



BRILL

Civic Purpose among Higher Education Students – A Study of Four Dutch and Finnish Institutions

Elina Kuusisto | ORCID: 0000-0001-5003-547X

University Lecturer in diversity and inclusive education,
Associate Professor, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland
Corresponding author
elina.kuusisto@tuni.fi

Isolde de Groot | ORCID: 0000-0002-0939-5227

Assistant Professor Education & Democracy at University
of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, The Netherlands
i.degroot@wh.nl

Ingrid Schutte | ORCID: 0000-0002-4846-0634

Researcher and activist in Oosterpoort Duurzaam in Groningen and former
researcher and educational advisor at Staff Office Education and Research,
Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, the Netherlands
i.w.schutte57@kpnmail.nl

Inkeri Rissanen | ORCID: 0000-0002-2676-0169

University Lecturer in multicultural education, Associate Professor,
Tampere University, Tampere, Finland
inkeri.rissanen@tuni.fi

Received 26 January 2023 | Accepted 13 July 2023 |

Published online 27 July 2023

Abstract

Given the increasing interest in academic citizenship in higher education, this study examines the civic purposes of higher education students in two European countries, namely the Netherlands and Finland, and relations between students' worldviews and their civic purposes. The majority of students was categorized as so-called *disengaged* or *dreamers*, respectively either not civically interested or active or then visioning

but not actualizing civic interests. Students with a purposeful profile referring to high civic interest, action, and identity, were most prevalent among Dutch students with a humanistic worldview and Finnish students reporting religions other than Christianity. Students from both countries not identifying with any organized worldviews were more likely to be allocated to the disengaged profile. Possible explanations for differences in student profiles are discussed.

Keywords

civic purpose – worldview – higher education – the Netherlands – Finland

1 Introduction

Climate change, global pandemics, political polarizations, and warzones, also in Europe as well as the United Nations' (2015) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) have brought a sense of urgency into updating higher education institutions' (HEI) curricula to acknowledge and realize social, environmental, and economic sustainability in education. The Netherlands and Finland were chosen as the contexts of the present study as examples of European countries where higher education legislation and policies emphasize cultivating students' moral development and civic engagement with social responsibility (Higher Education Law 1992 [the Netherlands]; University Law 2009 [Finland]). Students should graduate from university with a desire and motivation to use their intelligence, knowledge, and skills to find constructive solutions to global problems and with an enduring commitment to doing so (Veugelers et al. 2017). In both countries, sustainability is to be embedded in all teaching, learning, and research in higher education (Arene 2020; UNIFI 2020; Universiteiten van Nederland n.d.; Vereniging Hogescholen n.d.). At the same time, in both countries, the moral education in higher education is contested and questioned by the neoliberalist agenda in HEI management that focuses on competition and market economy (de Ruyter and Schinkel 2017; Rinne 2012).

Earlier studies on higher education students' morality from the perspectives of values and life purposes show rather strong tendencies of self-orientation, meaning interests in issues that mainly benefit students themselves (Kuusisto & Tirri 2021; Kuusisto, de Groot, de Ruyter, Schutte, Rissanen & Suransky 2023a; Kuusisto, de Groot, de Ruyter, Schutte & Rissanen 2023b; Manninen, Kuusisto & Tirri 2018). This can be seen as one consequence of the negative impact of

neoliberalism as students struggle to find their place in a commercially oriented society (Desierto & de Maio 2020). Earlier studies also indicate that values and life purposes are associated more likely with the field of study and institutions than with countries *per se*: humanities students are more oriented towards others while economics and technology students emphasize self-serving interests (Arieli, Savig & Roccas 2020; Kuusisto et al. 2023a, 2023b; Verkasalo, Daun & Niit 1994).

Even though studies on higher education students' civic engagement are rare, research in the US has shown that students' civic engagement decreases after high school (Malin, Han & Liauw 2017). Simultaneously, we know that experiential learning in civic contexts (e.g., service learning and civic advocacy projects) can enhance students' civic engagement (e.g., Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont & Stephens 2003). In order for higher education institutions to promote informed civic engagement and help policy-makers, and for HEIs as well as HE teachers to plan and implement education in a meaningful way, it is important to know more about the current state of affairs. One important factor in organizing pedagogically sound civic educational practices is to understand students' civic developments. In this study, we investigate one particular element of HE students' civic development: their civic purpose.

2 Civic Purpose Reflecting Civic Development

Civic purpose is a specific type of life purpose (Bronk 2014) oriented towards societal issues and towards contributing to others on local, national, regional, or global level. It is close to the concept of humanization, which could be defined as a process directed at creating a more just and caring world (Veugelers 2011).

In this study, we apply Malin, Ballard, and Damon's (2015) definition of civic purpose, namely a 'sustained intention to contribute to the world beyond the self through civic or political action' (p. 109). This definition includes three dimensions. *Civic interest* refers to one's motivation and awareness of civic, citizenship and societal issues. *Civic activity* means that one is not merely interested in civics but also engages in civic issues in concrete and practical ways. *Civic identity* refers to a long-term internalized intention related to civic issues. Through these dimensions it is possible to detect the developmental nature of civic purpose. A mature civic purpose subsumes that all three dimensions are apparent in one's civic purpose, while precursor forms lack some or all of these dimensions. Malin et al. (2015) identified five civic purpose profiles: *No purpose* refers to a situation where all three dimensions of civic purpose are lacking or are at a low level. *Dreaming* suggests that people may have civic interest and

even civic identity but lack engagement in civic activities. *Dabbling* denotes a profile where one may be committed to civic activities without having internalized and long-term civic interests or identity. *Self-goal pursuit* means that one has intentions and engages in activities but these are only motivated through self-serving reasons, and lastly, *purposeful*, that meets all three criteria, thereby showing a mature civic purpose profile.

3 Relations between Civic Purpose and Worldviews

Mariano and Damon (2008) identified five models depicting how spirituality and religious faith influence purpose development: 1) spirituality can spur on an intention to pursue, i.e., a purpose, 2) spirituality can invest personal goals with value and meaning which may cause goals to turn into an inspiring purpose, 3) spirituality supports intentions to develop character, i.e., moral purposes, 4) involvement in a religious community offers experiences of a common purpose that strengthens one's own purpose, 5) spirituality or religious faith, moral goals, personal goals can be merged inseparably forming a coherent purpose (Mariano & Damon 2008). However, studies show that the majority of young people do not have religion and spirituality as their purpose, or their purposes are not connected to religion or spirituality (Damon & Malin 2020). Overall, the relationship between purpose and worldviews may not be as direct as scholars have previously assumed (Damon & Malin 2020).

Earlier research also shows that civic engagement is associated with worldviews. Beyerlein and Vaisy (2013), for example, found that people with a worldview emphasizing civic responsibility are more likely to encourage volunteer efforts that benefit the wider community than people with worldviews emphasizing personal fulfillment. Religiosity, especially churchgoing has been found to be a powerful motivation for civic engagement among Americans and Canadians (Smidt 1999). A recent study also revealed how Turkish and Swedish university students saw civic engagement as a “fundamental cornerstone” of being religious and indicating the connection between pro-sociality and religion (Göcke et al. 2022, p. 210).

Altogether, religions and other worldviews seem to influence purpose development as well as civic engagement, which gives reason to assume a link between students' worldviews and their civic purpose. In this study, we explore the interrelatedness of civic purposes and worldviews among Dutch and Finnish HE students. Considering the connections between worldviews and civic engagement found in earlier research, we pose the following research questions:

RQ1 What kind of civic purpose profiles can be identified among Dutch and Finnish higher education students?

RQ2 How are worldviews related to civic purpose profiles?

4 Method

4.1 *Participants*

Participants were recruited from four higher education institutions, two in the Netherlands and two in Finland. Universities were selected based on convenience sampling: in each country, we chose one university of applied sciences and one university where the researchers were employed, to make data collection feasible. The Dutch Hanze University of Applied Sciences (HUAS) and the Finnish Tampere University and Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) are generalist HEIs without any specific worldview undertakings, while the Dutch University of Humanistic Studies (UHS) is a small denominational university based explicitly on a humanistic worldview. Both universities of applied sciences are large institutions with various disciplines of which economics, technology, and health and social care were represented in the present study. Tampere University is also a large institution, however, in our study only students from the Faculty of Education and Culture (EDU) participated, indicating that students from both Dutch and Finnish universities reported humanities as their field of study, which refers to and also includes social and educational sciences (see also Kuusisto et al. 2023a, 2023b). The nature of the HEIs in this study follow the general trends in both countries: in the Netherlands, there are many worldview-affiliated, denominational institutions (e.g., most typically Roman Catholic or Protestant) while in Finland all HEIs are non-denominational.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants were females ($n = 1,105$, 73%). The gender distribution of females and males followed the general tendencies in both countries. In the Netherlands, 54% of university students and 53% of students of universities of applied sciences were female in 2021 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2022), yet percentages vary widely across disciplines. At the Dutch universities of applied sciences females were in the majority in social and health care (77%) while males predominated in economics (60%) and technology (77%) (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2022). Unfortunately, information on the gender distribution at the HUAS was not available. At the UHS, 77% of humanities students were females in 2022 (UHS Education Office, personal communication April 14, 2023). Also in Finland, most students in higher education are females: 54% of the university students and 64% of

students at universities of applied sciences in 2019. However, there are significant differences between disciplines (THL, 2022). In 2021, at TAMK, females were in the majority in the domains of health and social care (85%) and economics (55%) while males were in the majority in technology (77%) and at the Faculty of Education and Culture (EDU) at Tampere University, 88% of the students of humanities were females (Statistics Finland, 2021a, 2021b). The mean age was 24 years ($SD = 6.80$), Dutch students at university of applied sciences being the youngest ones with a mean age of 21.5 ($SD = 3.17$).

Almost half of the Dutch students did not identify with any organized worldview ($n = 306$, 46%), while in Finland most students identified themselves with Christianity ($n = 396$, 47%) or no organized worldview ($n = 275$, 33%). The humanist traditions were reflected in the UHS student population: one third identified themselves as humanists or spiritual ($n = 73$, 34%). Other HEIs are non-denominational, and their students' worldviews mirror the population of the country at large. In the Netherlands, 54% of the population identify as non-religious, followed by Roman Catholic (20%) and Protestant (15%) (CBS 2020). In Finland, 69% of the population are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (yet to a large extent have secularized identities, see e.g., Nynäs et al. 2022), 28.5% do not belong to any registered religious community, 1.1% belong to Finnish Orthodox Church and 1.7% to other religious communities (Sohlberg & Ketola 2021).

4.2 *Instruments and Analysis*

Operationalization of the three dimensions of civic purpose can be found in Table 2. The first dimension, *civic interest*, was measured with three items developed for this study. Students were asked "How important the following issues are to you?" on a scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = extremely important. The second dimension, *civic activity*, was measured with five items from the Civic activity scale (Damon 2013). The question was "How often have you participated in each of the following activities since the time you started your current studies?" with the following response options 1 = never, 2 = once or twice, 3 = a few times, and 4 = regularly. The third dimension, *civic identity*, was measured with four items from the Civic Identity Questionnaire (Damon 2013). Students were asked to indicate whether items were 4 = very central to who they are, 3 = quite central, 2 = somewhat important or 1 = not central to their identity.

Validity and reliability of the scales were studied with confirmatory factor analyses with Mplus (Muthén & Muthén 1998–2017). Psychometric properties were further scrutinized with Kendall's tau correlations and Cronbach's alpha values. Profiles were computed with K-means cluster analysis in SPSS, which is an exploratory and robust method for person-centered analysis (Jain 2011).

TABLE 1 Background information on the participants

Country	Dutch			Finnish		
	UHS % n = 231	HUAS % n = 432	Total % n = 663	EDU % n = 563	TAMK % n = 283	Total % n = 846
Gender						
Female	183	241	424	494	187	681
Male	44	189	233	65	93	158
Other	4	2	6	4	3	7
Discipline						
Humanities, education	231	100	231	563	100	563
Economics		179	179		100	100
Health, social care*		134	134		96	96
Technology		118	118		87	87
World view						
No identification with organized worldview	77	36	306	157	118	275
Christianity	12	6	70	286	110	396
Humanism, spirituality	73	34	81	38	11	49
Other religions (e.g., Islam)	18	8	38	29	15	44
I do not know	35	16	60	42	19	61
Age	M = 24, SD = 6.80	M = 21.5, SD = 7.87	M = 23, SD = 3.17	M = 27, SD = 5.58	M = 25, SD = 7.28	M = 26, SD = 8.46

UHS University of Humanistic Studies, HUAS Hanze University of Applied Sciences, EDU Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, TAMK Tampere University of Applied Sciences

* At the HUAS, health and social care also includes future teachers of sports, dance and elementary school.

TABLE 2 Dimensions and items measuring civic purpose

Dimensions and items measuring civic purpose**Civic interest (dimension 1) (scale 1–5)**

Dem_1 Strengthen democratic development

Dem_2 Help in creating an inclusive society

Dem_3 Supporting respectful relations amongst groups of people

Civic activities (dimension 2) (scale 1–4)

Yllacts_8 Signed a petition

Yllacts_10 Attended a protest march, meeting or demonstration

Yllacts_13 Gave money to a cause

Yllacts_20 Interacted with people or groups about political issues

Yllacts_22 Documented or discussed political and social issues through the internet (Facebook, Twitter, blog, Myspace, YouTube)

Civic identity (dimension 3) (scale 1–4)

Civic_id_6 Involved in solving community problems

Civic_id_9 Politically involved

Civic_id_12 Concerned about government decisions and policies

Civic_id_14 Concerned about justice and human rights

Differences between profiles were calculated with one-way analyses of variances. To study relations between profiles and worldviews we utilized cross-tabulation, Chi square tests, and standardized residuals. In interpreting standardized residuals, we applied MacDonald and Gardner's (2000) suggestion that values greater than $|2|$ indicate a statistically significant contribution to the differences identified with Chi square tests.

5 Results

5.1 *RQ1 What Kind of Civic Purpose Profiles Can Be Identified?*

Analysis of civic purpose profiles started with confirmatory factor analyses in which the structure of the scales utilized was scrutinized separately for each institution and country as well as for the whole dataset. Goodness-of-fit values (see Appendix) indicated mediocre fit of the model in all samples (Byrne 2012).

Psychometric properties of the civic purpose scales were further studied with Kendall's tau correlations (Table 3), Cronbach's alpha values, means, and standard deviations (Table 4). All three sum variables correlated with each

TABLE 3 Kendall's tau correlation matrix

	1	2	3
1 Civic interest	–	.286**	.433**
2 Civic activity	.348**	–	.324**
3 Civic identity	.365**	.405**	–

** $p < .01$, Dutch students below hypotenuse, Finnish student above

TABLE 4 Psychometric properties of the civic purpose scales

Scales	Country	<i>n</i>	α	<i>min; max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>MRank</i>	<i>U</i>
Civic interest (dimension 1) scale 1–5	NED	593	.709	1.0; 5.0	3.16	.86	588.23	172701.5***
	FIN	836	.826	1.0; 5.0	3.61	.90	804.92	
	Total	1429	.786	1.0; 5.0	3.42	.91		
Civic activity (dimension 2) scale 1–4	NED	583	.670	1.0; 4.0	1.97	.66	779.43	202634.5***
	FIN	835	.726	1.0; 4.0	1.79	.63	626.3	
	Total	1418	.703	1.0; 4.0	1.87	.65		
Civic identity (dimension 3) scale 1–4	NED	561	.633	1.0; 4.0	1.99	.56	634.25	198319.5***
	FIN	828	.669	1.0; 3.75	2.08	.57	738.77	
	Total	1389	.629	1.0; 4.0	2.04	.57		

*** $p < .001$

other statistically significantly in a theoretically plausible way. Alpha values varied from satisfactory (.629) to good (.826). Means indicated that students had some civic interests ($M_{\text{NED}} = 3.16$, $SD = .86$; $M_{\text{FIN}} = 3.61$, $SD = .90$), while civic activity ($M_{\text{NED}} = 1.97$, $SD = .66$; $M_{\text{FIN}} = 1.79$, $SD = .63$) and civic identity obtained lower scores ($M_{\text{NED}} = 1.99$, $SD = .56$; $M_{\text{FIN}} = 2.08$, $SD = .57$). Mann-Whitney test showed that Dutch students were civically more active ($U = 202634.5$, $p < .001$) while Finnish students scored higher on civic interest ($U = 172701.5$, $p < .001$) and civic identity ($U = 198319.5$, $p < .001$).

Civic purpose profiles were identified with K-means cluster analysis (Figure 1). After testing two, three, four, and five profiles, the four-profile model proved theoretically soundest (Naes et al. 2010). Profiles corresponded with the findings of earlier American studies: The most prevalent profile, the so-called *disengaged* ($n = 440$, 32%), included students scoring low on all three dimensions. The second largest profile, *dreamers* ($n = 412$, 30%), included

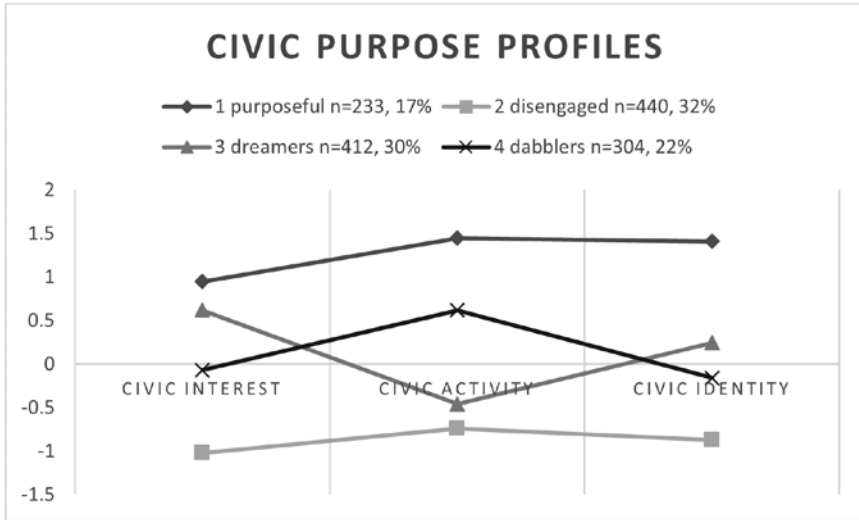


FIGURE 1 Civic purpose profiles

those showing some civic interest and civic identity without being engaged in civic activities. The third profile, *dabblers* ($n = 304$, 22%) included students scoring higher on civic activities than on other dimensions. Finally, the smallest group, *purposeful* ($n = 233$, 17%), included students having civic interest and civic identity and also reporting most civic activities. As can be seen in Table 5, one-way analyses of variances (ANOVA) and pairwise comparisons showed that all dimensions in all profiles differed statistically significantly from each other in both countries.

5.2 RQ2 How Are Worldviews Related to Civic Purpose Profiles?

Crosstabulations, Chi square tests, and standardized residuals (SR) were computed to study how worldviews were related to civic purpose profiles (Table 6). In both countries, civic purpose profiles were related to the students' worldviews (Dutch: $\chi^2(9) = 42.569$, $p < .001$; Finnish: $\chi^2(9) = 30.368$, $p < .001$). According to standardized residuals, Dutch students not identifying with any organized worldviews were more likely to be placed in the *disengaged* profile ($n = 125$, 41%, $SR = 2.3$) and less likely to be placed in the *purposeful* profile ($n = 36$, 12%, $SR = -2.2$). Dutch students with a humanistic or spiritual worldview were most likely to be classified as purposeful ($n = 27$, 33%, $SR = 3.6$) and least likely to be classified as disengaged ($n = 10$, 12%, $SR = -3.3$). In the Finnish sample, only those students affiliated with other religions differed from others: they were most likely to be found to be purposeful ($n = 17$, 39%, $SR = 3.5$) and least likely to be found to be disengaged ($n = 6$, 14%, $SR = -2.1$).

TABLE 5 Civic purpose profiles and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA)

	Purposeful	Disengaged	Dreamer	Dabbler	ANOVA
Dutch	<i>n</i> = 561	<i>n</i> = 180, 27%	<i>n</i> = 149, 22.5%	<i>n</i> = 136, 20.5%	
	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	
Civic Interest	Zscore 1.01 0.7	-1 0.63	0.67 0.63	-0.2 0.62	$F(3) = 274.118^{***}, \eta_p^2 = .596$
Civic Activities	Zscore 1.45 0.74	-0.8 0.51	-0.4 0.52	0.52 0.51	$F(3) = 403.493^{***}, \eta_p^2 = .685$
Civic Identity	Zscore 1.43 0.79	-0.8 0.57	0.17 0.68	-0.1 0.58	$F(3) = 264.273^{***}, \eta_p^2 = .587$
Finnish	<i>n</i> = 828	<i>n</i> = 260, 31%	<i>n</i> = 263, 31%	<i>n</i> = 168, 20%	
	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	
Civic Interest	Zscore 0.91 0.57	-1.1 0.75	0.59 0.54	-0 0.64	$F(3) = 410.485^{***}, \eta_p^2 = .599$
Civic Activities	Zscore 1.44 0.86	-0.7 0.5	-0.5 0.46	0.7 0.55	$F(3) = 564.119^{***}, \eta_p^2 = .699$
Civic Identity	Zscore 1.4 0.64	-0.9 0.59	0.29 0.68	-0.2 0.57	$F(3) = 428.671^{***}, \eta_p^2 = .609$

*** $p < .001$, all Howell-Games pairwise comparisons were statistically significant: Dutch data $p < .01$, Finnish data $p < .001$

TABLE 6 Civic purpose profiles and worldviews

	Purposeful				Disengaged			Dreamer			Dabbler		
DUTCH	Total												
Worldviews	<i>n</i> = 495	<i>n</i> = 84	%	<i>SR</i>	<i>n</i> = 165	%	<i>SR</i>	<i>n</i> = 127	%	<i>SR</i>	<i>n</i> = 119	%	<i>SR</i>
No organized worldview	306	36	12	-2.2	125	41	2.3	78	26	-0.1	67	22	-0.8
Christian	70	10	14	-0.5	23	33	-0.1	17	24	-0.2	20	29	0.8
Other religion	38	11	29	1.8	7	18	-1.6	8	21	-0.6	12	32	0.9
Humanistic, spirituality	81	27	33	3.6	10	12	-3.3	24	30	0.7	20	25	0.1
FINNISH	Total												
Worldviews	<i>n</i> = 764	<i>n</i> = 128	%	<i>SR</i>	<i>n</i> = 241	%	<i>SR</i>	<i>n</i> = 245	%	<i>SR</i>	<i>n</i> = 150	%	<i>SR</i>
No organized worldview	275	47	17	0.1	93	34	0.7	82	30	-0.7	53	19	-0.1
Christian	396	52	13	-1.8	133	34	0.7	138	35	1	73	18	-0.5
Other religion	44	17	39	3.5	6	14	-2.1	11	25	-0.8	10	23	0.5
Humanistic, spirituality	49	12	25	1.3	9	18	-1.6	14	29	-0.4	14	29	1.4

6 Summary and Discussion

This study aimed to address the knowledge gap about the civic purpose of European higher education students in the Netherlands and Finland. Analysis of students' civic purpose profiles revealed that most of the students in both countries were civically disengaged, meaning that they had limited civic interests, civic identity, and engagement in civic activities. This result aligns with studies on life purposes of the same participants as in the present study. These have shown strong tendencies of self-orientation: students mainly aim at becoming happy and having a nice life with their close ones (Kuusisto & Schutte 2022; Kuusisto et al. 2023a, 2023b; see also Kuusisto & Tirri 2021; Manninen et al. 2018). It is possible that competition (acceleration of society) and increased complexity in navigating life choices in different fields in life could explain the results (Desierto & de Maio 2020). Lack of engagement in civic activities was also prominent among dreamers, whose civic interest and identity did not match their civic engagement. This phenomenon is widely known as the value or judgement-action gap (Higgins-D'Alessandro 2008).

About 20% of the students were identified as *dabblers*: they engaged in some activities but showed limited internalized civic interest or identity. Finally, a minority of the students was identified as civically purposeful, demonstrating a full civic purpose, which concurs with findings from earlier studies among (late) adolescents (Malin et al. 2015, 2017).

Some relations were found between students' worldviews and some of the profiles: in the Dutch sample humanistic/spiritual students were more likely than their peers to be purposeful. This difference can be explained by the variety of institutions included: only the Dutch sample included a humanistic university. That humanistic/spiritual students are more likely to be purposeful may also relate to the political dimension of humanism, with its focus on humanization (also advocated by the University of Humanistic Studies): on promoting caring, just, and sustainable societies (e.g., Veugelers 2011). We also found that these students from the University of Humanistic Studies manifested statistically significantly more civic interests and other orientation in their life purposes than students from generalist HEIs (Kuusisto et al. 2023a, 2023b). In the Finnish sample, students reporting other religious affiliations were more likely to be purposeful. This is an interesting result for which there is no entirely plausible explanation. However, one might argue, for instance, that students from religious minorities have a greater need for identity work and are more often confronted with societal and global issues than are students from majority (religious) groups. Apart from social position, discrepancies in orientation towards civic responsibility among specific religions as identified by Beyerlein and Vaisy (2013) may also explain the differences in civic purposefulness found.

Our comparison of relations between students' worldviews and civic profiles also revealed that students from all participating HEIs who did not identify with any organized worldviews were more likely to be placed in the *disengaged* profile. This is consistent with Mariano and Damon's (2008) models on how spirituality, religiosity, and other worldviews can spur on civic purpose development.

Limitations of the study concern the instruments utilized. Firstly, the confirmatory factor analyses showed that the scales and items measuring dimensions of civic purpose were not optimal (see Appendix A). Possible reasons for the mediocre or even poor fit could be the cross-loadings and overlapping contents of the items (see Byrne 2012). From a theoretical point this is to some extent plausible since interest, actions and identity as dimensions of civic purpose have inherently intersecting elements. Nevertheless, more research on theoretical and methodological aspects of civic purpose is needed to improve and develop more robust instruments. Secondly, worldviews were measured

with only one question “Do you identify yourself with a religion or worldview?” with response options “No; Christian; Muslim; Hindu; Jewish; Buddhist; Humanistic; Spirituality; I do not know; Other, what:.” Even though the students’ responses correspond to the general religiosity trends in both countries, a more nuanced instrument would have afforded a more profound understanding of the phenomena (see Beyerlein & Vaisey 2013; Nynäs et al. 2022). Future studies should also utilize qualitative interview methods to further examine each profile and their developmental trajectories with longitudinal research designs. Purposeful profiles in particular should be studied further to identify the key aspects of their civic purpose development. Moreover, it would be of interest to gain insight into non-religious students’ perceptions of omissions in their socialization experiences, both at home and at school, concerning the development of civic purpose and reflection about their civic concerns. Thirdly, because of the different institutions involved, we cannot meaningfully examine commonalities and differences across countries. To do so, we would need more data from similar institutions in the two countries.

To conclude, given the non-denominational character of the great majority of Dutch and Finnish universities, HE teachers and leaders may also contemplate their role in promoting civic purpose and the processing of civic concerns, and the possible inspiration that (inter)religious traditions, positions, and activities can offer in this regard. Conversely, and in line with the commitment of HEIs in both countries to SDG’s, teachers’ own worldviews may also influence the guidance they currently offer and find desirable in promoting reflection on (societal and educational support for) their students’ civic purposes. The variety of civic purpose profiles present in each of the HEIs studied also indicates that the university offers a powerful space for students to reflect on and learn from students with purpose profiles different from their own.

References

- Arene. (2020). *Sustainable, responsible and carbon-neutral universities of applied sciences – Programme for the sustainable development and responsibility of universities of applied sciences*. The rectors’ conference of Finnish universities of applied sciences Arene. Retrieved February 9, 2022 from https://www.arene.fi/wp-content/uploads/Raportit/2020/Sustainable%2C%20responsible%20and%20carbon-neutral%20universities%20of%20applied%20sciences.pdf?_t=1606145574.
- Arieli, S., Sagiv, L., & Roccas, S. (2020). “Values at work: the impact of personal values in organisations” in *Applied Psychology*, 69(2), 230–75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12181>.

- Beyerlein, K., & Vaisey, S. (2013). "Individualism revisited: Moral worldviews and civic engagement" in *Poetics*, 41, 384–406. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2013.05.002>.
- Byrne, B. M. (2012). *Structural equation modeling with Mplus*. New York: Routledge.
- CBS. (2020). *Religie in Nederland* [Religion in the Netherlands]. Retrieved January 3, 2023 from <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/statistische-trends/2020/religie-in-nederland#:~:text=De%20katholieken%20ovormen%20de%20grootste,naar%2014%20procent%20in%202019>.
- Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Statistics the Netherlands]. (2022). *Al 23 jaar op rij meer vrouwen dan mannen in hoger onderwijs* [More women than men in higher education for 23 years in a row]. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2023/10/al-23-jaar-op-rij-meer-vrouwen-dan-mannen-in-hoger-onderwijs>.
- Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., Beaumont, E., & Stephens, G. (2003). *Educating citizens: Preparing America's undergraduates for lives of moral and civic responsibility*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Damon, W. (2013). *Stanford Civic Purpose Project, Longitudinal Study of Youth Civic Engagement in California, 2011–2013*. Retrieved November 1, 2018 from <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/content/civicleads/index.html>.
- Damon, W., & Malin, H. (2020). The development of purpose: An international perspective. In L. Arnett Jensen (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of moral development: An interdisciplinary perspective*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190676049.013.8.
- Desierto, A., and de Maio, C. (2020). "The impact of neoliberalism on academics and students in higher education: A call to adopt alternative philosophies" in *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*, 14(2), 148–159. <https://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/731>.
- Gökce, H. E., Sjö, S., Nynäs, P., & Lagerström, M. (2022). Prosociality in an international perspective: Civic engagement and volunteering. In P. Nynäs, A. Keysar, J. Konttala, B.-W. Kwaku Golo, M. T. Lassander, M. Shterin, S. Sjö, & P. Stenner (Eds.), *The Diversity of Worldviews Among Young Adults* (pp. 197–219). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94691-3_10.
- Higgins-D'Alessandro, A. (2008). The judgment-action gap: A modest proposal. In W. Veugelers (Ed.), *Getting involved* (pp. 103–118). Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789087906368_008.
- Higher Education Law [the Netherlands]. (1992). Article 1.3.5. Retrieved August 11, 2020 from <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0005682/2020-08-01#Hoofdstuk1>.
- Jain, A. K. (2010). "Data clustering: 50 years beyond K-means" in *Pattern Recognition Letters*, 8(31), 651–66.
- Kuusisto, E., de Groot, I., de Ruyter, D., Schutte, I., & Rissanen, I. (2023b). Values manifested in life purposes of higher education students in the Netherlands and Finland. (manuscript under revision)

- Kuusisto, E., de Groot, I., de Ruyter, D., Schutte, I., Rissanen, I., & Suransky, C. (2023a). "Life purposes: Comparing higher education students in four institutions in the Netherlands and Finland" in *Journal of Moral Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2022.2159347>.
- Kuusisto, E., & Schutte, I. (2022). "Sustainability as a purpose in life among Dutch higher education students" in *Environmental Education Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2022.2107617>.
- Kuusisto, E., & Tirri, K. (2021). "The challenge of educating purposeful teachers in Finland" in *Education Sciences*, 11(1), 29. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci1101029>.
- MacDonald, P. L., & Gardner, R. C. (2000). "Type 1 error rate comparisons of post hoc procedures for IJ chi-square tables" in *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 60, 735–754. doi.org/10.1177/00131640021970871.
- Malin, H., Ballard, P. J., & Damon, W. (2015). "Civic purpose: An integrated construct for understanding civic development in adolescence" in *Human Development*, 58, 103–130. doi: 10.1159/000381655.
- Malin, H., Han, H., & Liauw, I. (2017). "Civic purpose in late adolescence: Factors that prevent decline in civic engagement after high school" in *Developmental Psychology*, 53(7), 1384–1397. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dev0000322>.
- Manninen, N., Kuusisto, E., & Tirri, K. (2018). "Life goals of Finnish social services students" in *Journal of Moral Education*, 47, 175–185. doi: 10.1080/03057240.2017.1415871.
- Mariano, J. M., & Damon, W. (2008). "The role spirituality and religious faith in supporting purpose in adolescence" in R. M. Lerner, R. W. Roeser & E. Phelps (Eds.), *Positive youth development and spirituality: From theory to research* (pp. 210–230). West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998–2017). *Mplus User's Guide* (8th ed.). Muthén & Muthén.
- Naes, T., Brockhoff, P. B., & Tomic, O. (2010). *Statistics for sensory and consumer science*. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Nynäs, P., Keysar, A., & Lagerström, M. (2022). "Who are they and what do they value? The five global worldviews of young adults" in P. Nynäs, A. Keysar, J. Konttala, B.-W. Kwaku Golo, M. T. Lassander, M. Shterin, S. Sjö, & P. Stenner (Eds.), *The diversity of worldviews among young adults* (pp. 47–71). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-94691-3.pdf?pdf=button>.
- Rinne, R. (2012). Changes in higher education policy and the Nordic model, in T. Halvorsen & P. Vale (Eds.), *One world, many knowledges: Regional experiences and cross-regional links in higher education* (pp. 39–54). Bellville: Southern African-Nordic Centre.
- de Ruyter, D. J., & Schinkel, A. (2017). "Ethics education at the university: From teaching an ethics module to education for the good life" in *Bórdon*, 69(4), 125–138. <http://hdl.handle.net/1162/144704>.

- Smidt, C. (1999). "Religion and civic engagement: A comparative analysis" in *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 565(1), 176–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271629956500112>.
- Sohlberg, J., & Ketola, K. (2021). Religious communities in Finland. In H. Salomäki, M. Hytönen, K. Ketola, V.-M. Salminen, & J. Sohlberg (Eds.), *Religion in daily life and celebration* (pp. 45–66). Tampere: The Church Research Institute. <https://julkaisut.evl.fi/catalog/Tutkimukset%20ja%20julkaisut/r/4289/viewmode=previewview>.
- Statistics Finland. (2021a). *Yliopisto-opiskelijat ja -tutkinnot* [University students and degrees]. Retrieved April 5, 2023 from https://pxdata.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/fi/StatFin/StatFin__opiskt/statfin_opiskt_pxt_136b.px/.
- Statistics Finland. (2021b). *Ammattikorkeakoulujen opiskelijat ja tutkinnot* [Students and degrees of universities of applied sciences]. Retrieved April 5, 2023 from <https://pxdata.stat.fi:443/PxWeb/sq/00f07d7b-768f-46b8-a73e-70edc57cc753>.
- THL [Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare]. (2022). *Koulutuksen sukupuolen mukainen segregatio* [Education segregated by gender]. <https://thl.fi/fi/web/sukupuolten-tasa-arvo/tasa-arvon-tila/koulutus-ja-kasvatus/koulutuksen-sukupuolen-mukainen-segregatio>.
- UNIFI. (2020). *Theses on sustainable development and responsibility*. Retrieved February 9, 2022, from <https://www.unifi.fi/viestit/theses-on-sustainable-development-and-responsibility/>.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1. Retrieved February 9, 2022 from https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.
- Universiteiten van Nederland. (n.d.). *De 17 Duurzame Ontwikkelingsdoelen (SDGs)* [The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)]. Retrieved February 10, 2022 from <https://www.universiteitenvannederland.nl/duurzame-ontwikkelingsdoelen.html>.
- University Law [Finland]. (2009). Article 2 Objectives. Retrieved January 25, 2023 from <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2009/20090558> (in English en20090558.pdf (finlex.fi)).
- Vereniging Hogescholen. (n.d.). *Hogescholen en Duurzame Doelen* [Universities of Applied Sciences and sustainable goals]. Retrieved March 10, 2023 from <https://www.vereniginghogescholen.nl/duurzaam>.
- Verkasalo, M., Daun, Å., & Niit, T. (1994). "Universal values in Estonia, Finland and Sweden" in *Ethnologia Europaea*, 24, 101–117.
- Veugelers, W. (2011). *Education and Humanism: Linking Autonomy and Humanity*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.

Appendix

Goodness-of-fit values of confirmatory factor analyses on instruments measuring three dimensions of civic purpose (interest, activities, identity)

	UHS (<i>n</i> = 224)	HUAS (<i>n</i> = 369)	Dutch (<i>n</i> = 593)	EDU (<i>n</i> = 557)	TAMK (<i>n</i> = 279)	Finnish (<i>n</i> = 836)	All (<i>n</i> = 1429)
<i>Absolute fit measures</i>							
χ^2 of model fit	121.872	232.963	325.618	248.060	155.222	375.098	657.550
<i>Df</i>	51	51	51	51	51	51	51
<i>p</i>	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
<i>RMSEA</i>	.079	.098	.095	.083	.086	.087	.091
90 per cent C.I.	.061	.086	.086	.073	.070	.079	.085
<i>SRMR</i>	.097	.111	.105	.094	.101	.096	.098
	.076	.077	.074	.054	.062	.053	.060
<i>Incremental fit measures</i>							
<i>CFI</i>	.851	.783	.829	.896	.854	.888	.853
<i>TLI</i>	.807	.720	.779	.866	.812	.855	.810

Abbreviations: *n* = Number of participants. *RMSEA* = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation with 90 per cent confidence interval. *SRMR* = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. *TLI* = Tucker-Lewis Coefficient. *CFI* = Comparative Fit Index. UHS = University of Humanistic Studies. HUAS = Hanze University of Applied Sciences. EDU = Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University. TAMK = Tampere University of Applied Sciences