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How do learning environment experiences relate to personal worldviews among the students of theology?

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to investigate Finnish theology students' experiences of the learning environment provided by their faculty in relation to their personal worldview. Previous research has shown that theology students deal with the fundamental spiritual and religious questions in their learning processes both before and during their studies, irrespective of their career goals or professional orientation. This study was conducted among second-year higher education students of theology. The students responded to a questionnaire concerning their experiences of the learning environment in relation to their own religious or ideological worldview and experienced position in the learning context as part of the majority, minority or non-religious group. According to the results, students affiliated with majority and minority religious groups were more strongly committed to their personal worldviews than non-religious students were. The students' experiences of the learning environment varied regarding the group they identified themselves.

Introduction

Growing interest in higher education students' experiences of their learning environment has led to the implementation of various forms of quality assurance and management systems in higher education institutions. There is evidence that students' perspectives of themselves, such as their approaches to learning, affect how they experience their teaching-learning environment (Parpala et al. 2010). It has also been suggested that in educational settings researchers should take the learning context better into account rather than investigating general motivational themes (e.g. Volet and Kimmel 2012; Nolen, Ward, and Horn 2012; Volet and Järvelä 2001).

In this study, a novel approach to personal motivation is taken, which builds on the idea of Emmons (1999) and Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) and Hirsto (2001, 2012b), that as religious questions are intertwined with the personal worldviews and values of students, they also affect their motivational constructs. Motivational perspectives, which have been studied in the learning environments, often include perspectives of intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation

(e.g. Busse 2013; Brahm, Jenert, and Wagner 2017) or performance vs. mastery orientation (e.g. Pintrich 2000). It has also been suggested that it is important to consider goals and reasons for aiming at goals (such as autonomous or controlled reasons) separately as they have similar, however not completely overlapping relations to achievement (Sommet and Elliot 2017). In terms of the reasons for studying theology, it seems that students have a scientific, spiritual or a helping oriented motives, or they may experience a strong spiritual calling (Hirsto and Tirri 2009; Niemelä 1999). The contextualised motivational dimensions underpinning theological studies readily correspond with the personally interested, certificate-oriented, self-test-oriented, vocation-oriented, and ambivalent learning orientations defined by Vermunt and Vermetten (2004). Theoretically, motivational constructs build on a persons' strivings and the goals they set for themselves. Thus, a student's commitment to his or her personal worldview and the degree to which they base their goals on that worldview in the learning environment can be considered to reflect the extent to which the student builds their motivations on their personal worldview in finding their way in their lives more generally.

The goals a person holds are not trivial in the learning environment, as motivational dimensions and goals are also related to well-being. For example, according to Emmons, Cheung, and Tehrani (1998), individual differences in spiritual goals seem to predict well-being more strongly than any other category of striving that has been studied, exceeding those of intimacy and power, and generativity goals. Additionally, anxiety related to personal career or educational projects and ethics and idealism have been found to be connected to lower general health (Wallenius 2007).

Learning environment has various definitions and dimensions and can be approached from various perspectives (e.g. Manninen et al. 2007). The approach taken here refers to the social learning environment, which includes interaction with the environment, fellow students, the faculty and teachers.

To understand the interaction between students' perspectives of themselves and the teaching and learning environment, it is important to understand the relationship between students' goals and personal worldview commitment and their experiences of the social learning environment. The aim of this paper is to investigate Finnish theology students' commitment to their personal worldviews and experiences of the learning environment in relation to their identification as religious majority, minority or non-religious students.

The functional role of personal worldview in learning

Rauste-von Wright (1986) conceptualised the role of personal worldview in the process of guiding and controlling actions in any given context (see Figure 1). According to that view, we are each embedded in the context of the systemic social and physical reality (cf. Bronfenbrenner 1979). Our situation-specific goals and intentions reflect the worldview that we have constructed through our personal history, which includes beliefs related to the physical, the social and the self, as well as values and high-level goals. Spiritual and religious beliefs are included in the belief system. The situation-specific goals and intentions are reflected in the personal projects that students pursue during the different phases of their studies. Thus, students choose between alternative courses of action in their studies in line with their personal goals and intentions.
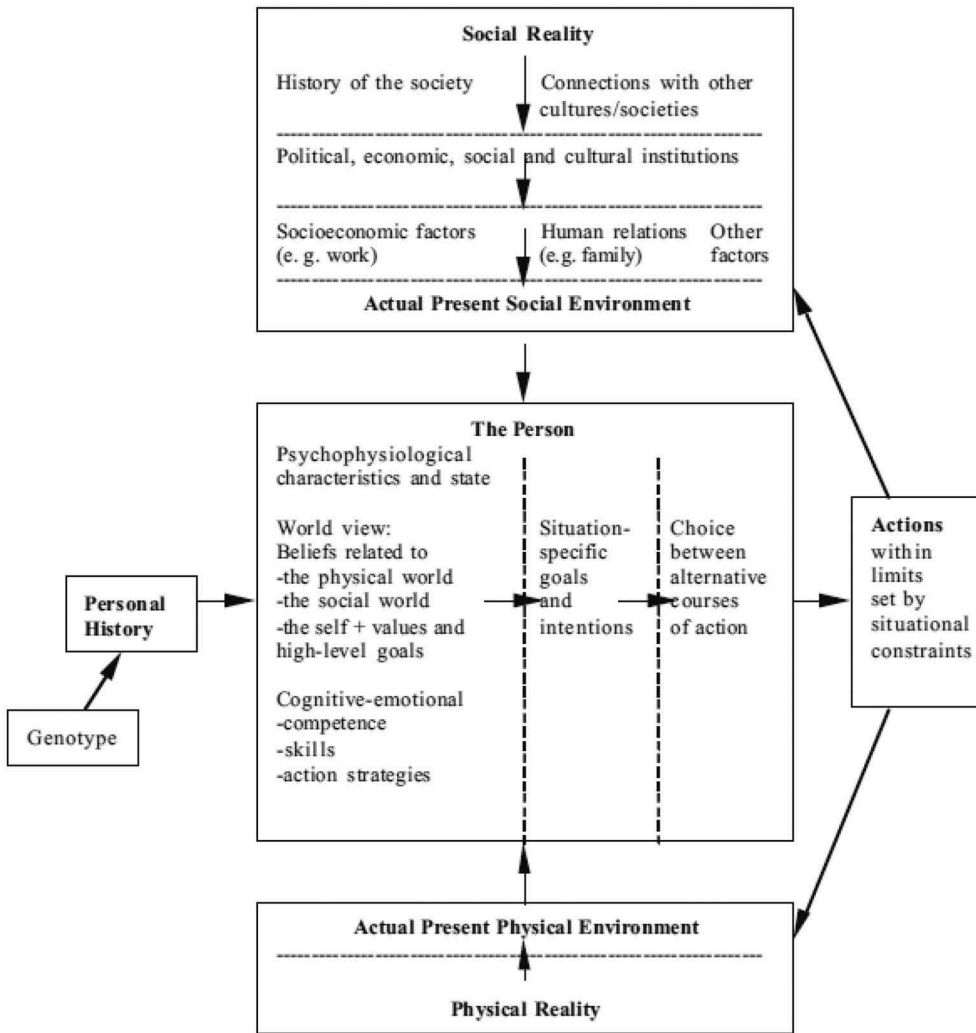
Figure 1. The role of personal worldview in the process of setting goals and taking situated action (Rauste-von Wright 1986; Hirsto 2001).

Empirical findings among university students support this line of thought in that personal project appraisals appear to be related to well-being as well as to academic achievement (e.g. Salmela-Aro and Nurmi 1997; Litmanen, Hirsto, and Lonka 2010). The question of goals is also reflected in theories of self-regulated learning (e.g. Pintrich 2004; Zimmerman 2002; Boekaerts and Cascallar 2006). Setting goals (e.g. setting a career goal) is often seen as the first phase of the self-regulated learning process, and the ability to do so is considered an essential metacognitive skill for the self-regulated learner.

The extent to which the goals of theology students are set based on their personal worldviews, and the level of their commitment to those goals in relation to the students' perception of themselves as part of a religious or ideological majority or minority is investigated in this study.

In terms of the meaning of religious, spiritual or worldview perspectives with regard to theology students' goals and motivational processes, it seems, according to Hirsto and Tirri (2009), that a high proportion of theology students consider religious or spiritual calling to be a key aspect of their motivation to study theology. Motivational approaches were considered in that study as the background motives for the students choosing theology as their field of study. However, in the Hirsto and Tirri (ibid.) study, the student group that had no explicit religious motivation, that was most uncertain about theology as a career choice, and whose key motive was merely to secure a study place, seemed to be the most sensitive towards spiritual issues in their environment compared to all other motivational approach groups.

In this study, the relation between theology students' goals and their personal world-views is seen as crucial. According to Mayhew and Bryant Rockenbach (2013), worldview commitment seems to differ among students in different disciplines. Low worldview commitment and spiritual struggle seem to be most prevalent among psychology students, which may be attributed to the nature of the field with regard to critical thinking and questioning of received wisdom (e.g. Bryant and Astin 2008). The nature of the learning environment and student worldview commitment seem, therefore, to be connected.

The learning environment can also shape students' worldviews. For example, Bryant (2011) has suggested that challenging co-curricular experiences and the salience of religion and spirituality in academic encounters tends to provoke an ecumenical worldview. Furthermore, exposure to worldview diversity may also enhance openness toward and acceptance and tolerance of diversity of worldviews. In career psychology, career choice has been traditionally investigated from the viewpoints of interest and capability. However, as more contextualised and situated approaches are being suggested for investigating the development of motivation and learning, similarly more holistic approaches are being suggested for career decision-making or career development. According to a study by Rockenbach, Walker, and Luzader (2012), spiritual struggles are multilayered and manifest in myriad ways as students navigate complex relationships, experience fear and doubt, lose and find meaning, and negotiate social and personal identities. In terms of negotiating personal identities and finding meaning, spiritual aspects fundamental to a personal world-view can be equated with religious and ideological aspects.

Higher education students' choices, goals and decisions about their studies can be approached from narrative perspectives. The narrative approach highlights the social and personal dimensions involved in negotiating and guiding their studies and future career path (e.g. Polkinghorne 1988; Penttinen et al. 2011). According to the narrative perspective, a person's life experiences and their stories about them reflect the main formative communities to which they have belonged. Furthermore, a person makes choices guided by their community's stories, while also at the same time producing their own stories about the community (e.g. Bruner 1986, 1987, 2001; Hänninen 2004). Regarding students' study path, students' finished and unfinished career stories may have an impact on their course of study and the construction of their careers (cf. Hirsto and Buchert 2016).

Programs in theology in Finnish universities provide the curricular options of a general theological education, a religious teacher education, and a curriculum for students wishing to become pastors within the Evangelical Lutheran church. However, the teaching at the faculties is non-confessional and students come from various Christian backgrounds. The non-confessional nature of theological studies and theological education in Finland, despite

the spiritual or religious profession that many students of each student cohort aim at, provides an interesting friction that brings the students' personal worldviews and their role in learning-studying and educational processes to the fore. If we can understand how to consider and successfully tackle with the religious, spiritual and ideological aspects of personal worldviews and their effects on motivational processes as well as experiences in the university learning and teaching context of theology, we may be better able to provide students with a fertile and supportive learning environment. These perspectives from one field of study will provide a basis, which can be compared to negotiated constructions in other fields of study, which will further help us to formulate suggestions for development for wider higher education contexts.

Microaggression in relation to social aspects of the learning environment

Mayhew and Bryant Rockenbach (2013) suggest that students' commitment to worldviews and the religious, spiritual and ideological climate of the campus are linked and that the relationship between climate and commitment depends upon the student's religious worldview. Thus, theology students' commitment to personal worldviews may similarly vary according to their experienced status of belonging to the religious, spiritual or ideological majority or minority in their learning environment.

In the US college context, according to Rockenbach, Mayhew, and Bowman (2015), it seems that strength of commitment to worldviews is associated with perceiving a positive climate for non-religious individuals on campus. This relationship seems to be particularly strong among students who identify with a majority worldview. However, Rockenbach, Mayhew, and Bowman (2015) also suggest that atheist students as a minority were less inclined than their peers to perceive a positive campus climate for non-religious individuals, and also, committed Christians tended to have more positive perceptions of a non-religious climate than students of other worldviews. Also, according to Harper and Hurtado (2007), minorities have usually had more negative experiences of the campus climate than majority students. Thus, it seems that minority students' are sensitive to the tensions between the environment and their own worldview, whereas it may be difficult for majority students to perceive the ways in which their values and perspectives are integrated into everyday practices. This may also lead to subtle and unintentional insensitive comments and attitudes towards other worldviews.

Rockenbach and Mayhew (2013) argue that space for spiritual support and expression, provocative encounters with worldview diversity, and challenging curricular experiences encourage ecumenical orientation. For Rockenbach and Mayhew (2013) an ecumenical orientation includes an interest in learning about diverse religious perspectives, a belief that core values underlie and connect diverse religious traditions, and acceptance of people with worldviews that differ from their own (cf. Bryant 2011).

Microaggression has been examined predominantly from racial or ethnic perspectives (e.g. Nadal 2011; Nadal et al. 2012). However, in this study microaggression is approached from the perspective of Mayhew and Bryant Rockenbach (2013), which includes experienced negative comments towards a person's religious, spiritual or ideological worldview. There are few studies that have addressed microaggression from the viewpoint of religious minorities or majorities. According to Pentaris (2018), lack of religious literacy on the part of health care professionals may lead to unintentional microaggression in healthcare. Nadal

(2011) defines racial microaggression as often unintentional and unconscious subtle forms of discrimination that send negative and denigrating messages to members of a marginalised racial group. Mayhew and Bryant Rockenbach (2013) define microaggression in a similar way to Nadal (2011), but with respect to religious, spiritual and ideological worldviews. Whereas in the above cases microaggression has been investigated from the perspective of experience in the societal context, the present study is contextualised within the learning environment provided by the faculty.

Personal worldviews and career choice certainty

Based on the theoretical viewpoints laid out above, it is considered here that religious perspectives are intertwined with the personal worldviews (cf. Emmons and Paloutzian 2003; Hirsto 2001) and values of the students, which in turn influences their personal motivational constructs. Earlier research, including the results of longitudinal research on theology students' learning and motivational processes, also support this theoretical idea (e.g. Rauste-von Wright 1986; Hirsto and Tirri 2009; Hirsto 2012b).

According to Hirsto (2012a), motivational factors better explained career choice uncertainty than general strategies and attributions. In the Hirsto study (ibid.), three motivational factors explained over half of the variance of uncertainty of career choice, while two general strategies and attribution variables explained only less than one-tenth. Among students of theology, committed students who progressed in their study-related project were capable, and had intrinsic motivation at the beginning of their studies progressed in their studies more rapidly than other student groups (Litmanen, Hirsto, and Lonka 2010). The difference in pace was considerable, reaching approximately a half-year difference by the end of third study-year.

Also, according to Hirsto and Buchert (2016), theology students have various motivational reasons for studying theology. Hirsto and Buchert (2016) further argue that theology students experience various kinds of struggles during their studies, varying from reflection on their choice of study programme to deep-level challenges regarding transforming personal worldviews, which change students' career goals.

Thus, from various perspectives, it seems that theology students' motivational perspectives and, in this sense, goals are related to the choices the students make regarding their learning environment and their career. According to Hirsto and Buchert (2016), theology students' career choice certainty seems to vary between different curricula. Furthermore, Hirsto and Buchert (ibid.) showed that students' certainty regarding their career goals also varies within curricula groups. Thus, among students aiming at the pastoral profession, there were students who were certain and less certain. Also, among the students aiming at a general theological degree, there were students who were certain about their career choice, as well as students, whose motivation was characterised by exclusion, who chose the curriculum because no other options were available to them.

Duffy and Blustein (2005) argue that individuals who have a strong spiritual relationship with a higher power and intrinsic religious motivation tend to be more confident in their ability to make career decisions and are more open to exploring a variety of career options. There are empirical indications that spirituality is one of the determinants of career behaviour as it influences career purpose, sense-making and coherence (Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2002). Vocational psychologists have conducted a great deal

of research on the effect of contextual variables on career development, but have yet to explore adequately the role of spirituality and religiousness (Duffy and Blustein 2005, 431–432). Thus, this study provides new perspectives on the contextual relation of religious, spiritual or ideological commitment and career certainty between religious majority and minority student groups. Empirical research perspectives have shown that students of theology, in general, have to deal with the fundamental questions of spiritual and religious issues in their learning processes before and during their studies, despite the nature of their specific professional orientation (e.g. Hirsto and Tirri 2009; Litmanen, Hirsto, and Lonka 2010; Hirsto 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

Research questions and objectives

The aim of this paper is to investigate Finnish theology students' experiences of the social learning environment provided by their faculty in relation to their personal worldview and their perspectives of belonging to the religious majority, minority or non-religious group of students. Personal worldview is considered from the viewpoints of general commitment to a worldview and the formulation of goals on the basis of it. Certainty of career choice is seen as a goal to which students may have various levels of commitment. The following core questions were addressed:

(1) How do experiences of being part of religious majority or minority or non-religious group relate to personal worldview-based commitments and goals?
(2) How do majority, minority or non-religious students experience micro-aggression in their learning environment?
(3) Are there gender differences in experienced microaggression among theology students?
(4) What level of career choice certainty do majority, minority and non-religious theology students have?

Method and materials

This study was conducted among second-year university students of theology. The students responded to a questionnaire surveying their experiences of their learning environment in relation to their own religious or ideological worldview and experienced position in the learning context as part of the majority or minority. The data were collected during a lecture class on a voluntary basis. The questionnaire also included a request for the students' informed consent to participate in the study. Students responded to the questions on a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)).

An important contextual viewpoint on the faculties of theology in Finnish universities is that they provide three different curricula: (1) general theological education (A2), (2) teacher education and (B), and (3) qualifications for students who want to become pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church (A1). However, the teaching at these faculties is non-confessional and students come from various, mainly Christian, backgrounds. In terms of religious minority or majority in general, it is important to consider national and cultural differences as, according to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (2018), approximately 72% of Finland's population were its members in 2017. Students'

identification with either a religious majority, minority or non-religious group was approached from the students' own experience. Thus, the majority of students more or less represented the Evangelical Lutheran Church. With respect to the investigated context, minority students could belong to minorities within the Evangelical Lutheran Church, such as those with conservative conviction regarding the ordination of women, or other smaller Christian revivalist movements or other religious communities.

The measurement scales used in this study were either translated into Finnish from earlier studies, or developed in Finnish in earlier studies or developed for this study. The scales seemed to work also quite well in Finnish as the reliabilities were at a reasonably good level.

The measure developed for this study reflected the effects of personal worldview on goals ($\alpha = .74$). The items in this dimension included:

- 'Aspects of my religious, spiritual, or ideological worldview usually direct my choices and goals',
- 'Without my current religious, spiritual or ideological worldview I would have made different kinds of choices in my life', and
- 'My current religious, spiritual, or ideological worldview has changed my choices and goals'

The items measuring worldview commitment (reliability in this study according to Cronbach alpha $\alpha = .73$) were translated from the Mayhew and Bryant Rockenbach (2013) study as well as the scale of microaggression.

The worldview commitment scale included three items:

- 'My current religious, spiritual, or ideological worldview gives my life meaning',
- 'How committed are you to your current religious, spiritual, or ideological world-view?', and
- 'I have put a lot of thought into why I believe what I do'.

The microaggression scale (reliability in this study $\alpha = .86$) included the items:

- 'Been mistreated on campus because of my religious, spiritual, or ideological worldview',
- 'Felt that someone on campus used his/her religious worldview to justify treating me in a discriminatory manner on the basis of my gender',
- 'Felt that someone on campus used his/her religious worldview to justify treating me in a discriminatory manner on the basis of my sexual orientation',
- (in addition) a scale of experiences of insensitive comments on worldview issues in various contexts.

The measure of certainty of career choice ($\alpha = .81$) (Hirsto and Tirri 2009; Hirsto 2012a; Ketonen et al. 2016) included three items:

- 'Another career choice might be more satisfying and closer to my goals',
- 'At the moment, I think that my career choice is right for me', and

- 'If I could have chosen my field of study freely, I would not have wanted to start studying at the Faculty of theology.'

Results

The respondents and their characteristics

A total of 80 theology students responded to the questionnaire. Of the respondents, 57.3% were female and 42.7% were male, and 62.7% were aged 20–25 years (Figure 2). The distribution is closely representative of second-year students of theology in general. There were also some older respondents, which is characteristic of the field of theology, which is often entered as a second career or in response to a spiritual calling to study theology later in life. The students' previous educational background included matriculation examination (84%), and some had earlier Masters' degrees (6.7%) or other educational backgrounds (9.3%).

All respondents had acquired at least 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits (Figure 3). In total, 26% of the respondents had completed less than the suggested minimum requirement of credits for first-year studies (60 credits), and 25% had completed just over the minimum requirement (60–69 credits). Thus, almost 50% of the respondents had completed more than 70 ECTS credits.

The students were asked to categorise themselves according to four religious or non-religious groups (Table 1). The majority (55%) of respondents identified themselves with the religious majority group; the non-religious group was the second largest, accounting for 21.3% of respondents; and 15% identified themselves with the religious minority group. Seven respondents classed themselves as 'other'.

The majority of the students in the religious majority group explained their positioning in terms of their membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. However, the majority of students tended to describe themselves as either quite liberal and not very active in the church, or quite conservative and quite active in the church. Similarly, the religious minority students, despite being members of Evangelical Lutheran Church, considered themselves to be either more liberal or more conservative than the majority of students.

Most students who classed themselves as non-religious explained that they had no personal faith or did not belong to a certain religious community. Those who classed themselves as 'other' did so on the grounds that they were agnostic or that they could not define themselves according to the other three categories.
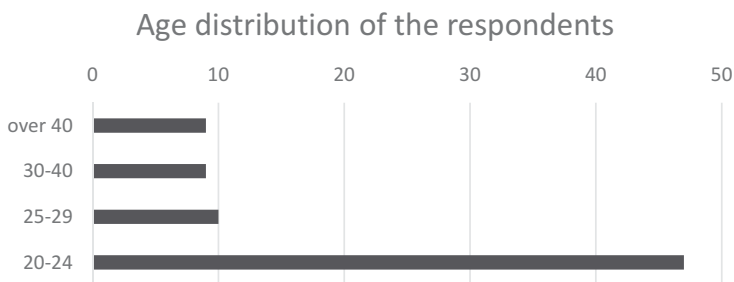

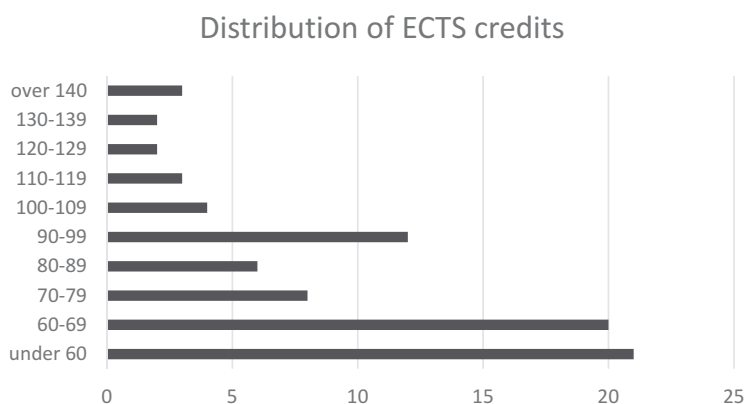Figure 2. Age distribution of the respondents.

Figure 3. Distribution of cumulative credits among the respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of students in religious majority, religious minority and non-religious groups.

In which of the following groups would you define yourself as a student of the faculty of theology?				
Religious majority	Religious minority	Non-religious	Other	Total
44	12	17	7	80

As was expected, the students' self-identification as belonging to the religious majority, minority or as non-religious were significantly related to the curriculum or career that they were aiming for ($\chi2$ (df = 6) = 15.50, p = 0.017). Of the students aiming for the A1 curriculum, which prepares students to be pastors or clergymen, 77% considered themselves to be part of the religious majority, and 13% as part of the religious minority. None of the students aiming at the ministry identified as non-religious, although 10% categorised themselves as 'other'.

Of the students aiming for the A2 curriculum, providing general theological education, 44% considered themselves part of the religious majority, which was somewhat less than theoretically expected, and 12% considered themselves part of the religious minority. The amount of students identifying as non-religious was 32%, and 12% categorised themselves as 'other'.

Of the students aiming for the teacher education curriculum (B), 39% identified with the religious majority group, 22% with the religious minority group, and 33% identified as non-religious.

Personal worldview commitment in relation to student characteristics

The level of personal worldview commitment in relation to student characteristics was investigated using the Kruskall–Wallis method, as the amount of respondents was moderate.

According to the results, theology students who identified themselves with the religious majority or religious minority groups most often reported a higher general commitment to their personal worldview (H(3) = 31,112, p < .001, d = 1.532, large effect) (see Figure 4). Pairwise comparisons made as post hoc analyses (Mann–Whitney) showed highly significant differences between the religious majority group and non-religious group (U = 32,194,
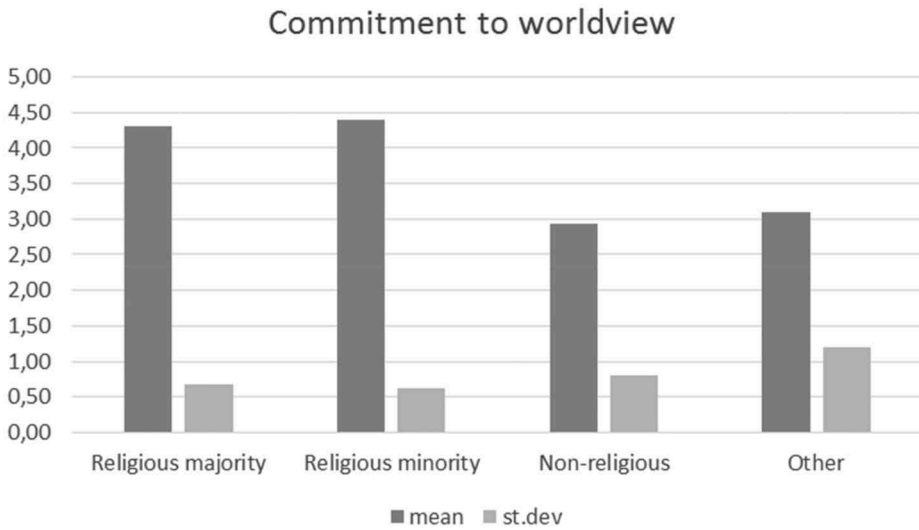
Figure 4. Students' worldview commitment per category of identification.

p < .001, d = 1.982, large effect) and between the religious minority group and non-religious group (U = 34,717, p < .001, d = 1.328, large effect). The difference was also significant between the majority group and the 'other' group (U = 25,555 p < .05, d = 1.131, large effect). The 'other' group and the non-religious group were essentially level in terms of personal worldview commitment with mean values close to 3, signifying no particular commitment to personal worldview.

A similar finding to personal worldview commitment was also found among the different groups of students with regard to the significance of worldview in setting goals (H(3) = 22,603, p < .001, d = 1.179, large effect) (See Figure 5). According to the post
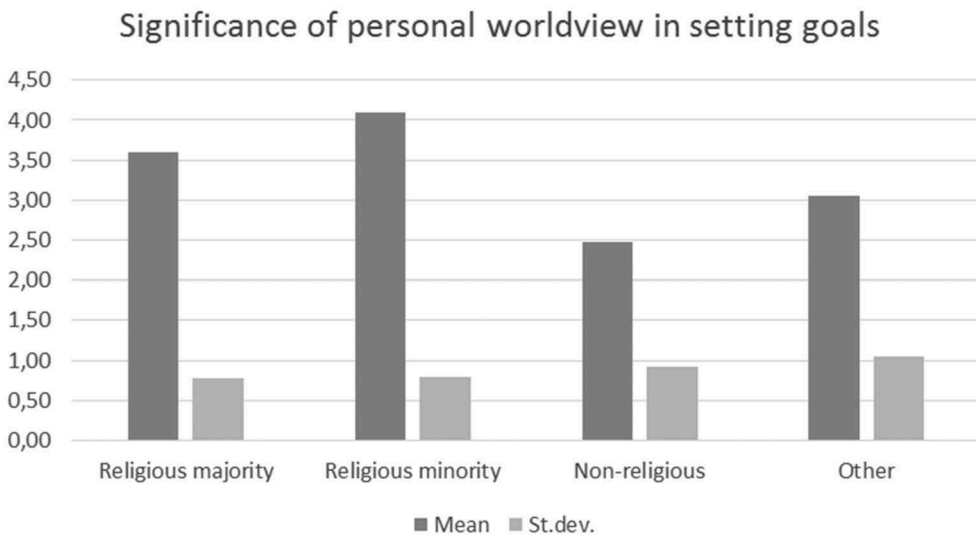

Figure 5. Significance of students' personal worldviews in setting goals, per category of identification.

hoc tests (Mann–Whitney), the difference between the religious majority group and non-religious group was significant (U = 25,192, p < .05, d = 2.065, large effect), and the difference between the minority group and non-religious group was also highly significant in this respect (U = 36,198, p.<001, d = 1.289, large effect).

Negative experiences and experienced majority-minority group memberships

The general level of experienced microaggression in the form of negative comments about personal worldviews was very low with mean values of between 1.17 and 2.12 (min 1-max 5), and there were no significant differences between majority and minority groups. However, there were significant relations between experienced negative comments and gender. Female students reported experiencing negative comments regarding their worldview (mean = 1.7) somewhat more often than male students (mean 1.3) (U = 392,5, p < .05, d = .785, intermediate effect). In terms of means, theology education seems to be quite a tolerant environment for different student groups, although female students did experience some negative comments regarding their worldviews in the wider learning environment in which they were embedded.

Majority-minority group memberships and uncertainty of career choice

A statistically significant relationship was found between majority, minority and non-religious group membership and uncertainty of career choice (Kruskall–Wallis H(3) = 16,838, p < .01, d = .944, large effect) (Figure 6). According to pairwise comparisons as post hoc tests (Mann–Whitney), the non-religious group of students was the most uncertain about their career choice compared to both the religious majority (U = 23,320, p < .01, d = 2.089, large effect) and the religious minority group (U = 26,142, p < .05, d = 1.596, large effect). Religious minority
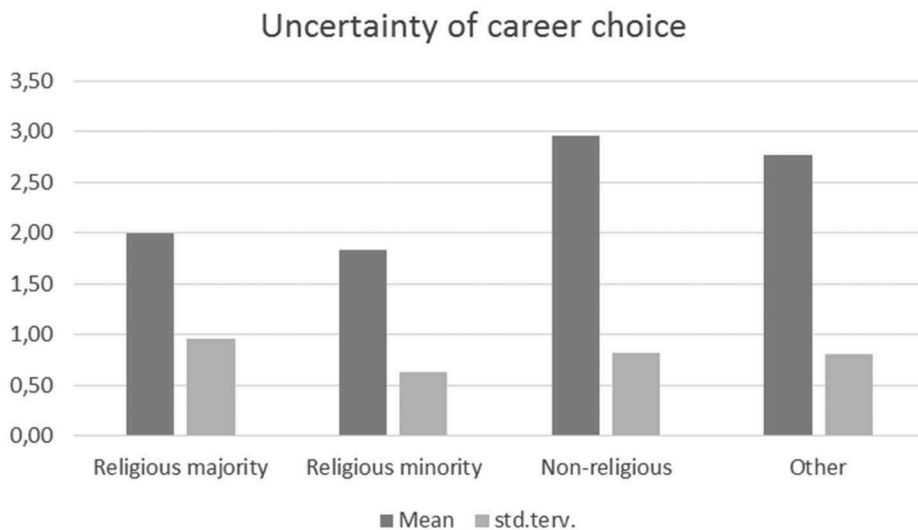

Figure 6. Students' career choice uncertainty per category of identification.

students seemed to be the least uncertain about their career choice. The 'other' group did not differ significantly from the other three student groups.

Conclusions

As expected, students with a religious identity were more committed to their personal worldview. These theology students also reported that their personal worldview strongly affected their choices and goals. In line with the personal worldview model and narrative approach, people are considered to choose and focus their goals in dynamic interplay with their environment and personal worldview. In accordance with earlier studies, religious orientation seems to be related to certainty of career choice also in this context; interestingly, though, the certainty seems to be slightly stronger among the religious minority group than the religious majority group. However, this tendency in the data may echo the perspectives suggested by Rockenbach, Mayhew, and Bowman (2015) and Harper and Hurtado (2007) that minority students seem less inclined than their peers to perceive a positive campus climate for minority students. That finding, however, varied between minorities, and experiences of campus climate differed, for example, between non-religious and religious minorities. As we consider the context of theology education in Finland, it may be that the religious minority students' encounter tensions between their own worldview and majority/hegemonic worldviews, which requires them to ponder more explicitly their own worldview and how it affects their goals and decisions in the learning environment. This may lead to stronger and more explicit commitment.

Students experienced, in general, very few incidents of microaggression. There were also no differences in experienced microaggression among the different majority and minority groups. Thus, the faculty of theology seems to be a tolerant environment for different student groups. However, female students reported slightly more experiences of microaggression on average than male students, which may be partly related to the discussions and religious groups' diverse views regarding the role and ordination of women in the church.

This study has shown that higher education students of theology experienced aspects of their personal worldview as important in their goal setting, and that this importance varies according to their experience of belonging to a majority, minority or non-religious group. Studying these motivational themes in one study field context is important in order to understand the contextual nature of sense-making and motivation (cf. Volet and Kimmel 2012). In the future, it would be important to investigate these kinds of personal worldview processes in other disciplinary and professional contexts. This would provide perspectives as to how unique the identified relations between personal worldviews and goal setting among majority, minority and non-religious groups in the theological field are compared to other fields of higher education. This could provide a basis for developing means for supporting higher education students' self-regulation processes and facilitating better guidance for students during their studies regarding personal worldview, as well as developing better disciplinary pedagogy for higher education.

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Disclosure statement

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Notes on contributor

Laura Hirsto, research director, has worked as a professor of teacher education at the University of Eastern Finland and as a senior lecturer in university pedagogy at the University of Helsinki. Hirsto has conducted research on higher education students' motivational and learning processes, teacher learning and innovative learning environments. She is a coordinator of the European Association of Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) Special Interest Group 19 'Religions and Worldviews in Education'.

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