social change and sustainable HR implementation– what we see as the primary purpose of HRE. Should knowledge about HR increase without a corresponding increase in tolerance levels (as demonstrated in Figure 1), we argue that this is an opportunity to learn where the gap is in the HRE curriculum and how the gap between knowledge and social action could be bridged through steps to increase student tolerance levels.

Methods

Data

The data used for this paper are derived from a study conducted during an academic year[1] in three classrooms across two NYC public high schools (see Russell, 2018 for more detail on the study and methods). These classrooms included an all girls, all boys, and a mixed gender class. Students were assigned to take a HR course several times a week run by a local non-governmental organization and taught by trained HRE facilitators in collaboration with the teachers in the schools. In the first semester, the course focused on global HR documents and issues related to human trafficking and genocide, as well as issues such as racial discrimination and gender and LGBT equality. In the spring, students organized an advocacy campaign based on an issue of their choice: students opted to work on police brutality and child abuse in foster care. While the HRE curriculum did not explicitly focus on the concept of tolerance, an implicit focus was embedded in discussions around racial discrimination and HR violations.

A research team, comprised of the primary investigator (second author) and three doctoral research assistants (including the first author), conducted a sequential mixed methods study

Table 1. Description of survey sample (fall) ($N = 68$ students).

	All girls ($N = 26$)	Mixed ($N = 18$)	All boys ($N = 24$)
	Percentage/mean		
Gender (%)			
Male	–	27.8	100
Female	100	72.2	–
Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply) (%)			
African American/Black	84.9	76	100
Hispanic	6.9	26	–
Asian	9.6	–	–
Native American	2.7	–	3.1
White	2.7	–	–
Other	11	10	–
Parental birth place (select all that apply) (%)			
U.S.	17.8	74	47.7
Latin America/ Caribbean	65.8	16	56.9
Africa	4.1	12	6.2
Asia	9.6	–	–
Languages spoken at home (select all that apply) (%)			
English	93.2	100	100
Spanish	12.3	6	3.1
Creole	11	–	7.7
French	4.1	4	4.6
Other	17.8	4	3.1
Age (mean in years)			
Age (14–18)	14.8	16.1	14.8
Grade (%)			
Grade 9	3.8	–	–
Grade 10	96.2	–	100
Grade 11	–	100	–

(Creswell and Clark, 2007) that included a survey given at the beginning and the end of the year, as well as interviews and classroom observations with students. Students took the paper survey (68 in the fall and 52 in the spring due to attrition), which took approximately 20–30 minutes to complete. The survey included various questions related to HR knowledge, attitudes about HR, and tolerance levels towards other groups. To complement the survey data, the research team also conducted six group interviews and 36 individual interviews in three classrooms. Pseudonyms have been used throughout this paper to protect the identity of participants.[2] In addition, we also conducted more than 100 hours of classroom observations during the school year.

The students in the study attended high schools in a low-income inner-city context where over 85% of the students were classified as economically disadvantaged. Students participating in the project identified mostly as African-American/Black (87% of students), including first and second generation students from Caribbean and West African countries. Over half of the students had at least one parent born outside the U.S., and more than a quarter of the students spoke second language other than English at home. Approximately 43% of the students were female and 57% male. See Table 1 for a detailed description of the survey sample from the fall broken down by classroom.

Measures

Dependent variable. For our study, we created an index to assess students' tolerance levels. We used factor analysis to determine which variables were most correlated, and then created an index including items about students' tolerance toward the LGBTQ community, women, and racial/ethnic and religious groups different from one's own. These variables span different groups (gender; LGBTQ; racial/ethnic; religious) in an effort to capture a more complete understanding of the way students shift toward a more inter-personal/inter-group level of self-categorization as discussed above. The specific survey questions included being comfortable living next to a gay or lesbian person; preference for friends coming from a variety of religions; seeing men and women as equally good political leaders; and willingness to be friends with someone who discriminates against gays/lesbians, different racial/ethnic groups, or those of a different religion. For this paper, we focus on *t*-test results and the difference between the fall tolerance (mean = 2.89; minimum = 1; maximum = 4; SD = 0.61) and spring tolerance (mean = 3.02; minimum = 1.83; maximum = 4; SD = 0.57) variables. These questions are presented with answer options on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree. Items were reverse coded as necessary to maintain a consistent direction indicating increased tolerance levels (i.e. higher score is associated with higher tolerance levels). The index thus demonstrates an overarching measure of tolerance as related to subcomponents associated with tolerance within the U.S. context.

Explanatory variables: Human rights knowledge and student characteristics. In seeking to understand the way tolerance is connected to HRE, we also look at a score measuring students' HR knowledge. We measured HR knowledge using a sum score of various components on the survey that included an assessment of knowledge of HR, HR documents, HR violations, and HR organizations. For this paper, we focus on *t*-test results and the difference between the fall HR knowledge score (mean = 14.58; minimum = 6; maximum = 20; SD = 3.79) and the spring HR knowledge score (mean = 15.79; minimum = 9; maximum = 23; SD = 3.42) as the main explanatory variable in our regression.

Because student characteristics, specifically gender and other demographics, may also factor into student tolerance levels and interaction with HRE (Tibbitts and Fernekes, 2011), we include four student characteristics as explanatory variables. These include: gender, age, race/ethnicity, and parent demographics.

We include gender given that most studies looking at tolerance suggest that adolescent females demonstrate more tolerance than males (Avery, 1988; Gieling et al., 2014; Hansman et al., 1999; Jones, 1980; Liebkind and McAlister, 1999), although little research has been done on gender differences related to tolerance within the context of an HRE setting. Gender is a binary variable (0 = female; 1 = male).

We also include a parent demographics variable that is also binary representing those students who have at least one parent born in the U.S. compared to those with no parents born in the U.S. (0 = no parents born in the U.S.; 1 = at least one parent born in the U.S.). Parental influences also appear to have a relationship with student tolerance levels, yet they are largely under studied (Stringer et al., 2010). We do not account for differences between students with two U.S. born parents versus those with only one U.S. born parent, rather they are grouped together with the assumption that having at least one parent born within the U.S. will give a student greater access to a particular set of cultural values and understandings that may be connected to experience within the U.S. context.

We also include race/ethnicity while recognizing the complexity of race/ethnicity and relation to tolerance levels. Intergroup tolerance and understanding of various issues are widely dependent on the way different groups (including racial/ethnic) interact and overlap with each other (Brewer

and Pierce, 2005). The racial experience is important in shaping group understandings in U.S. schools and the U.S. generally (Alexander, 2012; Ansell, 2016; Carter, 2012; Coates, 2015). Race/ethnicity is included as a binary variable comparing students identifying as black with those not identifying as black (0 = non-black; 1 = black). We grouped this variable as such due to the minimal variation among other racial categories.

Limitations. Our study includes a small sample size with little variation in race/ethnicity and socio-economic status, limiting our ability to account for patterns and outcomes that might be evident in a larger-scale study. Our lack of opportunity to conduct a randomized control trial limits our ability to assess impact and to hone in on the influence of singular variables on the relationship between HRE and tolerance. Moreover, while we used factor analysis to ensure internal consistency of the items included in the tolerance measure, we were not able to test the validity of the tolerance measure prior to this study. In addition, this study is limited to one HRE program across two different schools and three classrooms and is not generalizable beyond the population of students in the class. While this allowed us to consider specific aspects of this program in relation to tolerance levels, it limited our ability to make larger-scale assumptions. Finally, attitudes about HR and tolerance are self-reported and could be positively biased with participants answering questions in ways that are seen as more socially desirable (Edwards, 1953). In order to draw conclusions from self-reported data, we used a variety of objective markers, including data from our survey, interviews, and classroom observations, for identifying tolerance to capture a more complete understanding of the way students shift from an individual focus to an inter-personal/inter-group focus.

Quantitative results

We ran two simple *t*-tests to explore differences in student tolerance levels and differences in HR knowledge sum scores at the beginning and end of the HR course. Students who did not take the survey at both the beginning and the end of the year were dropped from our analysis leaving us with $N = 52$ (compared with the 68 students who took the survey in the fall). Our *t*-test results confirm an overall difference in outcome knowledge levels over the course of the year with students demonstrating higher knowledge in the spring compared to the fall ($p < 0.01$). Surprisingly, our results suggest no difference in tolerance levels across semesters In Figure 2 below we include a chart demonstrating the change over time in the overall HR knowledge sum score, and we also include change over time in the various components that comprise the overall HR knowledge sum score. The chart shows that all four components of the overall HR knowledge sum score increased over time. In Figure 3 on the following page, we display the change over time for each of the questions comprising the tolerance index along with the change over time for the overall tolerance index. We find that while there is an increase in most of the individual items from the tolerance scale over the year, the difference is not statistically significant for most of the individual items or for the overall tolerance score. This indicates that awareness about HR rather than increasing tolerance was the main outcome of the HRE class.

To further explore the relationship between tolerance and HR knowledge, we used a first differences model to explore if change in HR knowledge predicts change in tolerance levels (see table in Appendix 1). Across all three models, HR knowledge still does not predict a change in tolerance levels across time. This indicates that an increase in knowledge about HR, as was seen over the year in the observed HRE classes, does not align with an increase in tolerance levels. With tolerance levels integral to shaping a HR culture in the long-term – the aim of HRE – it is important to

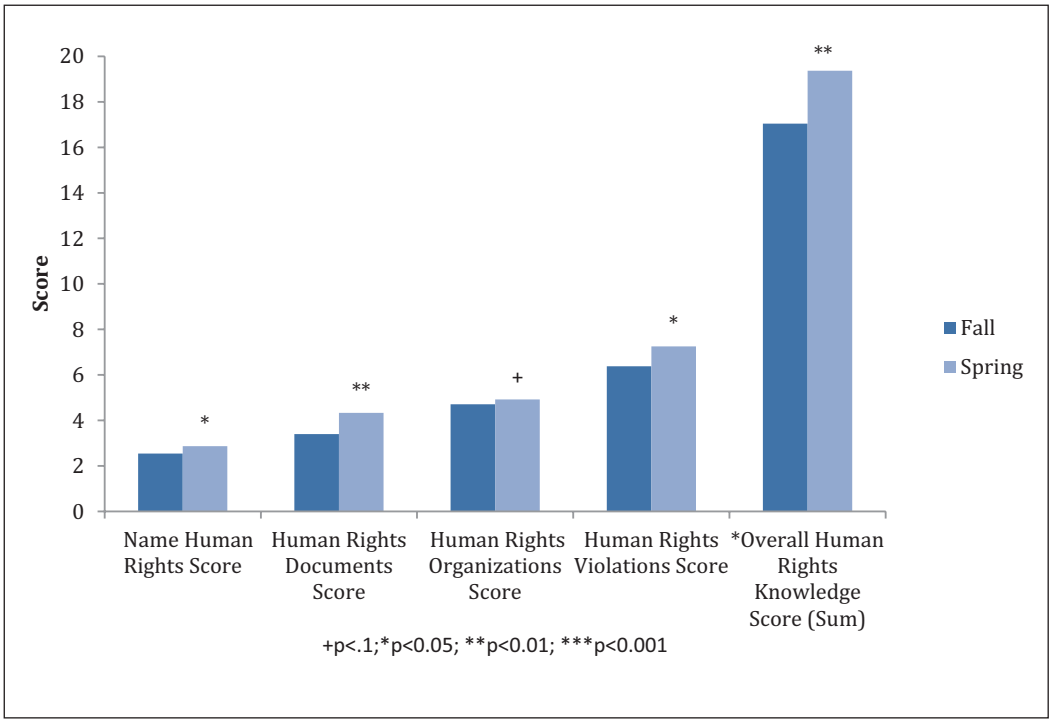

Figure 2. Graph showing difference in HR knowledge sum and components across time.

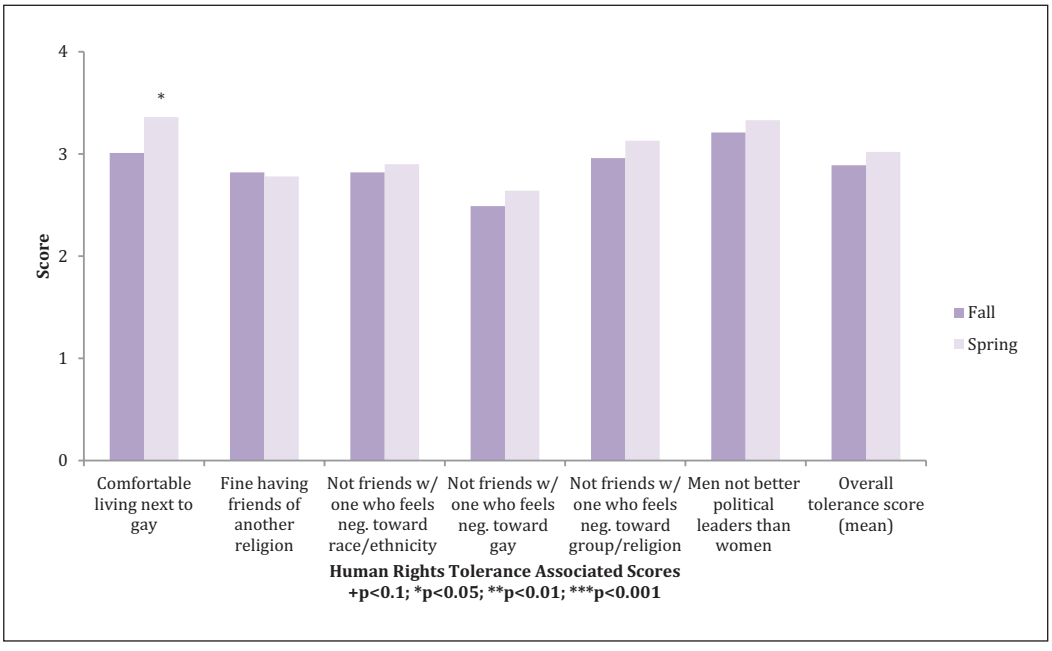

Figure 3. Graph showing difference in tolerance and components across time.

recognize that simply increasing knowledge about HR without an explicit effort to transform the way students view others will not increase tolerance levels as a bi-product. Our results indicate that this is not explained by differences in gender, age, race/ethnicity, or parent demographics. However, our analyses are limited by our small and non-random sample. To further explore the way students manage increased HR knowledge amidst stagnate tolerance levels, we include findings from classroom observations and interviews in the following section.

Qualitative findings

In the HRE course, the emphasis was on gaining knowledge about HR (semester 1) and how to put them into action in terms of advocacy work (semester 2). During the second semester, students worked together as a class on a HR campaign of their choice. Some classes worked on campaigns related to HR violations directly connected with individuals in the class (i.e. police brutality) and others worked on campaigns that advocated for groups seemingly unrelated to them (i.e. victims of sex trafficking, foster care). Despite this hands-on experience, tolerance levels did not increase while knowledge significantly increased. This indicates that students may need more focused structure specifically dedicated to developing more tolerant views. In the following example, a student talks about learning about her rights and then proceeding directly into learning about how to advocate for particular human right issues through the class campaign. This interview excerpt demonstrates the HRE course transitioning from knowledge about HR to advocating for a particular human right issue without taking what we argue to be the important middle step of deeply understanding one's own link to other groups and role in contributing to discriminatory attitudes or HR violations.

GABI: Well first, we just started off learning about all our rights like how the convention, universal declaration of rights, the convention of rights for children, the natural human rights that you all should have. That's what I call the basic rights. And then um as we learned the rights we just um started learning about awareness, advocate. . . and it was awareness, advocate. . .I think it was like persuade people to um understand what you're talkin' about like how do you advocate a person, how you make people in your community or around you aware that they have human rights, and then how do you like protect yourself or like um and what is the NGO like help bring into this whole idea. So after we learned about that just kept going on further into the school year. Then they started talking about like a campaign that we should do. (Gabi, Spring 2015)

Increased knowledge of HR along with talk about HR issues and violations in the community were the focus of classroom observations and interviews. Even though some of the topics included in the course implicitly challenge students' views about others, the HRE class did not explicitly provide structure for students to focus on critically analyzing their own intolerant views toward others or the reasons why the HR issues discussed came to be. In the following example from an end-of-year interview, another student describes the class as liberating his mind, but when the interviewer asked follow-up questions to understand what he meant, he was only able to give vague answers about 'a paper' that says 'what's right and what's wrong for a human being' and not judging or criticizing.[3] While this could be the beginning of a discussion and deeper analysis of one's own

intolerant views, this interview excerpt represents the lack of depth of the HRE class in encouraging self-analysis and critical thinking that would encourage more tolerant viewpoints (or at least an awareness of intolerant views and their roots).

ABDUL:	It liberated my. . .like it expanded it. It taught me, like it taught me new things that I didn't know.
INTERVIEWER:	Like what? What are some examples?
ABDUL:	Like I didn't know we had um the courage in human rights. Like I didn't know we had like a paper that says what's right and what's wrong for a human being and stuff like that. I really wasn't aware of that and what else? There's some other things but I can't really remember. But it really. . .expanded my mind. It kind of changed the way I think a little bit and made me. I was already a respectful person, but it kinda made me more respectful, ya know? Don't judge, don't criticize, just be patient and just accept you for who they are and so just, and to know you can always, one word, one word or one move can change a whole person's life. (Abdul, Spring 2015)

Abdul talks about becoming more respectful, which is also arguably important and a step toward greater tolerance; yet he focuses on a change in his behavior rather than a deeper change in the way he thinks about others. Even if he is interchanging the word 'respectful' for 'tolerant', he describes this change manifesting in his life in the way that he acts and not in the way that he thinks about HR issues and his place in relation to them. This may be a result of the implicit focus on expanding views about others in HRE without a corresponding explicit structure that supports the connection of these expanding views to transformation in the way students view themselves in relation to others.

A female student in a spring interview points out the lack of change in tolerance among her classmates. She recognizes that other students still stereotype and make fun of people, and the student expresses that she does not think this will change despite their increase HR awareness.

SHONA:	They're still the same as like yeah.
INTERVIEWER:	They're still make fun of people?
SHONA:	I don't think that's gonna change. (Shona, Spring 2015)

Another male student also points out in a spring interview that intergroup tolerance and relations among the students in the class have not changed. Generally, students did not recognize specific ways the HRE class shifted students to more tolerant behavior toward one another within their immediate environment. Instead, students recognized changes about knowledge of HR and awareness of national and global HR issues (see Author, 2018).

INTERVIEWER:	Do you feel like any of your classmates have changed in your human rights class, do students get along better or differently than before?
FREDDIE:	I don't really know. I mean we were gonna the students they're always gonna get along better as time progresses so either way we were gonna to change our like we were always gonna change no matter what but I guess I don't know I can't really see it.

INTERVIEWER: Are there still. . .I don't know do people still like tease each other or bully each other?
FREDDIE: Oh no no no no no.
INTERVIEWER: Make fun of each other?
FREDDIE: Yeah, yeah, yeah of course still
INTERVIEWER: Like about what?
FREDDIE: I mean the same things like weight. It's we never really mess with anyone because of their race because we're all almost basically the same we're all either Hispanic or African-American. (Freddie, Spring 2015)

This was corroborated by another student who talks about students learning more about their HR and correspondingly becoming more interested in the class. However, the student says that in another sense, students do not appear to 'learn anything' implying that students do not actually change beyond increased knowledge about their rights.

INTERVIEWER: Have you noticed the students in your human rights class, have they changed at all?
JIMMY: Well some change and some stay the same because um like the ones that change they mostly like after the HR class started to go along the path from fall to now. *People change because they started to know their rights*, and after they started to knew their rights like I think they've, they get more interested into the class. And others who just constantly talking, I don't think like they learn anything. *I think they learn but on the other hand I don't think they learn anything because they still the same way*, but yeah. (Jimmy, Spring 2015; italics added)

Based on our regular classroom observations, we found that although some students were able to recognize their own intolerances (as in the following example), the class does not specifically teach or focus on that. The following student interview excerpt demonstrates one of the few examples where a student actually recognizes their own intolerances that they are working to address.

THALIA: I like, me I, God knows *I stereotype a lot*.
INTERVIEWER: You do? Like how?
THALIA: So we went to the park, me and my brother and my brother was, and we were just relaxin' and so there's this thing, like people who don't dress to match like they just all over the place with their fashion, they're like oh, that might be a Haitian, so we were walkin' and. . .I was like, she looks like a Haitian. . .I was like, I shouldn't have said that. But I said it in my head so I was like, it was like out loud. But yeah. I think that's somethin' that everybody does. They stereotype.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So you've noticed that you stereotype you're saying.
THALIA: One I realize I'm stereotyping, I'm like that's rude. Don't do that. Try not to do that. You know talk to, it's kinda weird but I talk to myself and like you need to stop it. (Thalia, Spring 2015; italics added)

Generally, however, students were less aware even with increased knowledge about HR. In this excerpt from a classroom observation, the facilitator and students discuss making the community a better place, but as they are discussing how to advocate for others, a student interrupts the discussion with an intolerant comment.

MARQUEZ:	Like what they did in the circle and like that was helping the kids.
BRANDON:	It would not work in this class. . .you would be expressing your feelings and imagine what they would say
ANOTHER STUDENT:	Nigga, you gay.
	(Classroom Observation, November 19, 2014)

The student's remark is potentially racially intolerant – depending on its vernacular context and the racial identities of the students involved in the conversation – and intolerant against the LGBTQ community. This is notable because both racial and LGBTQ HR issues were discussed in the course. This comment, left unaddressed by the facilitator or the other students, was a missed opportunity to help students understand their own link to each other and their power to promote a HR culture in the way that they interact and think about themselves in relation to others – including in their own classroom. This is representative of tolerance as a missing link in HRE as seen in this course and more broadly in the HRE field. With the course moving directly from knowledge about HR to advocating for others, students miss out on a critical step in the HR movement: the development of and awareness around tolerance. Without tolerance as an identified goal within HRE, curriculum will not form around the goal of increasing tolerance among students, and educators implementing the curriculum may not have the impetus or awareness to take advantage of opportunities like those shown in the last interview excerpt to help students explore their own views of other groups and cultivate more tolerant attitudes. Tolerance allows for a deeper understanding of HR that goes beyond a *one-time shift* in views around a particular issue (such as police brutality) and instead reshapes the way students think of humanity and their relation to others – allowing for a *sustained shift* in approaching HR issues that will change continuously throughout their lifetime.

Discussion

The survey data indicates growth in knowledge about HR over the course but no change in tolerance levels. The data indicates that this change is general across different student characteristics and thus appears to be the overall pattern of the class rather than influenced by particular socializing factors or background characteristics. Knowledge about HR is and should continue to be an important goal in an HRE course, but knowledge without a change in the way one views themselves in relation to others will not be enough to sustain a HR culture in the long-term. When looking more closely at what is happening within the course, how students discuss their experience in the course, and the ways they have changed, we find a significant gap. To reference Bajaj's (2011) model of differentiated ideological orientations, the course jumped straight from the first step (*HRE for Global Citizenship*) focused on gaining knowledge to the final step (*HRE for Transformative Action*). The step she includes as the middle step linking these two, *HRE for Coexistence*, was largely absent from the program and is the space where students could have interacted with each other and the HRE curriculum in such a way as to challenge currently held notions while building the skills to apply HR knowledge to critique – both oneself and society – and thus move toward communal growth; a communal growth that comes from the willingness of

individuals to be critical and scrupulously uphold a HR standard for all people. We argue for the need to integrate self-categorization theory into a HRE framework for understanding how attitudes around tolerance shift.

What exactly does including this middle step actually look like in pedagogical terms? The kinds of pedagogy promoted by HRE advocates vary. Those that were included in this particular HRE program include: (1) experiential and activity-centered learning; (2) problem-posing to challenge prior knowledge; (3) participative teaching where students are encouraged to participate in clarifying concepts, analyzing themes, and doing activities; (4) dialectical teaching where students compare what they to know to other resources; (5) strategic thinking where students set their own goals and craft strategic ways to achieve them; and (6) goal and action-oriented curriculum giving students the opportunity to plan and organize actions to achieve goals. Other types of pedagogical strategies that are widely encouraged in HRE but were not included in this program include both (1) an analytical approach – where students are asked to learn about why the current status quo exists and how it came to be – and; (2) a healing approach – where HR is promoted in intra-personal and inter-personal relations (HRE pedagogy from the Asia-Pacific Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education, 2003). Again we see that the two pedagogical strategies that are directly related to building tolerance levels – an analytical and healing approach – are those that were weak within the course.

With this gap in the curriculum, students stay at the bottom and middle levels of the pyramid (see Conceptual Framework, Figure 1) unable to move forward to the final goal that would enable the sustenance of a HR mindset and culture. Students learn about HR from an intellectual perspective, and they learn to understand how their own rights are violated. However, this course, reflective of other HRE approaches and course designs, does not induce students to understand their shared link with others by working with students to understand the underlying causes of HR violations or the way their own intolerance inhibits understanding of a shared link with others.

Without motivating students to understand their connection to one another and to all humans, they cannot move to the highest level of understanding that serves as the foundation of the HR framework. HRE courses should encourage students to think of themselves as part of an overarching and inclusive group of human beings with the awareness and ability to use a critical lens when their own intolerant views present themselves as a challenge to this notion. This can be achieved by having students confront their own biases and learn to deconstruct the ways in which they and their society view the world. Mezirow (1997) calls this critically exploring assumptions and notes that there are four processes of learning: (1) elaborate an existing point of view; (2) establish new points of view; (3) transform a point of view; and (4) transform the 'ethnocentric habit of mind by becoming aware and critically reflective of our generalized bias in the way we view groups other than our own' (p. 7). While even the third step (transforming a point of view) will lead to increased tolerance toward other groups, getting students to the final step of becoming critically aware of how they view groups other than their own and how they see themselves in relation to these groups will take students to the highest level of understanding themselves as a part of a larger humanity – key to the sustenance of a HR culture in the long-term. This would take a highly trained facilitator who could use opportunities like the example of the negative comment (final example in the previous section). To achieve the highest level of understanding according to our framework, facilitators should be trained to harness opportunities like this, without using them as punishment or embarrassment, and to work with students to use these moments to more deeply understand their own views of others.

While our approach may appear to lean toward a furthering of a particular type of liberal paradigm focused on individual HR, we are instead conceptualizing, through our use of self-categorization

theory, the way students to think about themselves as a part of a greater humanity – despite what is happening in their particular societies. The actual implications of how they can incorporate their increased understanding through their actions will differ by society and context. For example, in authoritarian regimes such as Rwanda, it may be more difficult to implement HRE and encourage students to shift their views about other groups (i.e. see Russell, 2020) . Nonetheless, the HR framework, wherever it is able to be implemented, must move toward this broader understanding of self in relation to the group to fully achieve its ultimate goal – even if that mindset is planted in one generation and fruitful in generations to come. We realize this is an ideal that will confront challenges, particularly in the midst of increasing nationalism and critiques of liberal democracy (Kallis, 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019; Whitehead et al., 2018); however, we view this higher vantage point as necessary for any HRE curriculum regardless of the context. It is imperative (a) to accompany these broader ideas with appropriate practical actions to maintain safety – such as teaching students to engage in community organizing in ways that respect the local culture and safely involve the local community; and (b) to promote a realistic ability for student's to strategize effectively within the constraints of a society – even when trying to expand upon these constraints. Nevertheless, the broader viewpoint mentioned above is important to have as an overarching goal of any HRE program.

We can also learn from other studies and curriculum – even those not directly related to HRE – on how to achieve higher tolerance levels (see, Claassen and Monson, 2015; Gainous and Martens, 2016; Iasha et al., 2018). We argue that the promotion of tolerance should be a critical part of all HRE education despite specific goals of the course. Without understanding intergroup relations and their own part/views in these relations, students may shift toward an understanding of a larger abstraction of being part of humanity without having first analyzed or becoming aware of their intolerant views, and this leap will lead to an unstable foundation that may easily breakdown when students are presented with a HR issue related to a group for which they have intolerant views that they have not learned to recognize or address.

This study highlights the structure of a typical HRE course and the way it subtly, and unintentionally, dismisses an important step that is needed to sustain HR in the long-term which is the goal of HRE. By intentionally and strategically incorporating this key step of promoting tolerance and awareness of one's own intolerant views into all HRE curriculum and courses, we argue that HRE will be much more successful in attaining its goal in preparing students to work for HR in the long-term. We need to think about how to redesign HRE courses so that building tolerance is a key step in the process toward transformative action and not overlooked as an assumed byproduct of an HRE course or as less important to HRE curriculum.

More research is needed on how to effectively design and implement HRE curriculum specifically to improve both knowledge about HR along with tolerance – which we argue are both fundamental pillars to sustaining HR culture in the long-term. Before we can explore the way to best improve HRE courses in increasing tolerance, we must first better understand the link between HRE and tolerance. Future research on HRE programs should include larger sample sizes and an attempt to quantitatively measure aspects of HRE curriculum/course design, teaching strategies, and student outcomes across varying HRE programs. This would allow for a quantitative analysis with the potential to reveal relationships among course design, tolerance levels, and individual student factors. Moreover, if the goal of the course is to address how students promote and advocate for HR in the long-term, future research should also work to identify HRE pedagogical and curriculum-design factors, as well as relevant teacher professional development, that could contribute to sustained HR efforts of students following a course. Finally, a systematic study of existing HRE curriculum and materials in relation to tolerance building – along with any accompanying evaluative research implementation of the curriculum – would be beneficial to compile strategies and connecting themes across HRE courses.

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Notes

1. 2014–2015.
2. The Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of Teachers College, Columbia University, as well as the New York Department of Education approved the study. Permission was also received from the principals of the two schools; students and their parents submitted signed assent and consent forms respectively.
3. The student is possibly referencing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was covered in the first part of the HRE course.

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Appendix 1

To further explore the relationship between tolerance and HR knowledge, we used a first differences model to explore if change in human rights knowledge predicts change in tolerance levels (see the table below). We created an outcome variable that measures difference in tolerance levels across time and a main predictor variable that measures difference in human rights knowledge scores over time. Students with missing information relevant to this regression analysis were dropped leaving us with $N=51$. In Model 1, when we account for the unadjusted relationship between change in HR knowledge and change in tolerance across time, we find no relationship ($p>0.1$) indicating that an increase or decrease in knowledge about human rights does not influence a change in tolerance levels. In Model 2, we account for the relationship between change in HR knowledge levels and change in tolerance with explanatory variables for gender and age, we find that change in HR knowledge levels is again not associated with change in tolerance levels across time ($p>0.1$). In the final Model 3, we account for race/ethnicity and parent demographics, change in HR knowledge still does not predict a change in tolerance levels across time ($p>0.1$). Even when we ran simple multiple regressions (not included in this paper but available upon request) with only data from the same semester, we found no relationship between HR knowledge and tolerance levels.

Relationship between change in knowledge and change in tolerance levels across time[a].

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Student characteristics			
Change in HR knowledge[b]	–0.001 (0.027)	0.002 (0.028)	–0.005 (0.029)
Male[c]		–0.095 (0.197)	–0.034 (0.207)
Age		0.013 (0.104)	0.018 (0106)
African-American/Black[d]			0.309 (0.328)
U.S. Born parent(s)[e]			0.054 (0.185)
Constant	0.122 (0.106)	–0.026 (1.631)	–0.442 (1.709)
Observations	51	51	51
R-squared	0.000	0.005	0.028

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

[a]Difference between the spring and fall tolerance levels. Tolerance level is a mean score calculated based on the six questions shown to hold together during factor analysis. The higher the number, the higher the tolerance level.

[b]Difference between the spring and fall HR knowledge sum scores. HR knowledge is a sum score of various components of the survey measuring human rights knowledge. The higher the score, the higher the knowledge.

[c]Males in comparison to females.

[d]Binary variable comparing black identifying students to non-black.

[e]Binary variable comparing students with at least one parent born in the U.S. to those with no parents born in the U.S.

$^{***}p < 0.001$. $^{**}p < 0.01$. $^{*}p < 0.05$. $+p < 0.1$.