

5-1-2019

Humane Education as a Tool for Promoting Empathy and Societal Progress

Ardyn L. Cieslak

Follow this and additional works at: <https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/studentengagement-honorscapstones>

Recommended Citation

Cieslak, Ardyn L., "Humane Education as a Tool for Promoting Empathy and Societal Progress" (2019).
Honors Capstones. 632.
<https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/studentengagement-honorscapstones/632>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research & Artistry at Huskie Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Capstones by an authorized administrator of Huskie Commons. For more information, please contact jschumacher@niu.edu.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Humane Education as a Tool for Promoting Empathy and Societal
Progress

A Capstone Submitted to the

University Honors Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With Honors

Department Of

Sociology

By

Ardyn Cieslak

DeKalb, Illinois

May 11, 2019

University Honors Program
Capstone Approval Page

Capstone Title (print or type) Humane Education as a Tool for Promoting
Empathy and Societal Progress

Student Name (print or type) Ardyn Cieslak

Faculty Supervisor (print or type) Dr. Keri Burchfield

Faculty Approval Signature _____



Department of (print or type) Sociology

Date of Approval (print or type) _____

5.1.19

Check if any of the following apply, and please tell us where and how it was
published:

Capstone has been published (Journal/Outlet):

Capstone has been submitted for publication (Journal/Outlet):

Capstone has been presented (Conference):

Annual Sociology Symposium 2019

Capstone has been submitted for presentation (Conference):

Completed Honors Capstone projects may be used for student reference purposes,
both electronically and in the Honors Capstone Library (CLB 110).

If you would like to opt out and not have this student's completed capstone used for
reference purposes, please initial here: _____ (Faculty Supervisor)

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the subject of humane education, its history, and how it can influence social change. Specifically, how the development of empathy combined with raising awareness of various issues in classrooms helps to promote compassion. This, in turn, inspires students to take action to tackle the issues they are passionate about. The study includes a participant observation study at the Lifetime bonds program at the Illinois Youth Center through Safe Humane Chicago. This program works with incarcerated youth and pairs them with dogs from a local shelter with the goal to promote empathy for animals and awareness of animal issues. The findings from the animal-assisted programs in the scientific literature and from my own observation suggest that humane education does have positive impacts on empathy development. These findings are mostly qualitative and further, more in-depth studies still need to be done on the effectiveness of humane education programs.

Ardyn Cieslak

Humane Education as a Tool for Promoting Empathy and Societal Progress

Honors Capstone/ SOCI 490

4/22/19

Introduction

This paper discusses how humane education can lead to positive social change. The goal of humane education is to foster compassion, encourage critical thought, and empower students to take action to improve the problems the world currently faces. The focus of the paper will be on how humane education promotes compassion through empathy and awareness. Specifically, I will discuss a model of how humane education might advance social change that suggests that empathy plus awareness of an issue is what leads to compassion and the desire to act on behalf of others.

The second component to this paper is a participant observation study of the Lifetime Bonds program through Safe Humane Chicago. This program takes place at the Illinois Youth Center and uses dogs to promote empathy in at-risk youth. The paper will discuss other animal assisted programs, their results and effectiveness, and relate them to the process by which the combination of empathy and awareness leads to compassion.

What is Humane Education?

Many educators feel that the goal for education should be not only to provide the basics of reading, math, and science, but to also promote compassion and empathy for others. Students should learn more than just how they themselves can succeed. They should learn how to contribute to systems that benefit others as well. According to the Humane Education Coalition, Humane Education is defined as “the use of education to nurture compassion and respect for living things. We believe it is an innovative,

solutions-driven effort to create a better world for people, animals, and the environment” (Humane Education Coalition Website 2019).

Other terms for this type of education include education for social justice and prosocial learning. The Academy for Prosocial Learning defines humane education as follows:

Humane education encourages cognitive, affective, and behavioral growth through personal development of critical thinking, problem solving, perspective-taking, and empathy as it relates to people, animals, the planet, and the intersections among them. Education taught through the lens of humane pedagogy supports more than knowledge acquisition, it allows learners to process personal values and choose prosocial behaviors aligned with those values (Academy of Prosocial Learning Website 2019).

Humane education can be broken down into three phases: developing empathy and compassion for others, thinking critically about the information presented, and creating solutions to progress society.

Compassion

Humane education encourages students to practice empathy - to put themselves in another’s shoes – and thus encourages compassion. Compassion involves the desire to take action to alleviate the suffering of others. Empathy and compassion are essential components of the field of sociology. Empathy must be practiced by sociologists in order to understand why people behave the way they do and to understand the

suffering of oppressed and disenfranchised groups. It is likely that the researcher themselves has not personally gone through the experiences of the populations they are studying. Thus, they must try to imagine what their lives are like and how different experiences, often adverse, might produce different motivations for behavior (Richards 2010).

Compassion is also a vital aspect of the discipline of sociology. Many social scientists study the causes and implications of inequality in society. They study both historical and current issues. These include gender, racial, and class inequality. The goal is to create a more equal society. However, if we did not have compassion then why try to create equality? Empathy tells us that discrimination is undesired by the people experiencing it, and compassion motivates us to act on their behalf to reduce discrimination and inequality.

The main way to promote empathy in students is to expose children to stories about the lives of others. They learn the golden rule to “treat others the way you would want to be treated.” Many children may know to do this when it comes to other people. However, they may not know how to extend this compassion to the way animals and the environment are treated. They should be taught to have respect and consideration for others.

In today’s globalized world, our choices have far-reaching implications. For example, the products we buy can have effects on people, animals, and the environment in every corner of the world (Weil 2009). However, we are not always aware of the

effects of our choices. Humane education shows students where their food, clothing, and other products are from. They may learn that the meat they buy comes from animals that were treated very poorly in crowded, confined, and filthy conditions. They may learn that the shirt they bought was made in Bangladesh by a worker who is barely paid a living wage and must work in dangerous conditions. They may learn that the plastic grocery bags their family uses end up in the oceans and cause animals who ingest them to die. Or they may learn that the shampoos, toothpaste, and makeup products they use were tested on animals in cruel experiments. Once they have this information, they can now make choices that reflect their values. Simply by choosing some products over others, students can see that their consumer choices can influence the kind of world they want to see.

Critical Thinking

In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (2000) described how education can either hinder or promote social progress depending on the method used. He discussed two types of education. The first is what he calls the banking concept. In this model of education, the instructor is all-knowing and bestows the gift of education upon the learners. It is hierarchal, and the information is passed only one way, from teacher to student.

In the second model, the problem-posing model, people are encouraged to think critically and see the world in a state of constant transformation, always flowing. The banking model discourages individual thought and kills inquiry. It stifles independent

thought and, therefore, does not challenge the status quo. Problem-posing education, in contrast, challenges the systems of inequality and oppression in our society. As Paulo Freire said,

Problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end, it enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and alienating intellectualism (Freire 2000: 86).

Freire says that problem-posing education does not serve the interests of the oppressor. Education ought to encourage critical thinking and inquiry, challenge current ideas and systems, be open to different points of view, accept constructive criticism, and promote change and progress. It should not be one-way deposition of information. It should not encourage repetition and memorization rather than understanding of concepts or promote ignorance and fear of different perspectives (Freire 2000).

Create Solutions

Once students have been made aware of the problems that need to be fixed, they can begin to work on finding solutions. Humane education encourages students to use their creativity and passion to come up with innovative solutions to issues that are important to them. Zoe Weil, a humane educator, gives examples of how she encourages students to problem solve. She gives an example of the classic debate team. Rather than students being arbitrarily assigned a position on either side of an

issue and being taught to argue until they win, students could compete to come up with creative solutions. They can choose an issue they care about, come up with viable solutions and present them. As Zoe says, if the ideas are good, we could even implement them (Weil 2009). Weil talks about creating a generation of what she calls “solutionaries”. She advocates that the goal of education should be to give students the knowledge and tools and empower them to make positive changes for our society, the environment, and our fellow Earth inhabitants (Weil 2009).

History Without Compassion

We can look back through history for examples of injustices that arose from a lack of societal empathy and awareness. These include, but are not limited to, slavery of African Americans in the United States, a lack of rights for women, children being used for labor without legal protections, the Nazi holocaust, and more. In his piece entitled *Education After Auschwitz*, Theodore Adorno discusses how education has the potential to prevent horrors like the holocaust. Adorno discusses the societal ideal of being hard. We are often taught that being hard and cold are positive attributes. In his article Adorno says:

He thought hardness was necessary to produce what he considered to be the correct type of person. This educational ideal of hardness, in which many believe without reflecting about it, is utterly wrong. The idea that virility consists in the maximum degree of endurance long ago became a screen-image for masochism that, as psychology has demonstrated, aligns itself all too easily with

sadism. Being hard, the vaunted quality education should inculcate, means absolute indifference toward pain as such (Adorno 1966: 197).

As stated before, empathy is an essential component for compassion, and for overcoming injustice. But teaching people that they should not identify with their suffering, that their pain is not valid, and that it should be minimized or suppressed, leads people to fail to empathize or to see the same suffering in others. Thus, if we teach people to be hard and not have compassion for themselves, they may be unable to foster compassion for others. This may be especially true amongst young boys and men who are taught to never show sadness, fear, or vulnerability. One study found that boys avoided showing physical or emotional pain. They tried to appear tough because it was a desired trait of masculinity and to show emotion would mean they are weak (Oransky 2009).

Awareness is the other key factor in producing a compassionate individual and a compassionate society. Most injustices are visible to an extent. For example, racism in the time of American slavery was not a secret. In fact, it was quite the opposite. It was an ubiquitous part of society. It was the norm. This was in part justified by the “othering” or subordination of African Americans. This was perpetuated both informally at home and formally in the schools. In this way education can have a negative effect on compassion. It can justify discrimination by brainwashing children. They were told that blacks were less intelligent and all together inferior. However, they were also likely taught that slavery benefited African Americans and that they did not have it so bad. When people have a general awareness of an injustice, they are less likely to act.

However, when they become aware of the extent of the abuse endured by these people, it becomes more difficult to deny their emotions and empathy.

Awareness Without Empathy

Both empathy and awareness are essential components of the equation that leads to compassion. As we have seen throughout history many people are aware of injustice to some extent. For example, as demonstrated by slavery in the United States, people can know about unequal treatment and still participate in it. This is because of the strength of cultural norms. Slavery and racism were not a secret, but part of the dominant culture. They were justified by society and children were taught that, for a myriad of reasons, blacks were inferior to whites; that is just how things were. We are very much influenced by our socialization and the authority figures in our lives. Most people take the path of least resistance due to social pressures even if it is against their moral compass.

The Milgram experiment is an infamous example of this part of human nature. In the experiment conducted by Stanley Milgram in the 1960's people were told by an authority figure, a scientist in a white lab coat, to administer shocks to another volunteer every time they answered a question incorrectly. They were told to increase the intensity of the shock each time. The other person would scream out in pain every time they were shocked. The shocker did not know that the shockee was actually a recording and not really being shocked. Many people wanted to stop but were assured by the scientist that they needed to continue. The result of the study was that 60% of

the subjects were willing to give what they thought to be a lethal shock to another person for no other reason than the fact that an authority figure told them to. Following the results of this study we can see how it may have been possible for people to follow the Nazis in World War II.

Empathy Without Awareness

Likewise, empathy without awareness will also fail to yield results and create change. It is crucial to foster empathy in children to give them the ability to make decisions with a holistic, group mindset rather than an individualistic mindset. However, empathy on its own is not enough. One can be compassionate towards others and still be complicit in their harm. This is due to institutions that are in place that promote injustice. By simply going about one's daily life, one can unwittingly participate in and perpetuate systems that oppress and exploit others. It takes awareness of how these systems work and who is involved to know that there is reason to take action in the first place. One example of this is consumer choices. As stated earlier, the products we buy can have far reaching effects on human rights, animal cruelty, and environmental devastation.

Awareness also contributes to compassionate choices by giving alternative options to students to have a less harmful impact on others. Humane education offers this information to students and also gets them thinking about other ways they may be impacting others. For example, a lesson on how a t-shirt was made, may inspire

students to think about where their computer was made or the environmental pros and cons to an electronic book verses a paperback book.

The Role of Humane Education

With a belief that awareness and empathy are the roots of change, education should provide children with the tools to take charge of their own awareness. The critical thinking aspect of humane education briefly mentioned in the beginning is an essential component to awareness. Children must be taught to question the status quo, why things are the way they are. They should be encouraged to seek the truth themselves, rather than blindly following what they are told.

All households are not equal, and every child has a different parenting situation. While there is still disparity in the quality of formal school education, this environment provides a better opportunity to grant everyone access to humane education lessons. Society will benefit from educated, critical thinking, compassionate, solution-making people and, therefore, it is the responsibility of society to provide this type of education. The idea of schooling must be expanded from one of arithmetic, science, and reading only to a holistic approach that produces well-rounded citizens that benefit society. We cannot afford to leave the responsibility of character education, empathy development, and the values of good citizenship solely on a child's parents. We have to shift this type of education from the private to the public sphere.

The Risk of Desensitization

Is it fair to burden young people with all of the problems of the world? One might say it is unfair not to. Whether they are aware of and understand the problems or not, they are going to be affected by them. Why not, then, give them the knowledge and tools to work towards changing them? It is possible that too much exposure to the problems of the world can lead to a sense of overwhelm. This can lead to paralysis, when one feels so overwhelmed and powerless that they end up doing nothing. Hal Herzog refers to this as compassion collapse. He says that sometimes it is difficult for people to care about so many problems. When the scope of an issue becomes too large and difficult to comprehend, people can sometimes stop caring at all (Herzog 2011). They are emotionally exhausted and become cynical and less empathetic towards others.

It is a fine line between inspiring youth to take action and flooding them to an extent that leads to a sense of helplessness. Humane educators must find this balance. They must teach in a way that exposes students to emotionally difficult topics, but most importantly it has to leave them with hope. The goal and outcome of every lesson must be to empower students to make positive changes.

Animal-Assisted Programs

One form of humane education program is to use animals to facilitate the development of empathy. Students get the opportunity to interact with animals and develop relationships with them. They get to know the personalities of the animals which may shift their view of them. Children who have not had much interaction with

animals may not have a lot of empathy for them. Through these programs they may find that they have more similarities with the animal than they had previously thought.

The effectiveness of these programs can be difficult to study. It is not always easy to measure how empathy is developed through a humane education program. However, some studies have been done to see if any changes in behavior have occurred post program completion. The Project Positive Opportunities Obvious Change with Hounds (POOCH) is a program where detained youth train shelter dogs to increase their chances for adoption. The program has succeeded in reducing the recidivism rate from sixty-three percent to zero percent since it began in 1993 (Komorosky 2015). Beth Daly and Susanne Suggs studied the effect of classroom pets on empathy development in elementary children. They found that the presence of the class pet did increase the level of empathy in the students. It should be noted that the methods of this study involved asking teachers for their perceptions on the empathy development of their students (Daly and Suggs 2010).

Many animal shelters have humane education programs in place to educate and engage the community on animal issues. These programs allow children to interact with shelter animals by petting them, playing with them, and doing some basic training. In addition to the hands-on time with the animals, students are taught about various topics relating to shelter animals. They are taught about animal behavior and safety around animals. They are also taught about why animals are in shelters and how they can help. Students learn about pet overpopulation and the importance of spaying and neutering

your pets. They may also learn about the physical and mental needs of an animal and how to ensure a pet is adequately provided for.

Some programs like Teacher's Pet in Detroit have humane education programs that work to benefit both shelter animals and troubled youth simultaneously. According to their website Teacher's Pet Detroit is "an intervention program that pairs troubled youth with hard-to-adopt shelter dogs for a multi-week workshop in positive, reward-based dog training and behavior modification in an effort to make the dogs more adoptable" (Teacher's Pet Website 2019).

A study was conducted on the program to assess its effectiveness (Syzmanski et al. 2018). In the study some of the youth participated in the Teacher's Pet Program while the control groups simply walked the dogs. The results indicated that both groups had similar outcomes of behavior. However, the youth that participated in the Teacher's Pet Program showed more positive attitude outcomes in their reflective journals. The youth in the program created stronger bonds with their dogs than the control group. They even made adoption fliers at the end of the program to help their dogs get adopted. The results of this study show that the presence of animals can have a positive effect. However, they can have even greater effects when animals are paired with a curriculum designed to promote empathy (Syzmanski et al. 2018).

The website contains testimonials from the participants in the program who felt they had learned or gained something from the program. The youth said that they learned to be patient when trying to train their dog something new. They also said that

they learned a lot about issues like puppy mills and gained a new perspective on the pit bull breed. One youth said that “dogs are people, too, and have feelings and families”. Lastly, some of the youth were inspired to become activists and said that giving the dogs another chance at life gave them a sense of meaning in life (Teacher’s Pet Website 2019).

This is an excellent example of how humane education programs can promote prosocial behavior. The young men in this program developed relationships with their dogs, realized they had feelings, and developed empathy towards them. They then learned about the cruelty that shelter animals face like abuse, neglect, fighting and the cruelty that goes on at animal breeding facilities called puppy mills. This awareness of what these animals go through combined with the empathetic connections the youth have made with the animals inspires them to take action for these issues.

Case Study – Lifetime Bonds

Safe Humane Chicago has a very similar program to the Teacher’s Pet Program that connects troubled youth with shelter dogs. The program is called Lifetime Bonds and it takes place once a week for three-month sessions at the Illinois Youth Center at St. Charles. According to Dr. Keri Burchfield, who oversees the program, “Lifetime Bonds is a program that provides at-risk and adjudicated delinquent youth with the skills needed to safely handle, train and socialize shelter dogs. Through this program, youth participate in pro-social activities, are mentored by adult volunteers, and help to improve the quality of life of shelter dogs. At a broader level, these youth are exposed to

important messages about compassion, empathy, and the connection between animal violence and human violence.” As part of my study on humane education, I had the opportunity to observe and even help to mentor some of the young men in this animal-assisted program.

Each session of the program is ten weeks long and the first half of the program volunteers bring their own, well-trained dogs for the youth to start learning the basics of dog behavior and training techniques. They are taught to use positive reinforcement training by using a clicker to mark the correct behavior and follow it up with a treat as a reward. For the second half of the session, adoptable dogs from Aurora Animal Control are brought for the youth to work with.

The session I observed added something new to the program, a field trip to Aurora Animal Control. Before the shelter dogs were brought for the first time, the youth were given the opportunity to tour the shelter they were coming from. They got to see first-hand where the dogs live and also learned about animal shelters and how they acquire their dogs. They learned about the purpose of spay and neuter to reduce overpopulation. At the very least the youth learned that spay and neuter prevents the animal from having children, but one young man gave a more elaborate answer about what he learned. He said, “I used to think it was torture, but now I understand why they do it, and now I am all for it”.

The youth all had similar sentiments about their trip to the shelter saying it was sad, depressing, and that the dogs were “locked up”. The next session after the field

trip was the first time the shelter dogs were brought to the program. The lesson for that day was patience. I was surprised and impressed by the patience the boys demonstrated. These dogs were not well trained, were nervous, distracted, and much more difficult to work with than the trained dogs the youth had been working with previously. Despite all that, they did not get frustrated with the dogs and stuck with the training; they did not give up.

The use of shelter dogs in this program is vital because the youth are able to relate to them in a much deeper way. They understand what it is like to be locked in a cage or a cell. They know what it is like to have gone through rough times. I am sure all of the boys could relate to the shelter dogs on some level but the story that one young man decided to share out loud was of him being shot. A volunteer told him the story of her massage client who was a rescued dachshund that was shot in the rear end with buckshot. The young man listened intently to the story and showed his own gunshot wound. He then asked questions about how the massage benefits the dog and the massage therapist shared how it may benefit his own scar tissue.

Throughout the entire program one young man was working on a special project with the dog trainer's personal dog. He was participating in his third session of the Lifetime Bonds program and his job was to train the dog to complete the necessary skills to pass the Canine Good Citizen test. This certification is awarded by the American Kennel Club to promote responsible pet ownership. The young man and his dog would have to successfully demonstrate 10 skills to pass the test and earn the

certification including being friendly with strange dogs. This was especially challenging because the dog he was working with was not particularly fond of other dogs.

On the second to last day of the session, a certified examiner came out to conduct the test. The young man took his companion calmly through all the skills. Towards the end of the test the dog became extremely fixated on her owner and stopped listening to the young man. This went on for several minutes. He remained calm until he was able to regain her attention and complete the test. This demonstration of patience certainly impressed the examiner. The young man's hard work paid off and he and his companion animal passed the test. The examiner told the rest of the group how well he had done, and his face was full of smiles and pride. Additionally, the young man was commended for earning a five-hundred-dollar grant for the program for passing the test.

The last day of the session was graduation. For graduation each youth was able to select a dog, shelter or owned, to demonstrate some basic obedience training skills and a trick. Friends and family were invited to attend and three of the youth's families came to show their support. Each youth seemed very proud to demonstrate what they had learned in the ceremony and appeared to be having fun. Two of the youth prepared thank you speeches ahead of time on a sheet of paper. They thanked the people for attending the graduation and the volunteers for the time they put into the program. They said they were grateful for having something to do on Sundays and that they learned a lot from the program. The little brother of one of the youths attended the

ceremony and was inspired to imitate his older brother by attempting to train one of the volunteers' dogs.

The volunteers are also an important component to why this program benefits these youth. At the end of the session one youth said repeatedly that he was sad it was ending and that he would miss the volunteers. He and a few others also thanked the volunteers at the end. In their reflective surveys the youth had positive things to say about the volunteers. They said they were kind, helpful, and committed. One young man wrote "they were caring even though we are inmates". This shows that the people dedicating their free time to help these young men was appreciated and beneficial to the youth.

In the end, I think each young man gained something from the program. One young man started off afraid of the shelter dogs but became more and more trusting of them. Another told me he planned to buy a clicker and train his own dog when he got home. All the young men agreed that animal cruelty and dog fighting were wrong. They all said that they had a good experience, and many even said that they loved the program. Five of the youth said they would like to continue with dog training in the future.

One critique of the program is that while it is great at developing empathy in the youth through the interactions with the dogs, it could improve on the awareness component of the compassion equation. The addition of the field trip is an excellent improvement to the program. It achieves both goals of empathy development and

building awareness for the issues concerning shelter animals. However, in the current setting it is difficult to have instruction/discussion about these issues. Firstly, it is difficult to hear what people are saying in the room. Second, the dogs are in the room the whole time and cause too much distraction for the youth to focus on a lesson. The program could benefit from additional sessions without the dogs that focus on discussing relevant animal issues. That way the youth would build relationships with the dogs and have a more in-depth understanding of the issues they face and how they can help.

Contemporary Humane Issues

Ideally, once empathy is established, it can be applied to many situations. A humane education program with shelter animals or developing empathy through the care of a class pet could give students the foundation to extend that empathy to other issues. Once that compassion is built it will become easier for students to expand their circles of compassion. First, especially with small children, you start with a relationship to one animal. Then it can be expanded to all members of that species because of that relationship. From there, students can understand that all sentient, emotional beings have similar interests to us and deserve our respect, even if they are far removed from our sight or thought.

We live in a globalized world. This means that production has changed dramatically in the modern world. Manuel Castells says that we now live in an information age (Castells 2010). In this new type of economy, it is information rather

than the physical product that has value. During the industrial revolution factories were core production processes. Now in the information age, the core production process is the knowledge necessary to produce a product, like the technology for an iPhone. The actual manufacturing of the product has become what Castells calls a periphery production process. This means that the valuable information is held by a company and the labor is outsourced to developing countries (Castells 2010).

These businesses exploit the poverty and desperation of people in these countries by paying them barely enough to live off of. This, of course, benefits the company's bottom line. Most products are now produced in this way. That is why so many tags read "made in China". However, the average consumer in the United States does not give any thought to where their shirt came from, who made it, and what the externalized costs were.

Agriculture is an excellent example of how disconnected people are from the processes that produce their food. In the United States, we have access to food that was produced all over the world. These processes involve varying degrees of ethical practices and affect a wide variety of issues. Chocolate, for example, is often produced through child slave labor in West Africa. Slash-and-burn agriculture is devastating entire ecosystems, particularly in the tropical regions.

The world population is growing to eight billion people and developed countries are demanding higher amounts of luxuries at a cheap price. The increasing demand for meat at every meal in the west has led to a drastic change in animal farming techniques.

There is simply not enough land for animals to live on pasture with plenty of room and still meet the demand for animal products. As a result, the old McDonald farm has been exchanged for large, windowless warehouses called CAFOs, Confined Animal Feeding Operations. These buildings hold as many animals as can feasibly be housed, with little regard to the wellbeing of the animals. They are a product and corners are cut where possible to reduce costs and increase profit.

As a result of these crowded, stifled conditions animals become ill. Individual treatment is far too expensive to be justified by the industry. Instead, animals are pumped full of antibiotics. They are also subject to brutal mutilations in response to aggression issues induced by overcrowded conditions. Chickens have their sensitive beaks seared off with a hot blade and pigs have their tails cut off; both are done without pain relief and both are standard industry practices.

Food production is essential to human survival. We must have a system, but the system needs to be revised. Agriculture has its hand in so many issues worldwide, yet the general public are not aware of its far-reaching effects. From animal cruelty, human exploitation and slavery, the destruction of forests, emission of greenhouse gases, pollution of water, and potential antibiotic resistance. We have the resources to feed people, however, grain that could be fed to starving people is being fed to farmed animals. More calories can be produced by feeding people the grain directly rather than feeding it to livestock which will inevitably yield less calories than the resources that were fed to them throughout their lives. In sum, we cut down rainforests to produce

grain to feed to mistreated animals in wealthy countries while people starve. We also pollute the air and water while we are at it.

This is why awareness is vital for change. People have to understand how the system works in order to change it. They have to know the horrendous consequences of these systems in order to spark their empathy and ultimately their actions. Children should be fully aware of how agriculture and other systems work. During a humane education lesson, children can not only be given facts about an issue, but they can be engaged through activities that require them to be empathetic. They can be encouraged to think of what it must be like to live in the shoes of a child working all day to produce chocolate, an animal confined in a tiny crate, or an indigenous person whose home is being destroyed by deforestation. Students will have the information and the motivation they need to create solutions and sustainable systems that benefit everyone on the planet.

Discrimination as a Barrier

Most humane education programs focus on animals we consider to be pets in the United States like dogs and cats. Ideally, programs that allow people to connect with domestic pets would inspire empathy that could be translated to other animals that they may not have directly interacted with like farmed animals or wildlife. However, in society we tend to place some animals into different categories than others based on our use for them.

In the United States society as a whole cares deeply for animals we call pets likely because those are the animals that we have the most experience with and connections to. This is reflected in dogs and cats having the most legal protections even if they are not complete. This idea that farm animals for example deserve less protection comes from societies desire to continue eating them. However, there is no factual basis for this distinction. Chickens, cows, and pigs have the same capacity to suffer as cats and dogs and our different treatment of them stems from a form of discrimination called speciesism.

Speciesism may prevent people from extending their compassion to pet animals to the plight and rights of other animals. Thus, some programs focus exclusively on breaking down these barriers. Farm Sanctuary is the largest farm animal sanctuary in the United States. At their two locations in upstate New York and southern California they have visitor programs that allow the public to come and meet rescued farm animals and learn their stories. People instantly recognize the similarities of these animals to their own pets. They have individual personalities and preferences. Farm Sanctuary has recently developed an off-site humane education program to facilitate the development of empathy for farmed animals in people who cannot make it to the actual farm. They operate their programs in elementary and high schools in New York and California. Through the use of virtual reality technology, students are able to experience a virtual tour of the farm (Farm Sanctuary Website 2019).

This program also uses the empathy + awareness = compassion model. Students get to see well cared for animals enjoying life, playing and interacting with their

friends. They then learn about modern farming practices and the cruel, short lives that the counterparts to the ambassadors they just saw endure. This program encourages students to extend their compassion they have for people and pets to animals they may have not given much thought to but that are greatly impacted by the everyday choices of the student (Farm Sanctuary Website 2019).

Conclusion

Compassion for other people, animals, and the environment are essential for a peaceful, sustainable society. In order for our species' incredibly large population to function in an organized and fair way, individuals need to think about the consequences of their actions on a scale that is outside of their immediate surroundings and environment. The education system provides the perfect opportunity to promote compassionate individuals. Through education we can nurture empathy for those who are outside of our immediate lives and routines; those who are different whether they be a different race, speak a different language, or are an entirely different species. Education can encourage consideration of everyday actions on far away people and places, things that are normally out of sight and out of mind.

Sociology is the study of how people interact with each other. Humane education seeks to make those interactions well, more humane. Sociology relies on empathy as a discipline because in order to understand someone else's actions, a sociologist must imagine themselves in their experience. Additionally, compassion is essential to the societal change that sociology strives for. Why study inequality in

society if we do not intend to improve these conditions? Humane education provides children with an opportunity to develop empathy, raise awareness of the issues in the world, encourages them to think for themselves, take action for what they are passionate about and come up with creative and innovative solutions.

All of our past discriminations have been due to either a lack of empathy, a lack of awareness, or both. Providing these two things as a fundamental part of the education system from the very beginning can decrease the student's likelihood to continue to perpetuate the systems of inequality. Instead, they will be more inspired and well-equipped to dismiss these antiquated ideologies in favor of new, more humane ones.

Humane education is vital for a holistic educational experience. More and more, humanities and arts are being cut from school curriculums in favor of math and science courses. The reason? They are not as profitable. Unfortunately, we have a very narrow view of the purpose of education. The main goal of education is to be able to get a job. While preparing students to attain a career that will provide for them is important, it is not enough. Students do not just need to learn how to do their job. They need to learn other life skills like cooking, personal finance, and how to fix basic things. They need to learn how to participate in their government as a citizen and be inspired to actually do it. Lastly, they need to be taught how to have a positive impact on their communities, locally and globally. They need to learn that they do not exist in their own bubble and are responsible for contributing to the good of others as well as themselves. Our

society needs humane education to promote well-rounded, compassionate, engaged, solution-oriented, global citizens of this planet.

References

- Academy of Prosocial Learning Website. "Cultivating Compassion and Empathy: The Academy of Prosocial Learning. Retrieved 4/22/19. (<https://www.prosocialacademy.org/>)
- Adorno, Theodore. 1966. "Education After Auschwitz." *Critical Models*. Columbia University Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 2010. "Globalization, Networking, Urbanization: Reflections on the Spatial Dynamics of the Information Age". *Urban Studies*. 47 (13): 2737-2745.
- Daly, Beth. Suzanne Suggs. 2010. "Teachers' Experiences with Humane Education and Animals in the Elementary Classroom: Implications for Empathy Development." *Journal of Moral Education*. 39 (1): 101-112.
- Farm Sanctuary Website. "Humane Education: Cultivating Compassion and a More Sustainable Future In-Classroom Programming, Youth Advocacy, and Curriculum Resources". Retrieved 4/22/19. (<https://www.farmsanctuary.org/humane-education/>)
- Freire, Paulo. 2000. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. NY Continuum Publishers.
- Herzog, Hal. 2011. *Some we love, some we wear, some we eat: why it's so hard to think straight about animals*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Humane Education Coalition Website. "What is Humane Education? Why Does it Matter?". Retrieved 4/22/19. (<https://www.hecoalition.org/what-is-humane-education.html>)

Komorosky, Dawna. Keri K. O'Neala. 2015. "The development of empathy and prosocial behavior through humane education, restorative justice, and animal-assisted programs." *Contemporary Justice Review*. 18 (40): 395–406.

Oransky, Matthew. Jeanne Marecek. 2009. "I'm Not Going to Be a Girl": Masculinity and Emotions in Boys' Friendships and Peer Groups". *Journal of Adolescent Research*. 24 (2): 218-241.

Richards, Sam. 2010. *A Radical Experiment in Empathy*. TEDx Penn State University.

Syzmanski, Tiffany, Rita J. Casey, Amy Johnson, Annmarie Cano, Dana Albright, and Nicholas P. Seivert. 2018. "Dog Training Intervention Shows Social-Cognitive Change in the Journals of Incarcerated Youth". *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*. 5: 302.

Teacher's Pet Website. "What I Learned from the Teacher's Pet Program". Retrieved 4/22/19.
(<http://teacherspetmi.org/testimonials>)

Weil, Zoe. 2009. *The Power and Promise of Humane Education*. New Society Publishers.