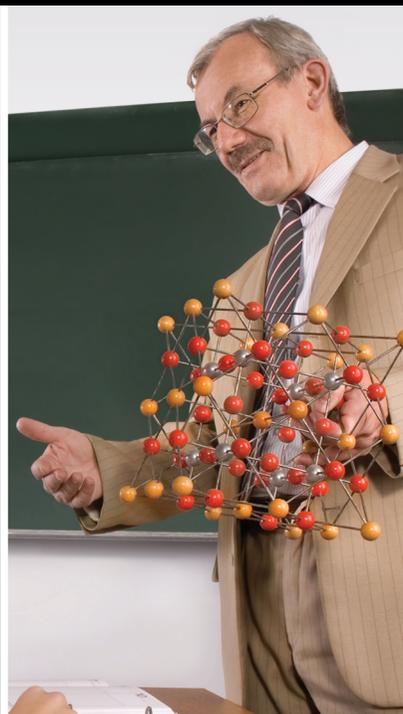


# THE MORAL CORE OF TEACHING

GUEST EDITORS: KIRSI TIRRI, ELIZABETH CAMPBELL, LIAM GEARON, AND TERENCE J. LOVAT





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# **The Moral Core of Teaching**

Education Research International

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## **The Moral Core of Teaching**

Guest Editors: Kirsi Tirri, Elizabeth Campbell, Liam Gearon,  
and Terence J. Lovat



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## Editorial

# The Moral Core of Teaching

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Nowadays, schools all over the world are under pressure to create safe, orderly, and effective learning environments wherein students can acquire social as well as academic skills, which will allow them to succeed in school and beyond. Over the last two decades, student populations—as well as those of teachers—have become increasingly diverse. Students and teachers sharing the same school can come from a broad range of cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. Schools face the challenge of creating pedagogical environments that are sensitive to numerous individual backgrounds in order to support students' social and academic success. In this kind of educational atmosphere, the moral core of teaching and the teacher's role as a moral educator are important issues in school pedagogy. Furthermore, updated research illustrates that pedagogy imbued with a moral core has ramifications for student well-being and achievement.

The main focus of this special issue is on the moral core of teaching. It is an international forum for researchers to summarize the most recent developments and ideas in the field, with special emphasis given to the role that teachers should play in moral education. In this special issue, we have nine papers from three different countries, Finland, the Netherlands, and Iran. These three countries represent very different academic, religious, and sociological contexts for education. Finland is known to be Europe's highest achiever in international PISA tests in mathematics, science, and reading and was also the first Nordic country to establish the Ethical Code for Teachers in 1998. Six papers from Finland discuss the moral core of teaching in different contexts, including early education, elementary and secondary school, science education, and teacher education.

Two papers from Iran deal with Iranian teachers' moral competence and discuss the moral nature of teaching in an Islamic country. In the Netherlands, moral education is seen as an important part of citizenship development. Schools in the Netherlands should actively promote the citizenship skills of their students, including in terms of their social integration. The Dutch paper introduces teachers' and students' views of the goals and practices in moral and citizenship education at the secondary level.

One paper of this special issue addresses the moral foundations of kindergarten teachers' educational approach from the perspective of sensitivity towards religion and worldviews. In the context of multicultural and pluralistic early education in Finland, continuous negotiations among the staff and families are necessary. Another paper continues the discussion on religious differences and presents a unique study of 16 Muslim youngsters' ideas on how to deal with religious and cultural differences in the context of Finnish society.

Moreover, a paper from Finland presents elementary school children's perceptions of moral behavior, with a focus on bullying and in the imaginary context of them possessing the infinite powers of superhero defenders. Also another paper presents empirical data of Dutch teachers' and students' views on moral education and citizenship education in vocational schools in the Netherlands. A paper that deals with the scientific, societal, and moral questions concerning science asked by gifted international students who study in the summer Camp in Finland is also presented.

The rest of the papers in this issue deal with teachers' moral competence. Two papers validate the instrument on

teachers' ethical sensitivity based on American theory with Finnish and Iranian teachers' data. The findings demonstrate similarities and differences among teachers from different cultures in their ethical sensitivity. A paper from Iran addresses the importance of caring in teaching and develops a quantitative instrument to measure the caring behavior of teachers. Another paper in this special issue explores the supervisory relationship as an arena for ethical problem solving in the context of doctoral supervision in higher education. All nine papers of this special issue focus on the moral core of teaching, contributing to its understanding through new perspectives, instrument development, or empirical data that have not been previously published.

*Kirsi Tirri*  
*Elizabeth Campbell*  
*Liam Gearon*  
*Terence J. Lovat*

## Research Article

# Finnish Teachers' Ethical Sensitivity

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The study examined the ethical sensitivity of Finnish teachers ( $N = 864$ ) using a 28-item Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ). The psychometric qualities of this instrument were analyzed, as were the differences in self-reported ethical sensitivity between practicing and student teachers and teachers of different subjects. The results showed that the psychometric qualities of the ESSQ were satisfactory and enabled the use of an explorative factor analysis. All Finnish teachers rated their level of ethical sensitivity as high, which indicates that they had internalized the ethical professionalism of teaching. However, practicing teachers' assessments were higher than student teachers'. Moreover, science as a subject was associated with lower self-ratings of ethical sensitivity.

## 1. Introduction

The Finnish education system endeavors to support the development of the whole person rather than only the cognitive domain [1]. This challenges Finnish teacher education to educate teachers to see their role as holistic and with clear educational purposes [2]. Our education is research-based, with the requirement that students exhibit a sound knowledge of recent advances in teaching and learning. Most teachers in Finland are similarly educated and qualified. In principle, the requirement for teaching is a master's degree in a given field and both a theoretical and practical approach to teaching. This teachers' knowledge includes skills in ethical reflection on teaching as well as ethical competence in intercultural encounters.

In Finland, the professional ethical codes for teachers clarify the teachers' roles and relationships in their work [3]. The Finnish guidelines for teacher's professional ethics emphasize ethical sensitivity in the teacher-pupil relationship. The teacher is urged to strive to understand the learner's point of departure, thoughts and opinions and to handle his or her personal and private matters tactfully. The teacher is also expected to give special attention to learners who need particular care and protection and not to tolerate the exploitation or abuse of learners in any form. The code also

acknowledges that the younger the learner with whom the teacher is working, the greater the teacher's responsibility for the learner becomes. This means that the teacher works together with the adults responsible for the child [3, 4]. We know from previous empirical research concerning Finnish teachers that they value professional commitment in terms of caring and cooperation in critical work situations [5, 6]. We also know that students benefit both socially and academically when they are supported by a caring classroom and school environment [7, 8].

Despite the high quality of the Finnish teacher education, in studies by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Finnish students assessed their school atmosphere and environment quite negatively. In the HBSC study 2001/02 comparing school satisfaction in 35 countries, Finland was situated in last place, with only 4.2% of the pupils reporting that they liked school very much [9]. The recent school shootings in Finland have also raised awareness of the issue of well being in schools.

It seems that in the Finnish educational system we have not acknowledged certain aspects of life and have assumed perhaps too easily that moral knowledge and reasoning lead to moral action [10, 11]. However, recent psychological research argues that the link between moral reasoning and moral behavior is weak [10]. Instead, tacit, implicit, and

automatic cognitive processes govern human functioning, with unconscious processing being dominant and conscious processing being of secondary importance [12]. This applies also to morals, which function similarly as intuition. As a tool for moral education that pays attention to both reasoning and intuition, Narváez [13] created the integrative ethical education (IEE) model. It combines rational moral education, representing Kant's philosophy, and traditional character and intuition education, representing Aristotle's. The IEE model acknowledges the importance of Kant's universal ethical principles as a top-down approach. It also highlights Aristotle's bottom-up stance where the environment's role is seen as essential in developing morals and virtues.

In addition, integrative ethical education is built on the notion of expertise development. Experts differ from novices in three ways: first, experts have more knowledge, and it is organized; second, experts perceive and react to the world differently; third, experts behave differently. Through rigorous practice their skills have become highly automatic and effortless whereas the opposite is true for novices. As with any skills, ethical skills, too, can be learned and developed [13].

According to Narváez [13], moral experts demonstrate holistic orientations in one or more of the four processes or skills: ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical motivation, and ethical action [14]. Even though all of these skills are essential; the most important is ethical sensitivity, since it is needed in noticing and understanding ethical problems and their cues. "Ethical sensitivity is the emphatic interpretation of a situation in determining who is involved, what actions to take, and what possible reactions and outcomes might ensue" [14]. Therefore the *eyes* symbolize ethical sensitivity. Even though it is influenced by ethical motivation (the *heart*; prioritizing ethical goals) and ethical judgment (the *brain*; ethical reasoning as a tool for solving problems); ethical sensitivity can be seen as preceding these as well as ethical action (the *hands*; courage to intervene, staying with the task) [14]. Because of the centrality of ethical sensitivity in general, and especially in schools as a key component of teachers' moral competence, this paper examines the ethical sensitivity of Finnish teachers ( $N = 864$ ).

## 2. Measuring Ethical Sensitivity

Ethical sensitivity's increased importance as a research domain has been accompanied by a growing number of tests of ethical sensitivity. However, most of these are context-specific (see [15]), for example relating to medicine and dental education [16], to racial and gender intolerance [17], or to science [18, 19]. In addition, these instruments include videotaped dilemmas [17], written dilemmas [16], or written scenarios [18, 19] that participants evaluate. In turn, researchers rate these evaluations. Therefore we have developed an instrument that operates on a general level according to Narváez's theory [20]. It can be used in all contexts and can be employed as a self-evaluation tool [21, 22]. Narváez's [20] operationalization of ethical sensitivity has guided our Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ) development work.

According to Narváez [14, 20], ethical sensitivity includes seven skills: (1) *reading and expressing emotions* mean understanding and identifying your and others' emotional expressions, as well as learning when and how to appropriately express your emotions and manage aggression; (2) *taking the perspectives of others* refers to the ability to take an alternative perspective, for example that of someone in or outside of one's cultural group, or of people who are less fortunate; (3) *caring by connecting to others* "involves expanding the sense of self-concern to include others," and showing care; (4) *working with interpersonal and group differences* includes perceiving and responding to diversity, as well as becoming multicultural so that one is able to shift from using one culture code to using another; (5) *preventing social bias* involves identifying, understanding, actively countering, and controlling bias; (6) *generating interpretations and options* means having the skills to respond creatively, since "people often repeat the same mistakes because they respond automatically without considering another way to behave;" (7) *identifying the consequences of actions and options* (identifying the consequences of actions and options [20] was later modified into communicating well [14]).

The ESSQ instrument has previously been tested with Finnish seven- to ninth-grade students [21–23] and Iranian Kurdish teachers [15]. These earlier studies using the ESSQ showed that female students estimated their ethical sensitivity skills higher than their male peers did [21, 22]. This tendency can be explained by the nature of the items measuring ethical sensitivity skills. Most measure caring ethics as well as emotional and social intelligence, since Narváez's definition of ethical sensitivity has common features with the manifestation of Gardner's [24] intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, which include the ability to identify and understand different feelings and motives in oneself and in others. The concept of ethical sensitivity is also in concordance with Goleman's [25] concept of emotional intelligence, which refers to a meta-ability of emotional aptitude that determines how well we can use whatever other skills we have. In earlier Finnish studies both sixth- and ninth-grade girls were shown to be more care oriented in their moral orientation than their male peers of the same age, who were clearly more justice oriented [26].

With the ESSQ we also found that academically gifted students estimated their ethical skills higher than did students of average ability [21, 22], which supports the notion of other researcher's that gifted students are more mature in their moral thinking because of their precocious intellectual development [27–29]. In the sample of Iranian Kurdish teachers the ESSQ revealed that the ethical sensitivity of primary and secondary school teachers was higher than that of high school teachers [15], thus indicating a caring ethos, which has been found to be particularly important for teachers of lower grades [30]. In the light of the previous studies the ESSQ seems to possess construct validity, indicating convergent validity that expresses the extent to which scores for the measure in question are related to scores for other measures [31, pages 101–104]. The results of previous studies also reflect the concurrent validity [31, pages 101–104], or

TABLE 1: The Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ).

Item/label	M (SD)
(1) Reading and expressing emotions	
<i>es1_1/In conflict situations, I am able to identify other persons' feelings.</i>	4.0 (0.6)
es1_2/I am able to express my different feelings to other people.	4.0 (0.7)
<i>es1_3/I notice if someone working with me is offended by me.</i>	4.0 (0.6)
es1_4/I am able to express to other people if I am offended or hurt because of them.	3.3 (0.9)
(2) Taking the perspectives of others	
es2_5/I am able to cooperate with people who do not share my opinions on what is right and what is wrong.	4.2 (0.6)
es2_6/I tolerate different ethical views in my surroundings.	4.1 (0.7)
es2_7/I think it is good that my closest friends think in different ways.	4.2 (0.5)
es2_8/I also get along with people who do not agree with me.	4.2 (0.6)
(3) Caring by connecting to others	
es3_9/I am concerned about the well being of my partners.	4.0 (0.6)
es3_10/I take care of the well being of others and try to improve it.	4.3 (0.6)
es3_11/In conflict situations I do my best to take actions that aim at maintaining good personal relationships.	4.3 (0.6)
<i>es3_12/I try to have good contact with all the people I am working with.</i>	4.2 (0.7)
(4) Working with interpersonal and group differences	
<i>es4_13/I take other peoples' points of view into account before making any important decisions in my life.</i>	3.8 (0.8)
es4_14/I try to consider another person's position when I face a conflict situation.	4.0 (0.6)
es4_15/When I am working on ethical problems I consider the impact of my decisions on other people.	4.1 (0.6)
es4_16/I try to consider other peoples' needs, even in situations concerning my own benefits.	4.1 (0.6)
(5) Preventing social bias	
es5_17/I recognize my own bias when I take a stand on ethical issues.	3.9 (0.7)
es5_18/I realize that I am tied to certain prejudices when I assess ethical issues.	4.0 (0.8)
es5_19/I try to control my own prejudices when making ethical evaluations.	4.0 (0.7)
es5_20/When I am resolving ethical problems I try to take a position evolving out of my own social status.	3.7 (0.8)
(6) Generating interpretations and options	
es6_21/I contemplate on the consequences of my actions when making ethical decisions.	4.2 (0.6)
es6_22/I ponder on different alternatives when aiming at the best possible solution to an ethically problematic situation.	4.2 (0.6)
es6_23/I am able to create many alternative ways to act when I face ethical problems in my life.	3.7 (0.7)
<i>es6_24/I believe there are several right solutions to ethical problems.</i>	4.0 (0.8)
(7) Identifying the consequences of actions and options	
es7_25/I notice that there are ethical issues involved in human interaction.	4.1 (0.7)
es7_26/I see a lot of ethical problems around me.	3.5 (1.0)
es7_27/I am aware of the ethical issues I face at school.	3.9 (0.6)
es7_28/I am better than other people in recognizing new and current ethical problems.	3.0 (0.8)

Note: Items in italics were not accepted for the final model. Items es1\_1, es1\_3, es4\_13, and es6\_24 with lowest values in extraction communalities were removed, so that the determinant was  $p = .001$ . In addition, item es3\_12 was deleted because the factor loading of the item was lower than .30.

known groups criterion [32, pages 173, 177], which reflects whether two or more groups of people differ in expected ways with respect to the measure.

In this study we measure Finnish teachers' ethical sensitivity with the ESSQ instrument we have developed and explore the possible explanations of our empirical findings within the context of teacher education. We continue to examine the construct validity of the ESSQ with the known group validation strategy regarding differences in ethical sensitivity between experienced and inexperienced teachers. The IEE as a theory includes the idea of novices and experts, where children are naturally seen as novices and in need of the expert guidance and role models provided by teachers

[13]. In teacher development theories it is also acknowledged that inexperienced teachers are novices and differ from experienced expert teachers for example in their ability to concentrate on interaction and students' learning processes [33]. Therefore our first hypothesis is that there should be a difference in ethical sensitivity self-estimations between novice and expert teachers, meaning that experts should have higher ethical sensitivity than novices. Secondly, we look at the differences between teachers of different subjects. Based on previous research which has found science students' ethical sensitivity to be lower than that of other students [[18, 19], see also [34]], our second hypothesis is that science teachers' ethical sensitivity is lower than that of other teachers'.

TABLE 2: Means, alpha loadings, and correlations of the dimensions of the ESSQ.

Dimensions and items	<i>M</i> (SD)	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Reading and expressing emotions es1_2, es1_4	3.6 (0.7)	.56	—						
(2) Taking the perspectives of others es2_5, es2_6, es2_7, es2_8	4.2 (0.5)	.80	.2	—					
(3) Caring by connecting to others es3_9, es3_10, es3_11	4.2 (0.5)	.67	.2	.4	—				
(4) Working with interpersonal and group differences es4_14, es4_16	4.0 (0.5)	.63	.2	.4	.5	—			
(5) Preventing social bias es5_17, es5_18, es5_19, es5_20	3.9 (0.5)	.72	.2	.3	.3	.5	—		
(6) Generating interpretations and options es4_15, es6_21, es6_22, es6_23	4.1 (0.5)	.74	.2	.4	.4	.6	.5	—	
(7) Identifying the consequences of actions and options es7_25, es7_26, es7_27, es7_28	3.6 (0.6)	.66	.2	.1	.2	.3	.4	.4	—

TABLE 3: Teaching career stage-related differences in ethical sensitivity.

Dimension	Practicing <i>M</i> (SD) ( <i>n</i> = 522)	Student <i>M</i> (SD) ( <i>n</i> = 342)	Levene's test <i>p</i>	<i>t</i> ( <i>p</i> )	$\eta^2$
(1) Reading and expressing emotions	3.7 (0.6)	3.6 (0.7)	.007	−2.306 (.021)	0.01
(2) Taking the perspectives of others	4.2 (0.5)	4.1 (0.5)	.974	−2.578 (.010)	0.01
(3) Caring by connecting to others	4.2 (0.5)	4.2 (0.5)	.413	.007 (.994)	
(4) Working with interpersonal and group differences	4.0 (0.5)	4.0 (0.6)	.113	−1.509 (.132)	
(5) Preventing social bias	3.9 (0.5)	3.8 (0.6)	.327	−1.741 (.082)	
(6) Generating interpretations and options	4.0 (0.5)	4.1 (0.5)	.728	.732 (.465)	
(7) Identifying the consequences of actions and options	3.7 (0.6)	3.6 (0.6)	.869	−.750 (.454)	

Effect sizes ( $\eta^2$ ) were calculated with the formula  $(t^2)/(t^2 + (n_1 + n_2 - 2))$ .

In addition, the study continues to explore the psychometric qualities of the ESSQ, which in the light of previous results have shown the operationalization of the ethical sensitivity model to be promising and satisfactory [15, 21, 22]. In the original study [21, 22] an exploratory factor analysis was not conducted even though it is an important tool for examining the construct of the chosen items. In this paper the factor analysis is explorative, however, and also confirmatory in a way, because the instrument is based on a theoretical model of Narváez's operationalization.

All in all, the ethical sensitivity of self-assessments of Finnish teachers ( $N = 864$ ) is studied in this paper with the following three research questions: (1) what are the psychometric qualities of the instrument with this population? and what, if any, are the differences in self-reported ethical sensitivity between (2) practicing and student teachers and (3) teachers of different subjects?

### 3. Method

**3.1. Sample.** A nonprobability sample ( $N = 864$ ) was collected with an Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ) during the spring and autumn semesters of 2011. Each respondent was personally invited to complete the Internet version of the questionnaire. The participants were asked to evaluate their attitude towards the statements measuring ethical sensitivity.

Of the teacher sample, 60 per cent were practicing teachers ( $n = 522$ ) and 40 per cent were student teachers ( $n = 342$ ) at the beginning of their pedagogical studies at the University of Helsinki. Altogether 667 (77%) of the teachers

were female and 197 (23%) male. The sample consisted of current and future early education and elementary school class teachers ( $n = 302$ , 35%) as well as lower and upper secondary school subject teachers ( $n = 562$ , 65%). The latter were teachers of science ( $n = 141$ , 16%), social science (religion, history, philosophy, and psychology) ( $n = 123$ , 14%), languages ( $n = 176$ , 20%), and other subjects (e.g., art, home economics, crafts, and physical education) ( $n = 122$ , 22%).

**3.2. The Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire.** The ESSQ [22] is based on Narváez's operationalization of ethical sensitivity [20]. The instrument consists of 28 items on a Likert scale of 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*) (Table 1). The items have been designed to apply to people from different background and cultures. This allows for the use of the instrument in a multicultural society and in cross-cultural studies. The statements describe the issues and values that the respondent considered personally important. Each of the seven dimensions has been operationalized with four statements. All items, with means and standard deviations, are listed in Table 1.

**3.3. Statistical Analyses.** The psychometric qualities of the instrument were examined in three stages. First, the psychometric properties of the seven dimensions of the ESSQ's 28 ethical sensitivity items were investigated. Second, the structure of the items was analyzed with an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Third, the reliability of the ESSQ indicators was analyzed by Cronbach's alpha [35, pages 169–170].

TABLE 4: Subject-related differences in ethical sensitivity.

	EE	Science	Social science	Language	Other	Levene's test $p$ $F(p), \eta_p^2$
	302 (35) $M$ (SD)	141 (16) $M$ (SD)	123 (14) $M$ (SD)	176 (20) $M$ (SD)	122 (14) $M$ (SD)	
(1) Reading and expressing emotions	3.7 (.7)	3.6 (.7)	3.7 (.7)	3.6 (.7)	3.8 (.6)	.220 1.568, (.181), .01
(2) Taking the perspectives of others	4.2 (.5)	4.2 (.5)	4.2 (.5)	4.1 (.5)	4.2 (.5)	.615 .811, (.518), .004
(3) Caring by connecting to others	4.2 (.4)	4.1 (.5)	4.1 (.5)	4.2 (.5)	4.2 (.5)	.429 3.855, (.004), .02
(4) Working with interpersonal and group differences	4.1 (.05)	4.0 (.6)	4.1 (.5)	4.1 (.5)	4.1 (.5)	.726 1.391, (.235), .01
(5) Preventing social bias	3.8 (.5)	3.8 (.6)	4.0 (.5)	3.9 (.5)	4.0 (.6)	.374 3.937, (.004), .02
(6) Generating interpretations and options	4.0 (.5)	4.0 (.5)	4.1 (.4)	4.1 (.5)	4.1 (.5)	.900 2.026, (.089), .01
(7) Identifying the consequences of actions and options	3.6 (.6)	3.6 (.5)	3.8 (.6)	3.6 (.6)	3.8 (.5)	.817 5.376, (.000), .02

The differences in self-reported ethical sensitivity were examined by comparing the means of the dimensions with  $t$ -tests, with the stage of teaching (practicing/student teacher) as grouping variables. The differences between teachers of different school levels and subjects were examined with a test of variance (ANOVA) applying subjects as fixed factors.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. The Psychometric Properties of the ESSQ Instrument

**4.1.1. Correlation Analysis of the Ethical Sensitivity Scale.** The first task of the statistical analysis was to investigate the psychometric properties of the ESSQ items. After four items (es1\_1, es1\_3, es4\_13, es6\_24) with the lowest values in extraction communalities were removed in iterative style, the determinant was .001. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test result was acceptable, with a value of .882. According to Tabachnick and Fidell [36, page 614], values of .60 and above are required for good EFA. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p = .000$ ). These tests showed that we were able to conduct an exploratory factor analysis.

**4.1.2. Factor Structure and Reliabilities of the Ethical Sensitivity Scale.** The exploratory factor analysis was executed by Maximum Likelihood extraction with a Direct Oblimin rotation. The sample revealed the presence of six factors with Eigen values exceeding 1 [37]. Cattell's scree plot [38] brought forth six to eight factors. The six-factor solution explained 44% of the variance and seven factor 46%. In both the six- and seven-factor solutions all 24 items loaded accordingly with Narváez's theory, except items of dimension 4 *working with interpersonal and group differences* which loaded in the six-factor solution on dimensions 3 *caring by connecting to others* and 6 *generating interpretations and*

*options*. In the seven-factor solution item es4\_15 loaded on dimension 6 *generating interpretations and options*, but items es4\_14 and es4\_16 loaded on the first factor (see Table 5). In the seven-factor solution item es3\_12 was not accepted for the final model, since the factor loading was not over .30. All in all, the seven-factor solution was chosen for the analysis, and 23 items from the original 28 were selected to represent the Ethical Sensitivity Scale.

The psychometric properties of the ESSQ items were further examined by reliability analysis [35]. The alpha loadings and correlations between the ESSQ dimensions are presented in Table 2. The reliabilities in the sample ranged from .56 to .80. Dimension 2 *taking the perspectives of others* had the highest reliability ( $\alpha = .80$ ) while dimensions 1 *reading and expressing emotions* ( $\alpha = .56$ ) and 4 *working with interpersonal and group differences* ( $\alpha = .63$ ) had the lowest. These dimensions included only two items, which lowered the reliability values. Dimension 4 *working with interpersonal and group differences* correlated with dimensions 3 *caring by connecting to others* ( $r = .5$ ), 5 *preventing social bias* ( $r = .5$ ), and 6 *generating interpretations and options* ( $r = .6$ ). In addition, dimensions 5 and 6 correlated with each other firmly ( $r = .5$ ). These correlations were strong, since according to Cohen a correlation above  $|.50|$  is considered large [39].

Both the alpha values and correlations support the suggestion that adjustments are needed to improve the ESSQ. Modification is required regarding dimensions 1 *reading and expressing emotions* and 4 *working with interpersonal and group differences* in order to increase the communality and stability of the items. In addition, the ESSQ's number of dimensions should be discussed and further researched. However, the present analysis of the psychometric properties indicates that the ESSQ is already a satisfactory instrument (see also [15]).

TABLE 5: Factor loadings and extraction communalities.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	$h^2$
es4_14 I try to consider another person's position when I face a conflict situation.	<b>.507</b>	-.099	-.131	-.010	-.082	.060	-.109	.508
es4_16 I try to consider other peoples' needs, even in situations concerning my own benefits.	<b>.323</b>	-.002	-.266	.015	-.037	.188	-.165	.478
es2_6 I tolerate different ethical views in my surroundings.	-.036	<b>-.856</b>	.041	.059	.026	.031	.084	.670
es2_5 I am able to cooperate with people who do not share my opinions on what is right and what is wrong.	-.140	<b>-.781</b>	-.009	.027	.031	-.012	-.055	.593
es2_8 I also get along with people who do not agree with me.	.077	<b>-.594</b>	-.100	-.053	-.043	-.031	-.049	.470
es2_7 I think it is good that my closest friends think in different ways.	.099	<b>-.567</b>	.000	-.005	-.016	.053	.005	.386
es3_10 I take care of the well-being of others and try to improve it.	-.066	-.007	<b>-.844</b>	.043	-.029	.079	.000	.736
es3_9 I am concerned about the well-being of my partners.	-.011	-.016	<b>-.610</b>	.245	-.013	.008	.004	.466
es3_11 In conflict situations, I do my best to take actions that aim at maintaining good personal relationships.	.222	-.129	<b>-.384</b>	-.156	-.021	-.016	-.020	.335
<i>es3_12 I try to have good contact with all the people I am working with.</i>	<i>.159</i>	<i>-.216</i>	<i>-.293</i>	<i>-.076</i>	<i>.024</i>	<i>-.038</i>	<i>-.098</i>	<i>.295</i>
es1_4 I am able to express to other people if I am offended or hurt because of them.	-.027	-.016	-.017	<b>.661</b>	-.045	.024	.074	.439
es1_2 I am able to express my different feelings to other people.	.014	-.031	-.114	<b>.554</b>	.026	-.021	-.134	.401
es7_26 I see a lot of ethical problems around me.	-.044	.085	-.030	-.077	<b>-.720</b>	.037	.018	.515
es7_27 I am aware of the ethical issues I face at school.	-.062	-.031	-.103	.012	<b>-.544</b>	-.016	-.155	.404
es7_28 I am better than other people in recognizing new and current ethical problems.	.165	-.008	.056	.161	<b>-.511</b>	-.049	-.010	.340
es7_25 I notice that there are ethical issues involved in human interaction.	-.039	-.117	.046	-.026	<b>-.416</b>	.238	-.020	.333
es5_19 I try to control my own prejudices when making ethical evaluations.	-.008	-.049	-.052	.038	.065	<b>.671</b>	-.107	.545
es5_18 I realize that I am tied to certain prejudices when I assess ethical issues.	-.093	.002	-.014	-.067	-.146	<b>.611</b>	.036	.421
es5_17 I recognize my own bias when I take a stand on ethical issues.	.121	-.050	-.026	.027	.019	<b>.578</b>	-.150	.535
es5_20 When I am resolving ethical problems, I try to take a position evolving out of my own social status.	.296	-.002	.004	.110	.011	<b>.377</b>	-.026	.322
es6_22 I ponder on different alternatives when aiming at the best possible solution to an ethically problematic situation.	-.094	-.048	.042	-.011	-.017	.035	<b>-.786</b>	.608
es6_21 I contemplate on the consequences of my actions when making ethical decisions.	.004	.103	-.087	-.024	-.048	.079	<b>-.676</b>	.543
<b>es4_15</b> When I am working on ethical problems I consider the impact of my decisions on other people.	.255	-.059	-.114	.032	-.012	.078	<b>-.420</b>	.501
es6_23 I am able to create many alternative ways to act when I face ethical problems in my life.	-.121	-.110	.084	.108	-.096	.009	<b>-.389</b>	.299

Note: Item in italics was not accepted for the final model.

**4.2. Career Stage-Related Differences in Teachers' Ethical Sensitivity.** Overall, the teachers' rated their ethical sensitivity high (Tables 1 and 2), which might indicate a ceiling effect and restriction of range [18, 31]. They rated their skills most highly in *taking the perspective of others* and in *caring by connecting to others* ( $M = 4.2$ ,  $SD = 0.5$ , resp.). They rated their skills to be the lowest in *reading and expressing*

*emotions* ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 0.7$ ) and in *identifying the consequences of actions and options* ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 0.6$ ). These dimensions included the two lowest means of the individual items (Table 1): es1\_4 "I am able to express to other people if I am offended or hurt because of them" ( $M = 3.3$ ,  $SD = 0.9$ ) and es7\_28 "I am better than other people in recognizing new and current ethical problems"

( $M = 3.0, SD = 0.8$ ). These low means might indicate the modest and reserved nature of Finnish people [40, 41]. Interestingly, Iranian Kurdish teachers' self-estimations reflected similar modesty when measured by the ESSQ [15]. Our instrument seems to have captured what G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede [42, pages 164–167], have referred to as “uncertainty avoidance,” defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations.” Finland and Iran shared the same index score and rank and were among the countries with low to medium scores in uncertainty avoidance, which has been associated with high scores in agreeableness combining modesty, altruism, compliance, and tender mindedness [42, pages 168–172].

Differences in ethical sensitivity between practicing teachers ( $n = 522$ ) and student teachers ( $n = 342$ ) were analyzed by  $t$ -test. Practicing teachers rated statistically significantly higher their ability to *read and express emotions* ( $t(655,294) = -2.306, p = .021, \eta^2 = .01$ ) ( $M_{\text{Practicing teacher}} = 3.7, SD = 0.6; M_{\text{Student teacher}} = 3.6, SD = 0.7$ ) and rated themselves more able to *take the perspectives of others* ( $t(862) = -2.578, p = .010, \eta^2 = .01$ ) ( $M_{\text{Practicing teacher}} = 4.2, SD = 0.5; M_{\text{Student teacher}} = 4.1, SD = 0.5$ ) (Table 3). Even though these results show that the practicing teachers rated their ethical sensitivity higher than the student teachers did, it should be noted that the effect sizes are small and there are no differences between practicing and student teachers regarding the five other dimensions of ethical sensitivity. Still, the findings are in line with theories and previous empirical findings concerning the differences between experienced and novice teachers. Experienced teachers have been found to focus more on interacting with their students, which is close to ethical sensitivity and novice teachers to concentrate more on their own content knowledge and role as teachers [2, 33, 43, 44].

**4.3. Subject-Related Differences in Ethical Sensitivity.** We applied a one-way analysis of variation (ANOVA) in examining subject-related differences in ethical sensitivity. We compared the self-assessments of early education and elementary school class teachers (EE) and of subject teachers of science, social science, languages, and other subjects. Statistically significant differences were found in three of the dimensions: *caring by connecting to others* ( $F(3) = 3.855, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ), *preventing social bias* ( $F(3) = 3.937, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ), and *identifying the consequences of actions and options* ( $F(3) = 5.376, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ) (Table 4). The results of the Levene's tests were not statistically significant (Table 5), therefore Tukey's HSD post hoc test was used in analyzing the multiple comparisons.

Science teachers' self-assessments were found to be statistically significantly the lowest in all three dimensions (Figures 1, 2, and 3). Their ratings in *caring by connecting to others* were lower than language teachers' ( $p = .013$ ) and other subject teachers' ( $p = .022$ ), and a particularly strong difference was noted between EE teachers' self-assessments ( $p = .005$ ) (Figure 1) (see also [15]). The EE teachers' high ratings with respect to the “caring by connecting with others”

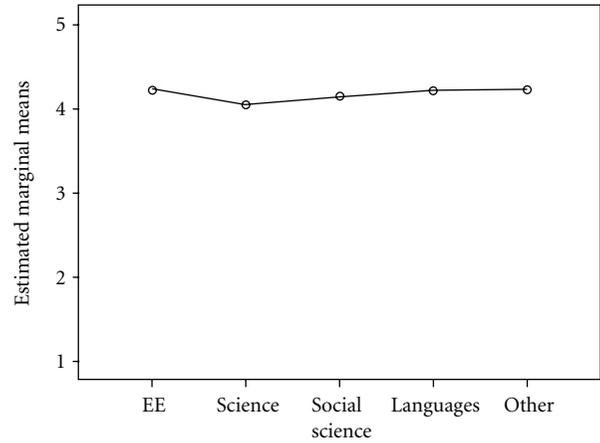


FIGURE 1: 3 Caring by connecting to others. Estimated Marginal means of 3 caring by connecting to others.

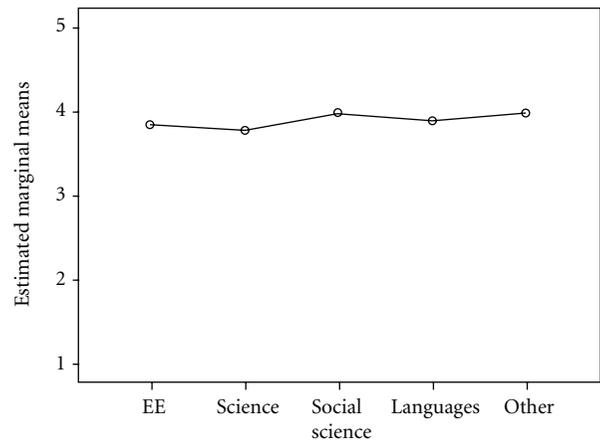


FIGURE 2: 5 Preventing social bias. Estimated Marginal means of 5 preventing social bias.

dimension were not surprising, since caring has been found to be at the core of class teachers' moral outlook [30].

Regarding the dimension *preventing social bias*, science teachers' self-assessments were lower than social science ( $p = .021$ ) and other subject ( $p = .015$ ) teachers (Figure 2). This phenomenon was similarly noted in a study [2] that examined Finnish student teachers of mathematics and religious education and their reflections on the pedagogical purpose of their teaching. Among other things, the student teachers of religious education emphasized reflection skills: “the teacher needs to be aware of his/her own religious identity in order to help the students find theirs” [2]. In our sample, it seems that social science subjects such as religion education, history, philosophy, and psychology are subjects where teachers' own thinking and affiliations have been reflected and recognized. This is also evident in the ratings of skills in *identifying the consequences of actions and options* (Figure 3), which social science teachers and teachers of other subjects rated equally highly. Social science teachers' ratings were statistically higher than science ( $p = .014$ ),

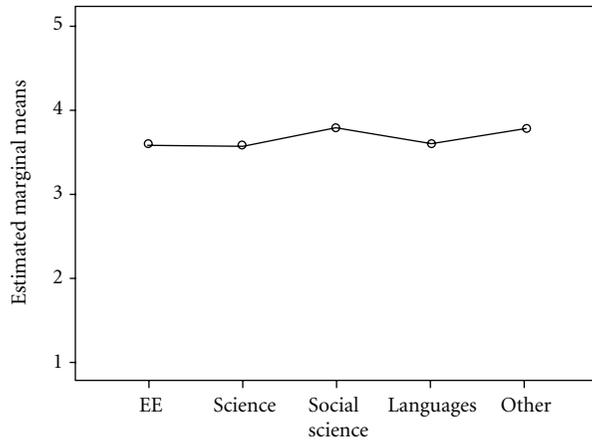


FIGURE 3: 7 Identifying consequences of actions and options. Estimated Marginal means of 7 identifying the consequences of actions and options.

EE ( $p = .014$ ), and language ( $p = .028$ ) teachers, and teachers of other subjects rated themselves more highly than science ( $p = .032$ ) and EE ( $p = .018$ ) teachers.

All in all, these results are in line with previous studies which have found a low level of ethical sensitivity among university science students [18] and also among high school students in anatomy and physiology classes [19]. A possible explanation may be that in Finland even though it has been very difficult to become a class teacher and to be accepted into social science teaching programs, the situation regarding science and language teachers has been quite the opposite. There have been difficulties finding new mathematics teachers, for example. However, in our study the science teachers' ratings matched the high level of other teachers' ratings, which could be explained by the homogeneity of the participants or the nature of the ESSQ itself [45]. The Finnish science teachers' overall high ratings could also be related to an interesting finding concerning Finnish student teachers of mathematics, who had reflected on the pedagogical purpose of their teaching and stressed the ability to meet the needs of different learners in mathematics [2].

## 5. Conclusions

The present study investigated the 28-item Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ) and tested its psychometric properties with a sample of 864 Finnish teachers as well as student teachers at the beginning of their studies (60% and 40%, resp.).

The study found a difference between experienced and novice teachers' self-estimated ethical sensitivity, which is in line with teacher development theories [2, 33, 43, 44] and with Narváez's IEE model's assumptions [13]. Further, the results showed science teaching to be associated with lower evaluations of ethical sensitivity. Therefore both of the hypotheses that were presented on the basis of previous studies were supported. The results with this population confirmed the construct validity, as well as concurrent and

convergent validities, of the ESSQ since the results are in line with studies that have utilized other ethical sensitivity instruments. However, based on this study, it is difficult to evaluate the divergent or discriminant validity of the ESSQ, since we were unable to correlate the results with other similar measurements [46]. Therefore the issue of the ESSQ's validity can be seen as a possible weakness of the study; the question needs to be addressed further in future research.

As well, more research is required especially concerning the *reading and expressing emotions* category, of which two of the four items could not be included in our model. This skill in particular has been shown to be important in urban schools with diverse student populations [47]. Skill in understanding and expressing emotions is frequently necessary for teachers in order to establish caring relationships with students and their families [4]. In many critical school situations ethical sensitivity has created opportunities for cooperation. The ESSQ as an instrument therefore needs adjusting and further development, while the items and the number of dimensions require more research and discussion.

The study made clear the Finnish teachers' high level of ethical sensitivity as shown in their self-assessments indicates that the participants, both practicing teachers and students at the beginning of their pedagogical studies, had in their own opinion internalized the professional ethical codes of teaching [3]. In general, caring and equality are the core values and ethos of Finnish educational policy [48], which can be seen in the results. Still, one should be careful when interpreting this finding, since the high means indicate the possibility of a ceiling effect occurring in the ESSQ [18, 31]. Therefore in order to overcome this limitation and thus improve the external validity and the generalization of results [31, page 85], more research is needed to improve the ESSQ so that it makes clearer teachers' and other experts' shortcomings in ethical sensitivity, as well as the possibilities of improving this skill. In any case, self-assessments do not necessarily relate to the nature and level of teachers' ethical sensitivity which is realized through actions in the schools. Therefore the study opens intriguing research prospects. Moreover, it identifies important tensions between research results in this area: more investigation is needed to determine why Finnish teachers' ratings of their own ethical sensitivity are high, yet Finnish schools are still facing challenges regarding pupils' wellbeing [9].

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## Research Article

# Third Graders' Perceptions on Moral Behaviour on Bullying If They Had the Infinite Powers of Superhero Defenders

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Bullying is a serious moral concern affecting the victim's welfare and achievement in school. Lately, research on bullying phenomenon has led to successful procedures in which passive bystanders are asked to become defenders of the victims of bullying. This case study explores children's perceptions on moral behaviour on bullying and, moreover, what type of moral voice they would express if they had the infinite powers and means of superhero defenders. Children created masks, posters, and flags for ideal superheroes and described their personalities. In addition, they drew comic strips about the skills they wish to teach new hero students in superhero school. The results indicate that children's moral voices can be divided primarily into justice and care. In addition, some expressed also the dark voice of the vigilante. Findings suggest that superheroes offer one tool for educators and children to ponder about the role of defenders for the victims of bullying. The topic focuses on the core of school life, relationships between pupils, and their moral development. Sixteen third grade children (aged 9-10) from a primary school in Finland took part in the study. The results for two of the children are presented in detail as the basis for discussion.

## 1. Introduction

In the classic children's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice comes to a crossroads in the forest and asks the Cheshire cat for advice about which way to choose. The cat tells Alice that it depends largely on where she wants to go. Alice says that she does not much care, and the cat replies that in that case it does not matter which path she chooses [1]. Often, choosing a path in life includes making moral decisions and it is not always easy to make the right choice. The awareness of one's destination can assist in making decisions. The conversation between the cat and Alice continues with Alice becoming curious about what type of people live around the different possible paths. The cat tells her that here she is only going to meet mad people. Alice says that she does not want to go among mad people but the cat responds, "Oh, you can't help that. We are all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad." Alice asks the cat how it knows that she is mad too. The cat responds, "You must be or you wouldn't have come here." [1]. Alice experienced nonsense in wonderland where things were opposite to her

previous world. Alice has inspired many graphic novelists to write adventures in various wonderlands of nonsense and madness. For example, contemporary superhero cartoonists Morrison and McKean [2] created *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth*, which is a fictional story of Batman entering a house for the criminally insane and being bullied by his archenemies. Soon, the book became the best selling original graphic novel in the comics industry. Children face moral dilemmas and crossroads just like Alice did in wonderland. Who could guide them? Pinocchio had to learn to make moral choices before becoming a real boy, and for this purpose Jiminy Cricket was asked to serve as his moral guide and defender on a straight and narrow path [3]. Little Red Riding Hood also met temptations in the forest and was deceived by the wolf. The hunter took the role of defender when he rescued her by shooting the wolf that had eaten her [4].

The roots of this study are in the idea that children can feel in school like Alice, Pinocchio, Batman, and Little Red Riding Hood in their worlds of nonsense and madness. Children need guides and defenders. For first graders on their

first day, school can be an amazing wonderland. It is like a brand new world with various crossroads, and many new people will enter their lives. First graders may also encounter violence like bullying which makes no sense and is complete madness to them. This study investigates one of the major moral challenges of the core of school life: pupil relationships in terms of bullying. The methodology invites their moral imagination to take the form of a superhero defender to tackle bullying. Often, children feel powerless when faced with serious moral problems. What would happen if they received more powers? This study explores how children see superheroes as defenders in bullying and what type of moral voice they would express if they had infinite powers.

### *1.1. Narrative Thinking as Children's Way to Learn Morality.*

When children meet virtuous characters in stories, they too want to be good human beings [5]. Stories are a key factor in the moral development of children as they contain morality in action. Stories reach deep into the core of moral life [6]. Stories are a source of information from which children scoop up ideas when they face moral dilemmas in their lives. The purpose of stories is to enrich the readers' moral imagination. From the role models and idols children find in stories, they create prototypes for justice, equality, and love which may not necessarily be found in real life. Thus, children's moral judgments are based on their own knowledge banks which are created from the stories they read [7]. Children's moral responses depend largely on the stories they have read recently [6], and they construct meanings based on their knowledge and previous experiences. However, there is a risk that children may understand the message in very different way to that intended by the author because they are not passive readers, since comprehension of stories depends on the reader's moral development [8].

Both parents tell more stories of caring to girls than to boys, which affects girls' moral orientation [9], while boys are expected to play competitively and aggressively in order to survive in a world of competition [10]. All children have a natural need for stories that contain opposite forces, good and evil [11]. Stories can work as therapy [12].

### *1.2. Superheroes as Moral Agents.*

Role models are important when a child forms a moral self and identity [13]. There are various types of role models and heroes in the stories that children read. This study focuses on the superhero genre who are seen mainly as defenders even though they have many roles in saving the world. There is wide agreement about superheroes' role as defenders. Superheroes are defenders of the less fortunate [14], vulnerable [15], innocent [16], powerless [17], weak, and oppressed [18]. They defend fair play [19], truth [20], justice, law, and order [21]. In a nutshell, superheroes are defenders of right against wrong [22]. Their action is based on charity and they see that certain behaviour must be controlled if order is to be maintained. Superheroes have a high social status and moral code [14] and they act in the name of justice as their morality is built on that [23]. Heroes fascinate because of their mythical

nature. The comic illustrator David Mazzucchelli [24] points out that orphans like Superman and Moses developed into heroes when they found their hidden specialties. This archetype resonates with a child's early fears and fantasies. Mazzucchelli disagrees with critics who analyze superheroes in terms of an adult sensibility. Superheroes come alive best in a children's world because they were created for them. This is in line with Morrison [23] who protects superheroes from critiques by arguing that children understand that stories have different rules. Adults question how Superman can fly but children know naturally that he is simply not real.

Children admire superheroes as their moral idols. In his empirical study, Martin [25] found a correlation between children's self-rated moral values and morality of their favourite superheroes. However, the correlation was stronger amongst boys. Moreover, Pardales [7] found that children may form their values based on their heroes' values.

Many educators have addressed the violence of superheroes. Violence should not be the determining factor in defining superheroes' moral nature because their violence depends on the social context. They use violence only to prevent villains causing harm to others [25]. Superheroes as defenders exist to solve serious problems and even though this may make violence necessary, they engage in violence without killing [23]. But does every child truly comprehend these facts? There is great danger in young children analysing superhero stories only in terms of images which are often violent. Young children have a tendency to focus their attention on action instead of a character's intentions [26]. Many times superheroes' solution to violence is more violence. Superheroes do not have an official role in their communities as they act more like unofficial security guards of the city. This makes questionable their position as role models and they may even encourage children to take the law into their own hands and thus becoming vigilantes. Superheroes face difficult moral dilemmas. They have a moral responsibility to use their powers and thus cannot remain as silent bystanders. Often there are two forces fighting within them, that is, hero and avenger. Sometimes, the villain makes the superhero choose between two alternatives in deciding whom to save? Another dilemma is that can he jeopardize other people's lives in trying to capture a villain in a dangerous chase.

Besides superheroes there are also everyday heroes without supernatural powers. Everyday heroism is a social concept in which personal virtue, integrity, moral courage, and compassion are turned into meaningful social action when the opportunity arises [27]. Moreover, everyday heroism is about peace, love, generosity of spirit, acts of kindness, and making others feel embraced, understood, and special. Moral courage and a heroic imagination lead to the ability to stand up to injustice and indifference. Becoming an everyday hero is a compassionate calling and answering that call means doing one good deed at a time [28].

### *1.3. Morality Can Be Analysed in terms of Justice and Care.*

In order to comprehend the morality of everyday heroes and superheroes, some moral models, which can be related to the

study of heroism, are introduced. Jean Piaget (1896–1980) studied the cognitive morality of children by observing them playing marble games. He became interested in the “rules of the game” and how children obeyed socially accepted rules and alter them based on their personal morality [29].

Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) continued Piaget’s work on cognitive morality by studying the moral reasoning of males when faced with hypothetical moral dilemmas in which they often had to make choices between life and death. Thus, Kohlberg’s theory was useful in this study as superheroes face similar types of moral problems in fighting super villains. When Kohlberg applied justice to a hero, he referred to vengeance to hurt or kill ([30], pp. 395–397). Kohlberg saw that justice is a principle and a reason for action. There are exceptions to rules, “We know it is sometimes right to kill, because it is sometimes just. The Germans, who tried to kill Hitler were doing right because respect for the equal values of lives demands that we kill someone who is murdering others, in order to save lives.” ([30] pp. 39-40.) Kohlberg dominated studies on moral justice for decades and he saw that good behaviour is a developmental process.

There are three levels in the development of children’s moral thinking: the pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional levels. Next, these levels are described with the emphasis on legal justice because some superheroes act on the borderline between what is legal and what is not. The pre-conventional level is about obedience to power. A child interprets right and wrong according to punishment and reward or the physical power of the person who enunciates the rules. The punisher is powerful and important [30]. Punishments can be physical with the purpose of hurting the wrongdoer who deserves to be harmed. Children do back to wrongdoers what they did to them [31].

At the conventional level, right behaviour is doing one’s duty, and individuals maintain the given social order for its own sake. The punisher is now sympathetic, benevolent, and fair. [30]. Laws are followed strictly except in extreme cases when they conflict with social duties. Thus, circumstances may justify deviant action [31].

At the post-conventional, or autonomous, level everyone is equal and principles are abstract like the Golden Rule instead of concrete rules like the Ten Commandments. Individuals define their chosen ethical principles and personal values apart from authority. Individuals do not necessarily identify themselves as part of the “system.” The emphasis is still on legality as in the previous level but there is now more willingness to improve laws. The conscience as a directing agent defines what is right. However, right action should be critically agreed upon by the whole of society. The punishment is assessed according to its effects on society as a whole [30]. At this level, individuals consider legal and moral points of views and they recognize that they may conflict. Thus, they feel it challenging to integrate them. Even extreme circumstances do not justify taking the law into one’s own hands and a good end does not justify the means, which was typically the case at the previous level ([31], pp. 46, 175.)

Carol Gilligan took a different viewpoint in her study of morality from that of Kohlberg. In her first studies, Gilligan

used Kohlberg’s method of hypothetical moral dilemmas and she was puzzled because women scored lower compared to men. [32]. In her classical work, Gilligan [33] studied real-life narratives of women and identified in her data moral voices of justice and care. Gilligan concluded that the voice of justice was more typical of men while women expressed more the voice of care. Justice is about rights and rules. Justice arises from duties and a commitment to the obligations of rules and it focuses on equality, reciprocity, and fairness between two people. Care focuses on compassion, empathy, affection, loving, and listening. Care includes the principle of nonviolence, not hurting others, minimizing suffering, the avoidance of pain, and expressing more mercy than justice. Moral development takes place when a person experiences change in the self. Individuals who reach the highest stage of morality do not hurt others or themselves [33]. This study extends these moral voices into the discussion about the superhero genre.

Vollum and Adkinson [14] analysed the morality of justice and they separated this voice into the justice of Batman and Superman who both hold to high moral codes. They both fight for justice, but their methods are different. Superman works only within the bounds of law, trusting rules and regulations, while Batman creates his own law and exalts himself a position where he is a judge. The reason for the difference in their methods arises mainly from the fact that Superman lives in Metropolis, which is the society of consensus while Batman’s Gotham City is in a state of conflict and corruption [14]. Superman is merciful knight of daylight and is all about chivalry while Batman is dark knight of grim justice [34] who created his own moral code [35]. Overall, when superheroes fight against evil the term is superjustice [36]. Since superheroes feel responsible for saving society, this study suggests that they can be used to aid children to ponder about one problem in their “daytime” society: school bullying.

*1.4. Bullying Damages the Moral Atmosphere of Schools.* Bullying is a group phenomenon in which there are altogether six possible participant roles, namely, a bully, the assistant of a bully, a reinforcer of the bully, an outsider, a victim, and a defender of the victim [37]. Bullying is a moral issue because bullies break the moral principles of justice and welfare [38], when they oppress, humiliate [39], and intend to hurt or cause harm to innocent victims [40, 41]. Bullies and their assistants construct bullying as unproblematic, justified, and even as a harmless game. Bullies see their victims as odd individuals who deserve such hostile action [42]. Finding a solution to bullying should not be concentrated on curing the bullies’ aggressive behaviour alone, as it is difficult to change directly. In addition, it is not fair to expect victims to change because they deserve to be accepted the way they are. Passive bystanders can change the dynamics of a group phenomenon if they step in as defenders to support, help [43], and comfort victims [44]. Bystanders normally a silent majority make meanness acceptable by watching victims being bullied, whereas defenders intervene and save the world by helping one individual at a time. Children are

more likely to intervene in cases of bullying if others expect them to do so [45].

But, what does it take to defend a victim of bullying? Previous research has identified that those who act as defenders have a strong sense of responsibility [46] and they have a high level of moral sensibility, moral domain [39], top status among peers [47], and social power, that is, perceived popularity, which may be necessary because it protects them against possible revenge from the bully in becoming a future victim [48]. As prosocial individuals they intervene in bullying incidents to help victims [37]. They are talented with sociocognitive skills and have a sophisticated understanding of both the cognitive and emotional states of other persons [39, 49]. Empathy [50], empathic reactivity [49], and affective empathy, that is, feeling another person's feelings is strongly associated with defending behaviour while knowledge of feelings is not necessarily enough and may even be used to cause harm to others [48]. Victims that have been defended by someone else have higher self-esteem and are less depressed [51].

The defenders of victims of bullying seem to have similar qualities to superheroes. This interpretation is not completely new. In fact, Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA) joined with Marvel Comics in 2003 to fight against bullying by creating special comic book issues in which a superhero prevented bullying. In one story a superhero teaches that those who remain silent bystanders in the face of bullying are not innocent [52]. Marvel Comics President [53] stated at the beginning of the Comics for Compassion campaign that heroes speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. Possessing great abilities in itself does not make anyone a hero but choosing the right thing to do with these skills does make one a hero.

Another important variable in fighting against bullying is the moral climate of the school. A higher sense of community leads to liking victims more. Children's perceptions about the moral atmosphere in school may affect their behaviour and attitudes towards others [54]. Moreover, stimulating exclusively individuals' moral competency by explicit teaching of moral principles is not enough to change moral behaviour measurably whereas teaching on improving the moral atmosphere of school is more effective [55].

With respect to bullying, Finnish schools are homogeneous. Teachers are highly trained and they are legally obliged to tackle bullying [56]. Finnish schools tackle bullying with national antibullying programs. The KiVa (KiVa is an acronym for *Kiusaamista* (against bullying) in the Finnish language. *Kiva* also means nice and friendly) antibullying program was developed in the University of Turku, Finland in 2006. In the experimental stage of the KiVa program, questionnaire studies showed that at different grades 20% (grades 1-2), 16% (grades 3-5), and 10% (grades 7-8) of pupils experienced being bullied several times per month [57]. Since 2009, 75% of Finnish comprehensive schools have been implementing the program. KiVa has been very successful in reducing bullying and contains concrete and practical tools for teachers to tackle bullying. The KiVa package consists of lessons and themes for pupils, video films, discussions, exercises done in groups, a computer

game, an Internet forum, parent's guide, and posters. The actual intervention consists of KiVa teams of teachers who lead discussions with bullies and victims. Furthermore, classroom teachers challenge prosocial classmates to become defenders of victims of bullying [44]. In addition to reducing bullying, KiVa has increased pupils' academic motivation and achievement and overall school well-being. After the intervention, children like school more and perceive the school climate and classroom more positively. KiVa has affected all pupils positively [58]. In addition to KiVa, over 400 Finnish schools also use the VERSO antibullying program which is a student-centered democratic approach in which children mutually solve bullying cases [59].

*1.5. Aims of the Study.* The aim of the present case study was to explore third graders' perceptions of moral behaviour related to bullying. Often, children feel powerless even though they have a desire to do much more. What would happen if they received few more means or even unlimited powers? The study explores how children see the role of superhero defender and what type of powers received tackle bullying? The precise research question was formulated as follows: what type of moral voice would children express on bullying if they had the infinite powers of superhero defenders? Based on a previous study of moral voices [33], it was expected that the moral voice of children can be separated into care and justice. One new aspect of this study is that every child's narrative was presented in terms of comic strips, masks, posters, flags, and written descriptions of the superhero's character. A narrative which includes different modes of presentation offers third graders various methods to express their moral views, as their writing skills are still developing.

## 2. Method

*2.1. Participants.* The participants were sixteen (12 girls and 4 boys) third grade children aged 9-10 years who attended a primary school in Finland. The school is located in an urban area. The pupils' home backgrounds in terms of the neighbourhood demographics revealed that the majority came from lower-income families but that there were also a few children from middle-income families. Both the KiVa and VERSO programs are actively used in this school so that KiVa is the "police" in the whole school but VERSO is used in the lower grades (1-3) while KiVa is practised in the upper grades. The participants were chosen by university staff who did not know what this study was about. Investigating children who attend the same classroom ensured that circumstances were similar for each participant. The classroom atmosphere can alter significantly between classrooms. Even the time of day can affect the results.

*2.2. Procedure.* The project was carried out at the children's own school in April-May 2011. Before collecting the data, the investigator participated in KiVa training at the University of Turku where this program was developed. The time limit for each task was limited to a normal class session, that is,

45 minutes. At the beginning of each session, the children were given clear instructions orally and they were also written on an interactive whiteboard. The children were free to ask questions. The class teacher made sure everyone understood the instructions. The atmosphere was very concentrated. Actual interviews were not conducted but discussions with each pupil helped to clarify some details. The investigator did not ask specific questions because they can be manipulative in nature. The investigator's goal was to receive explanations that were as spontaneous as possible. The investigator asked mainly, "Would you like to say something about this art work?" Children were free to use either English or Finnish in their art work. In this paper, all the Finnish data is translated into English. All the names appearing in the study are pseudonyms.

*2.3. Measures.* There are several ways to study how children express their sense of morality. Piaget [29] observed children playing games, Kohlberg [30] created hypothetical moral dilemmas, and Gilligan [33] analysed narratives. This current study supports drawings method as a way to bring forth third graders' moral thinking as their linguistic skills are still developing at this age. Thus, for children who cannot yet express themselves verbally in the way they wish, the artistic method may provide them with ways to express their ideas in a more comfortable and motivating manner. Parsons [60] has studied children's sense of morality in art drawings. He argues that children's art may reveal personal aspects of which even they are unaware. Art is about meanings. When evaluating art drawings, a moral view deals with practical action which affects other individuals. Children's drawings are mostly narrative stories related to their everyday life and problems, which may contain the pondering about good and evil [61]. Children's drawings are one of the ways in which they express what they would like to become [62, 63]. When children are given a chance to create their own narratives, they can speak out in their own way and have the opportunity to take part in a critical discussion [64]. In this study, the children were given the chance from a superhero perspective to take part in a critical discussion about bullying.

Children's perceptions on the moral behaviour on bullying were measured with five tasks. The children were free to choose a classical superhero or create their own superhero or everyday hero. Children were not given rules concerning what superheroes should look like. The idea for this comes from Morrison's [23] question, namely, what would superheroes look like if they were real? He answered that in making superhero comics there are not any rules.

First, the children made masks for the superheroes which they wished to become. Martin [25] found in his study that when he gave a list of classic superheroes to children to choose from, it favoured boys, who found it easier to identify with superheroes. Therefore, this current study tried to avoid this problem thus giving the children more freedom when identifying themselves with heroes. By not giving the children any list of superheroes from which to choose the children were free to choose either a superhero or an everyday hero. When the masks were ready, a fashion show

was conducted, where everyone introduced their masks by making an entry into the classroom as their hero. The show was called "We all wear masks", which is a famous quote by André Berthiaume. The quote is also used in Batman movies and comic books. After the show, the children were asked to wear their masks in the tasks and imagine being that hero. However, they were not forced to do so.

Second, the children wrote about their superheroes' character and how they would interpret the school rules. According to Morrison [23] superheroes' characters have changed over the decades. For example, in the early days it was Batman himself as a person that mattered but these days, when many artists use the same superhero in creating comic stories, it is the combination of creator and the character of the superhero that makes the difference. Therefore, by studying children's versions of the classic superheroes, this study explores some new interpretations of them related to bullying. However, it was expected that some of them might create new heroes and this was regarded as favorable. There were several questions that directed children in describing the personalities of their superheroes and their interpretations of school rules. The following are examples of typical questions. What powers does s/he possess? What does s/he defend? What does s/he feel toward others? Interpretations about the importance of school rules were analysed in such a way that they were seen as the laws of their "society."

Third, the children drew posters of their superheroes inviting outsiders to become the hero defenders of the victims of bullying. A poster is one way to campaign for a certain moral cause. Fourth, they drew a flag for their superhero. A flag is also a method to market and boost personal values. Fifth, the children drew comic strips about what skills this superhero could teach future hero defender students in a hero school. The children were asked to divide their paper into four parts and draw one picture in each panel. They were encouraged to write words in the panels.

This report is part of a larger study of bullying. Children also wrote stories about bullying and how the superheroes defend the victims of bullying. In addition, they wrote stories about how these same superheroes handle a situation when they become preys for bullies and victims of bullying. Four narratives were transformed into drama plays in small groups and acted out in front of the classroom. Moreover, they also wrote as superheroes to an imaginary newspaper about how to defend animals against bullying. Furthermore, they wrote stories about their first day in an imaginary school which did not have any rules. Owing to limited space, these assessments are omitted.

*2.4. Analysis.* The methodology to analyse the comic strips in this study was developed from Rudrum's [65] narrative methodology in which frames represent stages of the events. Moreover, Efland's [61] analysis method, in which children's drawings were mostly narrative stories, was adapted to this study in such a way that the children's artistic moral expression from their art works of comic strips, masks, posters, and flags was evaluated as one long narrative. Their written descriptions of their superhero and the discussions

between the investigator and each child were considered as supportive material to unite the different parts into one comprehensive narrative. The main point of the analysis was to investigate what moral values children see their superhero using and teaching, care or justice, and how does this relate to the defender's role.

The children were free to create characters for their superheroes and to define their moral codes. Allowing such freedom in assignments yielded different data compared to questionnaire sheets. Skill in combining figures, signs, and words in the panels was considered as an artistic moral expression ability. The moral expression in written descriptions of their superheroes' personalities and discussions were analysed in a similar manner but only in the use of words. To analyse which type of moral voice the superhero expressed in the narrative, the most important criterion was Gilligan's [33] moral voice model which separates morality into the moral voices of justice and care. For this study, an extended model was created based on the theories of Kohlberg [30], Gilligan [33], and Vollum and Adkinson [14]. This model will be introduced with metaphoristic language adapted from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. First, the children entered the superhero's wonderland by walking the superhero path which provided them with resources to become superheroes. These resources were divided into two categories:

- (1) superhero school subjects,
- (2) superpower.

Superhero school subjects are skills that aid in the work of superheroes but do not include any mystical or unnatural powers with which to tackle bullying. Instead, superpower provides resources which offer unlimited powers and means. Superpowers are infinite and even mystical in nature. Superpower gives options and choices for the different moral behaviours of care or justice. When the children received the resources to act as heroes, they faced a crossroads, which either lead to a care or a justice path. Furthermore, the justice path in turn has crossroads of Batman justice and Superman justice. The Superman justice path is a law-abiding commitment to the obligations of rules, that is, a belief that law is functional and honourable. Moreover, this Superman justice includes mercy. The Batman justice path is mainly one that is above the law because the law does not function properly and is corrupted. The justice of Batman is "exitus acta probat" (latin), that is, the end justifies the means. Batman is a merciless outlaw who creates his own moral code and takes the law into his own hands. In this study, walking this path was often required to solve tough moral dilemmas. The care path is all about empathy, love, not hurting others, and abstaining from violence. This care seems to be close to the attributes associated with everyday heroes. If superhero school subjects and superpowers describe the resources and powers that children wish to acquire, then care, Superman justice, and Batman justice are moral behaviours that describe what children would do with those unlimited powers. Thus, children's moral behaviours in tackling bullying were divided into three categories:



FIGURE 1: This Figure is one panel which includes superpower. Heidi's Dee Dee Girl teaches how to raise the dead. Translation: dead arise.

- (1) Superman justice,
- (2) Batman justice,
- (3) The care of the everyday hero.

Two children were chosen for a detailed and holistic analysis. They were Tomi (boy) and Selina (girl). Focusing only on two children allows more in-depth interpretation of these cases and enables to go beneath the surface. The choice was based on how widely a child walked these different paths and thus expressed variety of moral voices. This is one way to analyze the variety of their moral values and skills. This analysis method offers two trips into these children's personalities and moral worlds.

### 3. Results

*3.1. Resource Powers to Tackle Bullying.* The following table contains a list of the key resources that were coded and interpreted as expressions of the powers that the children wished to acquire in order to become defenders. Superpowers are unlimited, unnatural, and mystical in nature whereas superhero school subjects do not require unnatural means (Figure 1).

According to Heidi, the superhero is teaching how to raise a dead victim who wants to live. This art work is an example of care toward the victim and it also contains justice because an innocent victim deserves to live. A superpower may combine care and justice. In fact, three girls drew a panel of raising the dead. The drawing by Merja shown in Figure 2 was interpreted as a sign of a superpower because it is unnatural power.

*3.2. What Did Children Do with Their Resources?* Table 1 includes the key elements that were coded and interpreted as expressions of moral behaviours characterized by care and justice. In many cases, the children were not able to draw clearly especially voices belonging to the moral of care. Therefore, Julia wrote a list of words in one panel. For example, "knowing that you can trust someone" was difficult for her to draw on paper. It should be noted that everyone did not express violent justice as this seemed to be related more to superheroes and not to everyday heroes who seemed



FIGURE 2: Merja’s superhero teaches the power to lift and rescue objects. Translation: power.

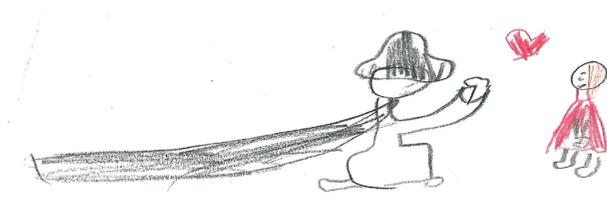


FIGURE 3: Julia’s Zorro has knelt down and is expressing his feelings towards a weak victim. Zorro is at her service. The heart was interpreted as a strong moral symbol of care. Even though Zorro is drawn totally in black his feelings have been expressed in red.

to be caring heroes. The headings at the top describe the background theories for actual moral categories (Table 2).

3.3. *Gilliganian Care Is a Voice of the Everyday Hero.* The moral expressions that were close to the Gilliganian type of care, or the care associated with an everyday hero, include codes, signs, symbols, and words like the expression of one’s feelings towards others, comforting, affection, tenderness, knowing that you can trust someone, learning not to fight, not being nasty, staying without fear, avoiding fear, having only a small amount of fear inside, maintaining courage, self-control, relaxation, peace, yoga, calming down, not being shy, not being in a hurry, and calling an ambulance. Figures 3 and 4 from the participants’ comic strips are typical examples which include the type of care of the everyday hero. It does not include any superpower.

3.4. *Kohlbergian Batman Justice.* Many moral expressions of children were close to Batman justice. They can be identified at various levels of Kohlberg’s legal justice theory. Their expressions included symbols and words like violent killing, attacking in groups, pride, karate, shooting with a gun, violent fights, defending with force, hitting, and fighting with sword. Figures 5 and 6 include the moral voice of Batman justice.

3.5. *Kohlbergian Superman Justice.* Some moral expressions can be identified as the justice of Superman and they are close to Kohlbergian conventional justice. The expressions include signs, symbols, and words like self-defence, dance assisted defending, using a shooting device and fast action with little



FIGURE 4: Anne’s everyday hero Tiina teaches values related to care. Translation: self-control; peace; calming down.

TABLE 1: Resources to tackle bullying if children had infinite powers.

Superpower	Superhero school subject
Exercising magic	Learning new languages
Transforming into an animal	like Russian
Flying	Moving silently
Walking on hot rocks	Acrobatics
Raising the dead	Climbing
Spying and moving in the dark	Diving
Possessing power over water, fire, wind, earth, and sun	Swimming
Power to lift an aeroplane and a ship	Balancing
Appearing as different people	Singing
(the list also includes symbols which combine care and justice like the Batman logo)	Playing instruments
	Learning artistic skills
	Practising various techniques

violence. In Figure 6 the punching bag was interpreted as a symbol of Superman justice as it is a legal way to use force. It should be noticed that in Figure 3 Julia’s Zorro expressed the clear moral voice of care.

Moreover, this study investigated how superheroes interpret the importance of rules in school. The first key finding was that children who expressed justice and especially Batman justice in their narratives saw that rules were crucial for their safety and well-being. The second finding was that they interpreted the nature of rules to mean that everyone should agree on them.

Tomi (boy) and Selina (girl) managed to take the mantle of superhero as defender expressing different moral voices. Moreover, they saw superhero school subjects to be an important part of a superhero’s work. Both superheroes also have dark sides. The investigator did not notice them bullying during this study. The investigator followed up the children by also spending recesses with them outdoors five times with the same results. In general, it can be said that the characters which Tomi and Selina created reflected their personal lives but due to limited space such analysing is kept to a minimum.

TABLE 2: Children’s moral behaviour on bullying if they had infinite powers.

Gilliganian care	Kohlbergian preconventional and conventional justice	
	Batman justice	Superman justice
Care of everyday hero	Violent killing	Self-defence
Feelings towards others	Attacking in groups	Dance assisted defending
Comforting	Pride	Using a shooting device
Affection	Karate	Fast action with little violence
Tenderness	Shooting with a gun	
Knowing that you can trust someone	Violent fights	
Learning not to fight	Defending with force	
Practising not to be nasty	Hitting hard	
Staying without fear	Fighting with a sword	
Avoiding fear		
Having only small amount of fear inside		
Maintaining one’s courage		
Self-control		
Relaxation		
Peace		
Yoga		
Calming down		
Not being shy		
Not being in a hurry		
Calling an ambulance		



FIGURE 5: Rebekka’s World Girl teaches fighting. The victim is dead.

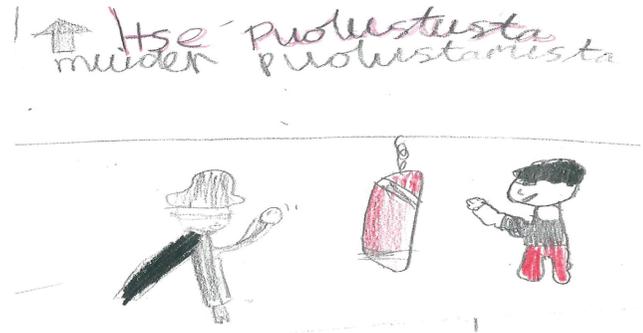


FIGURE 6: Julia’s Zorro teaches self-defence and the defending of others. The figures wear boxing gloves. Translation: self-defence; defending others.

3.5.1. Case 1: *Batman Alias Tomi*. Batman alias Tomi appeared to be a real Batman fan. In fact, before this study he had written a story about Batman in his notebook when they were given a free choice of topic for a writing assignment. It included exact aspects and details from the world of Batman like Arkham Asylum, and his villain gallery included Joker, Two-Face, Mr. Penquin, Mr. Freeze, Bane, and Riddler, and it all happened in Gotham City. In that story Batman had to make a difficult moral decision and he chose the morally right thing to do. Tomi was excited about this project and he often talked about Batman even in the cafeteria. Tomi said about the original Batman, “Batman is my favourite superhero. He is the best because he helps weaker ones... He is actually a little bit of an outlaw... Batman is wise. His voice is deep and low while Spiderman’s voice is higher.” Tomi mentioned that the best Batman movie was *Batman Begins* [66] but that there are several good ones. *Arkham Asylum* fascinates Tomi and he understands that it is a mental

institution for mad villains. He has many Batman comic books at home and he reads them regularly. Tomi also likes to read books about World War II. From this point, the study will refer to Tomi’s version of Batman. Batman does not need to use much force to solve bullying cases as bullies are afraid when he appears.

Tomi wrote about Batman’s personality and character saying that he has excellent instincts and his hearing is extraordinary. He can fly and he has a lot of assistive devices. He defends justice and good people. He has good feelings towards the citizens. He brings with him a feeling of excitement. He is popular but some people interpret him as evil. Tomi’s Batman realizes that without rules in the school there would be no order, instead there would be chaos, and bullying and fighting might occur. Without rules the school



FIGURE 7: Batman mask.



FIGURE 8: Batman poster.

would not be secure. Pupils do not make the rules. Tomi himself seems to be a strict follower of the school rules as he said, “We follow rules which we agree.” He sees that it is important that everyone agrees with the rules (Figure 7).

When Tomi introduced his Batman mask his body language expressed confidence and he used a deep and gruff voice which sounded scary. Tomi said that he used black card-board to create the mask in order to cause fear. The mask is also for protection in a fight. Tomi’s poster of Batman has both a picture and words. Batman’s words “You must be a hero like me” have a commanding sound. It is an invitation to follow his example and become like him. The mouth is wide open (Figure 9).

In the first strip, Batman is showing new heroes how to fight. He does not need guns because he moves fast. Batman is able to fight against many villains at once based on his instincts. This type of cruel fight can be recognized



FIGURE 9: Batman hero school. Translation: panel 1: fighting. 2: flying. 3: spying and moving at night. 4: learning new languages. “This is Russian.”

as Batman justice. It should be noticed that this was the first thing that Tomi drew on the paper. In the second strip, hero students practise flying like an eagle which is a superpower. Tomi said that having an ability to fly helps in fights and also helps in rescuing people in trouble. In the third strip, Batman teaches spying and moving at night. Tomi said that Batman spies on villains and also good people in order to protect and help them. This was interpreted as a superpower, although it could also be seen as a superhero school subject. In the fourth strip, Batman is teaching hero students new languages, which they will need to solve crimes. Now he is teaching Russian. This can be referred to as a superhero school subject.

Tomi painted a Batman flag which has a big bat with its wings wide open. It is similar to the Batman logo found in Batman comic books and movies. Tomi said that the flag can be raised up to a flag pool as a sign of his power. The flag is supposed to frighten and offer protection for good people.

Tomi’s position among the peer group can be defined as a leader of the other boys. His self-confidence and ability to speak out can be noticed when he gives presentations. Even the teacher recommended that he should be the person who started the presentations in order to show others how to act in front of his peers. Sometimes, he has a hot temper which shows up in sport lessons. He is also the smartest pupil in terms of mathematical skills. The investigator noticed these things (Figure 10).

**3.5.2. Case 2: Webwoman Alias Selina.** These art works were created by Webwoman alias Selina. Selina created a mask to beautify Webwoman. When Selina introduced her mask she made an impression of a super model. Selina said that the mask has the marks of a spider’s web which is a sign of Webwoman. Later, she knitted black webs at home to decorate the eyeholes. She attached them with tape. She used that decorated mask in school even when she was not encouraged to do so. Her poster has both a picture and words. The text says, “I watch you with my eyes at night and day.”



FIGURE 10: Webwoman mask.



FIGURE 11: Webwoman poster.

Selina said that she likes Spiderman and she sought inspiration from him in creating her own superhero. According to Selina, first graders are too young for violent defending. For example, sleeping medicine put into candies is a good remedy and makes bullies unconscious. The Webwoman does not kill her enemies as she only makes them lose conscience. She uses a web to transport, for example, bullies home. Selina wrote about Webwoman's personality and character saying that her powers are heatvision, laservision, and intelligence. She shoots a web from her fingers. Webwoman defends



FIGURE 12: Webwoman hero school. Translation: panel 1: walking on hot rocks. 2: acrobatics. 3: using devices. 4: diving and swimming.

justice but she is not entirely a “goodie” in Selina’s own words. However, she does not give more details about this. She defends the helpless, the sick, victims of bullying, and discriminated human beings. She brings with her an exciting and beautiful atmosphere. She has contact only with one human being, Loviisa-friend. She is popular only among boys. Selina’s Webwoman thinks that rules in school are important so that everyone can feel good in school. School rules are generally agreed upon and they must be suitable for everyone. Without school rules the school would become a mishmash. Selina herself is a follower of the rules but she was once a little rebellious with a teacher giving her a dirty look when she was corrected.

Selina created a flag to symbolize the web making device which Webwoman uses to catch people who are in danger. The web is also used to catch villains. Thus the flag combines the care and Superman justice (Figure 12).

In the first panel, a superhero student is learning to walk on hot rocks whilst keeping her balance. Walking on hot rocks can be considered as a superpower moral because it is an extraordinary skill. The second panel is about acrobatics. A superhero student is learning to kick and thus practising fighting skills in challenging circumstances. This can be categorized as Batman justice because the opponent is hurt. Another student on the right side is learning to fall down, which is a superhero school subject. In the third panel, the student is learning to use devices, which may be Superman justice because it does not necessarily hurt the enemy. The fourth panel is about diving and swimming both of which can be categorized as superhero school subjects.

#### 4. Discussion

School is a morally insecure wonderland of nonsense and madness if bullying is not stopped and if it is allowed to destroy the moral climate and student achievement. The

present case study examined what type of moral voice children would express on bullying if they had the infinite powers of superhero defenders. The key result was that children's moral expressions can be divided mainly into the categories of moral voice of care and justice as Gilligan [33] suggested 30 years ago. In this empirical study two different moral voices of justice were identified and they can be separated into the justice of Batman and Superman as Vollum and Adkinson [14] suggests. In addition, we observed notions of mystical superpowers, which, along with superhero school subjects, were analysed as resources that children wish to acquire in order to tackle bullying. In a way these children were like Alice in Wonderland facing crossroads and they had to choose paths of moral behaviour from various alternatives. The crossroads symbolize the difficult moral choices that children had to make in the wonderland, which had various villages of either chaotic or lawful systems. Entering into the wonderland of superheroes happened when the children put their superhero masks on. First, the children walked the superhero path that provided them with the resources to become superheroes. Superhero school subjects gave them natural skills and superpower provided unlimited powers. Some superpowers were even mystical such as the ability to raise the dead, and these skills can be used for good or evil purposes. Soon, they encountered crossroads which were like temptations concerning how to use those new special resources. They had to make decisions on which way to choose. The first crossroads splits into a care and a justice path. The care path leads to everyday heroism. When children chose to walk the justice path they soon encountered a new crossroads where the road divided into the path of Batman justice and Superman justice. The Batman justice path is filled with darkness and fear. In Batman justice, law had to be broken. If the children keep walking it they are going to find themselves becoming more like Batman. The Superman justice path is bright. Superman lives at the end of that path and he serves as a moral guide and instructor there. Following his example may lead to becoming more like him.

When analysing all 16 narratives, the most chosen moral path was the care path. One reason for the popularity of this path can be found by looking at whom the children directed their moral behaviour. More children were concerned to draw or write about the welfare of the victim, which meant using the care voice more compared to a smaller group of children who were enthusiastic about attacking the bully in the name of justice. Another reason for the popularity of the care path could be that 75% of children were girls. For example, Selina's Webwoman prefers care when she defends the helpless, the sick, the victims of bullying, and discriminated human beings. In general, the care path seemed to be all about feelings and comforting the victim. This seems to be exactly in line with Gilligan's [33] moral model in which care is nonviolent and it focuses on compassion, empathy, affection, and loving. This is also similar to findings by Gini et al. [39] according to which the defenders of victims of bullying are talented with sociocognitive skills and have a sophisticated understanding of the emotional states of other people. In this current study, walking the care path seemed

to mean love, and some girls even drew love signs towards the victim. This is probably what Kärnä et al. [43] meant when they argued that it is not fair to expect victims to change because they deserve to be accepted the way they are. Bystanders should step in as protectors to support and help victims. Similarly, Vollum and Adkinson [14] interprets that a superhero's action is based on charity. The care path and this type of defender's voice seem to fit the qualities of everyday heroes. For instance, Zimbardo [27, 28] sees that everyday heroism is about integrity, compassion, peace, love, generosity of spirit, acts of kindness, and making others feel embraced, understood, and special. Selina's Webwoman walked the care path when she said, "I watch you with my eyes at night and day (Figure 11)." Victims of bullying find peace when they know that superhero is defending them with an all seeing eye 24/7. In fact, the key idea in the KiVa program is that victims should get feeling that everything possible is being done to stop bullying.

The justice path of darkness is guided by Batman. Batman justice can be recognized in Tomi's narrative when Batman taught fighting so that opponents were hurt. When analysing the narratives of the 16 children reported in this paper there were three cases of killing. This contradicts Morrison [23], who states that superheroes as defenders exist to solve problems without killing. This study argues that in the end all that matters is how children see the message that superheroes from media are sending. What about violence without killing? This study has shown that when superheroes are used as a method to study the defender's role, violence seems hard to avoid in the narratives. Most of the children expressed at least some sort of violence and the results indicate that a defender can also be an avenger. This can be analysed as a worrying sign if children see a defender as a vigilante who uses violence even if it is justified in terms of "exitus acta probat". Kohlberg [31] might have analysed this ideology in terms of his conventional moral, as circumstances may justify deviant action. It cannot be a postconventional moral as Kohlberg stated that at that level even extreme circumstances do not justify taking the law into one's own hands as a good end does not justify the means. In this study children who justified violent means by pointing to a right outcome also mentioned defender's qualities that were related to empathy. The schools should have zero tolerance towards any level of violence. Defending with guns and violently hurting someone are methods that lead to dark justice. Punishment seems to be Batman's obsession as an avenger. Tomi's Batman spoke with a deep and scary voice and it had commanding sound, "You must be a hero like me (Figure 8)." It is often neglected in moral voice studies that a moral voice can also be expressed in the sound of the voice. Tomi's Batman is trained to defend justice by fighting harshly and his main weapon against bullies is his ability to cause fear. Because he sometimes breaks the law, some consider him as evil. Kohlberg's [30] pre-conventional moral is about punishment and obedience to power. Thus, Tomi's Batman also shows signs of a lower level of morality. However, this study does not intend to place children on different moral levels as that type of analysis would require a larger study. However, it seems that Tomi's

Batman expresses moral voices that indicate a relation with both the pre-conventional and the conventional levels. In addition, Tomi's Batman's moral expression even has hints of the post-conventional level in which individuals consider the legal and moral points of view and recognize that they come into conflict with each other. Thus, it is challenging to integrate them [31].

The second justice path which is bright and guided by Superman seemed to be more popular among girls than boys, who favoured taking steps towards Batman as their idol. Selina's Superman justice can be recognized when she drew a panel in which Webwoman uses a device to shoot target plate. Thus, she is just practising and not actually hurting anyone. Other signs of Superman justice from Selina include the use of a sleeping medicine, rather than killing her enemies, and shooting a web instead of bullets. Kohlberg's [30] conventional level is about fulfilling the expectations of society in following the law. This is more like Superman's method of working as he respects the law of his city. However, Selina also expressed the darker side of justice as being not entirely a "goodie." In order for Batman to work in corrupt Gotham, he must break the law and create his own laws and rules. Superheroes' respect and attitude towards laws are the key aspect when making the difference between the justice of Superman and that of Batman and their different moral paths. Gilligan's [33] justice seems to be closer to Superman as she states that justice arises from a commitment to obey the rules.

Tomi's Batman argues that without order and rules in the school there could be chaos, bullying and fighting. Thus, Tomi's Batman seems to interpret the school system as a kind of Gotham City, which would also be in a state of chaos and constant fighting without Batman ruling over it and keeping strict order. Problems arise if laws are not followed. Batman intervenes if the system does not work. Thus, Batman, who can be above the law, has the keys to the "rules of the game" as Piaget [29] would have put it. Similarly, according to Vollum and Adkinson [14], superheroes see that certain types of behaviour must be controlled if order is to be maintained. In this study, this type of "exitus acta probat" -spirit can lead to another serious form of violence which is madness and nonsense: school shootings. In fact, in one narrative, a child killed a bully with a gun relating the story to school killings and vigilantism.

In previous studies, bullying is correlated to school shootings in a way that most school shooters have experienced a long period of victimization and marginalization by their peers [67]. Children learn at an early stage that schools are unsafe and cruel places where they have to defend themselves in order not to become a victim themselves [68]. Students seek guidance at school in constructing their moral identities and when they do not find it they create their own rituals which may take the form of a ceremonial school shooting. Why schools? Children are forced to be in school, so they are ideal places to show off force. Because schools are places to experience humiliation and fear, they are the places chosen to cause humiliation and fear. Schools were violent even before a shot was fired. School shootings as traumatic events cause a community to question its educational systems

and values [69]. In the years 2007 and 2008, two dramatic school shootings occurred in Finland, and these tragedies shocked people, because the Nordic welfare society was perceived to be safe [70]. Thus, if the victim of bullying is not protected, he may see school as a corrupt Gotham City and may choose the path of an avenging Batman. To become a superhero, one needs superpowers, and school shooters by having guns obtain great powers. It may also be that an extreme and twisted worshipping of superhero vigilantes, who take the law into their own hands, leads to school shootings. Pardales [7] found that children may form their values based on their heroes. At least, this current study has shown that imagining powers of a superhero gives some warning signs as some children's narratives included violent killing, which they saw as an acceptable way to handle bullying. Lately, the media has discussed the case of the Norwegian Anders Breivik who killed 69 people on the camp on the island of Utøya. When children enter the superhero wonderland they face supervillains similar to Breivik. Another real life "super villain" Osama bin Laden was killed in a US assault, providing an example of Batman justice in the real world. This study tried to find out how children see morality in relation to bullying. The logic of caring which is often emphasized in school lessons does not necessarily cure cases such as Breivik and Osama bin Laden. Kohlberg himself wrote that it is sometimes justified to kill in order to save lives [30]. However, he did not mention that it is necessarily the highest level of morality.

The superpower path which includes gaining the resources to behave as a hero led to a crossroads at which the road splits into a care and a justice path. Selina's Webwoman's superpower is a web which is a soft saving device for rescuing the innocent and a hard device for capturing villains and bullies. Webwoman thinks that rules in school are important and that everyone should feel good in school. Moreover, she feels that school rules are generally agreed upon and that they must be suitable for everyone. In these sentences it is easy to identify both the paths of care and justice. Feeling good in school is close to what Gilligan [33] means by caring. Generally agreed school rules which are suitable for everyone are exactly how Gilligan [33] interprets justice as it focuses on equality, reciprocity, and fairness between people. The superpower path leads to a crossroads where children feel challenged to integrate moral points of view and rules which may conflict with each other. These children did not always stay within the boundaries of a "goodie" citizen as they got lost in a cold and dreary wonderland and even became "a little bit of an outlaw" in finding the correct path. Thus, they also expressed the dark side of their specialities. Possessing great powers led in some cases to violent behaviour. Great powers offer the chance of losing oneself to evil or the possibility of becoming a legend or a saint. Tomi and Selina did not just choose one path but walked many paths. It seems to be that superheroes face tough moral dilemmas in deciding what to do with their superpowers, which leads to them using both moral voices. When children imagine gaining great powers, they encounter similar moral dilemmas as superheroes in the media. In school shootings guns symbolise great powers.

Some superhero school subjects raise questions like why are these skills taught to hero students? Tomi's Batman sees it important to teach Russian which will help in work. It should be noticed that Finland has been at war with Russia many times, which has caused a fear of Russia. Does Tomi see a possible threat? He is aware of wars, as he mentioned reading books about World War II.

Besides superheroes' roles as defenders, this study also investigated their role in creating the general school atmosphere. Selina's Webwoman brings with her an exciting and beautiful atmosphere. Like Webwoman, Tomi's Batman also brings with him a feeling of excitement. These types of school atmospheres could help in tackling bullying. Batman is popular but Webwoman is popular only among boys. This can be interpreted as meaning that superheroes are a more boys' thing. In fact, some girls favored creating everyday heroes as all four boys were "obsessed" with superhero idolism. In general, children interpreted their hero as popular, and in this respect superheroes seem to fit the role of defender of victims of bullying. Caravita et al. [47] found that defenders have a top status among their peers, and Pöyhönen et al. [48] concluded that they also have social power, that is, perceived popularity.

Can the influence of the KiVa program be recognized in these children's narratives? SM Girl alias Sanni mentioned in her narrative that her leader had asked SM Girl to defend a girl who had been bullied. This seems to reflect the KiVa program as it is at the core of the program that a classroom teacher should challenge prosocial classmates to become defenders of victims of bullying [44].

Would there be a preference for one superhero moral over another, is Superman's justice superior to Batman's? Superman sends criminals to prison but is that going to change them. In some cases, prisoners only become worse in prison. Superman seems to be for the "status quo", keeping things the way they are without changes in the long run. In Dark Knight [71] Joker says to Batman, "You've changed things, forever." If children's experiences make them believe that the system is not able to protect them from bullying, they may begin to consider taking the law into their own hands. When assigned as a defender, a child may have similar feelings. Their morality may become what Kohlberg [31] would call postconventional as individuals consider legal and moral points of views and recognize that they may conflict. Thus, they feel it challenging to integrate them. In this study children's superheroes' moral choices between two justice paths often depended on how satisfied they felt about the system of school rules. Those who chose the so-called Batman path expressed more forcefully the view that without rules school would be chaotic and that these rules should be agreed upon by everyone. Moreover, it can be concluded that in law-abiding cases the school rules were seen to be functional and this led to children choosing the Superman justice path. When school rules do not work perfectly they see that they are "corrupt" and they may feel that they have the right to put themselves above the law. When the law is "corrupt," tackling bullying requires tough moral decisions. Batman's justice as punishing moral seems to be before the law and order level (preconventional) in

Kohlberg's [31] terms or then after corruption if analysed by Vollum and Adkinson [14]. In other words the Batman justice is the morality of precivilization or postcorruption. Fear rules at the preconventional level. On a law-abiding level everything is black and white, but at the next level children have to make difficult choices which bring forth challenges. In school children are taught ideal morals like the Golden Rule which refers to moral of care. Children admire teachers who are fair and just towards all pupils. Often the reality is far from such ideals and children get disappointed when confronted with the fact that the system simply does not work.

When Alice entered the wonderland she did not want to go among mad people. Similarly, children do not always have a choice; they cannot choose their school, classmates, and teacher. Thus, they may experience adventures in bullying wonderland and some of them will get lost. Some are lucky when they get a defender like Selina's Webwoman who comforts them, saying, "I watch you with my eyes at night and day" (Figure 11). These words can also be directed to a bully. In a nutshell, the moral voice of care seems to be enough for everyday heroes to act as defenders while superheroes need superpowers to fulfil their duties in bringing justice to the bully.

## 5. Conclusion

Although this is a case study and the data was collected from only 16 children and only four of them were boys, it appears that children's art works can be used as a narrative method that offers children a clear way to express a variety of moral voices related to bullying. What are the benefits of these findings for the field of moral education and research on bullying? Besides violent nature, superhero imagination may provide new material for discussing bullying as some children have grown up in world of superheroes. Superheroes can boost children's imagination to explore new ways of producing material about how they would solve bullying if they had more powers. Normally, small children feel powerless. But what would they do if they received unlimited powers one day? Even if superheroes have their dark side, they still offer one tool to stimulate discussion and ponder about bullying and the role of defenders. At least, through this study it is possible to interpret children's inner desires, values, and moral voices.

Superheroes are the unofficial security guards of their territories, who supervise that the rules are followed. This fact may attract, especially, boys' attention to do something about safety in schools. Schools should be safe institutions where children should not feel threatened as they have the right to feel safe and protected. The question is do children see the school system as Gotham City or Metropolis? Children's writings about school rules refer more to Metropolis. The teacher's role as a moral educator to secure protection and bullying-free atmosphere becomes an important issue in school pedagogy which should ensure student well-being and achievement. Without rules, schools may become wonderlands of chaos and madness. Problems like bullying

can arise when students break the rules. Schools should have strong moral protectors and defenders. If current moral education emphasizes the teachings related to care, does it develop boys' morality in an idealistic way?

The narratives included many smart details and clues for further studies. For example, Webwoman could be a defender of victims of bullying in the World Wide Web, where bullying madness and nonsense is spreading. What would children with unlimited powers do about bullying in the internet? Currently, there are not enough fairy tales about how to behave in the internet.

Why is this study important for educators? It discusses the general state of the current school system and its failure to defend the victims of bullying. Thus, superheroes were invited to supervise the school. The study could be improved by taking one more dimension into consideration; what about a world where nobody monitors children? What are their power and position in the world outside school?

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## Research Article

# A Cross-Cultural Study of Gifted Students' Scientific, Societal, and Moral Questions Concerning Science

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This study investigated the number and nature of gifted female and male students' scientific, societal, and moral questions concerning science. The participants ( $N = 658$ ) of this study were 16–19-year-old international students from 55 countries and two continents, Asia and Europe. They applied to participate in the Millennium Youth Camp held in 2011 in Finland. The students came from scientifically and mathematically oriented schools, and they had shown an interest towards science through competitions, school success, and their own research. The students were asked to formulate questions they would like to get answers to during the camp. The nature and number of the students' questions were analyzed with qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The results showed that the boys asked more scientific questions than the girls, and the girls asked more societal questions than the boys. The students asked less questions about morality than scientific or societal questions. The most common questions about morality were related to pollution and fresh air, environmental problems, and water protection. The results point to the need for teachers to teach socioscientific issues and discuss moral questions related to science.

## 1. Introduction

In this study we explored the number and nature of moral questions and compared them with the scientific and societal questions asked. The questions were presented by international high school students gifted in science. The students ( $N = 658$ ) came from Europe and Asia and were identified gifted because most of them came from scientific schools or classes, many had done well in national or international science competitions, won scholarships and prizes as well as had good school grades. All of the students applied to join the Millennium Youth Camp held in 2011 in Finland [1]. The camp is aimed at 16–19-year-old students gifted in science. The students in this study chose to study one of the camp's environmental themes in more detail: climate change, renewable energy and resources, and water. All three themes can be explored from a scientific, societal, or moral perspective. In the application form, the students were asked to present three questions related to their chosen theme, which they wanted an answer during the camp.

We analyzed the students' questions and divided them into three different categories: scientific, societal, and moral.

Our aim was to explore the nature of the questions that the students had asked and the possible cross-cultural and gender differences in these questions. Furthermore, our aim was to contribute to the discussion on science education as moral education. In addition to scientific knowledge, science education deals with societal issues and ethical dilemmas [2]. Excellence in science needs to be combined with ethics to serve humankind in the best possible way [3]. Therefore, moral sensitivity in science includes the skill of being able to identify a moral question in a science domain. Previous research has revealed a close relationship between morality and socioscientific issues and also advocated the need for addressing ethical aspects in science education [4, 5]. In this study we explored the nature of the moral, scientific, and societal questions the gifted students identified.

## 2. Socioscientific Issues in Science Education

As science interacts with many different aspects of human activity, such as economics, the environment, technology, culture, and social issues, science education should not only

focus on scientific facts, but on the interactions of these different spheres. For instance, many issues, such as the use of renewable resources, are both scientific and societal in nature. Unlike the traditional problems faced in a science class, these so-called socioscientific issues do not have one clear answer that can be found at the back of the textbook. Moreover, they may not have, as there may not be, a right answer at all [6].

Socioscientific issues, such as global warming and the use of renewable resources, two of the themes of the Millennium Youth Camp, often contain controversial ideas and do not necessarily have generally accepted viewpoints, as people may look at different aspects of the issue [7]. When engaging students with controversial socioscientific issues, students need to be critical, skeptical, and open to new ideas in order to deal with these problems. In order to reach these goals of scientific literacy, Zeidler et al. [8] have argued that it is necessary to include moral issues and discussion in the science curriculum.

As environmental issues deal with many moral and ethical aspects, environmental education could be a means to reach this goal. A step towards increasing environmental education has already been taken as researchers have suggested moving beyond STS (science, technology, and society) curricula towards STSE (science, technology, society, and environment) curricula in order to pay more attention to the moral aspects of socioscientific issues [4].

Already in 1972, at a conference held by the United Nations, it was decided that schools should emphasize formal and informal environmental education more. As a consequence, environmental education is seen as key in many national curricula, for example in Finland and the USA [9, 10]. Furthermore, the OECD [11] has been discussing the importance of environmental education and has set goals to increase public knowledge on environment issues. The main goals are to increase knowledge on the causes and effects of environmental pollutants, climate change, and the use of renewable resources. Another important goal is to increase students' knowledge on how to protect the environment [12]. For instance, by discussing environmental issues with students, educators can introduce "real-life" problems to their students. Moreover, scientific knowledge then becomes part of the currency of such discussions and helps students to make decisions regarding societal issues that are relevant to their lives [13].

### 3. Moral Education and Gifted Students

We know from earlier empirical research that intelligence tends to correlate with high levels of moral reasoning [14, 15]. However, the relationship between intelligence and morality is a very complex one and needs more detailed study [16, 17]. According to Bebeau et al. [18], morality is built upon four basic components. These include moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character. The components of moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral character have been less studied than the component of moral judgment.

Tirri [3] argues that skills in moral judgment and especially in moral sensitivity are necessary in order to combine excellence with ethics. High-ability students have shown to be superior in moral judgment when compared to average-ability students. However, high academic ability does not always predict high moral judgment [14]. Morality includes other components as well, such as sensitivity, motivation, and character. According to Muriel Bebeau et al. [18], *moral sensitivity* is about the awareness of how our actions affect other people. Thus, without possessing a moral sensitivity it would be difficult to see the kind of moral issues that are involved in science. However, to respond to a situation in a *moral way*, a scientist must be able to perceive and interpret events in a way that leads to *ethical action*. A morally sensitive scientist notes various situational cues and is able to visualize several alternative actions in response to that situation. He or she draws on many aspects skills, techniques, and components of interpersonal sensitivity. These include taking the perspective of others (role taking), cultivating empathy for others, and interpreting a situation based on imagining what might happen and who might be affected.

The students in this study come from a selected group of international students gifted in science. Their main interest is in science and academic affairs and technology based on humane values. However, in addition to scientific questions, science education has great potential for addressing questions related to globalization, morality, and societal issues [3, 4, 8, 9]. Science education is also moral education and it deals with questions of a good life and future. Science education gives teachers opportunities to educate the youth in terms of their life perspectives including their world-view and ethics. It should offer tools for scientific argumentation and moral judgement [15]. Moral sensitivity includes skills in identifying and asking moral questions related to science and research done in that area. It also includes social skills in sharing and working in teams to solve scientific problems.

### 4. Young People's Perspectives and Questions Related to the Future

Earlier comparative research conducted in different countries has revealed remarkable differences in perspectives for the future of young people and also in the questions they ask about the future [19–22]. In the study by Ziebertz and Kay [19], a total of 8,096 young people with an average age of between 17 and 18, who attended good academic secondary schools in nine European countries, were investigated. The researchers wanted to explore the views of these future opinion formers. The authors argued that the young people in their study were likely to be in a position to exert social and cultural influence and occupy important positions. Their research findings showed that these young people differed in the degree to which they had positive or negative views about the future. In Germany, for example, young people were the most pessimistic when it came to discussing their prospects in life. Similarly in England and the Netherlands pessimism figured in the top three attitudes expressed about the future. This finding means that young people in Europe assess their

personal chances for the future as being quite bad. However, youth from the Nordic countries, Finland, and Sweden had a more positive attitude and trusted themselves to be masters of their own future [19].

Studies on gifted learners' questions have demonstrated some culture-invariant trends. Gifted learners in the USA, Hong Kong, and Finland were more concerned than average ability learners about large global issues [23]; a result that was also obtained in prior studies [20, 24]. This lends further support for curriculum for gifted learners on global issues of concern to these students. In addition, this appears to be true of all three countries in the study.

In another cross-cultural study, preadolescents' questions about the future were investigated [21]. The students ( $N = 975$ ) came from four countries, namely, Finland, the United States, Hong Kong, and Bahrain. Half of the participants in each country came from special programs or schools that represented above-average-ability students and the other half came from ordinary schools, representing average-ability students. The study revealed that the gifted students from each participating country asked more scientific questions than their average-ability peers. This finding was not found to be dependent on the respondent's gender. Furthermore, in each country the average-ability students asked more everyday life questions than did their gifted peers. The scientific and everyday life questions were very much in accord with each other in different cultures. The gifted students in all countries asked more questions about morality than did the average-ability students. The moral questions dealt with war and terrorism, which reflected the global moral concerns raised by the attacks on 9/11. Cultural differences were also found in the spiritual and religious questions asked by these preadolescents. In all the data sets, girls asked more questions of a spiritual and religious nature than boys. The Christian influence could be seen in the data for Finland and the United States. The Bahrain data clearly reflected a Muslim influence on the nature of religious questions [21].

Another study with Finnish youth ( $N = 316$ ) explored how concepts about the future develop from preadolescence to adolescence. This study demonstrated how the number and nature of different types of question develop as students get older. The number of spiritual questions about the future increased, while the number of moral questions decreased from preadolescence to adolescence. Both preadolescent and adolescent girls asked more religious questions than did boys of the same age. The increase of spiritual questions by age can be explained by psychological developments in adolescence. The struggle for a sense of significance and purpose in life is greatest during adolescence [25].

According to Fry [25], the ultimate problem in studying adolescent psychology is to understand how the adolescent searches for and finds some measure of meaning in the present and gains wisdom for the future. This trend can be seen in the developmental process of concepts about the future, as well [22].

Kelly [26] has studied what type of questions youth ask about renewable energy. She found that questions about renewable energy most often concentrate on energy production, the economy, politics, and the environment.

The questions often seem to have a perspective on the future. Production-related questions are often about whether natural resources will run out; in economic questions people wonder whether renewable energy will be beneficial in the future; in political questions people wonder if renewable energy will decrease wars; in environmental questions people ask how using alternative energy sources will affect the environment and global warming.

## 5. Data and Methods

The participants ( $N = 658$ ) in this study were from 32 countries in Europe ( $N = 420$ ) and from 23 countries in Asia ( $N = 238$ ). The countries from Europe that had the highest number of participants were Bulgaria ( $N = 43$ ), Slovakia ( $N = 37$ ), and Slovenia ( $N = 31$ ). The Asian countries that provided the most students were Russia ( $N = 84$ ), Kazakhstan ( $N = 44$ ), and Indonesia ( $N = 34$ ). The participants included 385 girls or 58.5% and 273 boys or 41.5%. Their age varied between 16 and 19 years, the median was 17.6 years.

The data was collected by asking all the applicants to the 2011 Millennium Youth camp to present three questions regarding their chosen theme. Of the applicants, 38.7% ( $N = 290$ ) had applied to join the renewable energy group, 38.1% ( $N = 286$ ) to the climate change group, and 23.2% ( $N = 174$ ) to the water group. In addition, demographic questions were asked to find out the applicants' gender, age, and country of origin. Other informative questions were also asked, but they do not play a role in this study.

Though different research methods, such as interviews and surveys, could have been used to gain information on the types of socioscientific questions asked by the youth, we decided to obtain the research data through a less obvious way, namely, the camp applications. Firstly, the reason why the camp application was preferred over other methods of collecting data was reliability. As the camp application was not only focused on the given theme but had many other questions that the applicant had to answer, such as their own interests and school achievements, it was thought that the applicants would be less likely to think that certain types of answers were expected of them. Moreover, as the applicants were unaware that their answers would be used for research purposes, the answers, we believe, would be more authentic than if they knew that their answers would be thoroughly analyzed. In addition, as the youth filled in the application form at home, at their leisure, it could be assumed that they had more time and patience to think about their answers.

Secondly, as the youth were applying to a camp where the themes were climate change, water, and renewable energy, it could be assumed that they were familiar, at least to some extent, with these themes. Having some basic knowledge about an issue, then, allows a person to look at the issue from different perspectives. In other words, as the youth had some previous knowledge of the theme, they had the capability to present societal and moral questions, rather than just scientific questions, as proposed by Sadler and Donnelly in their research [27].

Thirdly, using the camp application forms enabled us to collect a large amount of data from around the world, which would have required much more work and time using other means

The data was analyzed first by a qualitative content analysis. Some participants' ( $N = 114$ , 17%) questions had, for example, bad English or handwriting, and therefore these questions were impossible to interpret. These unclear questions were not included in the analysis. The final data included questions from 544 participants.

The students' questions were coded into three main categories. These categories were scientific questions, societal questions, and moral questions. Owing to the nature of the themes, some overlapping of these categories occurred. To avoid this problem, we decided to rank the categories: the ranking was done so that moral questions were ranked the highest, then societal, and last scientific questions. This means that if a question had both a scientific and a moral aspect to it, the question was ranked as moral, because the moral category was the higher rank. As it was a science camp, we hypothesized that most of the questions would be scientific, causing us to rank scientific questions the lowest. Between societal and moral questions there was no clear idea which one should be ranked higher, but as societal questions were more similar to scientific questions, and some ranking had to be made, it was decided to give moral questions the highest rank.

The interrater reliability was reasonable ( $ir = .83$ ). The index was based on individual scoring of 100 students' questions by two raters. The index was calculated by the formula:

$$ir = \frac{n \text{ of rater agreements}}{n \text{ of questions}}. \quad (1)$$

Secondly, the data was examined using a nonparametrical statistical analysis. Three qualitative categories of questions were cross-tabulated with genders (female/male), continents (Asia/Europe), and camp themes (climate change/renewable energy/water). The scientific significance of the relations between the variables was investigated with Pearson's chi-square.

## 6. Results

In this study, 544 scientifically gifted international high school students each presented a question they wanted an answer during the camp. The distribution of scientific, societal, and moral questions between gender, continent, and the camp's themes is seen in Table 1.

**6.1. Scientific Questions.** Students asked mostly scientific questions ( $n = 308$ , 57%). The boys ( $n_{\text{male}} = 152$ , 66%) asked more scientific questions than the girls ( $n_{\text{female}} = 156$ , 50%) ( $\chi^2(2) = 15.872$ ,  $P = .000$ ). Furthermore, the students interested in renewable energy and resources ( $n_{\text{renewables}} = 142$ , 65%) asked more scientific questions than the students interested in the other themes ( $n_{\text{climate change}} = 108$ , 55%;  $n_{\text{water}} = 58$ , 45%) ( $\chi^2(4) = 19.895$ ,  $P = .001$ ).

The most typical scientific questions asked by students in the renewable energy group included questions related to new methods and costs of extracting energy. The following two questions, one asked by an Asian girl and one by a European boy, are good examples.

What are some fundamentally new methods of extracting energy? (16-year-old girl from Asia)

The first specific issue in which I would like to develop my knowledge is wind power. I already know the basics of using this type of renewable energy, but I am still interested in how it works practically. What are the main benefits of it in comparison with other renewable energy sources? Also I am interested in the costs and consequences which arise from using wind power. How it is harmful for the environment? (19-year-old boy from Europe)

The students in the climate change group wanted to learn the truth about the research being conducted in this area and also how to do research related to this important domain. The following questions are typical of those asked by students in this group.

I would like to learn more about research. The methods, resources, and so forth, to conduct excellent research in the field of science, specifically in the field of climate change. I consider it a very important issue. (17-year-old girl from Europe)

Climate change. What is true and what is not concerning the topic of global warming? (17-year-old boy from Asia)

The most common scientific questions related to water included topics such as the effect of global warming on water and how to define the quality of water. The following questions demonstrate this line of enquiry.

How does Global Warming affect the world's water resources? How can the resources of fresh water be rationally used? (18-year-old girl from Asia)

To learn how to define the quality of water (16-year-old boy from Asia)

**6.2. Societal Questions.** The second most asked type of question was societal questions ( $n = 125$ , 23%). The girls asked more societal questions ( $n_{\text{female}} = 87$ , 28%) than the boys ( $n_{\text{male}} = 38$ , 17%) ( $\chi^2(2) = 15.872$ ,  $P = .000$ ). The students in the renewable energy group ( $n_{\text{renewables}} = 32$ , 15%) asked fewer societal questions than the students in the other groups ( $n_{\text{climate change}} = 56$ , 28%;  $n_{\text{water}} = 37$ , 29%) ( $\chi^2(4) = 19.895$ ,  $P = .001$ ). The most typical societal questions asked by students in the renewable energy group included questions related to cooperation between countries and some economical issues in their countries. Below are some examples of these kinds of questions.

How can all countries work together to fight global warming and come to an agreement to make energy consumption between developed and developing

TABLE 1: Frequencies and percentages of scientific, societal, and moral questions by gender, continent, and camp theme.

	Scientific <i>n</i> (%)	Societal <i>n</i> (%)	Moral <i>n</i> (%)	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Gender				
Female	156 (50)	87 (28)	72 (23)	315 (58)
Male	152 (66)	38 (17)	39 (17)	229 (42)
Continent				
Asia	99 (56)	38 (22)	40 (23)	177 (33)
Europe	209 (57)	87 (24)	71 (19)	367 (68)
Camp theme				
Climate change	108 (55)	56 (28)	33 (17)	197 (36)
Renewable energy and resources	142 (65)	32 (15)	45 (21)	219 (40)
Water	58 (45)	37 (29)	33 (26)	128 (24)
Total	308 (57)	125 (23)	111 (20)	544 (100)

countries more equitable? (17-year-old girl from Europe)

Bio fuels. I'm really interested in how far we would go to satisfy the demand for fuel. Bio fuels have proven to be a viable alternative for oil. Here in the Philippines, specifically in my province, some farmers in the provinces are switching into the production of bio fuels instead of rice since it is more profitable. Maybe it is not the alternative we want after all. (19-year-boy from Asia)

In the climate change group the students from Asia and Europe emphasized global aspects in finding solutions to this issue. In the following quotes from Asian students international initiatives are questioned.

I would like to learn more about climate change all over the world. Specifically I want to know how other countries relate to this problem and what actions are carried out in this regard. In the same way, I want to learn about methods of preventing and mitigating the consequences of global warming. (19-year-old boy from Asia)

During the camp, I would like to learn more about the international initiatives to reach a settlement concerning the problem of climate change. At what stage is the international cooperation in this field? Discuss the pros and cons of the existing international instruments. (17-year-old girl from Asia)

In the water group, students from Asia and Europe wanted to promote water security organizations and knowledge about the importance of water to humankind. The following examples from the data demonstrate these types of question.

I want to learn about the water security organizations and to become part of one of them. Or to create together with some supporters our own water security organization. (17-year-old girl from Asia)

I've read that many people worldwide lack access to potable water, for example, in Africa, India, and other areas. Humanity is wasting this natural wealth and

using it without being aware that life with no water is unthinkable. (18-year-old boy from Europe)

6.3. *Moral Questions.* Only 111 students (20%) asked a moral question. The most common themes in the moral questions asked by students were related to pollution and fresh air in the climate change group, environmental problems in the renewable energy group, and the protection of water in the water group. The Asian students asked more questions related to floods and the European students more questions related to the lack of water. The following quotes from students' answers demonstrated these lines of enquiry. The first two quotes are from the renewable energy group students.

I would like to learn more about ways to deal with global climate change both in our everyday life and on a higher level. (18-year-old girl from Europe)

I want to know more about dealing with environmental problems and emerging sources of energy. (19-year-old boy from Asia)

A European girl from the water group identified protection and cleaning of water vary important and wrote the following quote.

I want to know more about protection and means of cleaning water and ways of prevention of its pollution. (16-year-old girl from Europe)

A boy from Asia also wanted to protect water. The quote demonstrates his interest in being involved in water projects and in sharing his own ideas.

The most important and interesting issue for me is saving water. You cannot deny that water is the main thing for all living creatures. So, if we do not want our planet to die, we ought to prevent wasting priceless water. It just depends on us. That's why I have a great desire to get acquainted with the water projects of foreign scientists and to share my ideas. (18-year-old boy from Asia)

The moral questions asked by students demonstrated that they were aware of current ethical discussions in science

education. The questions by the girls in the climate change group differed from the questions asked by the boys in the group. The girls took a more personal stand on moral issues than the boys, asking what they could do to solve the problem. The boys, in contrast, formulated the questions in a more general and impersonal way. The boys also identified the future implications of the moral questions they asked. This feature can be seen in the following examples.

How can I contribute to solving the problem of Climate Change? (17-year-old girl from Europe)

Efficient possibilities to slow down climate change, also those which may exist only in the future (16-year-old boy from Europe)

## 7. Concluding Remarks

In this study, international high school students gifted in science from Europe and Asia asked scientific, societal, and moral questions related to the themes in science they wanted to study. The students were identified gifted because most of them came from scientific schools or classes, many had done well in national or international science competition, won scholarships and prizes as well as had good school grades. An equal amount of males and females applied to the camp, but males applied more to the ICT and Math group, which were not considered in this study. Females applied more to the climate change, water, and renewable resources groups. Females' interest to these themes can be explained by Sjøberg's [28] ROSE research, where he concludes that males, more often than females, think that threats to the environment are not their personal business. Females also tend to believe that they can personally influence what happens with the environment.

Our findings demonstrate that the most often asked type of question was scientific in nature. The boys asked more scientific questions than the girls. This characteristic was also evident in our earlier studies [21, 22]. The girls asked more societal question than the boys. Both boys and girls asked the same number of moral questions related to their interests. Moral questions were not as common as the other question types in our study. This feature was also evident in our earlier studies with gifted preadolescents and adolescents. In those studies we demonstrated that there tends to be fewer moral questions as students get older [22].

The students in the climate change group asked more moral questions than their peers in the water group. The nature of the moral questions asked by the girls was more personal than that of the moral questions asked by the boys. This could be explained by the ethics of care that are so typical of girls and women, who tend to care, protect, and show empathy to others in more personal ways than men [29]. The boys took a more impersonal approach to moral questions in science, but their questions often involved a future perspective. Moral questions in science need to be discussed and solved with a view to the future of humankind. Many moral issues related to climate change, renewable energy, and water require solutions that have an understanding of future needs. We need to protect, restore, and nurture our

environment to be able to have a future on earth. In science education, teachers should actively discuss the moral questions that science raises with both a caring and a long-term perspective. One way to increase focus on morality and ethical issues in a science curriculum is to bring more socio-scientific issues into education. Another means is to teach on the Nature of Science (NOS). Through this, students gain understanding on how science advances and what kind of decisions scientists need to make in their careers. Furthermore, students see themselves as decision makers, possibly increasing the interest to consider moral issues.

The findings of this study have been used to improve the next camp by taking moral issues more into consideration in the project works done by the youth. An example of this is the project work of the renewable energy group, where students had to consider, among other things, the use of food crops as a source of fuel.

Gifted students in science may have the best cognitive skills and logical thinking but they may lack the ethical sensitivity that is needed to solve moral dilemmas in science [15]. In a recent study on teachers' ethical sensitivity, science teachers rated their ethical sensitivity lower than teachers of other subjects [30]. This study points to the need for teachers to teach socioscientific issues and discuss moral questions in science, which might influence the future of humankind. Science teaching has a moral core like all the other subjects taught in high schools all over the world.

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## Research Article

# The Supervisory Relationship as an Arena for Ethical Problem Solving

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Doctoral supervision involves the analysis of situations and decision making, some of which include ethical perspectives. This research endeavoured to gain a better understanding of the nature of the ethical problems encountered by supervisors. We have interviewed fourteen supervisors in two disciplines: the natural sciences and the behavioural sciences. We have identified the ethical issues in light of five ethical principles, namely respect for autonomy, non maleficence, beneficence, justice, and fidelity. We have located the ethical issues within the supervisory activity in two locations: the dyadic supervisor-student relationship and the academic community. The study shows that supervisors encounter a plethora of ethical issues. Many of the supervisors were highly aware of the ethical challenges in supervision and actively worked to anticipate and prevent ethical problems. The supervisors described a number of sustainable solutions, but at the same time, ethical problems and malpractice were reported. This suggests that the complexities of ethics are not always evident to the actors themselves. We claim that in order to expose and scrutinize supervision practices, it is insufficient to analyse the ethical issues only on dyadic level. What appears to boil down to a dyadic relationship may in fact be indicative of the values, attitudes, norms, and practices of the community.

## 1. Introduction

Previous research on doctoral education has identified supervision as one of the central determinants of doctoral experience (e.g., [1]). Ives and Rowley [2], for instance, found that a constructive supervisory relationship was associated with students' progress and satisfaction with their doctoral studies. In turn, problems in supervisory relationships such as lack of supervision or destructive friction have been reported to be a cause of problems in doctoral studies [3] in press. The supervisory relationship provides a context, not only for developing students' academic expertise, but also for ethical problem-solving embedded in the supervision activities. Supervision does not, however, exist in a vacuum between the student and the supervisor but is rather rooted within the various contexts of a scholarly community (e.g., [4, 5]). The ethical problem-solving embedded in a variety of supervisory activities is the focus of this article. Little is known about the ethical problems doctoral supervisors encounter in their work and how they identify and solve these

problems. This paper focuses on exploring ethical problem-solving from the doctoral supervisors' perspective in two disciplines, natural and behavioural sciences.

## 2. Ethical Principles in Doctoral Supervision

A set of ethical principles can be used to identify ethical issues in supervision. In the following sections, we present perspectives on ethical principles and behaviours in supervision, discuss the role of the scholarly community, and describe the characteristics of doctoral training in Finland in order for the reader to gain a sense of the context in which the study was conducted.

Doctoral supervision provides a potential arena for identifying and solving problems in an ethically sustainable manner. However, not all the challenges faced are ethical in nature. Furthermore, the problems are not always solved in ethically sustainable ways. Therefore, well-grounded criteria for identifying ethical problems in the context of doctoral

supervision are needed. Ethical principles can be used as tools for analysing what can be perceived as problematic from an ethical or moral point of view in a situation such as doctoral supervision.

Kitchener [6], for instance, has proposed the following principles to facilitate ethical decision making in counselling and advising in a university context: (1) *respect for autonomy*, (2) *doing no harm* (non maleficence), (3) *benefiting others* (beneficence), (4) *being just* (justice), and (5) *being faithful* (fidelity). Respect for autonomy forms the basis of many ethical codes of conduct, including guidelines for professionals and researchers (cf. [7–9]). The principle postulates an individual's right to decide how to live his or her life, and make decisions concerning one's life. Research on doctoral education has shown, however, that both lack of autonomy (e.g., [4, 10]), as well as too much independence or even isolation can cause serious problems in doctoral studies. Stubb et al. [11], for example, found that the experience of being isolated and the lack of supervisory support [12] were related to considerations of withdrawal from doctoral studies, as well as lower levels of satisfaction with their studies among doctoral candidates.

The principle of non maleficence refers to the necessary avoidance of activities that would harm others, either psychologically, physically, or socially. There is evidence that doctoral students experience significant degrees of distress during their studies [13–16]. Moreover, the drop-out rates among doctoral candidates range from thirty to fifty per cent, depending on the discipline and the country [17–19]. Similar findings have been reported in Finland. For example, Stubb et al. [11] found in their study that 43 per cent of doctoral students had considered abandoning their studies. Several complementary reasons for dropping out and experiencing lack of wellbeing have been identified, including high workloads, frequent evaluations, the competitive atmosphere, the lack of supervision and scholarly community, problems in the supervisory relationship, lack of resources, and problems in combining research and private life [13, 20–22]. Although the negative experiences and the lack of wellbeing reported by doctoral candidates arise for various reasons, the findings indicate that there is a need to develop more ethically sustainable problem-solving strategies to deal with the problems that doctoral students face.

While avoiding harm, ethical conduct also includes promoting the wellbeing of others, that is, the principle of beneficence. Wellbeing can be promoted in many ways—through directly helping others, being kind, having mercy, or engaging in charitable acts. Sometimes the situation may require a careful balancing act for the benefits to outweigh the harm when both are potential outcomes of a situation or a decision. Through fairness and impartiality and by promoting equality and reciprocity, one can implement the principle of justice in practice. However, what is perceived as equitable may vary, not only between doctoral candidates and supervisors, but also according to the context.

The principle of fidelity often pertains to human relationships and involves loyalty, truthfulness, keeping promises, and showing respect. Fidelity is often present through

an implicit agreement between professionals and their clients [6], or in our case, the supervisor/s and the student. If fidelity in a supervisory relationship is based only on an implicit agreement, then there is the danger that the doctoral student's and the supervisor's expectations and beliefs about the working practices are not aligned, which may in turn cause conflict. We find it necessary to expand the principle of fidelity to include the scholarly community in which the supervisory relationships take place. The community, the supervisors, and the doctoral students are members of a complex interactive system in which norms, values, and shared practices are constantly constructed and renegotiated; hence, students and supervisors can keep, reconstruct, or break promises to each other. Moreover, students may engage in or attempt unethical conduct, which can challenge the supervisor's skills in ethically sustainable decision making. A community with a pronounced ethical value basis and a strong sense of ethics supports its individuals, including supervisors, team members, and students, to act in accordance with those values.

### 3. Ethical Practice in Doctoral Supervision

Ethical practice can be seen as the manifestation of ethical principles. This means that criteria for ethically sustainable problem solving can be reflected in principles of ethical practice. Applying Welfel's [23] criteria for the ethical behaviour of counselors in the context of supervision, we point to the following criteria: (a) the supervisor possesses skills and knowledge to facilitate the process, for instance, through various interventions; (b) the supervisor respects the human dignity and autonomy of the student; (c) the supervisor uses the power inherent in his or her position responsibly; (d) the supervisor acts to promote public confidence in the way research communities function. In the context of academic supervision, these criteria imply the necessity of a sufficient knowledge base in the field in which the research is conducted together with methodological competence and an understanding of research ethics. There is evidence that doctoral students rarely [12] and supervisors to a limited extent [24] perceive the lack of domain-specific expertise as a core problem in the supervision. One reason may be that supervisors are usually experts in their field and hence are able to provide sufficient guidance and advice to students in conducting thesis research. Doctoral studies are not, however, only about learning research skills and acquiring knowledge; they are also about becoming a full member of a scholarly community and developing an identity as a scholar [25]. To facilitate the doctoral process successfully, an understanding of human learning, that is, pedagogical knowledge, is needed.

The second criterion essentially boils down to the first of Kitchener's [6] ethical principles, that is, allowing the doctoral candidate to make fundamental decisions regarding his or her life. In practice this could mean recognizing when a candidate simply is unable, for any reason, to pursue doctoral studies further, and allowing the candidate to make the decision that he or she finds the most satisfactory. In

the context of supervision, respecting human dignity can be understood as allowing the novice researcher to engage in a learning process without fear of being humiliated because of lesser knowledge and experience in the field. Acknowledging the asymmetrical power relationship in supervision will allow the supervisor to use the power inherent in his or her position wisely. However, supervision and ethical problem-solving in the context of doctoral education is not limited to a dialogue between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor, but it is influenced by practices of the scholarly community.

#### 4. The Scholarly Community in Supervision

Supervision is often embedded in the practices of cosupervision, the activities of a research group or seminar group or the practices in the disciplines. Accordingly, during the doctoral process, students are exposed to various pedagogical subcultures; they participate in different kinds of peer groups and adopt various roles in dynamic and complex communities of practice (cf. [26, 27]). Ethical problem-solving often takes place in multilayered and dynamic communities rather than in supervisor-student dyads [28, 29]. Students engage in cognitive apprenticeships [30] in carrying out their doctoral thesis [19].

However, the signature pedagogy of doctoral training has been the implicit apprenticeship, either in a student-supervisor dyad or in a research group [4]. These practices have their own cultural roots and reflect the values, norms and conceptions of a certain research domain while also being multi- or interdisciplinary in nature [31]. The attitudes and behaviours of faculty members effectively convey the true ethical standards in the community [32, 33].

Unspoken rules and practices exist in various scholarly communities and that doctoral candidates generally learn them without explicit guidance. The role of the academic community is clear in the research by Anderson et al. [34], who found that the students who had the best opportunities to learn research skills, that is, who collaborated closely with faculty in research projects, were also the most frequently exposed to unethical behaviour. The researchers suggest that greater focus should be placed on research communities and their role in fostering future generations of academics. The multilevel and sometimes contradictory practices provide opportunities for agency, avoidance, opposition, and resistance. Consequently, tension inevitably arises in interactions between different actors in these contexts [35, 36]. When faced with such practices, doctoral students can use a variety of strategies: they can adapt to, ignore, or adopt the practices, or they can leave the community [37]. At its best, this dynamic and complex interplay involves participating in various complementary practices that contribute to the gradual acquisition of expertise in one's own domain. However, sometimes the community of practice fails to provide doctoral students with adequate support and shared control. This may lead to continuous destructive friction between students and the learning environment, which can be reflected on the community level as ethical problems of supervision.

#### 5. Doctoral Education in the Natural Sciences and Behavioural Sciences

In Finland, a significant portion of doctoral education takes place in conducting the research for the thesis. The doctoral degree includes the doctoral thesis, seminars, course work, and a public defense of the thesis. The research project is launched at the very beginning of the doctoral studies. The course work (between 40 to 80 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System in which 1 credit equals 27 hours of study.) credits, depending on the discipline) included in the studies is usually individually constructed and based on personal study plans that frequently include international conferences and methodological studies. The emphasis in doctoral programmes is on conducting research. There is no separate extensive course work before launching the doctoral research; instead seminars and course work are complementary to the thesis project and designed to support it. Students need to apply for doctoral education. However, once permission is granted for the doctoral studies, it has, until very recently, been valid for life. Accordingly, it can be argued that characteristic for Finnish doctoral education is that it is quite unstructured [38] compared to many other European countries and highly embedded in conducting doctoral research, although more systematic pedagogical models have been developed during last decade.

The doctoral thesis can be done either in the form of a monograph or as a series of articles including a summary (Finland's Council of State's regulation of university degrees 645/1997). In the natural sciences the majority (81%) of doctoral candidates pursue article-based dissertations [1], which consist of three to five internationally refereed journal articles coauthored with the supervisor and other senior researchers, and a summary that includes an introduction and a discussion bringing together the separate articles. Accordingly, doctoral candidates in the natural sciences often work intensively in relatively strong research communities that consist of several doctoral students, post docs, and professors who focus on collectively solving shared research problems related to the supervisor's research projects. In most cases, the students' mother tongue is Finnish or Swedish, but the articles and the summary are often written in English. Also in the behavioural sciences the article compilation with a summary has become the dominant form (66%) of theses in recent years [1]. However, there is more variation among the domains within behavioral sciences in terms of the primary form of the doctoral dissertation. For instance, the article compilation is more dominant in psychology, while monographs are more often carried out in the field of educational science. The doctoral students who pursue monographs often engage in seminars, and supervision is based on supervisor-student dyads rather than intensive work in research groups. Doctoral supervision is, however, usually based on an apprenticeship, both in the research groups and in the supervisor-student dyads.

The average time for completing the degree is five to six years [39]. The doctoral education is publicly funded and does not cost the student, but they have to come up with their cost of living expenses. Students do not automatically

get funding for conducting their studies by launching their doctoral project. The most used funding form among doctoral candidates is a personal grant, project funding, or wages earned by working outside the University [1]. Hence, during their studies doctoral students usually apply and gain funding from various different sources. This is also reflected in their roles in the academia. Doctoral students typically adopt various roles during their studies ranging from junior staff member, such as research assistant, teacher, or project researcher to student. This means that the relationship can include a wide range of supervisor roles, for example supervision of the student's doctoral work, supervision of student's work in the supervisor's project, and collaboration with the student on a consulting project for private industry. At its best the various roles can be complementary and promote doctoral student development as a scholar, but sometimes destructive frictions and role conflicts may occur.

Each student has at least one advisor (a full professor in the field in which the thesis is being done) and one supervisor. Also the use of supervisory boards has become more popular in recent years [15]. The evaluation process of the doctoral thesis consists of four stages. After the manuscript is accepted by the advisor and the supervisor(s), the Faculty Council will name the prereviewers (usually full professors from other national or international universities) to examine the thesis. The manuscript is read by the prereviewers, and the doctoral candidate revises it based on their comments. The Faculty Council then decides whether the student will be given permission to defend the thesis publicly and names the opponent. At this stage, the thesis is printed, published with an ISBN number and sent to the opponent. After the doctoral candidate has publicly defended the thesis, the opponent decides whether he/she will recommend its ratification. Finally, the Faculty Council decides whether to award the doctoral degree.

## 6. Research Task and Method

*6.1. Aims of the Study.* This study endeavours to gain a better understanding of the nature of the ethical problems encountered by supervisors of doctoral candidates. Moreover, we focus on exploring the various strategies used to solve the problems. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows: What kinds of ethical problems do supervisors in the natural sciences and behavioural sciences encounter in their work? In what kinds of practices are the ethical problems situated? How do the supervisors solve these problems?

*6.2. Participants.* The present investigation analyses interviews of 14 supervisors in two domains—one in the natural sciences and one in the behavioural sciences in a major Finnish research-intensive university. Eight supervisors from the natural sciences and six supervisors from the behavioural sciences were interviewed (three female, eleven male). All participants had PhD degrees and most also had several doctoral students under their supervision. The participants

included in this study are members of active research communities.

Many of the investigations in the natural sciences involve methods and practices of collecting data in field settings, whereas in the behavioural sciences the research is more often conducted by a single researcher. Both research communities collaborate with several research communities worldwide.

*6.3. Method and Data Collection.* The present investigation is part of a larger national research project on Finnish doctoral education [28]. The supervisor interviews were conducted in the research communities during the year 2007. The data were collected with semistructured thematic interviews, and it included questions on three wider themes: (1) the doctoral process, (2) supervision practices, and (3) oneself as a supervisor. The interview instrument was intended to obtain a wide view of the supervisors' work and especially of the different aspects of supervising doctoral students. All questions and instructions were validated by the members of the research group before the interviews. Altogether, the interview contained eighteen questions on different aspects of the supervisors' work and six background questions on the participants' working history, years of supervising, and current position. None of the questions explicitly addressed ethical challenges. Experiences in facing ethical problems emerged in the interviewees' reflections on their work as supervisors. Our focus is on the kind of ethical issues that emerge in supervision, not how the supervisor's identify and conceptualise ethical challenges in supervision. Hence, to reach our aim of capturing authentic manifestations of ethical problems embedded in supervision, the ethical issues needed to be studied as such. Had we explicitly asked about ethical issues in supervision, we would have ended up with the supervisors' conceptualisations, which may have differed from the ethical issues that we have now identified.

The data were collected by one of the authors of this paper during fieldwork in the research communities. Each interview took between 60 and 90 minutes to complete. The interviews were tape-recorded digitally and transcribed into text files by two trained research assistants. All supervisors participated voluntarily. Owing to the sensitive nature of some of the data, we have not provided background information in connection with the interview quotations. We have also neutralized any references to the gender of the interviewees or the people they have referred to.

*6.4. Analysis.* We explore the episodes that challenged the supervisors' everyday practices. Through the episodes, the supervisors' experiences of encountering and solving ethical problems can be located in specific contexts and events in the supervisory processes. The data were analysed by content analysis. The analysis strategy involved both deductive and inductive processes. The first step was deductive in the sense that we used Kitchener's [6] five ethical principles as a framework for recognising ethical issues in the data. Based on this analysis, we extracted phrases from the interviews so that the unit of analysis was a whole thought or theme.

TABLE 1: Ethical principles, related issues, and frequency in the data.

Principle at stake	Ethical issues	Frequency ( $f$ )	Percentage of ethical issues (%)
Avoiding harm	Exploitation and abuse	19	36
	Dual relationships	10	17
Beneficence	Competence and adequacy of support	4	8
	Boundaries of supervisor role/support	8	13
Autonomy	Conflicting demands	5	9
Fidelity	Abandonment	7	13
Justice	Inequity	2	4
	Total	55	100

At this point we ended up with a total of 63 units, which through an iterative process were reduced to 55 retained units. After the initial identification of ethical issues, the analysis took an inductive turn, as we categorised the ethical issues under seven data-driven categories based on the nature of the issue (e.g., exploitation, lack of autonomy). In line with a content-analytical procedure (cf. [40, 41]), we made abbreviated descriptions of each unit of analysis.

The next phase was to locate the ethical issues within the supervisory activity in which it appeared. We distinguished between two locations: (1) the dyadic supervisor-student relationship and (2) the academic community (e.g., the research group, department, faculty). In the third phase we identified the ways in which the ethical issues were or could be solved. The analysis was conducted by the first author, but the interpretations were tested with a dialogic reliability check [42] to guarantee agreement between the researchers.

## 7. Findings: The Complexity and Multidimensionality of Ethical Issues in Supervision

The supervisors described a variety of events which they considered ethically problematic or challenging ( $f = 55$ ), ranging from short events to extensive series of episodes. For example, they described exploitation, destructive friction in supervisory relationships and dual relationships. Moreover, there was variation among the supervisors' experiences. Further investigation showed that the source of the problematic episodes varied. The results suggested that a range of ethical issues potentially breaching the five ethical principles (cf. [6]) were present in the supervisors' experiences and in their conceptions of supervision. The issues were categorised by the ethical principles that might be breached according to the scheme in Table 1.

More than half of the ethical issues pertained to exploitation, abuse or dual relationships. Role ambiguity and conflicting relations and supervision abandonment accounted for approximately a fourth of the ethical issues as reflected by the supervisors. Fewer in frequency were the issues that pertained to supervision competence and adequacy, conflicting demands in supervision and inequity. The theme of dual relationships emerged with equal frequency among the supervisors in the natural sciences as in the behavioural sciences ( $f = 5/5$ ); however, the theme of exploitation and

abuse emerged more frequently within the natural science domain ( $f = 13/6$ ), which is not to be interpreted as natural sciences harbouring more frequent cases of exploitation and abuse. It merely demonstrates the multidimensionality of the ethical issues that can involve exploitation or abuse. Issues ascribed to the supervisor's lack of competence ( $f = 0/4$ ) or inequity issues ( $f = 0/2$ ) were not mentioned by the behavioural science supervisors, whereas these issues did emerge among the natural science supervisors. In contrast, pressures arising from conflicting demands were more frequent among behavioural science supervisors ( $f = 1/4$ ).

### 7.1. Principle: Avoiding Harm

**7.1.1. Exploitation and Abuse.** Exploitation was a theme brought up frequently by the supervisors. But rather than being a relatively straightforward phenomenon, with one person being the exploiter and the other, the exploited, it proved to be a much more complex area of ethical problems. One of the forms of exploitation had to do with differing views as to what is acceptable supervision. For instance, supervisors hesitated over how much of their own contribution to an article is acceptable and when the contribution might be viewed as exploiting a student's work, even a form of "free riding". Another viewpoint was that the article dissertations are the work of the supervisor, not the student, and would thus not represent the student's actual contribution. A solution suggested by one supervisor was the unification of practices with the introduction of a detailed description of the student's own contribution to the articles included in doctoral dissertations. This suggestion works well to alleviate suspicion of both contribution of the student and the supervisor:

*When I first got here I heard comments that they [the article-based dissertations] are written by the supervisors, and I suggested that we adopt a practice similar to that in the medical school where the students write a report for each article, describing their own contribution.*

Supervisors felt the need to protect their supervisees against exploitation or abuse by fellow colleagues. One supervisor described a situation in which a colleague was considered to be taking advantage of the doctoral student's research work. In this case, the colleague was said to have

belittled the student's input and tried to exclude the student from article authorship. The supervisor had found direct confrontation to be the solution, taking the side of the student against the colleague. Again, clear rules on what counts towards authorship accompanied by a contribution report might have helped the parties settle the conflict.

In one case, the supervisor's own superior was seen to be exploiting the doctoral students, requiring them to do tasks that neither related to nor advanced their studies. In order to secure their income, students may need to work, a situation that sometimes results in over-work or in other projects that do not directly advance the doctoral studies. While a supervisor argued that it is important for the students to carry out a variety of academic tasks during their doctoral studies, one supervisor had solved similar incidents with colleagues by appealing to them not to ask the students to work for them, as the students would find it hard to decline a request from superiors:

*Sometimes I've had to say, had to forbid people to take on work chores unless they come from me; forbid all other supervisors to give certain persons any tasks. No one is allowed to ask [the students] for anything anymore.*

One supervisor described a situation in which the student had to be protected from another type of abuse, namely racist attitudes and behaviour. The supervisor had arranged a workplace for a gifted graduating international student. The supervisor then heard of racist attitudes towards the graduate in the workplace and felt responsible for the situation:

*Of course, I was thinking that he [the student] would need to find employment after finishing the doctoral studies, and then drifted into an unpleasant situation that I hope wasn't too evident to the student: There was racism in the work place. Considering the situation, I was quite satisfied that I had used my energy to promote the student's wellbeing without thinking so much about the project, that the project was of secondary importance, and first I needed to organise the student's personal environment in a way that the student could be in a good environment.*

Students may not be the only objects of exploitation or abuse. The data included four descriptions of a supervisor experiencing exploitation. Supervisors felt exploited when their supervisees made claims beyond the legitimate sphere of the supervisory relationship. Such claims could be related to demands for assuring employment after graduation, or a student could endeavour to turn the relationship into a therapeutic one. In the following excerpt, the supervisor was very clear about where the responsibilities of the supervisory relationship end, yet encountered situations in which this understanding was neither shared by the student nor the community:

*It's after all their life. You can follow it with interest and be supportive, but if you start to be too*

*proud of them and live off them, giving them job offers they wouldn't otherwise receive, it's getting dangerous... I know that there are supervisors who do a lot more, and I shun it very much. But, of course, some students also expect their mentor and supervisor to be a recruitment office. And that's when I say, hell, no! It's not our job to fix jobs for people. Or matchmaking or anything like that. That's that other part of life.*

Whereas above the exploitation is viewed as taking place between individuals, a category emerged, in which a system, that is, the university or a department or even policies, could be exploitive. Some supervisors found it problematic that doctoral students are recruited in order to maximise the government funding of the department, as funding depends to a certain extent on the number of graduating PhDs. The ethical problem is that students are often recruited to uncertain careers, and five of the supervisors interviewed expressed concern over the career prospects of the graduating students. The supervisors felt that sometimes students are recruited merely to secure maximal departmental funding rather to foster a new generation of scholars:

*With regards to doctoral dissertations, I wonder how much we really should encourage people to do dissertations when the situation in the universities is crazy, and this is a tough place for doctoral students and PhDs who don't get employed and don't get a decent salary. Really, really, I think about my own morals and whether it is right to recruit these most talented young people to do PhDs.*

**7.1.2. Dual Relationships.** Dual relationships as ethical issues in the supervisory relationship were identified by four supervisors. We have categorised dual relationships as a category of its own, although in some respects these may be just another form of exploitation. The reason for keeping dual relationships as its own category is that these were emotionally or psychologically confounded relations. The supervisors described it as a problem or challenge when the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee took other forms, such as a deep or intimate friendship, or started to serve psychological needs, that is, parent or therapist, normally associated with relationships other than a supervisory one:

*Close friendships and best friends develop into romance surprisingly seldom considering that all are adults. This hasn't been the biggest problem. But the emotional involvement, friends and family friends... It easily turns into father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, mother-daughter relations.*

The supervisors had different suggestions for dealing with such emotional complications. One suggested that assigning same-sex supervision dyads would reduce the tensions that arise in mixed-gender relationships. Another supervisor permitted infatuations and also allowed colleagues to speak of their supervisees using what could be

described as derogatory language. The supervisor claimed that by admitting the infatuations, it was possible to control the situation and one's behaviour:

*I know that I am regularly infatuated with [the student], but that's all right, because I have admitted it to myself a long time ago. I don't try to struggle with it, because then in a post-dissertation party when dancing slow dances, it'll blow up in your face. But because I admit, OK, I'm infatuated with [the student] again this week, nice, it stays in control precisely because I communicate with the thought, and I don't try to say "I'm not, I'm not and that thing doesn't exist", because that way it won't work. I don't know how these things should be dealt with in the work community, and it would be good to have some agreement, because we clearly have cases here. For instance, one supervisor said to me that X is a bit slow, but nice to supervise because the student is physically attractive. And because I know this person well, and I'm myself what I am, I don't feel bad about this at all. I just think it's OK that it's been voiced.*

Speaking derogatorily about someone, particularly a person in a weaker power position, places that person in an even more disadvantaged position and can further enhance the power differential. Accepting sexually-loaded ways of speaking about students may signal that dual relationships are, if not common practice, at least an accepted norm in the research community.

One supervisor described the experience of being caught up as a student in a supervisory relationship that can only be characterised as abusive:

*That supervisor was an ass. And still is. In other words, a socially disabled person, who apparently suffers from unfathomable shyness or other problems, which takes the form of being an asshole; an evil, sharp-tongued person who tells you that "you have no brains". Well, then I drifted into an intimate relationship, mostly because the only way to communicate with the supervisor was to go to the bar with [the supervisor] because when [the supervisor] was drunk one could get supervision. Really! And then, of course, I got addicted to the attention, because it was so difficult to get.*

The coarse language, which contradicts much of the tone in the rest of the interview, suggests that there is an unresolved emotional burden attached to the incident. The problem appears to have escalated by the private nature of the supervisory relationship. One may ask how it is possible for such a situation to have persisted without anyone in that community reacting to what was going on. It appears that the community has been unable, perhaps even unwilling, to undertake any measures against exploitation and abuse when the supervisory relationship has been viewed as a private matter. Reducing the supervision to a private relationship

deters the community from taking responsibility and taking action to implement more candid supervision practices, even when there is a justifiable case for intervening.

One of the supervisors referred to the necessity of maintaining a professional stance in the supervisory role in order to support the students in times of need. The supervisor was guided by an understanding of the nature of the doctoral process and the mandate of the supervisor, which included a clear definition of one's own role:

*I have made the decision that I can be very close and they can talk to me, but I am their supervisor. I am not their friend. That doesn't mean that I can't be close to them or democratic, but it means that in times of crisis during the dissertation process, be it self-doubt or doubt about mastering the whole thing or a rejection from a journal—there are many such things—and if I am their nice friend, I cannot be the supporter of the process when a crisis arise. . . I try to keep the roles clear. Otherwise I cannot help them when they despair.*

## 7.2. Principle: Beneficence

7.2.1. *Competence and Adequacy of Support.* Adequacy and supervisor competence were themes that appeared to trouble the natural sciences supervisors in particular. Four of them discussed competence and adequacy through themes such as doubting the worth of one's own contribution, experiences of insufficiency, inexperience and lack of pedagogical training. The supervisors have a mission to do their task well, but attributed shortcomings to their own performance, which, in their minds, compromise the principle of benefiting the students. These experiences result in bad conscience and guilt:

*I sometimes have the feeling, a bad conscience, that I have nothing to contribute to this student, because [the student's] brains produce such things that go beyond my comprehension.*

Not all problems were attributed to shortcomings in knowledge. The supervisors acknowledged that their lack of understanding of the learning processes created or at some point in their career had created problems. The following dialogue describes the supervisor's experience of such a situation and reflects that knowledge about support structures may not have reached all parties who could have benefited from the support:

*Supervisor: Are we training supervisors here now in any way to supervise doctoral studies?*

*Researcher: Well, do you?*

*Supervisor: No [laughing]. Not really for supervision, there is no training here, which could be a way to develop doctoral studies.*

In addition to preparing academics to supervise the doctoral students' research processes, supervision training

can help community members clarify their vision of good supervision practices. This will allow the community to share the responsibility of developing such practices, instead of leaving individual supervisors to sort them out for themselves. The shared vision and responsibility allows the individual supervisor to judge his or her own competences and the adequacy of the supervision in more objective terms and allows the supervisors to seek consultation when their competence is insufficient.

*7.2.2. Boundaries of the Supervisor Role and Support.* Ambiguity in what constitutes the supervisory role could cause problems in terms of the benefits gained from the relationship. The following quotation shows that even experienced supervisors grapple with the nature of the task:

*It is a relationship that's in a way very intensive, but you work together, so is it comparable to the arts; theatre or film-making, like the kind of relationship that exists between a director and an actor?*

Looking for guidance for the supervisory role from the director-actor relationship may be misguided in that both a director and an actor are professionals in their own right, whereas the doctoral student generally is a novice in academia and needs guidance to develop into an independent researcher. The power constellation inevitably places the supervisor and the doctoral student at different ends of the continuum. As the doctoral process evolves, the power constellation may shift towards greater equality, but if this is taken as the point of departure, we see that there are great risks for missing the core of the supervision task and for misuse of power.

Another issue involved collegial relationships in the immediate community, which prevented the student from gaining optimal support from the supervisors. The supervisor role itself was not the arena of ambiguities; rather the strained relations with coworkers affected the progress of the doctoral studies:

*The leader of this research team is in considerable conflict with another person... and now there is a new twist: these two persons cannot have their name in the same publication, which sounds strange, but there are many background variables. I work with both people, cooperate quite successfully. And now the problem is that I can't use the strengths of these two people, can't have them both in my doctoral student's work. It has caused problems in the past, and still does.*

Inflamed interpersonal relationships that hinder people from cooperating are a serious threat to any team or community, and there are likely others who suffer in these situations in addition to the doctoral students.

A third form of role-related issues extending beyond the supervisee-supervisor relationship included the ambiguity of the supervisor's role in relation to the research community. The community may embrace practices that benefit the doctoral student, but simultaneously other practices may work

against the student. The following excerpt illustrates this point through the different demands placed on supervisors by academic and financial policies:

*University departments compete with each other, but the national doctoral school tries to support mutual doctoral candidates. We spend a lot of time, top researchers spend a lot of time, supporting the doctoral students of supervisors in another university, and the department doesn't view this favourably.*

Defining the responsibilities not only of supervisors and doctoral students, but also of the community (team, department, university), and making these explicit to everyone would alleviate the issues that arise from supervisor role confusion and unclear boundaries of the supportive task.

### *7.3. Principle: Autonomy*

*7.3.1. Conflicting Demands.* The supervisors described a number of situations in which they had experienced the ambiguity between supervision and imposing on a student's autonomy. For instance, they recognised that forcing a viewpoint or simply adhering to contextual pressures might interfere with the student's learning process. In the quotation below, the supervisor recognises a conflict between supporting the students in dealing with the system and allowing the students to engage in a developmental process:

*Especially now that there are a lot of projects and tight deadlines and so on, in order to alleviate the pain of creating something new, they [supervisors] give ready reading lists, for instance. And that is a big service, but it can also be quite a big disservice. It's this old issue that if you give bread to the hungry, you can ease his hunger today, but teach him to farm and he won't be hungry for the rest of his life... There are the EU grants. But the system is wrong. The world today is tuned so that it takes away some extremely valuable states of mind, which we should learn to recognise and tune up and allow people the spaces and the time to stay there, and that way support them.*

Another type of ethical dilemma emerged in situations in which the supervisor's and supervisee's views differed. Insisting on the viewpoint that the supervisor knew to be right would, in the long run, have made things easier for the student, but that would not have been the student's own decision, which is one of the valuable aspects that students should learn during the doctoral process. Ethical dilemmas of a similar nature also appeared when supervisors felt unsure about how persuasively to insist on their own view rather than give in to the student's perhaps unconventional ideas:

*The doctoral student receives, but simultaneously also preserves or develops his or her own perspectives, which at best deviate in interesting ways*

*from the supervisor's ideas. So it is difficult because you never know when you might have pushed an idea too strongly and prevented the doctoral student from developing his or her own idea, or the other way around: when you should have been more forceful and not left it up to the student to decide.*

Furthermore, an issue involving student autonomy is the acceptance by the supervisor that the supervisees will exceed the supervisor's grasp of knowledge and eventually go beyond what is currently known in the field. Supporting the supervisee's development is a theme that came up in most interviews, and as such it may not pose a dilemma. It may, however, become an ethical issue if the supervisor or the community does not accept that the student may accomplish greater things than the supervisor or the state-of-the-art in the community. In most interviews, supporting the student in this process was described as a satisfying task, and seeing the students excel was described as one of the greatest joys of supervision. One of the supervisors also described feelings of jealousy and the necessity of mastering those feelings in order not to impose on the student's right to build a successful career.

#### 7.4. Principle: Fidelity

**7.4.1. Abandonment.** Of the examples of supervision abandonment in the interviews, all but one pertained to the supervisors' own experiences of being supervisees. Abandonment took the form of indirect abandonment, lack of support, inadequate supervision, or inappropriate interference. One supervisor described delegating the supervision of a student to a coworker incapable of providing adequate supervision, which resulted in involuntary abandonment of the supervisee. There appears to have been the potential of utilising the research team as a supervision resource, yet the supervision relationship only shifted from one dyadic relationship to another, that is, it remained highly private in nature, which prevented the team leader or others from interfering with the neglect.

Other experiences included the lack of support from a supervisor owing to different research approaches and inappropriate interference from the supervisor. In one case the interviewee had tried to avoid the supervisor, who mostly interfered in a nonsupportive way. Similarly, in another case, the supervisor recalled his/her own doctoral studies and the supervisor's flagrant feedback. Such experiences had led the supervisors to reflect on the importance of a respectful attitude towards the student, even if there is disagreement on the subject matter itself. Further, one of the supervisors had gradually stopped taking new supervisees and started to extend and gradually transfer supervision responsibility to graduates so that at retirement there would be a smooth transition and no doctoral student would have to feel abandoned.

#### 7.5. Principle: Justice

**7.5.1. Inequity.** Supervisors realised that there is the expectation of equal treatment among students, but at times the understanding of what equal treatment entails was contradictory. From the supervisor's perspective, equality may not necessarily mean similar tasks and an equal amount of work, which, according to one of the supervisors, is what students expect. Balancing the tasks in a way that is experienced as fair to all is difficult. Part of the problem may also be the expectations that the supervisors have for themselves. They may embrace the ideal of fair and just supervision, but realise that in practice it may not mean treating all supervisees in the same way:

*What the doctoral students want from the supervisor is some kind of fair treatment. And it is a bit tricky because you might yourself think that you are treating them all in an equal way, but that doesn't automatically mean that you give them all the same jobs and the same amount of work. From my perspective, I see that to some students I can give certain tasks and that much more work, and so on. In my opinion, it should be related to their skills and capacity, and that is fairness, but they don't see it that way. They want everything to be exactly the same. . . That's a problem because you should treat them in a fair way, but true equality where everything is shared just the same is impossible.*

Supervisors may also fear accusations of favouritism or exploitation, which makes the quest for equality all the more urgent. Candidness in the responsibilities of individuals in the community as well as open communication about various opportunities that arise favour a just work community.

Another issue that potentially breaches the ethics of justice was identified by one of the supervisors, who was concerned that students are held responsible for things that they may not always be able to influence. Naturally, the doctoral dissertation is an inquiry in which the student demonstrates the ability to carry out research. Sometimes the direction that the project takes is influenced by the grants that a research team acquires, and it may not be fully up to individual students to make all the choices themselves. If the student nevertheless is held responsible, this may create a sense of unfairness:

*It is, of course, a bit unfair that the doctoral student can't always be responsible for what's been investigated because in a way it is determined by external sanctions, for instance by what is funded.*

Group support plays an important role in the direction that the individual student's research may take, especially in communities where research is usually conducted in teams. Part of the support entails responsibility for the group as a whole and for the individual researcher within it.

## 8. Discussion of Ethical Problems in Supervision

Our study shows that supervisors encounter a plethora of ethical issues in supervision, and they are sensitive to the ethical nature of the problems. The supervisors interviewed for this study sought ways to solve the ethical dilemmas, and many actively worked to anticipate and prevent issues from turning into problems. The supervisors described a number of ethically sustainable solutions to the issues and problems they encountered. At the same time, serious cases of malpractice were reported, suggesting that the complexities of ethics and sustainable solutions are not always evident to the actors in the supervision arena.

Prior research identifies a variety of ethical issues in supervision, including incompetent and inadequate supervision, supervision abandonment, intrusion of supervisor values, abusive and exploitative supervision, dual relationships, encouragement to commit fraud, and authorship issues [43]. We identified many of these in our data, with the exception of fraud. Asking people to be honest about their dishonesty is methodologically problematic (e.g., [44]) and may require other approaches than a thematic interview. Nevertheless, the interviewees did not describe any fraudulent behaviour of colleagues or students either.

Abusive and exploitative supervision relationships were the most frequent type of ethical issue. Although conceptually close, exploitation and abuse may arise from different kinds of motivation. Exploitation generally serves a selfish end such as using a student to advance one's own goals, even if this may prevent the student from finishing the dissertation. Abusive supervision springs from a motivation to punish the students, for instance, for their lack of skills and experience in the field (cf. [43]). Exploitation or abuse may work in two directions. Our data show that the exploiter as well as the object of exploitation may be the supervisor, the student or the community, or even the system. Our data indicated an additional twist on the theme, namely, supervisors who experienced the need to protect their supervisees from exploitation by others.

Dual relationships emerged in our data as well. In academia, faculty and students interact in various contexts and situations, which, despite a number of similarities, are more variable and sometimes less constrained than the settings in which therapist-patient relationships take place, for instance [45], in [43]. Mutual interests and values may provide a basis for attraction, paving the way for emotional contagion. The asymmetrical power relation increases the vulnerability of the student [4], and generally places the student at greater risk for harm than the faculty member. Reducing the supervisory relationship to a private matter increases the risk that exploitative and abusive relationships will take place without interference by the community. The kind of language in which supervisory relationships are talked about within a community may be indicative of the community's accepted norms. Scrutinizing the discourses can reveal discriminatory and oppressive norms.

Goodyear et al. [43] has identified authorship as an ethical issue in supervision. Our data gave evidence not

only of ambiguities related to authorship, but more broadly, to work contributions in general. The supervisors often attempted to solve these ambiguities at the level of the individual relationship, rather than scrutinizing the norms and practices on the community level. If a community is unable to resolve its conflict by itself, then an external mediator may be called in to provide the community members with tools for conflict resolution.

Incompetence with regards to subject matter and methodology can stop benefiting the supervisees or even harm them [43]. Based on our data, incompetence also included the lack of pedagogical knowledge or a perceived incompetence in pedagogy. We also recognised in our data ethical issues that arose from unclear boundaries in the supervisor's role and the extent to which the supervisor should give his or her support. When supervision is primarily viewed as a dyadic relationship, recognising the responsibilities and resources of the community can be difficult. At the other end of the continuum of assuming all responsibility oneself as a supervisor is supervision abandonment. In our data, the references to abandonment were related to the supervisors' own experiences of being doctoral students, and many emphasised that, based on their prior experiences, they knew what kind of supervisor they did not want to be. Even if the neglect might not go as far as abandonment, experiences of exclusion or belonging could have serious consequences: scholarly communities have been suggested as playing an important part in doctoral student wellbeing and students' commitment in their studies [17, 20, 46]. Pyhältö and colleagues [28] for instance, found that seeing oneself as an outsider to the scholarly community was related to a lack of interest in the studies, considerations of dropping out, and experiences of exhaustion, anxiety, and stress.

Our data do not allow us to make inferences about the field-specific nature of ethical issues, and we can only hypothesise about the possible relationships between a discipline and the types of ethical issues. Could the more frequent occurrences of references to exploitation and abuse within the natural sciences be related to the fact that students work in teams with many supervisors overseeing students and with several projects being carried out simultaneously? The boundaries of who is supervising whom and who participates in what projects in which ways may be unclear, and the work distribution arising in such a situation, may be experienced as exploitative. Perhaps the fact that the quest for equity also arose more frequently from the natural science data could be a reaction to experiences of exploitation. Another explanation may be that in many areas in social sciences it is typically the case that students approach the supervisor with whom they would like to work. When applying for doctoral studies, the student thus has the support of a supervisor, who is ready to make a commitment to the supervision, should the student's application be accepted. In the latter case, that is, typically in natural sciences where doctoral studies are conducted within a research group, appointment of supervisors is done by the leader of the research group, and there is less gravitation of students towards working with individuals. In such situations it is vital that commitments and responsibilities of all parties involved are negotiated

explicitly. When students seek supervision from a chosen individual, the commitment of the two parties is perhaps more explicitly dealt with prior to beginning the supervision. In these cases, however, there appears to be the risk of conflicting demands and related pressures accumulating on one individual.

Lack of supervision competence did not emerge as an ethical issue among the supervisors in behavioural sciences. The field in itself neither guarantees adequate or competent supervision nor does it automatically endorse the supervisor's experience of his or her own competence. Yet we are confident in proposing that pedagogical training in general and supervision training more specifically provide knowledge and skills that are useful in the supervision process of doctoral students.

Our findings suggest that the ethical issues which supervisors encounter are challenging and multidimensional. As such, they also require problem-solving on many levels. It is insufficient to focus only on individuals and their actions. This suggests that supervision of doctoral students is in the interest and the responsibility of the research community, for example, the research team or institution, rather than being the task of individuals. This is not to say that the dyadic relationships are not important; rather it is insufficient to analyse the ethical issues only on that level. What appears to boil down to a dyadic relationship may in fact be indicative of the values, attitudes, norms, and practices of the community. Pedagogical and supervision training are means of working with and solving ethical issues in supervision on the community level. The training provides an arena for sharing good supervision practices and ethically sustainable solutions, which also our data provided evidence of. Training can provide further tools with which supervisors can scrutinize the current practices and discourses in their research communities.

On a final methodological note, we recognise that there are limitations to our research approach. The supervisors were interviewed about their supervisory experiences as a whole, and it is possible that they remembered some incidents differently from what actually occurred owing to the retrospective nature of recall. However, we were striving for understanding perceptions of a certain phenomenon rather than recording the experiences of a particular event; moreover, perceptions can be considered to develop over a longer period of time instead of being allocated to certain situations.

The supervisors were interviewed only once, and it is possible that certain aspects of the interview situation (e.g., mood, the latest incidents in the doctoral supervision) or the current research or the life situation in general may have affected their responses. The primary aim of qualitative research, however, is not to describe individuals' perceptions *per se*, but to increase the understanding of the variation in perceptions at the collective level [42]. From this perspective it can be considered a strength of this research that the data consisted of supervisory interviews from two communities in two scientific fields. All the supervisors were quite experienced; however, they were in different phases of their careers as academics, and we believe that this in some

ways heterogeneous group provided an overall picture of the kinds of ethical problems supervisors may encounter.

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## Research Article

# How Finnish Muslim Students Perceive and Deal with Religious and Cultural Difference: Negotiating Religious Tradition with Modern Liberal and Postmodern Ideals

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This paper presents the results of a qualitative case study examining Muslim students' ways of perceiving and dealing with difference. The study is motivated by the need, expressed in previous literature, to achieve more elaborate comprehension of the relation between tolerance and religiosity. Deeper understanding of these dynamics is pursued by concentrating on one specific group and context—Muslim youngsters in Finland. The students' negotiations between different cultural and ideological sources of understanding difference and tolerance will be elaborated and discussed. These negotiations reflect the special challenges encountered when dealing with religious difference.

## 1. Introduction

Since 9/11 scholars from many fields have been showing interest in religion and its relation to xenophobia and violence [1–4]. While religions are factors in many conflicts, they also contribute to dialogue and peaceful coexistence. There is a lot of empirical support for the hypothesis that religiosity correlates negatively with deviant behaviour (see [2]). On the other hand, there are also studies showing how religiosity increases intolerance, negative intergroup attitudes, or xenophobia [3, 5]. These ambiguities might result from the deficiencies in operationalizing religiosity and tolerance found in many studies. Due to the diversity of religious cognition and experience, as well as the complexity of the concept of tolerance, many studies have drawn simplistic conclusions about their relationship [3, 6]. Furthermore, religions are often considered subordinate to cultural diversity and the special challenges in dealing with religious differences left unnoticed. These confusions have motivated this study, the purpose of which is to gain deeper understanding of the dynamics of dealing with religious and cultural difference by concentrating on one specific group and context—Muslim students in Finland.

Tolerance, religiosity, and diversity are understood in distinct ways in different discourses and ideological frameworks

affecting religious education. Confessional religious education aiming at religious socialisation is grounded on the ideals of religious traditions, but it has been challenged by liberal and postmodern paradigms. However, often these approaches overlap, which is also the case in Finland. In order to be able to elaborate the multidimensionality of the dynamics of dealing with difference, this study examines the ways in which the students' ideals and ways of perceiving and dealing with difference have been affected by these overlapping educational discourses that draw from liberalism, postmodernism, and religious tradition.

The liberal paradigm of religious education is the result of questioning the traditional confessional models. Confessional education, which means enculturation to the beliefs, values, and practices of religious tradition, became problematic in the light of the liberal ideals of autonomy and tolerance, which relate to reducing beliefs to matters of subjective opinion and questioning religious education based on exclusive truth claims [7]. In the liberal framework, tolerance is regarded as a necessary ground for individuality, autonomy, and freedom, that is, the core values of liberalism that demand respect for all individuals. However, difference must be balanced with unity, which sometimes also leads to modifying difference so that it fits into the demand for unity [8, 9]. In modern liberal states this ideal of social unity

has sometimes resulted in understanding equality as cultural assimilation. Difference is tolerated only in the private sphere and unity is equated with homogeneity. For example, uncritical acceptance of dogma based on authority or revelation is unwelcome, which makes it hard to accommodate deep forms of difference, such as passionate religious identity: this explains why Muslims have become “the critical case of multiculturalism” in many liberal societies [10, 11].

The liberal paradigm is nowadays extensively criticised. Religious education based on these liberal ideals is in risk of misrepresenting how religions understand themselves and creating a conflict of values. For example, some fundamentalist Christians regard liberal education in its promotion of tolerance as indoctrination and as a threat to their cultural integrity [12]. According to postmodern critiques, in a liberal framework only those willing to accept liberal values are tolerated. The liberal principles of freedom and tolerance have become ends in themselves and tolerance has developed into a closed worldview. Postmodernists have endeavoured to overcome these pitfalls of the liberal framework by accepting the diversity of local micronarratives and replacing objective knowledge with relativism and subjectivism [7]. In postmodernist approaches to religious education, the life world of the student becomes the center of attention and the focus is on the ideal that students should construct their own knowledge and spirituality [13]. Diversity is understood as enrichment and tolerance as the positive evaluation and true acceptance of others, not as a mere endurance of differences.

However, this approach can also be accused of departing from the self-understanding of religious traditions. A postmodern antirealist way of understanding and celebrating difference as “all there is” leads to a concept of tolerance that requires renouncing the idea of one single truth or reduces questions of truth to matters of personal preference and is itself in danger of imposing a worldview that does not recognize radical forms of difference [7, 8]. In a postmodern framework, religious difference is optimally dealt with in a dialogue that departs from religious exclusivism and requires that one is continuously able to change one’s own—perceptions this is regarded as openness (see, e.g., [3]). The influence of this kind of postmodern paradigm can be observed in the concepts of European teenagers, who believe in the possibility of the peaceful coexistence of religions and declare their positivity towards religious diversity, but at the same time are critical of exclusive truth-claims and actually regard what is different as an obstacle to dialogue [14].

However, believing that the contradictions between one’s own theories of truth and those held by others are irreconcilable does not have to be equated with intolerance: when there is a strong ideal of one truth, not demanding too much of tolerance is vital in order to facilitate peaceful coexistence without compelling religions to renounce their self-understanding [8]. Nevertheless, liberal educationalists fear that the dogmatic position of Islam with its absolute truth-claims leads to intolerance. The primacy of religious belief and the idea that one should not open religious beliefs to critical scrutiny creates a conflict with liberal educational ideals and entails indoctrination [15]. However, while holding on to exclusive truth-claims and ideas of

universality, religions themselves can function as resources for tolerance. As long as Islam has existed, it has encountered other religions. Its basic teachings leave room for different interpretations concerning the position of other religions, and throughout history Muslims have adopted various attitudes towards non-Muslims. In the Qur’an, Jews and Christians are criticised, but also defined as “People of The Book” and thus given a protected status. Even though claims of universality are essential in Islam, the Qur’an also states that “there is no compulsion in religion” and encourages the respectful treatment of others [16, 17]. Thus, tolerance in the Islamic framework is grounded on the ideas of freedom of religion and the equality of all human beings as creatures of God, which should lead to the respectful treatment of all peoples, despite the exclusivity and universality of religious truths. Schweitzer [18] introduces the possibility of pursuing tolerance in education by invoking the values related to tolerance within religious traditions and seeing them as “resources for tolerance.” His arguments rest on findings according to which individualised faith does not engender tolerance. This makes it important to embrace the possibility of promoting tolerance from within the different religious traditions.

These different cultural sources of understanding diversity, tolerance, and religion also affect educational discourses in Finland. It is important to start paying attention to how different cultural paradigms affect students’ ideals of dealing with difference, which is an unstudied area. Furthermore, there is lack of research on the ways in which young immigrant Muslims deal with difference. Researchers studying Muslim identities do not always take into account the rich variety of Muslims’ own understandings of their identities or the effects of a particular cultural and political context on these identity processes [19]. In a similar manner, understanding the variety of Muslims’ ways of dealing with difference requires departing from the perspectives of “official Islam” and taking into account the ways in which individuals have been influenced by other cultural sources. For these reasons, the objectives of this study are to analyse (1) how Finnish Muslim students perceive and deal with difference, and (2) how these perceptions reflect the ways in which a commitment to religious tradition and experiences of life are negotiated with influences from liberal and postmodern discourses. Even though there is a certain amount of ambiguity related to these paradigms and they often share features, in this article, they are used as analytical tools in order to increase understanding of the tensions related to the students’ ways of dealing with difference.

## 2. Finnish Context

Finland differs from other European countries that have experienced Muslim immigration in that it has had a small Muslim population, the Turkish Tatars, for over a hundred years, but postwar immigration started as late as in the end of the 1980s. Nowadays, the Muslim population in Finland is ethnically mixed, with Somalis, Arabs, Kurds, Kosovo Albanians, Bosnians, and Turks as the largest groups.

Approximately 0,8 percent of the Finnish population are Muslims, but the figure is somewhat higher in the area of Helsinki, where this study took place [20, 21].

Finland has long been regarded as quite a homogeneous nation, most of its population (roughly 80 percent) belonging to the Evangelic Lutheran Church. When awareness of this Islamic presence in Finland awoke in the 1990s, it was considered alien and threatening. Furthermore, Finland was coping with a recession, and Muslim immigrants have been very dependent on the Finnish welfare system due to the difficulties in integrating them into the Finnish labor market: this has hardened attitudes, and public opinion concerning Muslims is on the whole negative [20, 21]. In this study, attention is also paid to how this position as a disadvantaged minority group and the fact that it is regarded by society as a whole as a social problem affects Muslim students' ways of dealing with difference.

However, efforts are being made to encourage mainstream Finnish opinion to be more sensitive to cultural and religious diversity. This study is part of a larger case study examining Islamic education in Finnish schools, and these educational policies reflect the ethos of Finland's multicultural policies. The positive aspects of religious freedom are emphasized, and students are granted the right to receive a religious education according to their own tradition if there are a sufficient number of them from that religious tradition living in the same area. In any event, confessional and liberal approaches overlap in the Finnish curriculum. The content and aims of religious education are not constructed according to the interests of religious communities, and religious observance in the classroom is prohibited. The development of the religious and cultural identities of the students is supported because this is regarded as an important means of enhancing their integration into Finnish society. This reflects the fact that the endeavour to integrate individuals has been the primary reason for granting collective cultural rights in Finland [22].

The purpose of religious education is to give students material for building their identity and worldview. In the core curriculum, religion is presented as subordinate to culture—respect for people who “think and believe in a different way” is developed by presenting different religions as variations of the religious “undercurrent influencing human culture” [23]. Thus, even though the curriculum puts an emphasis on religious traditions, presenting religions as cultural sources for students to individually draw from reflects influences from postmodern individualism. The postmodern ideal of celebrating difference is further strengthened by the common educational ethos according to which prejudices are dissolved and tolerance increased by understanding cultural diversity as a resource and a source of enrichment [22].

### 3. Data and Methods

The methodological design draws from educational ethnography in pursuing an understanding of a cultural phenomenon at school (see [24]). Many of the guiding principles

of the study link it to the tradition of critical ethnography (see [25])—attempting to speak on behalf of the subjects of the study, paying attention to wider ideological processes affecting the microsocial details observed, and recognizing the critical ideas affecting the research process. The study is inductive in nature, but the interpretations have been influenced by the assumption that discourses on difference in school and in society are ideologically loaded.

In the wider case study examining Islamic education, of which this paper is a part, three courses of Islamic education in Finnish comprehensive and upper secondary schools, taught by experienced teachers, were observed. From those courses, 16 students that were willing to participate were interviewed. In these semistructured interviews, three main themes were discussed: the students' thoughts and experiences of (1) their own religion, (2) other religions and cultures, and (3) Islamic education. The interviews lasted from 25 to 45 minutes.

The students were first ( $n = 9$ ) or second ( $n = 7$ ) generation immigrants from 8 different countries, aged between 13 and 19. They had all lived in Finland for at least seven years and were fluent speakers of Finnish. Five boys and eleven girls were interviewed—owing to a coincidence, there were only girls participating in one of the courses. All the students considered Islam as an important or very important part of their lives. Interviews were conducted in a school context during Islamic education lessons, which probably made the students feel that they were representing Islam to a Christian researcher and, at first, they seemed to endeavour to give what might be called the “right” answers. This, however, made it possible to observe the ways in which the different discourses on diversity and tolerance had influenced the students' understanding of ideal ways of dealing with difference.

The data was analysed by means of inductive qualitative content analysis. The variety of the students' concepts was elaborated without focusing on the profiles of individual students. Thus, the different ways of dealing with difference presented are not mutually exclusive but context dependent. All utterances relating to the research questions were extracted from the litterated data, condensed, and coded. In a circular process, these codes were grouped into subcategories and categories that were again revised by returning to the condensed meaning units. The main categories of analysis are represented in a compact, tabular form (Tables 1 and 2). The validity of the study is fostered by relying on multiple sources of data and substantiating the researcher's interpretations by presenting plenty of examples from the data.

## 4. Results

*4.1. Students' Ways of Perceiving and Dealing with Religious and Cultural Difference as Influenced by Liberal Ideals.* The students tended to declare that difference was *not an issue* (Table 1). For example, statements that emphasized the insignificance of the fact that people belong to different cultures and religions were grouped under this category. Some students eagerly argued that religion does not make

TABLE 1: Ways of perceiving and dealing with difference related to the negotiation of liberal ideals.

Difference is not an issue	Difference is a problem-causing matter	A conformist way of dealing with difference	Dealing with difference by concentrating on oneself
(i) Difference is an insignificant fact (ii) Difference is a positive fact	(i) Difference causes difficulties in understanding others (ii) Difference causes difficulties in interacting with others (iii) Difference is a complex issue	(i) Trying to avoid confrontation (ii) Adaptation (iii) Dealing with difference by concentrating on commonality, equality, and togetherness	(i) Adhering to one's own religion (ii) Representing one's own religion

people different. There were reasons to interpret that these statements expressed an ideal of dealing with difference learned from liberal discourse—it should not be regarded as a problem. This ideal, however, had to be negotiated with experiences of life: as the discussions became deeper, critical attitudes and negative experiences often supplanted the neutral attitude that had initially been declared. A large majority of the meanings given to difference related to the perception that it was a *problem-causing matter* (Table 1). Difference was considered to cause various difficulties in human relations. In the following example, a student explains why she would rather live in Turkey than in Finland:

*They would understand Muslims. Christians do not understand Muslims. It would be nicer to live in a country where there were more Muslims than Christians.*

*Researcher: Why don't they understand Muslims?*

*Student: They can't think in the same way as Muslims. It's because Muslims think in a totally different way to Christians.*

Most of the students did not report having experienced major difficulties in living with religious and cultural diversity, but generally thought that difference causes fights, discrimination, and irritation. Even students who emphasized the easiness of being a Muslim in their own school and in Finland said it would be easier to get along with people in a Muslim country. Being a representative of a minority was regarded as a burdensome matter that caused practical difficulties and feelings of shame. Muslim youngsters tend to remain loyal to traditional Islamic values whilst western societies have become more liberal. Sexual ethics have become the main dividing line separating young Muslim from their non-Muslim peers [26]. The most troubling matter for the students of this study seemed to be the different conventions governing appropriateness which affected their friendships as alcohol and dating had become issues—this was pondered upon much more than the difficulties in practicing religion.

Liberal discourse emphasises tolerance because all people are equal, but often in a way that accepts dichotomy only within unity [8]. Possibly, the students' way of declaring the insignificance of difference was influenced by this ideal that, however, had to be negotiated with the difficulties they experienced. Furthermore, ideals from the liberal discourse could be seen in the students' comments that embraced

*conformist ways of dealing with difference* (Table 1). Almost all the students expressed ideas that considered preserving harmony as the best way of dealing with difference: a defining feature of this category was the conceived importance of being careful not to do or say anything offensive. The idea that religious differences do not have to be exhibited or affect things was sometimes represented as an ideal, and seemed to be influenced by the liberal idea of confining differences to the private sphere. Most of the students had friends who were not Muslims, but this was often considered possible because they did not discuss religious differences.

Another conformist strategy of dealing with difference was adaptation. It related to, for example, modifying one's behavior when in the company of believers in another religion, as demonstrated by the following:

*Student (15-year-old girl): Well, with Muslims I'm like the way they are, and with members of other religions I try to be a little like them and behave how they do, but I mix my own religion to it [...] So that I wouldn't be peculiar but would fit in.*

Assimilation is a common response to having or being given a negative social identity [27]. In the negotiations of the students of this study, however, this ideal was more easily absorbed in the case of cultural aspects of difference, such as differences in behavior. Some students expressed their views about the importance of conforming to Finnish culture and criticized Muslims not willing to do so. However, when it came to differences between religious beliefs and doctrines, the dominant way of dealing with them was by ignoring such differences and concentrating on commonality either by referring to their similarities or with reference to people's equality. Students referred to the similarity of all religions, but mentioned only Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, which reflected the teachers' way of emphasizing these religions (see [28], in press). Positive statements concerning other religions often related to the idea of similarity in questions of truth—the common belief in one God.

When asked about the differences, the students mentioned variations in the common denominators of the religious way of life, which were considered insignificant:

*Researcher: What do you think of other religions?*

*Student (14-year-old boy): Well, they aren't different because Christians believe in God, but then there are different things.*

*Researcher: What do you think is the most important difference?*

*Student: The difference is that Muslims have a mosque while Christians have a church, and then there are different things like a priest and an imam, and stuff like that.*

The most common reason given for seeing other religions as harmless was that they do not differ from Islam: in a way, similarity was regarded as a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence and was identified with equality. The students phrased this idea in such similar ways that the fact that they had learnt it by participating in the same educational discourse was evident. The teachers of Islamic education were themselves balancing between liberal educational aims and the need to preserve the self-understanding of Islam: this led them to emphasise tolerance as an Islamic virtue based on the commonality and similarity of Muslims with Christians and Jews [28]. However, the discourses in the lessons of Islamic education seemed to be affected by a liberal pressure for inclusivity, which also resulted in seeing similarities where they do not actually exist. This, however, was the case only in dealing with differences in religious beliefs and norms—diversity in behavioural conventions was more easily acknowledged and could also be dealt with by adapting. These observations further confirm perceptions that religious boundaries are more insurmountable in nature than those between cultural groups [29] and show how dealing with religious differences in a liberal framework is sometimes problematic.

However, the minority status of these Muslim students is also an important explanatory factor for their way dealing with difference in a conformist way. These students identified being Finnish with Christianity. Thus, when their differences with the Christian majority were suppressed, it was easier to be recognised as part of the Finnish majority, which promotes one's societal image and guarantees more power [30]. However, this kind of way of "capitalizing on commonality" also has certain pitfalls: in the situation of truly existing differences, the sense of similarity is difficult to sustain and might also increase the need to emphasise the positive distinctiveness of one's own group [30, 31]. This reflects the way in which the multiculturalism of liberal democracies draws minorities to negotiate between a separate identity and "usness," and often leads to minorities preferring a dual identity [11, 31]. Thus, the students of this study also seemed to have to balance the conformist way of dealing with difference, influenced by liberal ideals, with a defensiveness about their religious identity. This was done, for example, by regarding group-boundaries as justifiers of difference. In itself the fact that people belong to different religions was regarded as contributing to orderliness and peaceful coexistence. If people know they belong to different religions, it is clear that they have differences and there is no need to find a consensus, or so one might conclude from the reasoning of this 16-year-old boy, who referred to his Christian friends:

*If they, for example, claim that Jesus is the son of your God, then we might begin opposing that by saying that Jesus is some kind of prophet in our religion. Then this leads to discord, but in the end we are like yeah, we have like different religions, so we could keep arguing the whole day, but (laughs) it's like different religions.*

The students also guarded the boundaries between "us" and "others": one of the teachers spoke about the students' indignation when a non-Muslim teacher had greeted them according to Islamic conventions. From a social psychological perspective, the logic in the students' way of guarding their religious group boundaries is clear. The extent to which a person is recognised as a member of one's group always affects the evaluation of deviance: deviance is less likely to be regarded as a threat when there is less pressure for group uniformity and belonging to a different social category can be regarded as a valid explanation for differences [30]. Thus, the endeavours to combine liberal ideals with experiences of representing a minority religion led many of the students to deal with difference by *concentrating on oneself* (Table 1). Their primary concern seemed not to be how to get along with others but how to build and protect their own identity. In general, they disapproved of those who had "forgotten" Islam in Finland, but there were also those who spoke about their own growing distance from an Islamic way of life—usually with the intention of changing this trend in the future. Remembering one's own religion was a salient factor in dealing with difference.

The students often felt a need to rationalize their commitment to Islam. Defensive attitudes were demonstrated when the students justified their commitment to traditional Islamic values by negatively stereotyping others with accusations of immorality: this can be interpreted as a strategy for enhancing collective self-esteem (see [32, 33]). Students considered Christians immoral and irresponsible, especially in their sexual and drinking behavior, and referred to Muslims as people of higher morality:

*Student (15-year-old girl): Muslims are, I don't know, reliable. But I think Christians, not all, but many of them, are not reliable and faithful.*

Furthermore, there was a strong intention to represent Islam to others correctly. Thus, dealing with difference by concentrating on oneself was connected to the experienced need to defend oneself against certain threats, such as cultural influences affecting Muslims in a diasporic situation, negative attitudes towards Islam resulting from media representations, and the pressure to conform to the liberal ideal of rational, autonomous, and private religiosity. They seemed to endeavour to emphasise the rationality and autonomy of their decision to commit to religious tradition, as demonstrated by this 16-year-old girl:

*Researcher: What do you think of being a Muslim?*

*Student: I think it's great! I am very happy. I have not always taken for granted that I am a Muslim,*

*I have considered all the other religions and stuff like that, but now I think this is an amazing religion. I do respect all the others but this religion is the right one, I think. I really am very content with this.*

There is a general tendency among European Muslim adolescents to guard their religious identity by emphasizing Islam as a rational religion and a chosen way of life [34]. This kind of defensiveness, also observed in this study, could be interpreted as a counter reaction to the misrepresentation of religion in the liberal discourses of multicultural societies: religious revivalism often occurs and fundamentalism rises when believers fight against their belief that their religion is being disregarded and confined to the private sphere. There is a “born again” Islamic youth who want to base their thoughts and praxis straight on the Qur’an and sunna, and criticize the cultural practices associated with popular Islam in order to defend their understanding of the authenticity of Islam [34, 35]. However, these identity processes can be interpreted to be influenced by the modern liberal ideals of individuality and autonomy: Muslim youth negotiate between tradition and individuality, as well as between contextual liberal and universalist fundamental Muslim identities by emphasizing Islamic identity as a matter of individual choice and Islam as a rational religion [34, 36].

*4.2. Students’ Ways of Dealing with Religious and Cultural Difference as Influenced by Post-Modern Ideals.* Many of the students in this study quite strongly declared their positive attitudes towards religious and cultural difference, even though sometimes the only reason they could give for this attitude was that similarity should not be desirable. Thus, even though students declared that diversity was a value in itself, this concept was superficially internalized and seemed to reflect a learnt ideal, the roots of which can be traced to the postmodern discourse on diversity as enriching. However, there were also students who had internalised this ideal more deeply and could specify why they perceived difference as *an opportunity* (Table 2). Two students referred to the opportunity to express oneself through different religions and cultures. More common was the idea that difference makes it possible to learn about, and from, others, which related to the perceived importance of difference in preventing a dull, bland existence. However, the ideal of learning from other religions was expressed mainly as an opportunity for others to learn from Islam, which is demonstrated by the following example, in which the manner of denying the problems caused by difference is also evident:

*One student (14-year-old boy) explains why he considers difference favourably: You see... in Islam, I guess these alcohol problems are a little better, so Christians can learn from it.*

*Researcher: Are there any other things that could be learned from Islam?*

*Student: Well, not doing evil things and stuff like that.*

*Researcher: So what kinds of problems might be caused by the fact that people are so different?*

*Student: No kinds of problems.*

*Researcher: No problems at all?*

*Student: No.*

In this way, students seemed to negotiate between the ideal of understanding diversity as a resource and their identification with a religious tradition that has ideas of moral absoluteness and superiority as its central feature. The same students who declared religious diversity in terms of an opportunity for religious autonomy and freedom also emphasised the importance of adhering to their own religion. They explained how the existence of different religions and cultures enhances the freedom of the individual by facilitating the opportunity to learn from, or to choose between, them, but for these students this actually meant that they could declare their Islamic identity as an autonomous decision. This can be interpreted as a way of reconciling a commitment to a religious tradition with the liberal ideal of autonomy as well as the postmodern ideal of constructing one’s own religious identity.

The shallow understanding of tolerance and diversity as an enriching value that is common among European teenagers [14] was also apparent among the students of this study. Their superficial way of absorbing the postmodern ideal of celebrating difference later became evident when some students who had declared their positivity towards difference were actually inclined, in some respects, to adopt a *resistant way of dealing with difference* (Table 2). For example, they preferred to reduce difference, did not consider the problems caused by it to be solvable, and mistreated those who were different. Students who were inclined to a more relativistic religiosity very straightforwardly condemned those who “think their beliefs are better.” Thus, it seemed that these students considered a resistant way of dealing with difference more appropriate when the differences were localised between inclusivists and exclusivists rather than between religions. This is reminiscent of the intolerance towards exclusive truth claims which was observed to be a common feature of European teenagers in the REDco project [14].

Among European Muslim youth, there are tendencies towards both the privatization and relativization of religious identities as well as islamization and normativization [34]. Increased individualization has brought with it a shift from obedience to individuality and the creation of an authentic self that comes with the idea of choosing tradition [37]. The students in this study seemed to be compelled to negotiate between the Islamic ideal of commitment to tradition and the postmodern individualistic and relativistic discourse on building religious identity according to one’s own preferences. This implied individualizing “through Islam” rather than “from Islam” (see [38]). However, this is not always without contradictions, which was the case also in this study: the students emphasized the importance of being a good Muslim by obeying the unchangeable Islamic doctrines,

TABLE 2: Ways of perceiving and dealing with difference related to the negotiation of post-modern ideals.

Difference is an opportunity	Difference is a threat	An open and rewarding way of dealing with difference	Resistant ways of dealing with difference
(i) Difference is an opportunity for learning (ii) Difference is an opportunity for autonomy and self-expression	(i) Difference is a threat to one's own religion (ii) Difference is a threat to others (iii) Difference is a threat to one's religious identity	(i) Recognizing and pondering on difference (ii) Getting to know others (iii) Interacting with others	(i) No effort to deal with difference (ii) Negative treatment of those who are different

even though they at the same time embraced the idea of building ones religious identity autonomously by drawing from different religious traditions.

Nevertheless, even though combining religious commitment with the ideal of religious diversity as a possibility required certain acts of negotiation, in the case of cultural diversity these were not needed. The students associated culture with behavior and regionality and religion with faith and universality, and in the case of nonnormative differences that could be regarded as culture, the opportunity for learning was understood more reciprocally and the ideal of enrichment absorbed more naturally. However, the students of this study, who were committed to their religious tradition, had to negotiate the ideal of diversity as an enrichment with an understanding of religious difference as a *threat* (Table 2). Perceiving diversity as a threat related specifically to the diversity of religious beliefs and norms. In order to understand the dynamics of these perceptions, the exclusivity of Islamic truth-claims as well as the ideal of unity have to be taken into account. One of the students put it simply: religious diversity is an unfortunate thing, because there is only one God. The fact that the universal truth-claims held by religion eventually lead to perceiving other religions as distorting the truth also became evident in statements of the following kind:

*Student (14-year-old girl): In our religion it is a sin to situate Jesus by the side of God, but these Christians say that Jesus is the son of God. If we believe in that, it is a sin.*

However, associating religious difference with sin led to considering it as a threat not mainly to oneself but to others—the salvation of non-Muslims was considered during the observed lessons.

Disregarding the nature of religious differences in post-modern discourses can lead to defensiveness and the guarding of the autonomy of religions by putting an emphasis on the universality and absoluteness of religious truths, which lays the ground for fundamentalist reactions (see [39]). The students in this study seemed to be drawn to negotiate between relativistic discourses and the need to defend the authenticity and legitimacy of their tradition. However, perceiving diversity as a personal threat also related to the concrete situation of living as a member of a minority. The students brought out the difficulties in learning their religion, adhering to it, and resisting the attractions of a secular, often equated with a Christian, lifestyle. With no exception even those students who fluently participated in

the postmodern and liberal discourses emphasizing individuality, freedom, and the celebration of diversity, regarded departing from the Muslim way of life as a danger. Even though the personal religiosity of the immigrant Muslim students in this study varied, religion was at the core of their group identity, having the capability of providing a sense of stability and continuity. This explains why influences from outside the group that damage the integrity of their religion are easily regarded as threatening [30, 40]. Furthermore, there is a strong ideal of unity in Islam, and when pressure towards uniformity increases, deviance is more likely to be regarded as a threat [30].

Thus, due to their disadvantaged position as a minority group in Finland as well as the ideal of unity in Islam, it might be possible that these Muslim youngsters' need for a social identity in the face of a perceived threat would outweigh the impact of education about tolerance (see [5]). Nevertheless, the ideals and experiences which this study categorised under *an open and rewarding way of dealing with difference* (Table 2) can be seen as a result of a negotiation between postmodern and religious ideals of dealing with difference. However, this category only included statements from some of the students. In the postmodern relativistic discourse on difference, openness is the ideal way of dealing with difference and it is defined as the capability to navigate between different cultural frameworks or to re-evaluate constantly one's religious views [3, 41]. However, the students in this study seemed to have absorbed the ideal of openness from the postmodern discourse, but interpreted it in a different way because of their need to reconcile it with their commitment to a religious tradition.

The students were interested in other religions, but this did not relate to understanding them as material for building one's own identity. The idea of knowing enough about others as a necessary way of coping with difference was commonly referred to. Even though for some students of this study familiarizing oneself with other religions in order to choose one's own beliefs seemed to represent the "right" way of dealing with difference, there were no signs of these students truly considering beliefs held by other religions, except for one 15-year-old boy from a multireligious family, who wanted to find out which religion really is right about Jesus. Thus, none of the students in this study had truly absorbed this kind of relativistic way of dealing with difference. More likely, those inclined to an open and interesting way of encountering difference seemed not to feel the need to participate superficially in that discourse.

An open and rewarding way of dealing with difference related particularly to such interactions in which religious and cultural difference is not ignored but recognised and communicated. The students spoke, for example, of how they compare their religion with that of their Christian friends and marvel at the differences. Furthermore, in discussions with a Christian researcher, these students related how they considered some aspects of Christianity weird and openly pondered upon the relationship between Islam and Christianity. Different influences were not regarded as dangerous but as objects of observation and discussion, as demonstrated by this 18-year-old girl:

*I once visited a church, where I was so amazed you know, because it was so different. I kept asking all the time what is that, why does he do that... It's the same when they ask me about Islam and I always ask them when we don't understand some things they do.*

This student was regarded as the most religious and knowledgeable of them all by her classmates. It was interesting to notice that these students, who had received the most extensive education on Islam, were not inclined to regard equality as sameness but more often as related to the ideal of respecting the religious freedom of the individual. In this way, the ways of dealing with difference that were regarded as open and encountering in this study seemed to be related to a concept of tolerance grounded on an Islamic framework. This difference-affirming understanding of equality did not require a departure from their self-understanding of religious tradition: tolerance based on religious freedom was presented in the classroom as an Islamic ideal and as the "will of God." Even though they did not consider it possible to change their religious views, these students regarded it as their religious duty to "treat all people the same despite the differences." Thus, a strong religious identity could be paired with respect and recognition of difference when religious tradition functioned as a resource for tolerance. These students had learned the importance of tolerance and respect from liberal and postmodern discourses, but had interpreted these values in an Islamic framework. In this way, their Muslim identities could align with liberal values.

## 5. Discussion

Most Muslim students were balancing between various ideals of tolerance. The ideals of not regarding difference as an issue and dealing with it in a conformist way can be interpreted as implications of the liberalist educational discourse. The liberal pressure towards inclusiveness led the students to concentrate on commonalities. However, these ideals had to be negotiated with life experiences related to problems caused by difference as well as the need to guard religious identities and group boundaries. Ideals from the postmodern educational discourse could be seen in the students' way of declaring diversity as enrichment, but this ideal had only been superficially internalised and negotiated with the perception that religious difference was a threat due to the exclusivist and universalist nature of religious tradition.

This situation of overlapping and competing discourses on difference in contemporary multicultural societies is the context in which students nowadays are developing their religious identities. Despite the particular and context-dependent nature of the negotiations observed in this study, they can be interpreted as reflections of wider societal negotiations concerning multiculturalism. Even though the ideals of recognizing and celebrating difference have become more prominent, multicultural policies are often still grounded on liberal premises. Furthermore, even though religious minorities, such as European Muslims, criticize these liberal principles, at the same time they defend their own rights through these self same liberal discourses [42]. In this way, different norms of dealing with difference are being mixed and negotiated. In this kind of situation, in order to create educational models that are able to promote peaceful coexistence and take into account the true challenges of dealing with difference, it is important to pay attention to the negotiations that are constantly going on in the life-worlds of students. These kinds of negotiations that are being undertaken by young Muslims in the West, caused by the conflicting pressures from religious tradition and a liberal worldview, might also lead to unwanted results. There are signs of increasing anti-westernism as well as religious radicalization among immigrant students [43].

The observations of this study demonstrated the difficulties of dealing with religious difference in liberal and postmodern frameworks: the contemporary ideals of dealing with difference based on individualism, relativism, and inclusivism could be absorbed in the case of differences regarded as cultural conventions, but they had to be negotiated in the case of difference related to the truths and norms of religious tradition. In liberal and postmodernist discourses, religion is regarded as subordinate to culture, and considering religions in the framework of cultural relativism puts pressure on religions to protect their authenticity as the repositories of a universal truth transcending culture, which leads to a process of deculturation. In this process, the clash between cultures becomes a clash between culture and religion, and barriers are built between believers and nonbelievers, between those embracing new cultural paradigms and those holding on to religious self-understanding as the universal truth transcending culture [39]. These ideas of universality in religions and the sacred nature of religious identification explain why social boundaries linked to religion can be more clear-cut and harder to cross than ethnic boundaries [29, 44]. In other words, the most difficult clash might not be between different cultures but between inclusivists and exclusivists: intolerance towards those holding exclusivist truth-claims is increasing [14].

The students of this study were young, and the outcomes of their negotiations unknown. However, as there are examples of this kind of negotiation leading to defensive fundamentalist reactions, and as the school seems to make a difference in terms of the students' religious attitudes (see [5]), attention should be paid to the implications of different educational discourses on difference: education on tolerance should not require the students' detachment from their

self-understanding of their religious or cultural tradition. Thus, in order to recognise the complexities in dealing with religious difference and the multidimensionality of tolerance, it is also important to preserve the legitimacy of religious discourse in school, at least in the context of religious education. Furthermore, more research is needed about young people from different backgrounds and the cultural and ideological sources affecting their ways of dealing with difference. It would also be important to find out where their negotiations between different ideals of tolerance lead them.

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## Research Article

# Caring Teaching as a Moral Practice: An Exploratory Study on Perceived Dimensions of Caring Teaching

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Caring teaching is a conceptual framework used to gain an insight into the moral aspect of teaching. Using a quantitative research approach, we studied 556 teachers in order to explore their perceived dimensions of caring teaching. Drawing on existing literature, we found that caring teaching has been elaborated in line with two broad concepts: personal care and academic care. Considering these concepts, we developed the Caring Teaching Scale with which we identified four dimensions of caring teaching: the nurturing of a student's character, didactical bias, awareness, and respectful didactics. A meta-analysis reflection suggests that the nurturing of students' characters and awareness represent personal care while didactical bias and respectful didactics call for academic care. Further analysis showed that these teachers attached more pedagogical value to personal care. Controlling for two demographic variables, we found statistically significant differences with regard to gender and caring teaching.

## 1. Introduction

The moral aspects of human life have faced formidable challenges because of the emergence of new value systems rooted in the increasing individualization of modern Western societies [1]. Educational agencies such as schools and teachers are affected by this trend and need to consider it in their daily activities. Sockett and LePage (2002) argue that moral language is missing from the classroom [2]. As such "schools can no longer afford to focus solely on delivering the academic curricula; they are also responsible for establishing and maintaining schools' cultures that empower students and teachers alike to negotiate the diverse values and social norms of their communities" [3]. This raises the question, how should schools and teachers deal with the moral elements of their responsibilities? In line with this, numerous studies have dealt with exploring one or more elements of the ethical or moral nature of teaching [4–8]. These studies show that teaching is a moral activity by nature, and thus teachers are responsible for improving moral life in the classroom. According to Fenstermacher, "what makes teaching a moral endeavor is that it is, quite centrally, human

action undertaken in regard to human beings. Thus matters of what is fair, right, just, and virtuous are always present. ... The teacher's conduct at all times and in all ways, is a moral matter" [9]. This understanding raises two important questions regarding the moral aspect of teaching: what are the ends of teaching as a moral activity? And, in addition, how can these ends be realized through the practice of teaching?

Regarding the first question, most researchers highlight the idea that the mission of teaching, as a moral activity, is to develop the moral character and virtues of the students. Hansen (1998) states that many classroom teachers place moral considerations at the heart of their activities. These teachers "see themselves as more skilled technicians or knowledge conveyers. ... These teachers feel that there are extraordinary possibilities in their role to be a force for good: to help young people to broaden their intellectual and moral horizons and to deepen their connection to their own intellectual and human capacities" [6]. The rationality behind this perspective is to emphasize that nurturing the whole character of one's students takes precedence over their academic properties [10, 11].

Considering the idea that teaching as a moral activity aims at developing the moral character and virtues of students, the next concern is how virtues can be dealt with in the classroom. The question, “Can virtues be taught?” is perhaps the oldest in moral philosophy [5]. One of the main arguments in the existing literature suggests that “Moral virtues cannot be taught” [6, 12–14]. Fenstermacher states that “from *Plato’s Meno* to *Ryle’s The Concept of Mind*, it has been generally accepted that in Anglo-American philosophy virtue cannot be taught. . . . Virtue is not conveyed in the way academic content is conveyed, rather it is acquired or picked up by association with people who are themselves virtuous. . . . thus teachers must themselves be virtuous persons if they are to foster virtues in their students” [14]. In relation to the argument that virtues cannot be taught, the question that arises is how can teachers develop students’ moral and intellectual lives?

Caring practice is widely believed to be a vital approach in dealing with the moral component of teaching [15–18]. It is a new and different approach to teaching practice since teachers consider different ends, and their own pedagogical orientation in their personal philosophy of teaching. The “principal end” of teachers, in caring teaching, is to nurture the whole character and dignity of the students [10, 11, 19], whilst in other teaching approaches, such as “effective teaching,” the dominant duty of teachers is to transmit educational materials to students. In caring teaching, however, this end is overridden by virtues embedded in the main ends of the teachers. In addition, in the caring teaching approach, teachers’ pedagogical orientations are more “moral and emotional” than technical and methodological. In other words, teachers prefer to establish a kind of learning environment, in which humor, fun, enjoyment, fairness, trust, friendship, and respect for students are considered to be at the core of the teachers’ practice. Such an environment, in turn, encourages and prepares students to be effectively engaged in learning activities.

Caring teaching, accordingly, can be reflected in teachers’ activities in two integrated and interrelated ways, elaborating the moral aspects of young people. In the first place, teachers help students enhance their moral competency by nurturing the character of the students. In addition to academic skills, teachers here care about students’ basic social and personal skills for life outside the school community [10, 16]. In the second place, teachers should have good manner and integrate it into their pedagogical decisions. Fenstermacher has stated that when teachers are characterized by traits such as honesty, compassion, truthfulness, fairness, courage, moderation, and generosity in their daily activities, their students will pick up these virtues in their interaction with teachers [14].

Caring teaching has been widely studied using qualitative research approach. In our previous work [10], we elaborated the nature of caring teaching in relation with teachers’ practical knowledge. Drawing on our previous works, we have developed a framework to gain further insights into the dimensions of caring teaching. Since there is a lack of significant quantitative research on caring teaching, we have developed a questionnaire based on our previous framework in

order to gain deeper insights into the topic in a larger population. We believe that, like many other human traits, it will be an essential research effort to measure the characteristics of caring teachers in different contexts with a large population.

## 2. Theoretical Framework for Studying Caring Teaching Dimensions

In order to develop a conceptual framework with regard to caring teaching and thus identify its dimensions, we relied on findings from our own previous qualitative research and the existing literature on caring teaching. Drawing on Valli, Hansen (1998) explains three approaches to the moral foundation of teaching: the deliberative, the relational, and the critical. The deliberative viewpoint supports teachers to reflect on the purposes of their activities and justify it based on moral and rational principles rooted and constrained by the community’s consensus. In the relational approach, the empathic understanding in the relationship between the carer and the cared-for is more important than abstract principles. In the critical approach, teachers are morally responsible for helping students to deconstruct the dominant value system and ideology [6].

In this study, we mainly base our work on the relational approach in order to explore the possible dimensions of caring teaching. According to this approach, “a true caring relationship depends on a teacher’s ability to identify and meet students’ needs and is affirmed by students’ confirmation of that caring” [15]. Caring, as a relational phenomenon, demands that the teacher knows his/her students well in order to respond to their needs, desires, and struggles [20]. It is also concerned with the teachers’ sensitivity to students’ feelings, academic development, and their dignity. According to Nodding, a caring relationship “requires engrossment and motivational displacement” whereby teachers replace their own needs and desires with the needs and desires of their students [15, 19]. Reviewing the existing literature on relational caring teaching suggests that the behaviors and characteristics of caring teachers can be conceptualized into two main categories, each aiming at different but interrelated intentions: personal care and academic care. The common features of these dimensions are to put sensitivity, respectfulness, and “commitment” at the heart of teachers’ pedagogical decisions.

*2.1. Personal Care.* Personal care emphasizes the overall growth of a student as a “person” [16, 18, 21]. In personal care, teachers act like mothers to nurture the whole character of the students. Rosiek (2003) states that teachers should deal with students as whole human beings and need to respond them as emotional, moral, social, cultural, and cognitive beings [22]. Empirical studies show that teachers are expected to meet such an important task in terms of two different professional obligations: responsibility for improving the social, emotional, intellectual, and moral features of students and being sensitive to deal with their personal and interpersonal problems [10, 23, 24]. Regarding the first obligation, Nias (1999) suggests that caring teaching involves care as affectivity, as responsibility for the learner, as

responsibility for relationships in school, and as professional identify for teachers [25]. In addition, caring teachers are expected to listen, understand, and take care of students' personal and interpersonal problems inside and outside school and deal with these problems with empathy and patience [10, 15]. In an empirical study, 38.46% of female students and 45% of male students thought that their teachers should be involved in interpersonal relationship with students in different ways [24]. In general, the main intention in personal care is to help students develop their identity and dignity as human beings in order to become good citizens, establishing a productive and moral relationship with society.

**2.2. Academic Care.** Academic care involves teachers' pedagogical activities that deal with learning activities, classroom management, and the rules and regulations that teachers use for enriching the learning environment. In academic care, teachers are still sensitive to the possible harmful emotional consequences of their practice [10]. In other words, teachers are limited in the means by which they bring about learning. de Guzman et al. found that caring teachers were perceived as achievement, task, goal, and change orientated where they are expected to help students improve their learning and achievement [20]. In another study, 45% of the female and 18% of the male students thought that caring teachers' behavior associated with academic care, fairness, and providing equal opportunities for all students to engage in academic activities was important element in academic care [10, 24]. In such cases, being fair towards students created good feelings and emotions in them. In general, academic care has two sides in terms of caring teachers' behavior. One is to establish an enriched and productive learning environment where everybody's needs and capabilities are met by the teachers' pedagogical activities. On the other hand, teachers' actions should be sensitive to the emotional reactions of the students.

### 3. Purpose of the Paper

The main aim of this paper is to explore and describe the basic components of teachers' perceived caring practice in order to gain insights into the moral aspect of teaching. Relying on previous qualitative empirical research and theoretical frameworks, we developed a questionnaire and asked primary, secondary, and high-school teachers in Kurdistan (Iran) to respond to it in order to capture their perceived caring teaching characteristics. The second aim of the paper is to describe and analyze caring teaching characteristics in the target population. In this way, we will examine the level of caring teaching in the data in general and in regard to demographic variables, gender, and the subject matters taught by the teachers.

### 4. Methods

**4.1. Design.** One of the main concerns in educational research is to ensure that the knowledge claim of research is consistent with its methodological operations. In other words, how appropriate are the research methods for examining the knowledge that the research claims to produce. Caring teaching is a complex area, and it should be studied with

different methods, particularly a mixed method approach. In line with this, in our previous works, we elaborated on caring teaching based on findings from qualitative research [10]. In this paper, we will continue our reflections on caring teaching using a quantitative approach. Thus, the tools (e.g., our questionnaire), concepts, and research framework and procedure, in this paper, rely on previous empirical qualitative studies. The questionnaire, as an important tool, was essentially developed out of the interviews we had with the teachers in the qualitative phase of our research (see Section 4.3). Therefore, this paper draws on findings from a research project that has used a mixed approach, but, here, we primarily present the results of the quantitative stage.

**4.2. Participants.** A total of 600 primary, middle, and high-school teachers (for more information on Iran's teacher education system, refer to the other paper by Gholami and Tirri in this volume) were asked to participate in our study on a voluntary base, and we used nonprobability sampling. The teachers were teaching in province of Kurdistan, in Iran. Kurdistan is one of the provinces in Iran with a minority Kurdish ethnic background. The questionnaires were personally delivered to the school administration to distribute among teachers. After returning the questionnaires, we found that some 44 cases had significant missing data, and these were excluded from our data analysis. So 556 cases were selected and entered into Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for analysis. Table 1 illustrates the sample description.

**4.3. Data Collection Tool.** Drawing on existing literature and our previous studies, we developed a questionnaire in order to measure caring teaching: the Caring Teaching Scale (CTS). In line with the concept of caring teaching, we first provided a pool of items. Items were mainly extracted from the content of our interviews with teachers in the previous studies. The initial draft consisted of 30 items representing academic care and personal care. These items were then sent to 20 teachers in order to check the contents relevance and wording. Unclear items were reworded, and four items were removed from the list in response to the feedback from the teachers. At this stage, the instrument for administration consisted of 26 items, each concept (personal and academic care) 13 items, on a 5-point Likert Scale, where strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neither = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. We should point out that the concepts of personal care and academic care were not statistical dimensions of caring teaching but simply a conceptual framework in order to explore the possible dimensions of caring teaching.

**4.4. Data Analysis.** Exploratory Factor Analysis with Principle Component Analysis, Direct Oblimin was conducted in order to extract the basic dimensions or subscales of the Caring Teaching Scale. The results yielded six components with eigenvalues greater than one, explaining the total variance of 55.25 for the solution. KMO (0.88) and Bartlett's test ( $df = 325$ ;  $\chi^2 = 4476.90$ ;  $sig = .000$ ) confirmed that we could proceed with the factor analysis. In this stage, however, the determinant was .000, and thus we conducted a further

TABLE 1: Sample description.

	Primary teachers ( <i>N</i> = 125)	Middle school teachers ( <i>N</i> = 221)	High-school teachers ( <i>N</i> = 204)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 556)
Gender <i>N</i> (%)				
Female	40 (32.0)	96 (43.4)	88 (43.1)	224 (40.3)
Male	85 (68.0)	125 (56.6)	116 (56.9)	332 (59.7)
Age				
Mean	35.65	34.64	35.27	35.08
(Min–Max)	(21–50)	(20–52)	(20–50)	(20–52)
SD	6.55	6.92	5.58	6.35
Experience				
Mean	14.45	13.24	13.61	13.63
(Min–Max)	(1–23)	(1–28)	(1–27)	(1–28)
SD	6.68	7.15	6.02	6.63

TABLE 2: The comparison of random eigenvalues (PA) and real eigenvalues for factor retention.

Factors	Random eigenvalues	Real eigenvalues
1	1.41	6.28
2	1.35	2.34
3	1.30	1.63
4	1.26	1.28
5	1.22	0.98
6	1.19	0.84

investigation to modify the model. Studying the communalities, we found that four items had low communalities (i.e., lower than 0.25). When we removed these items from the analysis, it resulted in a better solution with a determinant = 0.001. Thus, we proceeded with the new factor analysis to extract the main dimension of caring teaching.

The new solution (after deleting the four items with the lowest communalities) resulted in four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. A Kaiser Criterion ( $k_1$ ), which retains factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, is argued for, as finite samples would tend to overestimate the number of factors [26, 27]. Accordingly, we decided to use parallel analysis (PA) to make sure that an appropriate number of factors were retained. PA “involves the construction of a number of correlation matrices of random variables based on the same sample size and the number of variables in the real data set. The average eigenvalues from the random correlation matrices are then compared to the eigenvalues from the real data correlation matrix. Factors corresponding to the actual eigenvalues that are greater than the parallel average random eigenvalues should be retained” [27]. Using parallel analysis, we created a set of random data with 100 times replicated. The result of the parallel analysis is compared to the results from the actual data set in Table 2.

According to Table 2, we decided to retain four factors that yielded real eigenvalues greater than the random eigenvalues. At this stage, a new Principle Component Analysis with a 4-fixed factor solution and Direct Oblimin rotation was conducted and considered the basis for reporting our

results. The results showed that out of 22 items, 7 items loaded on factor 1, 3 items on factor 2, 4 items on factor 3, and 6 items on factor 4; one item did not have enough loading value on these factors and was thus deleted from the analysis.

Table 3 shows the factor-loading values and communalities ( $h^2$ ) of items in the final factor analysis. Therefore, the final instrument for analysis consisted of 21 items, from which 10 items were reversed and thus recoded during the data analysis and description (see the Appendix for more information about items). In this way, a higher score on the scale indicates more caring in teaching.

## 5. Results

*5.1. What Are the Dimensions of Caring Teaching?* The results of the factor analysis showed that the teachers perceived four dimensions with regard to caring teaching, with factor 1 explaining 28.58 variance, factor 2, 10.66, factor 3, 7.44, factor 4, 5.84, and a total variance of 52.54 for the whole scale. Table 4 shows the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients of these dimensions. As presented, the Alpha coefficients for the four dimensions range from  $\alpha = 0.69$  to  $\alpha = 0.85$  and thus show a satisfactory degree of reliability.

Considering the wording and meaning of the items corresponding to each factor and drawing on our previous qualitative research [10, 23] and in line with personal and academic care, we named four dimensions of caring teaching: factor 1 nurture students’ character, factor 2 didactical bias, factor 3 awareness, and factor 4 respectful didactics. A meta-analysis suggested that nurture students’ character and awareness deal with personal care and didactical bias and respectful didactics deal with academic care. In order to gain more insight into these dimensions, see Table 6 with final items included in the CTS.

“*Nurture students’ character*” triggers teachers’ pedagogical decisions that aim at cultivating the student’s character as a human being. These activities are meant to improve students’ social, moral, emotional, and intellectual capabilities in order to become good and productive citizens in their society. “*Awareness*” concerns teachers’ involvement in

TABLE 3: Factor loading and communalities ( $h^2$ ) of the caring teaching scale.

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	$h^2$	Mean	SD
1	0.80				0.62	4.06	1.15
2	0.799				0.69	4.22	1.07
3	0.793				0.62	3.96	0.90
4	0.78				0.64	4.15	0.81
5	0.66				0.59	3.96	0.95
6	0.57				0.33	3.52	1.02
7	0.43				0.33	3.74	1.02
8		0.86			0.70	3.56	1.07
9		0.84			0.74	3.56	1.15
10		0.75			0.61	3.31	1.18
11			0.76		0.58	4.54	0.66
12			0.70		0.57	4.40	0.82
13			0.64		0.53	4.42	0.80
14			0.60		0.39	4.24	0.75
15				0.73	0.49	3.56	1.11
16				0.71	0.51	3.42	1.08
17				0.70	0.58	3.98	0.98
18				0.63	0.48	3.98	1.02
19				0.62	0.48	3.80	1.00
20				0.52	0.31	3.31	1.05
21				0.44	0.32	3.39	1.01

TABLE 4: Four dimensions of caring teaching.

Dimensions	Items	Alpha $\alpha$	Mean	SD
Nurture students' character	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	0.85	3.94	0.68
Didactical bias	8, 9, 10	0.77	2.52	0.93
Awareness	11, 12, 13, 14	0.69	4.40	0.54
Respectful didactics	15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21	0.78	3.63	0.68
Caring teaching scale		0.83	3.72	0.48

knowing students' personal problems, needs, and capabilities. This is a basic dimension of caring teaching, with which teachers may help students nurture their character as well as their academic properties. "Didactical bias" involves teachers' activities that avoid any "bias" towards particular students, for example, giving them more chances or constraining their academic opportunities. Accordingly, teachers should provide equal opportunities for all students to be engaged in learning activities regardless of their academic status and personal capabilities. "Respectful didactics," which mainly aims at bringing about learning, should still respect students and avoid violating their dignity as human beings.

**5.2. Description and Analysis of Caring Teaching.** The second purpose of this paper is to present a description and analysis of the caring teaching dimensions as explored in the present research. Considering the four dimensions, the results showed that teachers perceived *awareness* ( $M = 4.40$ ;  $SD = 0.54$ ) as the most important dimension of caring teachers; *didactical bias* however received the lowest score

( $M = 2.52$ ;  $SD = 0.93$ ). The results for the other dimensions and for the whole Caring Teaching Scale are presented in Table 4. As we mentioned, "respectful didactics" and "didactical bias" represent the concept of academic care, while "nurture students' character" and "awareness" account for personal care. In order to gain a clear insight into the role of both personal and academic care in caring teaching, we combined the scores of their corresponding dimensions and studied the difference between them and the score for the whole scale (i.e., the mean score of four dimensions). The results showed that personal care ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) received a higher score and academic care ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) received a lower score than the mean score of the Caring Teaching Scale ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ). The details are presented in Table 5.

Considering the demographic variables, we further studied the effects of gender and subject matter on both personal and academic care. A multivariate test on the relationship between gender and both personal and academic care showed statistically significant results, indicating a

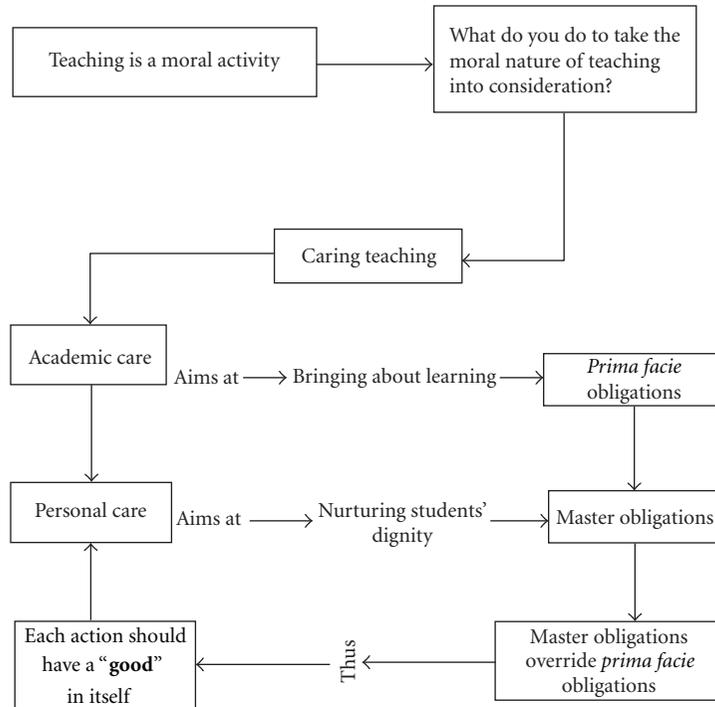


FIGURE 1: Moral nature of teaching practice.

TABLE 5: Mean differences between personal care and academic care with CTS ( $n = 556$ ).

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Mean D	$t$	$P$
Personal care	4.17	0.52	0.45	20.39	0.000
Academic care	3.08	0.62	-0.64	-24.02	0.000

Test value = 3.85 significance level (0.01).

reliable difference between male and female on the composite dependent caring teaching:  $F(2, 553) = 19.82, P < 0.01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.067$ . Both groups perceived personal care (for male:  $M = 4.13, SD = 0.52$ ; for female  $M = 4.22, SD = 0.51$ ) as more important than academic care (for male:  $M = 2.94, SD = 0.62$ ; for female:  $M = 3.27, SD = 0.58$ ). This data also suggest that in both cases female teachers give caring teaching higher scores than male teachers do. The partial eta square indicates that gender accounts for 0.067 of the total variance of caring teaching.

Regarding the subject matters taught by the teachers, the results of a multivariate test showed no statistically significant differences:  $F(4, 1104) = 1.21, P < 0.05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.04$ . In personal care, the perceived scores were  $M = 4.19, SD = 0.50$  for humanities and literature teachers,  $M = 4.15, SD = 0.48$  for mathematics and science teachers, and  $M = 4.15, SD = 0.59$  for primary teachers who taught multiple subjects. Compared with personal care, in academic care, the scores were lower but still no statistically significant differences were found on the basis of the subject matters taught by the teachers:  $M = 3.08, SD = 0.57$  for humanities

and literature teachers;  $M = 3.16, SD = 0.61$  for mathematics and science;  $M = 2.99, SD = 0.73$  for primary teachers.

## 6. Conclusion and Discussion

In order to gain some insight into the moral aspect of teaching, this paper aimed at exploring possible dimensions of caring teaching. Drawing on the existing literature and our previous research, we found that the concepts of personal and academic care could help us to explore the possible dimensions of caring teaching [4, 10, 15, 20]. The results of exploratory factor analysis showed that the teachers perceived four dimensions with regard to caring teaching, with factor 1: “nurture the character of the students”; factor 2: “didactical bias”; factor 3: “respectful didactics”; factor 4: “awareness,” each explaining 25.85, 10.66, 7.44, and 5.84 variance, respectively. The total variance of the model was 52.54. In line with existing literature, we categorized these dimensions into two general dimensions: (1) “personal care” consisted of two subscales, namely, “nurture students’ character” and “awareness”; (2) “academic care” included two subscales, namely, “didactical bias” and “respectful didactics.” We believe that at the core of personal care and its corresponding dimensions is a concern about nurturing the whole character of students as human beings. The main intention of academic care, however, is to help students enhance their learning properties. For a caring teacher, to place learning at the core of academic care does not mean to use any tool in order to enhance students’ learning. Caring teaching in this sense calls for respectful and sensitive didactics to serve the dignity and humanity of the students.

TABLE 6: The final items included in the caring teaching scale.

Factors	Items
Nurturing the students' character	(1) It is important for a teacher to care about nonacademic matters of students.
	(2) In addition to academics, teachers are expected to care about students' social skills.
	(3) Teachers should care about dignity of students.
	(4) It is a teacher' duty to care about the personal character of the students.
	(5) Teachers should care about moral properties of students.
	(6) Teachers should care about students' behaviors in the social contexts out of school.
	(7) Teachers should care about emotional properties of students.
Didactical bias	(8) It is fair if teachers give more academic freedom to the gifted students.
	(9) It is fair if teachers pay more attention to the active students.
	(10) It is fair if teachers engage good students in the learning activities.
Awareness	(11) Teachers are expected to be aware of students problems which are related to the matters outside of classroom.
	(12) It is teachers' responsibility to be aware of students' different capabilities.
	(13) Teachers should be aware of students' background.
	(14) Teachers are expected to be aware of students' needs and interests.
Respectful didactics	(15) It is effective if teachers punish careless students in the front of classmates.
	(16) As far as teachers' method brings about learning, it does not matter if the method put pressure on students.
	(17) Teachers can justify any method to improve learning of poor students.
	(18) Teachers' pedagogical activities should only focus on students' academic achievement.
	(19) It is an effective rule if teachers ask students leave the classroom to discipline them.
	(20) Teachers should be harsh to force students improve their academic learning.
	(21) Teachers' methods should be fixed based on typical students' capability.

Our results are consistent with the ideas of “manner” and “methods” in teaching proposed by Gary Fenstermacher [5, 13, 14, 28]. It also confirms that teaching is a kind of “practice” that has “intrinsic good” as it is elaborated from the perspective of “neo-Aristotelian” [29–32].

Considering both personal and academic care, the results showed that teachers perceived personal care ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) to be more important than academic care ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ). As such, drawing on Audi [11], we argue that the moral aspect of teaching calls for two interrelated obligations: master and *prima facie* obligations. In *prima facie* obligations, according to Audi, “to each obligation (or duty), there corresponds a principle to the effect that we (morally) should fulfil it. The “should,” however, like “duty” as Ross used it, does not designate the presence of a final, that is, overriding, moral obligation.” Master obligation can, however, support a final moral obligation in a way no single *prima facie* can do. On master principle theories, any *prima facie* principle owes its authority to the master principle [10]. In line with our results, the intentions (e.g., bring about learning) embedded in academic care correspond to *prima facie* obligations which will be overridden in the presence of a master obligation (e.g., to nurture the dignity of students). Figure 1 illustrates the moral aspects of teaching based on findings from this research.

The last part of our results suggested that there was a statistically significant difference between male teachers and female teachers in terms of perceived personal and academic care. Both groups perceived personal care (for male:  $M =$

4.13,  $SD = 0.52$ ; for female  $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) as more important than academic care (for male:  $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ; for female:  $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ). However, a multivariate test analysis showed no statistically significant differences among teachers when we studied the subject matters they taught. This result is consistent with other empirical research that found that female teachers valued caring more in the context of teaching [24]. Such a result is also in accordance with the nature of caring teaching, which is considered as “mothering” [15]. In conclusion, we believe that this paper proposes a promising conceptual framework to further qualitative and particularly quantitative reflection on the moral aspect of teaching. In line with this, we suggest that prospective researchers use the Caring Teaching Scale developed in this research in order to improve its psychometric properties in different contexts.

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## Research Article

# Moral Foundation of the Kindergarten Teacher's Educational Approach: Self-Reflection Facilitated Educator Response to Pluralism in Educational Context

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This paper investigates the moral foundation of Kindergarten teachers' educational approach from the perspective of sensitivity towards religions and other worldviews. As a context for the examination, the paper presents the current situation of the Finnish multi-faith kindergartens through the empirical mixed method data gathered from five day care centres in the capital Helsinki area. The findings illustrate that at present, the multitude of religions and other worldviews in the increasingly diverse Kindergarten context causes continuous negotiations among the staff on both the educational practices and in the teachers' educational partnership with families. In particular, there is a lot of uncertainty of how—if at all—education on religions and worldviews should be implemented in the multicultural, multi-faith kindergarten. Some of the staff members have difficulties in encountering religious diversity in a positive or neutral light, as religions are often seen through limitations to everyday practicalities and educational contents. It is argued that in order to develop a constructive, worldview sensitive educator response to pluralism, and thus to encourage the development in the moral foundation of the teachers' work, the teachers would need supported opportunities for dialoguous self-reflection. To support this, working models for intercultural and inter-faith sensitivity are suggested.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper we examine the moral core of teaching from the viewpoint of worldview sensitivity. More precisely, through the findings of our empirical data as well as the framework set by the national and municipal curriculum guidelines, we will explore the kindergarten teachers' response to worldview diversity. As a part of this, we examine the kinds of practical level educational approaches that are employed by the teachers in relation to worldviews, and the discourses they engage in dealing with the worldview diversity in the kindergarten. Finally, we will suggest some directions for supporting the teachers' self-reflection towards coping with the worldview sensitivity as a part of their professional development.

Due to increasing religious diversity, both the children and the staff in today's kindergartens and schools are exposed

to more diversity of worldview backgrounds than the previous generations ever were. Nevertheless, the empathy towards other cultures and worldviews does not develop automatically when diversity in the environment increases. Rather, the worldview differences present a particular challenge to individual's own cultural and religious preconceptions [1]. In the educational setting, pluralism present in each group of children through the diversity of the home backgrounds intensifies the teacher's need for worldview sensitivity as a moral core of their professionalism; an essential part of their educational approach. However, although the special considerations for cultural and linguistic diversity in the kindergarten group are often already taken into account, the meaning of religions and other worldviews for the children is very often disregarded.

Besides the teacher's educational approach to instruction as a means of conveying educational contents, worldview

sensitivity as a part of the moral core of teaching also expands to the contents. Namely, from the point of view of the children, the diversity of the educational context emphasizes the importance of acquiring knowledge and the demand for supporting their own identity, value system, and worldview [2–8]. Furthermore, worldview sensitivity is an essential part of teacher's every encounter: in relation to the children, their families, and staff members. Children are very receptive to detecting the teacher's values from every tone of voice—even silence: by leaving a child's question unanswered, the teacher communicates that the topic is a taboo not suitable for discussion [9].

In the following, we will examine the data from five multicultural Finnish kindergartens as a case in inaugurating the need for a worldview sensitive educational approach as an essential part of the moral core of teaching. Through our empirical findings, we will illustrate some of the strengths and challenges of the present-day societal education in the increasingly pluralistic Finnish kindergartens. Thereby, we will demonstrate the need for a new kind of educational approach, in order to better meet the needs of the children from all kinds of worldview backgrounds. We argue that teachers need worldview sensitivity as an essential interpersonal skill in their work, in order not to segregate or marginalize anyone due to their worldview.

The context of our case studies, the capital Helsinki area, has become increasingly multicultural due to increased migration during the past few decades. In addition to immigration, the society is increasingly pluralistic due to secularisation as well as the privatisation of religion among the native Finnish population. There is also a growing interest in the new religious movements among Finns. [10]. Geographical variance in hosting cultural diversity both nationally and between different residential areas is significant. The kindergartens examined here are located in the so-called multicultural pockets of the city [11]. These city parts have hosted culturally diverse residency for a couple of decades now, and the day care staff thus already hold a rather long experience of working in a diverse educational setting. The diversity of home backgrounds among both the children and staff members in the educational context brings particular considerations for taking into account [the presence of religions and worldviews...] the presence of religions and worldviews in the kindergarten. In particular, there is a lot of uncertainty on how—if at all—should religious and worldview education be organized.

Increasing pluralism brings new challenges in the societal educational arenas, including the Early Years' Education and Care (ECEC) and the Preschool Education provided in these kindergartens. The worldview diversity also raises the question of how to harness it for developing the children's competences for living in a diverse world [12]. In order to implement education corresponding to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (§14) [13] and in Finland the national Freedom of Religion Act [14] emphasizing the positive freedom to religion and for receiving religious instruction [15], and in order to meet the Religious Education objectives set in the national curriculum guiding documents [16, 17], there is a need to consciously develop new educational approaches.

In other words, there is a need to better acknowledge not only the multicultural but also the multifaith, pluralistic educational setting the contemporary generations of Finnish children are growing up in.

## 2. Teachers' Moral Reflection and Pluralistic Educational Context

De Ruyter and Kole [18] write on the necessity of intraprofessional reflection about moral ideals of teaching. They argue that since teaching is a significant social good, both the teachers and the state have to take responsibility for the moral quality of teaching, and that both of these parties have their own particular role in this process. For teachers, this implies that they have to take responsibility in developing their professional morality in its full potential, in particular when it comes to defining its "optimal or aspirational dimension" that is pursued towards. This also includes their professional ideals. De Ruyter and Kole write that although the literature on teachers' professional ethics is relatively scarce, there are several arguments for the importance of ideals for teachers. They argue that in order to provoke teachers to think about the best aims and means of their work, they have to articulate their ideals through dialogue with their colleagues. This dialogue also contributes to their sense and meaning of their work [18].

We argue that the sensitivity to worldviews should be positioned among these moral ideals. Like Darling-Hammond et al. write that teachers need a "moral compass" to enable them to follow through on their commitments for all children. This requires ethical considerations in teaching. Diversity intensifies the need to develop cultural democracy enabling social minorities to maintain aspects of their community cultures and languages [19]. In the same way, also worldviews should gain a similar position in the kindergarten. It also has to be kept in mind that although not all teachers regard conscious acting as role-models to their students as a part of their work [20], the teacher in any case has a significant influence as a model in moral practices and caring approach such as respecting others' rights [21].

Husu and Tirri [22] have examined *teacher's moral reflection* from the perspective of three domains: (1) *the ethic of purpose*, providing the teachers' self-understanding which can lead to a sufficiently informed, justifiable ethical action; (2) *the ethic of rules and principles*, or a general guide to the teachers' actions and decision-making based on their set of moral rules and principles; and (3) *the ethic of probability*, where moral dilemmas are interpreted through an estimation of the probable consequences of particular educational decisions, after which the decisions are made so to maximize benefits and minimize harms. Their study illustrates how abstract theories can be used in real-life ethics in education, and how such "reference points" can help teachers in their work when it comes to ethical reflection.

After all, the quality of teachers' thinking and their ability to associate thought with action are of vital importance in their day-to-day work. However, since the actual teaching work often takes place within a hectic social setting of

the classroom where there is often very little time for reflection before taking action, teachers' behaviour is also much dependent upon their personalities [23]. This adds to the critical importance of attending to the beliefs of teachers already in the preservice stage, in order to prepare the educators for the moral work of teaching. Moreover, also in line with what Husu and Tirri write about the ethic of rules and principles [22], this builds towards constructing the conceptual framework for guiding the teachers in their actions and decision-making [24].

To facilitate the advancing of this part of the moral core of teaching, the teachers would need additional support in developing their sensitivity in the encountering of cultures [25] and religions [1, 26]. Teachers should be provided with opportunities to consciously work on their sensitivities in order to enable attitudinal changes. Through these, gradually also the wider operational culture of the kindergarten or school can be developed. Using increased sensitivity in encountering cultures and worldviews it is also possible to better understand the position of one's own culture and personal worldview among the whole variety of ways people use in making sense of the world. Such process enables an individual to become increasingly conscious on their own way of meaning-making and constructing reality [25].

Developing the individual's moral reflection, and through that developing one's sensitivity to recognizing other people's perspectives, may thus require an active intervention such as further training, in the context of this article that targeted for the kindergarten staff. Through such process, each educator would have an opportunity to develop their own thinking; to recognize and accept the differences between cultures; eventually facilitating a change of behaviour in the work as educational professionals. Bennett has presented a working model targeting the development of cultural sensitivity in particular. What he sees as critical here is that, firstly, understanding is gained about people's behaviour when encountering difference, and, secondly, after receiving further education targeted to cultural sensitivity, there is a change in the participants' behaviour [25].

More precisely, the model aims into gradually increasing the cultural sensitivity, through which the individual learns to understand the position of her own culture and worldview as options among others. At the same time, she becomes increasingly aware of her particular ways of constructing the reality and making-meaning. Bennett's model aims to improve cultural self-recognition alongside with increasing awareness of other cultures. Through such awareness, also the approach to cultural differences becomes more natural. The increased cultural sensitivity helps the individual to cope with cultural differences and increases the understanding of intercultural communication [25].

This can also be applied to sensitivity towards worldviews, which are a critical part of a culture [27]. Abu-Nimer [26] has developed Bennett's model in particular in relation to interfaith dialogue and the development of a positive attitude towards the "other"—or a religion that is perceived as such. Abu-Nimer sees religion as crucial in the development of cultural sensitivity, since it holds a central

role for the identities of both the individuals and communities. He thinks Bennett's model does not fully recognize the significance of religion in the development of cultural sensitivity; Abu-Nimer states religion can even become a hindrance for the development of cultural sensitivity, as it holds such strong influence in individual's cultural behaviour and her views of other people or groups. After all, religious values and norms form a central part of cultural identity [26].

The way of experiencing and reacting to cultural or religious differences can become a crucial part of individual's worldview, thus affecting to the manner in which he behaves in interaction with others. Since the religious dimension of identity reaches deep also into the spiritual, moral, and ethic aspects, it differs from other dimensions of cultural identity. Thereby, encountering other worldviews can cause a stronger reaction than what the encountering of cultures usually does. Abu-Nimer's model describes the different ways in which people react to the differences of worldviews and cultures. By working according to this model, it is possible to deepen the consciousness on one's personal way of reacting to, encountering of and dealing with the difference [26].

When aiming to develop the sensitivity towards cultures and worldviews, it needs to be acknowledged that every individual experiences and encounters the differences through her own perspectives, anchored in her personal life history. People also differ in the ways in which they interpret life events such as cultural encounters. Furthermore, cultures and worldviews differ from each other in a multitude of ways, and these differences should not be disregarded [25]. Bennett's and Abu-Nimer's models depict the different attitudes from ethnocentrism (disregarding cultural differences or denying their existence in one's own living environment) to ethnorelativism (recognizing cultural differences and accepting these) in regards to the development of intercultural sensitivity; correspondingly, in Abu-Nimer's model these ends of the developmental spectrum are religious relativism and centrism [25, 26].

Cultural sensitivity affects the cognitive, affective, and behavioural level in people. These are in continuous change and they all affect each other. Thus, Bennett states sensitivity represents dynamic learning, including the elements of increasing awareness and widening understanding. Through these, interactive skills are constructed. The dynamic and nonlinear nature of the process is evident in that an individual can also return to the earlier stages in his development of sensitivity if he faces such difference for which he is not yet prepared [25].

When it comes to religions, Abu-Nimer has focused in particular to the ways in which the cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements have mutually affected in individual's attitudes towards the "other." In his view, attitudinal change is possible when all these elements are present: the interaction with other worldviews touches the emotional (heart), rational (head), and practical, as in doing something together (hands) levels—corresponding to Bennett's dimensions of knowledge, emotion, and behaviour. Abu-Nimer illustrates the process of attitudinal change by placing these three aspects (head, heart, and hands) as the vertices of a triangle,

with the individual's spirituality (spirit) as the centre of the triangle. He does not want to separate confessional "religion" from "spirituality" (religion as the expression of individual spirituality) [28]. as the centre of the triangle. The goals to which the process of increasing religious sensitivity aim to reach are in a crucial position: (1) learning to cope with the differences that arise; (2) increasing the cultural and religious competences; (3) becoming increasingly aware of one's own reactions towards the "other"; (4) to recognize situations relating to the interfaith dialogue; (5) to learn concrete means in which to improve interfaith communication in one's own day-to-day environment. Even the small, daily encounters and actions can work as a starting point through which respectful attitude is expressed in one's everyday life [26].

### 3. Conceptual Underpinnings

Every individual holds a *worldview*; an ontological and ethical orientation to the world, humanity, and life questions. It is not merely knowledge and understanding of the world, but also a philosophy of life, crucial in defining human existence and providing meanings to immanent reality [27]. Worldview is the individual's "primary frame of reference or life philosophy" that may reflect a particular religious faith or be nonreligious (e.g., atheist, agnostic, and/or "spiritual, but not religious") [1, page 441]. *Values* are people's views of what is good and preferable; general aims for actions that are stable from situation to situation, however altered in significance, and by which people evaluate both their own actions and the world around them [29–31]. *Religion* is a way or a special mode of believing, a part of which the individual's *beliefs* are the "supreme objects of individual and collective convictions" finding their expression in the "body of practices, behavior, and institutions" [32].

We have chosen to use the concept *worldview sensitivity* here, as we want to emphasize the equal inclusion of both religious and nonreligious worldviews in the educational context. Although worldview sensitivity comes close to some previously used notions, none of these targets explicitly enough what is meant by it in this article. *Moral/ethical sensitivity*, as the awareness of how actions affect other people, the ability to see things from the perspective of other individuals and groups, which from a professional perspective also includes the norms of one's profession and recognizing when these apply [33], addresses the area in more general terms than the sensitivity to the worldviews *per se*. *Intercultural sensitivity* [25] as a concept operates in a more general level too: although religion typically forms a core part of a culture, the discussion on cultures typically includes for example languages but the position of religions and other worldviews often remains overlooked. Moreover, *interreligious sensitivity* as a notion leaves out the nonreligious worldviews.

As an educational approach and a part of the moral core of teacher, the concept worldview sensitivity denotes the awareness of worldviews as something that each individual holds and the recognition that there is thus an immense

diversity of perspectives. Worldview sensitivity involves the ability to respect the diversity of the worldviews held by individuals and groups. In professional terms, choosing one's courses of action in a manner that provides recognition to the differing views and does not cause harm (such as social exclusion, discrimination, marginalization) to anyone due to their worldview, but gives space to the differences. Worldview sensitivity acknowledges the differences between worldviews without ranking them and provides space and respect to each individual's personal worldview [5, 27]. After all, in line with Näre's [34] concerns on gender sensitivity, the idealistic notion of "neutrality" in Religious Education disregards the meaning of worldviews in utilizing the "value-free" operational models of a secularized society as a norm. Furthermore, it is still often disregarded how even the same tradition influences the life of different families in a variety of ways: not everyone shares the same beliefs and customs [28, 35].

*Diversity* here refers to the multitude of individual characteristics and backgrounds; in particular the multitude of religions and other worldviews that are present in the homes of children and adults operating in the day care context. Furthermore, *pluralistic* here refers to the diversity of values; whereas "*multi-faith*" refers more generally into the presence of various traditions, religious and nonreligious, in the educational context. It is also acknowledged that besides the diversity stemming from different faith backgrounds, the values and beliefs vary significantly also both within the "majority" and the "minorities" in the society, which is also visible in the kindergarten.

The educational setting under focus in the here presented case studies is the Finnish *kindergarten* or *day care centre* (here used as synonyms) context, providing Early Years Education and Care for the children of ages 0–6. Preschool for 6-year-olds is commonly integrated with the kindergarten rather than school; this is also the case in these five day care centres.

### 4. Case Study Examination of Five MultiFaith Kindergartens in Finland

Through the empirical and documentary data presented below, we aim to delineate the reflected foundations of the kindergarten teachers' educational approach to worldviews in the pluralistic setting. More precisely, this problem is targeted through the following research questions: How do kindergarten teachers respond to pluralism in the educational context? What kinds of discourses and practical level approaches do they employ regarding the diversity of worldviews and worldview education in their work?

The Developmental Models for Intercultural [25] and Interreligious [1, 26] explain different reactions to other, respectively, cultures and religions. Recently Holm et al. [36] and Tirri and Nokelainen [37] have developed quantitative measures on these sensitivities. Although we gathered data using a mixed method design with a variety of tools, due to the nature of case studies and the limited size of the sample, our analyses on their part bring a more qualitative

perspective to this very timely discussion on the field. Three sets of data were utilized for the present analysis. These are described in the following (see Table 1).

Firstly (Data 1), Lamminmäki-Vartia gathered data in a municipal kindergarten with an ethnographic approach [38, 39]. These data were gathered through participant observation of kindergarten groups' day-to-day educational activities, inclusive on Christmas and Easter times; research interviews of the staff, and a questionnaire data from the educational teams about the cultural and religious diversity of children's home backgrounds. This kindergarten presented an interesting case due to a religious education development project going on during the time of data gathering [8].

Secondly (Data 2), Kuusisto gathered mixed-method [40] empirical data in four municipal kindergartens with an action research approach. The empirical data was gathered with surveys and focus group discussions with the staff, parental interviews, participant observation, and discussions with the children. The data were gathered as a part of the research and development project "Multicultural Children and Adults in Day Care" (<http://www.muca.fi/>) [6, 41].

Thirdly (Data 3), the authors have used the available national, municipal, and day care centre specific documents as a part of the data. In the following presentation of the results, we will start by describing the framework set by the curriculum guiding documents from the perspective of the position of worldviews in the early years' education and care in Helsinki.

The data were analysed with content analysis, also utilizing some elements from discourse analysis (Data 1 in particular), and the Atlas.ti programme (Data 2). We have aimed to maintain as much of the participants' own voice in the article as possible, thereby we have included as many authentic data extracts as possible. These are marked with the number of the set of data as well as the method used in order to set the context (e.g., focus group discussion, interview, or observation situation) for the reader.

## 5. Framework Set by the Document Guidelines on Position of Worldviews

The curriculum document guidelines (Data 3) are to form the basis and an overall framework for the practical educational work, and thus hold a significant role in the present examination. Regarding the position of religions and other worldviews in Early Years' Education and Care (ECEC) and preschool in Finland, the guidelines are based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child [13] and the national, 2003 updated Freedom of Religion Act [14] which emphasise everyone's positive right to religion and worldview. The document regarding the education and care of children between the ages 0–5 is the National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland [42], and National Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool [43] regards the education of the 6-year-old preschoolers. These guidelines include a religious orientation, which is non-confessional. The societal change towards a more multicultural and pluralistic Finland is reflected in these documents. When

the Religious Education contents previously emphasized learning about religion in terms of the gradually increasing commitment to one's "own" religion, presently the focus is on the role and impact of religion in the development of the growing child [44].

The Ethical Orientation in the National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC [42] focuses on values and norms, stating that the children's daily life events are to be analysed from the viewpoint of questions of right and wrong, good and bad; the questions of justice, equality, respect, and freedom are to be dealt with; as well as their fears, anxiety, and guilt are discussed in safe environment. As for the religious-philosophical orientation, it is stated that its core is formed by religious, spiritual, and philosophical issues and phenomena, more precisely:

*Interest is taken in the traditions, customs and practices of the child's own religion or beliefs. The child is offered an opportunity to experience silence and wonder, to ask questions and ponder over issues. The child's sensitivity and ability to understand non-verbal and symbolic are respected, supported and strengthened. Insights are gained into the customs of various religions and beliefs close to the child [42, emphasis added].*

In the 2010 renewed National Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool [43], it is stated that the freedom for religion is assured by the constitution, and that this freedom for the preschool age children is employed by their guardians. In these guidelines, the entity on ethics and worldviews consists of ethics education, cultural worldview education, and religious education or the optional ethics and life questions education. From these, ethical education is seen as being included in all education, and is mutual to everyone. The cultural worldview education also includes everyone; it is studied together with the whole group. Its aim is the development of thinking in regard to worldview; including, more specifically, that the child is being heard on his/her questions regarding worldview, the opportunity to gain knowledge on the customs of one's own religion or other worldview, and the other religions and worldviews represented in the group. Furthermore, the religious education in preschool aims to provide an opportunity to encounter matters relating to religion and to familiarize oneself with religious festivities and the reasons why and ways in which these are celebrated. Also, it aims to provide an opportunity to familiarize with the main contents of one's own religion. The optional ethics and life questions education aims to develop potential for encountering life questions dealing with issues like worldviews and cultural identity [43, 45].

## 6. Findings on the Teachers' Response to Pluralism in the Studied Kindergartens

In multicultural kindergartens, diversity is a part of the children's everyday life: in all the five kindergartens that were present in the data, over 40% of children came from other than "native-Finnish" family backgrounds. To illustrate

TABLE 1: Research methods, participants and gathered sets of data.

Method	Data 1: Multi-method data gathered by Lamminmäki-Vartia				Data 2: Multi-method data gathered by Kuusisto				Data 3:	
	Observation	Interviews	Questionnaire data	Staff focus group interviews	Interviews with parents	Observation of pre-school groups	Interviews, discussions, storycrafting	Surveys with educational practitioners	Surveys with educational teams	Survey with educational teams
Time of data gathering	Nov 2007–March 2008	Nov-Dec 2008	Nov-Dec 2008	Nov-Dec 2008	Dec 2009–Feb 2010	March-April 2009	March-April 2009	Dec 2008, May 2009	Aug-Sept 2009	2008–2010
Research participants	Day care centres ( $n = 1$ ) day to day activities, the staff and some 90 children, with particular attention to a group of 20 children aged 3–6	Personnel of one day care centre ( $n = 16$ )	Day care centre educational teams ( $n = 5$ )	Personnel of four day care centres ( $n = 45$ )	10 parents (between ages 28–55; eight females and two men)	Some 80 children and ECEC personnel	80 children (5–6-year-olds)	(1) The staff members of four day care centres ( $n = 35$ ) (2) Educational practitioners participating in staff development seminar ( $n = 40$ )	ECEC teams ( $n = 45$ individuals), each responsible for a group of children	(1) National curriculum guiding documents; (2) Municipal curriculum guiding documents; (3) Kindergarten-specific documents; (4) ECEC teams' plans targeting diversity
Form(s) of data	Field notes; transcribed notes, 93p. all together	Transcribed interviews (50–70 min each), 76p. all together	Questionnaires	Transcribed focus group discussions (1.5–2.5 h each, 8 h altogether)	Transcribed interviews (20–60 min each)	Field notes; photographs	Field notes, recorded discussions	Questionnaires	Questionnaires	Documents

the worldview diversity: in one of these kindergartens there were 55% from various Christian backgrounds (mainly Lutheran, some Catholic or Orthodox, and one Seventh-day Adventist). Secondly, 31% of the children were Muslim. The third largest group, with 7% of children, had no religious affiliation. In addition, there were Jehovah's Witnesses and a Buddhist child (Data 1).

From the perspective of the day-to-day running of the kindergarten, worldview diversity is often seen as a challenge. It is often perceived through the limitations that different worldviews bring into what the children (and adults) present are not allowed to eat, see, hear, or do due to their confession. This is reflected in the communication with parents, as often the "educational discussion" with the families perceived as "religious" focuses on what cannot be done with the child because of the family worldview—whereas with some families there is little mention about religion at all.

*We haven't been asking so exactly what religion they are affiliated with—from these "ordinary Finns". From the point of view of activities, we've just been interested in what the children can participate in and what they can't. So not really about what their affiliation is. The Muslims do let us know that themselves (Data 1/interview with a staff member).*

The fact that the teachers' personal attitudes and pre-suppositions towards cultures and worldviews differing from their own are visible in the everyday encounters and practices in the kindergarten became clear both in the interviews and field observation (Data 1) and focus group discussions (Data 2). It can be asked, how can the teacher provide positive recognition to each child's worldview, if religions are only visible in the operational culture as something causing limitations and restrictions? The use of words and expressions disparaging some cultures or worldviews may be unconscious, but the message that is transmitted to the children can nonetheless be very clear. To illustrate this, we'll share a fieldwork note from the lunchtime in one of these kindergartens.

*Anne [teacher] chooses veggie balls to her plate. She sits in the same table with the children. Suddenly, Nelli [child] starts to laugh and bursts out into singing in a loud voice: "Anne is a Muslim, Anne is a Muslim!" pointing to the food on the teacher's plate with her finger. "No, I definitely am not!" responds Anne (Data 1/observation).*

The practical level response to the challenge brought by the increasing worldview diversity of kindergartens has not been to increase the visibility of worldviews but rather the opposite. The contents and methods that are regarded unsuitable to any of the children in the group have commonly just been cut off. Though it has been done in the name of the minority rights, it does not serve either the minorities or the majority. Furthermore, the cutting off has been done without much questioning of what will these contents and means be replaced with [44]. Hence, this "culture of cutting

off" [46] has thinned both the contents and the methods from the whole group.

*Regarding this [Religious Education] we're a bit lost here. And I suppose this is the case in many other kindergartens, too. That—we cannot see that our own Lutheranism is getting lost here. The religion of this country. Because of multiculturalism it [the educational activities] only includes this secular. Terrible hurry to grow the ryegrass and craft the [Easter] chicks to the tables and [Christmas] elves in the windows. It is left only to this material level. And in many cases the elves are left away, too, in order not to hurt another religion that doesn't stand elves (Data 1/interview with a staff member).*

One of the main reasons why religious or worldview education is not implemented in some multicultural settings appeared in the data to be the wide spectrum of worldviews present in each group. However, such overly cautious attitude to "other" religions—also strengthened by societal secularism—can sometimes cause excess reactions. The Quran may be openly discussed with the whole group, even a visit to the Mosque can be planned, but the Bible is not mentioned or Church visit intended with the whole group since some of the group are "these multiculturals" (Data 2/staff focus group discussion). For several kindergarten teachers in this relatively secular societal context, also Christianity was among the "other," not perceived as so familiar, religions.

What was regarded as particularly challenging among the teachers was providing positive recognition to what were considered as the "other" worldviews. Some teachers did not see this as their task in the first place, whereas others said they simply do not know enough of these faiths in order to teach the children. However, in general, the teachers spoke for an educational approach that would recognize positively different faiths. These issues also caused a lot of uncertainty. For example, when a child had started singing a traditional Christian Christmas Carol in the corridor, a staff member was wondering whether she should have silenced the child because peers were present from families that do not celebrate Christmas: "Then what, when there are others [sic] present; how to deal with that? Is it appropriate or not?" (Data 2/staff focus group discussion). Thus, focusing the discussion of RE merely on what and for whom to include in the contents so to include wide enough coverage of traditions is sometimes not seeing the wood for the trees. Since the implementation of RE is very much up to the personnel of each day care centre, the actual educational practices vary greatly across the country as well as each town or city or even between the different groups in the particular day care centre unit.

In multicultural educational setting, such as in any other day care context, the careful planning and implementing of worldview education demands preparation, which naturally takes time. Still, when it comes to a multifaith setting, the special considerations that the particular setting is regarded to demand, are often talked about only through their

negative aspects. This reflects how the teachers—despite of all fine talks—still do not recognize worldview diversity as an asset in their educational approach and its practical level implementation [2]. In order not to exclude any of the children because of their worldview, there is a need to organize the religious/worldview education with a new approach, and this demands a deeper input than what the document level can reach into: it demands self-reflection and moral dialogue on the very basis of each teacher's work. Reaching the educational aims set in the documents is first and foremost an attitudinal matter and referring to the difficult practicalities may work as an excuse in the operational environment dialogue for not implementing RE. In some kindergartens, RE responsibilities were “handed over” to the local Evangelical Lutheran congregation, from where someone came every once in a while to hold a short story time for the children [44, 46–49]. Such out-sourcing of “the religion,” of course, does not serve any of the children: neither the Lutheran nor the non-Lutheran, and in particular not the non-Christian children, who are commonly excluded from these activities altogether.

After all, for example working in small groups targeted for a particular language needs or social skills development is already a daily routine in many Finnish kindergartens—using a similar approach to instruction of own religion would be equally simple to implement. Similarly, group discussions with children are also a part of the daily programme, discussing worldviews among other matters would be easy to do [4, 5, 44, 47]. Applying these methods also to worldview education just does not happen in many kindergartens. Like one of the teachers says “Religious Education should be a normal part of the every-day activities, not just a “lump” that is lifted on the table “Now, here we have the Religious Education!”—it should be present all the time in some way.” (Data 1/interview with a staff member). Widening the regular group discussion topics so that they would also deal with worldviews as a part of the everyday would not demand any additional preparation from the teachers—just added sensitivity and a wider educational approach.

The “culture of cutting off” and more generally the overly cautious attitude towards religions in multicultural educational settings have caused thinning of both educational contents and methods. Instead, new approach should be employed in worldview education in order to provide the children with tools for understanding their diverse environment. Active development of educational contents and methods better suited to the multifaith context are needed, as well as some active questioning of the customary ways of doing things (see also [48, 49]). Such new approach would demand the enrichment of contents with the appreciation of the variety of worldviews present in the group, for example, familiarizing with the festivities celebrated in each of the families throughout the year when those become timely in the children's homes, or reading stories from different traditions, singing songs, making plays, and playing games (see also [44, 46, 47, 50]).

The above described approach is to some extent utilized in many other settings where multifaith society has longer traditions, for example in the UK and Netherlands. In one of

the kindergartens where the empirical part of this study was completed, the Evangelical Lutheran Church worker who was carrying out some of the kindergarten “morning vespers” had started developing “Multicultural Religious Education” together with the kindergarten staff. The aim here was to hold “morning vespers” that would be “suitable” to all of the children in the group.

*The church worker who had come to hold the morning vesper: “Do you know what, children. The Muslims celebrated Ramadan just recently, isn't that so?”*

*Children: “Yeeah!” [loud reply in the kindergarten hall]*

*Church worker: “At the end of that, there was a big, joyful feast. A similar one than Advent is for Christians. A fasting time for calming down—although it sometimes seems we never can really settle down, we just have more and more hassle every day. Our duty is to think about other people, too. To start considering, who are those around us that we should take special care of, who may have some misfortune or sorrow; those that are near to us that we should particularly care for. In a similar way, Ramadan has been for taking into consideration those people who may not have all things well like we do (Data 1/observation).*

The positively recognizing way of speaking about worldviews that was aimed by the church worker was seen as an encouraging example by some of the staff members.

*Through these [vespers] I have gotten a new perception of what we are aiming to do here. That—right, this must be the way forward here, this is the way to do it. All religions should become visible through the mutually shared aspects. What the church worker has brought up that we don't segregate here. That these [children] get this and those get that, but those matters that are for everyone. (Data 1/interview with a staff member).*

It was not all of the staff members that saw such an approach as a good idea. Some thought giving positive recognition to another religion than the “customary” Lutheran/Christian one was not such a good idea: “Personally I regard it healthy that those [Islam] festivities are not that visible in here.” (Data 1/interview with a staff member). However, the position of religion in the children's home cultures was understood by many.

*Religion is an important part of everyday life in many of our multicultural families. We need to know and understand something about that, so our know-how about this needs to be developed, so we can understand the families and the matters that are important to them. So we can serve the families better and understand the life of the child when there is the religion that influences.*

*If we don't know, we cannot understand.” (Data 1/interview with a staff member)*

The above quote illustrates also how the “other” religion is seen as something that the families from immigrant background have. The secular Lutheran, thus, is a strong norm in the discussion about religions in Finland [7, 27, 51]. It remains disregarded that many of the immigrants moving to Finland are in fact Christians [10] and that the so perceived “majority” in reality is immensely varied [7].

What was found as one functioning approach in some of the kindergartens was that when the staff took some time for thoroughly explaining to the children’s parents, what exactly will be going on for example in the kindergarten’s Christmas festivities. Furthermore, the Christmas celebrations were organized in such manner that the families who did not want their children to see the Nativity scene, were able to join the party without going to the room where that was presented. After this PTA meeting, all of the families wanted to join the kindergarten Christmas party. The parents do want their children to familiarize with the Finnish traditions, including the ways in which Christmas and Easter are celebrated in Finland. Some also wanted their children to take part in the kindergarten Christmas Church service to see what that is like. This demands an active and openly communicative and appreciative approach from the staff, but it contributes towards transparency of the educational agenda of the kindergarten, thereby also building the trust with the families (Data 2) [6].

Functioning cooperation with individuals from different cultural and worldview backgrounds requires appreciation also to one’s own background [52]. If the whole group activities that are aiming towards so-called religious neutrality are the only form of religious instruction, the children do not get support for their own religious identity; neither do they develop tools for understanding their own tradition. Understanding other traditions only becomes possible with enough knowledge on one’s own. Thereby, both the small group activities for children with similar worldview backgrounds and the whole group activities that are mutually shared have their own role in kindergartens. The kindergartens RE has also an important role in the perspective to give the children a “language,” so that they are able to talk about and understand things related to religions and worldview’s. In that way the worldview education can also be connected to S2 (Finnish as the second language) teaching. This “giving a language” is not only important to children with immigrant background but also to those many children whose homes are secularized and/or the RE is not regarded as so important. As one teacher said:

*These children will be among those who run the country in the future. If they are not learning here to discuss: “oh, so you’re about to celebrate Ramadan, we’ll have Christmas and you’re Hanukkah is approaching.” For example these. In the kindergarten, the seed is sown for recognizing that there are other ways and parties with other names but that these share similar elements. “So you believe this and we this.” The thought that*

*there are other ways to believe and that I do not have to hit this guy because in his home he’s been taught this matter in a different way or in no way at all.” (Data 1/interview with a staff member).*

When looking at the data through the point of view of these teachers’ and staff members’ moral reflection [22], the discourses in justifying the meaningfulness or the lack of it when it comes to providing worldview education to the children reflects some ideas of the level in which these educators have actually been reflecting on these matters. Whereas many staff members talk about worldviews only through the practical level limitations that the different worldviews bring to the everyday, such as through the complaining of the vast number of religion-based diets to consider; others are somewhat self-conscious of how they should have dealt with some particular situations, such as the pondering of whether she should have silenced the child singing a hymn in the corridor or not. Still others bring up deeper considerations on the opportunities of teaching worldviews, such as the above example of the giving of a language approach. Overall, it seems that worldview issues in general have commonly not been reflected on very much by the educational staff, perhaps with the exception of those for whom a particular religious worldview is a personally meaningful part of life.

## **7. Discussion: Towards Worldview Sensitive Educational Approach**

In the above, we have presented examples of our empirical data on the presence of religions and other worldviews in the multicultural, pluralistic Finnish kindergartens (Data sets 1 & 2). Based on these and the document level framework (Data 3), we argue that although there are numerous individuals who already hold a worldview sensitive educational approach, and along these ideals, use functioning, inclusive practices in their work; the more generally maintained attitudinal climate towards diversity of worldviews in early years’ education is not sensitive enough. Thus, many marginalizing practices are still used, and numerous children and adults get excluded and marginalized, even discriminated, because of their worldview in their everyday. This is not only true with religious worldviews, but also the nonreligious ones. Furthermore, the full potential for supporting inclusion and social cohesion is not utilized, not even to the level required by the national guidelines (Data 3). Thereby, there is still a critical need for developing the moral foundations of teaching through a new, increasingly worldview sensitive educational approach.

The presented findings illustrate how a single day care centre can portray a “miniature world” with the cultures, languages, and worldviews present. That a multicultural kindergarten is usually also a multifaith one—and that worldview diversity is immense also when the group would not have any children with an “immigrant background”—is often disregarded in the discussion on diversity. However, multiculturalism should self-evidently include the worldview diversity as a part of the everyday. Dialogue, and familiarizing

with a variety of religions and other worldviews, works towards increasing openness and tolerance [53]. Kindergarten teachers have thereby an excellent opportunity—and in the light of the Finnish National Guidelines, for example, also a responsibility—to discuss worldviews and also more generally the matters relating to the family worldviews of the children present in the group. Aiming towards a deeper communication in this respect, not merely going through a check list of “what the child is not allowed to do, see, hear and eat” would enable the staff to promote genuine dialogue between different worldviews in the kindergartens. At the same time, the teachers would be able to develop in their own work when it comes to worldview sensitivity. The diversity within each tradition and between the families [28, 35], and the confusion caused by this among the day care staff also came out clearly in the data. This finding emphasizes the importance for the teacher to sensitively encounter each individual child, rather than seeing him as a representative of a particular tradition, and to positively recognize her culture and worldview from her particular starting points.

A respectful and sensitive attitude is also something that the religious leaders from different faiths in Finland have been concerned about [54]. This includes the right to an education on not only her own religious tradition but also other religions and worldviews. The aim is constructing a balanced cultural identity accompanied by understanding others and the acceptance of diversity; bringing children into mutual dialogue and respect [54]. In the globalized, pluralistic present-day world, culturally and religiously sensitive educational approach should be a self-evident professional attribute in particular when working in the educational sector. It should be recognized as an essential part of the continuous professional development, relating to the relationships towards the children, families, and co-workers. Kindergartens do, after all, hold a key position when it comes to the opportunity for enhancing mutual respect in the society. For realizing this opportunity, the educators need to execute an actively antioppressive, respectful approach in their professional life, towards every individual, despite of the differences in people’s cultural and worldview backgrounds. Without such approach, it is pointless to expect the realization of the aims set in some formal Religious Education Curricula or the Rights of the Child Documents to be reached. Pluralism and the negotiations of worldviews have come to stay, besides among the staff, also both in the everyday running of the kindergartens and in the educational partnership with the homes.

Open discussion on worldviews and demonstrating positive appreciation towards these is a vital part of meaningful Early Years’ Education in all kindergartens. In practice, developing these among the teachers would demand good educational leadership: something that is not self-evident in the kindergartens that are already facing a multitude of pressures and challenges in the present societal situation [55]. The worldview sensitive educational approach would at its best involve recognising every individual’s particular needs and supporting his or her development with special attention to these. Worldview sensitive approach is also culturally sensitive; by acknowledging the different needs of

the individual, also the cultural elements present in each individual’s life are recognized. Furthermore, these sensitivities also involve respect to the diversity more generally, which works as a foundation of the educational approach [34].

As illustrated above data, it seems evident that religious diversity challenges the kindergarten staff stronger than cultural diversity does. Although, to some level, the domains of teacher’s moral reflection [22] are utilized in the staff discourse, the personal meaning of worldviews to the children are often not realized, and the worldviews in general are still often seen through the perceived limitations to the everyday running of the kindergarten. This is why developing worldview sensitivity merely through the increase of knowledge on worldview traditions is not enough; rather, the teachers need opportunities for pondering their own values and attitudes in relation to these [26]. Gradually, through the development of teachers’ worldview sensitivity it is possible to increase their courage in answering the children’s worldview-related questions [4, 5]. This need for worldview sensitive educational approach also challenges the teacher education; the students should be offered possibilities to start to develop their sensitivities and practice their intercultural and interreligious skills already at the very beginning and throughout their studies.

Kindergarten teacher needs worldview sensitivity as a part of her educational approach also in order to be able to support each child’s holistic wellbeing and not to discriminate against anyone. The teacher can support each child’s identity construction by actively and positively acknowledging the cultures and worldviews present in the child group. This kind of cultural democracy [19] and worldview democracy would increase the minority background children’s membership in the kindergarten community. Furthermore, the more democratic presence of worldviews would enlarge the common space shared by all the children of the group, as this space would then come to reflect the aspects of more and more of the members [19].

Our data illustrates that pluralism is still often seen merely as a challenge and constraint, and thereby it remains difficult for many kindergarten teachers to appreciate children’s diverse worldview backgrounds. Inevitably, these difficulties in their part influence the educational approach in planning and implementing educational activities, in particular when it comes to religious and worldview education. Worldview sensitive educational approach recognizes the diversity of worldviews and gives space to it in the discussions and the everyday activities in the kindergarten. Every encounter in the kindergarten holds an opportunity for positive recognition: between staff and parents, between the teachers, with the children, and in the children’s peer groups. In a pluralistic society, a central educational aim is to build the child’s competences and literacy as a part of becoming a functioning citizen in the globalizing worlds. Teacher as a moral educator holds a central role in determining the direction into which the children grow. Teacher’s role is crucial in how the children learn to encounter cultures and worldviews; and difference more generally. After all, the foundation to acceptance and positive encounters between people can, to a significant part, be constructed in the kindergarten.

## 8. Conclusions

The empirical data presented above illustrates the moral challenges that teachers face in their everyday work. The day-to-day work of the kindergarten teacher is typically hectic and the pace of the incidents with small children, with their immediate reactions and endless curiosity about life, is so hasty that it leaves very little time and space for teacher's moral self-reflection before the answers are already given and educational choices made. As for the children, they will interpret the adults' silence or hesitation as a reply, too, and they incorporate the educator responses and reactions as a part of how they see the world around them. If the teacher has not had time to process and accept the increased presence of diverse worldviews in the educational setting, the children are very fast in noticing her reserved, hesitant position towards what she sees as "otherness."

Although being sensitive about another person's worldview is quite a task—many people may not be very conscious of their own to begin with—and thereby the grasping of or even gaining some surface level understanding of the worldview diversity present in the group of children may be difficult or even impossible. However, as is true with many other theoretical level goals, *employing an educational approach that consciously aims towards worldview sensitivity* should be in use as a part of every teacher's moral competence for functioning in the present-day pluralistic educational context. This involves the teacher's values and ethics, but also the practical level abilities for implementing instruction. Worldview sensitivity as an educational approach does not silence worldviews as taboos but preserves a position for them in the everyday life of the kindergarten or school. Although the most direct influences of this may often be visible in the religious or worldview education, sensitivity also reaches wider than this. It influences the teacher's approach towards openness and appreciation towards the diverse worldviews, both religious and nonreligious. In the kindergarten, worldview sensitive educational approach at its best includes aiming to detect and to support the needs of each individual child and their family.

The presented working models of Bennett and Abu-Nimer illustrate how cultural encounters and intercultural communication differ from the encountering of religions and worldviews and interfaith dialogue. According to these, it is easier for people to accept differences relating to cultures than those related to religions and cultures. It is easier for the individual to develop positive attitude towards someone's culture and to support the maintenance of a culture or language that is unfamiliar to oneself, than to support a religion in the same situation. Thereby, when it comes to encountering religions and other worldviews, there are more defined special challenges than in the encounters of cultures. Although the moral foundation of teachers may be strongly anchored in the ideal of equality—such as that every child is equally important—this ideal is not implemented in the everyday work if the teacher is not conscious of her own presumptions and prejudices towards worldviews regarded as "the other." Thus, if worldview sensitivity does not form a part in the teacher's professional "tool kit," the

lack of it will show in her day-to-day work for example as exclusive practices. The working models presented above demonstrate two examples of how supported self-reflection could facilitate the educators' response to pluralism, thereby gradually reaching influences to the moral foundation of the teachers' educational approach.

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## Research Article

# The Cultural Dependence of the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire: The Case of Iranian Kurdish Teachers

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A good theory-based tool for measuring ethical sensitivity, which is usable in different contexts, is scarce. In this study, we examined the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ) in line with its seven-dimension structure. The scale was presented to a sample of 556 Iranian Kurdish teachers in primary, middle, and high schools. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to scrutinize the original factor structure of the ESSQ. The results confirmed that the ESSQ supports a reasonable model fit to study the seven dimensions of ethical sensitivity as it was developed in the original study. However, some modifications were conducted to free high error covariance between four pairs of items in the scale. This modification increased the fit indices and thus resulted in a good model fit. In addition to examining the satiability of the ESSQ, a further analysis showed that the level of ethical sensitivity in the targeted sample was high.

## 1. Introduction

Ethical sensitivity is a fundamental element of human moral conduct. Ethical sensitivity was coined for the first time by Rest [1] and it is the first important component of his 4-component moral action theory. In a general sense, ethical sensitivity is the identification of salient aspects of a situation that involves the “good” and the “bad” of others. Weaver et al. [2] define ethical sensitivity as “the capacity to decide with intelligence and compassion, given uncertainty in a care situation. . . with additional ability to anticipate consequences and courage to act.” According to Tirri and Nokelainen [3] “to respond to a situation in a *moral way*, a person must be able to perceive and interpret events in a way that leads to ethical action”. The central feature of ethical sensitivity is the *ability to read* a caring situation in order to respond with an ethical action, that is, a human conduct whereby the others’ benefits and losses are taken into consideration. As such, the primary assumption in research on ethical sensitivity is that something one might do or is doing can affect the welfare of someone else. Discerning that a situation requires a moral response is the first step in the process of moral action [4].

Recently there has been a significant conceptual insight into the topic in different studies [2, 5]. As an empirical concept, Weaver et al. [2] found that ethical sensitivity has five basic aspects in various professions and domains. “Attributes” which refers to basic characteristics of the concept includes moral perception, affectivity, and dividing loyalties. “Moral perception involves *awakening* and *particularizing*, which allows professional to perceive client situational needs. . . Affectivity is a relational component based on professional putting oneself in the place of clients and identifying comparable reactions. . . and dividing loyalties refers to strategies of interpretation, justification, and flexibility to deal with authenticate and contradict moral perception”. Definition is the second aspect of ethical sensitivity, where the research shows there has been a multiple-discipline description and definition of ethical sensitivity but “decision-making within the uncertainty of professional practice” has been considered as a central feature to define ethical sensitivity. Preconditions is another aspect of ethical sensitivity, which refers to client suffering and vulnerability and professionals’ perspectives of uncertainty, receptivity,

responsiveness, and courage to deal with this suffering. As another aspect of ethical sensitivity, “Boundaries” passes on what is and is not, in this concept, based on previous aspects of ethical sensitivity. Moreover, ethical sensitivity has “outcomes” such as “integrity, comfort, well-being, personal growth, professional self-transcendence, and practical wisdom” for clients [2].

These conceptual insights into the topic encouraged researchers in various domains to conduct empirical studies on ethical sensitivity. This trend has shifted researchers’ attention from Kohlberg’s moral judgment to ethical sensitivity. Jordan states that one reason for the recent increase in attention to moral sensitivity may be that there are now several methods for measuring this construct, for example, the Dental Ethical Sensitivity Test, ethical sensitivity in television viewing, the Racial Ethical Sensitivity Test, moral sensitivity in counseling supervision, moral sensitivity in social work, ethical sensitivity in accounting, and several other measures [6]. Using these measures, a significant body of research has been conducted to examine ethical sensitivity in various professions such as nursing and medicine [7–9], news [10], and business and accounting [11]. These studies have also addressed different issues such as gender, cultural, nationality, and racial differences in regarding to ethical sensitivity.

As can be seen, most of these measures are domain specific and may not be applied in a different context. Drawing on Narvaez and Endicott [12], Tirri and Nokelainen have developed a measure, the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ), which is more general and thus can be applied in different professional contexts. Using this measure, this research examined teachers’ ethical sensitivity [13].

Numerous studies have showed that teaching is a moral activity by nature. Narvaez [14] believes that “because humans are wired for emotion signaling and social motivation, a caring, supportive teacher more easily foster students’ empathy and prosocial behavior as well as motivation to learn... Children with poor early care will have brains that are less flexible, integrated, and attentive, represented by poor attachment but with patience and supportiveness, these *children* can be reached.” Higgins stated that “talk about teaching is talk about the present and the past and the future of persons... Teaching is an act of caring-caring for the world and another human being. Teaching requires responding to the student as a worthy human being.” [15] According to Hansen, every moment of the classroom life emits moral messages. Thus “If teachers sought to be constantly alert to the moral impact of their work, they might find themselves suddenly walking on eggshells in the classroom, fearful that at any moment a single word or deed might morally injure a student” [16]. In a philosophical term, the moral foundation of teaching can be met with what has been called “teachers’ manner”. In line with this reflection, empirical evidence shows that along with method, which is used to convey knowledge to the learners, teachers should have good “manner” to convey virtue [17–20].

Narvaez has proposed a popular framework that can help educators gain insight into the moral foundation of teaching and teachers’ manner. According to this framework, a moral agent and particularly a teacher should have four basic ethical skills namely ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical focus, and ethical action in order to develop moral character of students [14, 21]. Teachers with these ethical skills provide a sustainable pedagogical climate, in which children “foster secure attachment, develop more agreeable personalities, earlier conscience, and more prosociality”. In this framework, ethical sensitivity is the “opening door” for conducting moral action because it deals with “concern for others”. Most of pedagogical decisions in classroom life involve taking care of students in different ways. Different dimensions of ethical sensitivity are very critical skills with which teachers can regulate the emotional, sociological, and pedagogical aspects of their practice. “Reading and expressions feeling” and “caring by connecting to others” help teachers provide an effective emotional relationship with students. With these two skills, teachers can read the existing emotional conditions of students and then care about them with appropriate actions. In addition, “Taking the perspective others,” “working with interpersonal and group differences,” and “Preventing social bias” are necessary skills to take social aspects of the students into consideration in different ways. These skills can be effective characters for teachers in a multicultural teaching context where students have different gender, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. “Generating interpretation and options” and “Identifying the consequences of action” are other two dimensions of ethical sensitivity that can improve the pedagogical atmosphere of the teaching context in two ways. “Generating interpretation and options” helps teachers be flexible in dealing with students when they try to have various pedagogical actions to deal with students with different interests and capability. “Identifying the consequences of actions” can be an effective basis for reflective teaching when teachers try to be sensitive to the outcomes of their actions in very critical situations that involve ethical considerations. Figure 1 illustrates how dimensions of ethical sensitivity are connected to teaching as a moral activity.

According to Figure 1, teaching as a moral practice has three important bases, including pedagogical, emotional, and social aspects. Different dimensions of the ethical sensitivity are linked to three bases of teaching as moral practice. If teachers fail to perceive and recognize the moral issues of their work regarding the students, how then can they conduct a moral action? Higgins argued that teaching will turn to be a “care-less activity” if teachers fail to perceive the ethical loading of their pedagogical decisions [15]. Empirical research has shown that ethical sensitivity, especially the skill to read and express emotions, is an important skill for teachers in establishing caring relationships with their students and their families, particularly in schools that have an increasing cultural diversity amongst students [22]. Even though teaching is considered to be a moral action, there seems to be a paucity of empirical research on its first component, that is, ethical sensitivity, particularly in a cross-cultural and international context.

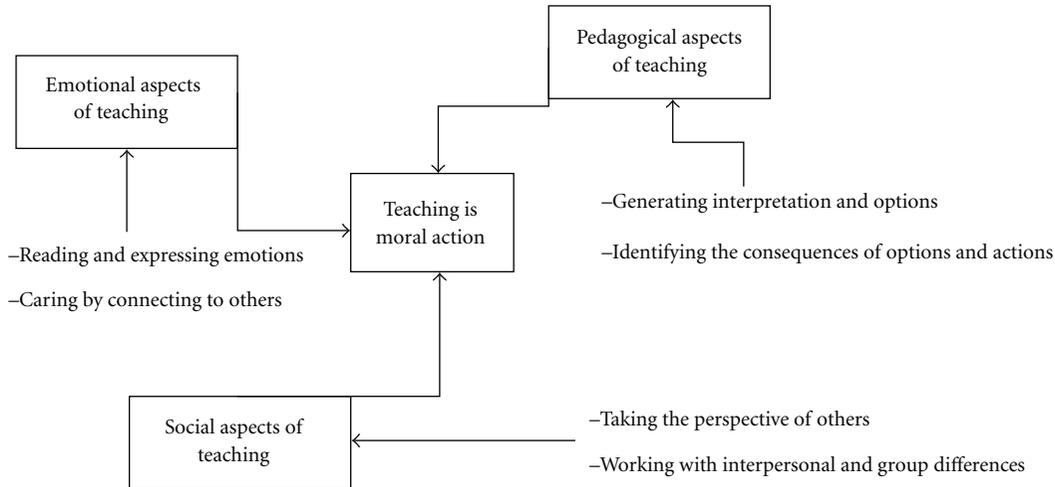


FIGURE 1: Dimensions of ethical sensitivity and link to teaching.

## 2. Teaching and Teacher Education in Iran

Basic education is compulsory for 12 years in Iran and it is highly centralized and thus governed by the Ministry of Education. It has three different levels of schooling, primary, middle, and high school. Primary school (*Dabestan*) starts at the age of 7 and lasts for 5 years. Middle school, also known as the orientation cycle (*Rahnamayi*), goes from the sixth to the eighth grade. High school (*Dabirestan*) is divided between theoretical (science, mathematics, and humanities) and vocational/technical sections, each program having its own specialties; in the theoretical section, the students have one year studying as a preuniversity course [23]. In line with its educational system, teacher education in Iran is also centralized in terms of its structure and curriculum. In general, particular teacher training centers and universities are responsible for preparing teachers for K-12 education. For primary and middle schools, teachers must generally have a postdiploma (associate degree, i.e., two years further education after graduating from high school); high school teachers must have a bachelor's degree in various subject matters [24]. Primary teachers mainly receive pedagogical education to deal with basic subjects such as science, mathematics, reading, writing, religion, and Persian literature. In order to teach in middle and high schools, teachers, however, must complete both pedagogical and subject-specific education in the different subject matters they intend to teach.

Moral competencies are also highlighted in Iranian teacher education. For all three levels of schooling, teachers must complete a few courses regarding the morality, specifically the moral principles of Islam [25]. In addition, one of the main necessary requirements needed to become a teacher is to have moral and ideological competency [24]. In other words, teachers must show their faith in Islam and Islamic values. This means that teachers' moral competencies should be based on Islamic values and principles. This institutional tendency to integrate Islamic ideology into education and teacher education was the consequence of the

so-called Islamic revolution in Iran, which occurred in 1979. According to Cheng and Beigi, "this revolution brought a new era in Iran in which the new Islamic republic began to Islamize many sectors which had secular foundations prior to revolution" [23]. The most striking feature of post-revolution schools is the moral education teacher (*Morabbi-ye tarbitati*). This teacher does not teach particular subjects but is responsible for teaching Islamic moral values at various religious events in schools [26]. The primary qualification of this teacher is his/her knowledge of, and faith in, Islam. Other teachers are not allowed to discuss their own values and principles with students, except those regarding to Islamic moral values.

## 3. Specific Research Questions

Considering the context of Iran's teacher education, this paper examines the ethical sensitivity of Kurdish teachers in Iranian's context. Previous scholarship shows that ethics in teaching includes many culture-specific issues, for example the religious worldviews of teachers and students. In Iran's context teaching is influenced by Islamic worldview, which might have implications also for teachers' professional morality including their ethical sensitivity. In the American-based theory behind our instrument used [12], the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ), ethical sensitivity is operationalized to include seven dimensions with concrete competencies in each dimension. The concrete skills for ethical sensitivity in the context of classroom teaching are discussed in Narvaez [27]. The earlier empirical testing with the ESSQ includes Finnish students and teachers [13, 28]. Finnish context is very American-like European culture with an influence of Christian worldview and Protestant ethics among teachers [29]. However, the instrument has been developed to be used in multicultural contexts and our goal is to test the culture-dependent aspects of the instrument with this specific population of Kurdish teachers whose worldviews differ very much from the Western teachers we

TABLE 1: Sample description.

	Primary teachers (N = 125)	Middle school teachers (N = 221)	High school teachers (N = 204)	Total (N = 556)
Gender N (%)				
Female	40 (32.0)	96 (43.4)	88 (43.1)	224 (40.3)
Male	85 (68.0)	125 (56.6)	116 (56.9)	332 (59.7)
Age				
Mean	35.65	34.64	35.27	35.08
(Min–max)	(21–50)	(20–52)	(20–50)	(20–52)
SD	6.55	6.92	5.58	6.35
Experience				
Mean	14.45	13.24	13.61	13.63
(Min–max)	(1–23)	(1–28)	(1–27)	(1–28)
SD	6.68	7.15	6.02	6.63

have studied before. This empirical investigation will give us more information on the validity of the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ). In line with this, the paper addresses two specific research questions.

- (1) To what extent can the original constructs of the (ESSQ) be identified among Iranian teachers?
- (2) What is the nature and level of ethical sensitivity of Iranian Kurdish teachers?

## 4. Methods

**4.1. Sampling Frame.** Data was collected from teachers who taught in three levels of K-12 Education in Kurdistan. Kurdistan is one of the 31 provinces in Iran and has about one and half million inhabitants, the majority of which has a Kurdish ethnic background. It has 8 major cities each with a population of over 100,000 inhabitants. The center of the province is Sanandaj with about 400,000 inhabitants. The total number of students and teachers in Kurdistan was 58,979 and 3,274 respectively in 2011. Using nonprobability sampling, data was collected from 556 teachers in the province of Kurdistan. The teachers were asked to complete a paper-and-pencil version of the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ). Questionnaires were distributed among schools and delivered to the teachers by school principals. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the sample.

**4.2. Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire.** Drawing from Narvaez and Endicott [12] the ESSQ measures seven dimensions of ethical sensitivity: reading and expressing emotions, taking the perspectives of others, caring by connecting with others, working with interpersonal and group differences, preventing social bias; generating interpretations and options, and identifying the consequences of actions and options. The measure consists of 28 items; each dimension is measured with 4 items. In the initial investigation on the psychometric properties of the measure, Tirri and Nokelainen found that, due to small sample size, there

was a “quite low” level of common variance between items when inter-item correlation was examined [3]. However, the direction of all 378 possible correlation combinations but one (i.e., item es1\_4 with es7\_28 had negative correlation;  $r = 0.01$ ) was positive. Such positive correlations between items supports Narvaez’ operationalization of ethical sensitivity [3, 12]. Further, reliability analysis of the dimensions showed good results: “Caring by connecting to others” and “Working with interpersonal and group differences” had the highest reliabilities ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ;  $\alpha = 0.75$ ); “Reading and expressing emotions” and “Preventing social bias” showed the lowest rates ( $\alpha = 0.54$ ;  $\alpha = 0.50$ ) [3].

## 5. Results

In line with the main research task, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the stability of the factor structure of the ESSQ, using LISREL 8.72. In other words, CFA was carried out to confirm the underlying seven structure dimensions of the ESSQ. In examining the model fit, we supported the model  $\chi^2$  statistic with both absolute and incremental fit indices [30, 31]. Absolute fit indices examine how well an original model reproduces the sample data under study. For this case, we have reported the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Incremental fit indices assess model fit by comparing the target model with a baseline model. According to Hulpia et al., “typically, the null model in which all observed variables uncorrelated is used as a baseline model” [30]. Regarding the incremental fit indices, the four most reported ones, including the comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness of fit-index (GFI), the incremental fit index (IFI), and the normed fit index (NFI), are reported in our study.

Conducting a CFA with a seven-factor structure of the ESSQ resulted in reasonable model fit (with  $\chi^2 = 1248.57$  [df = 329;  $P < 0.00$ ], SRMR = 0.064, RMSEA = 0.071 with a 90% confidence interval of 0.067 and 0.075, CFI = 0.86, GFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.93, NFI = 0.90). Different studies have suggested that for SRMR a value of 0.08 or

TABLE 2: Factor structure and alpha loadings of the ethical sensitivity scale.

Dimension	Items	$\alpha$
Reading and expressing emotions	<i>Es1_1, es1_2, es1_3, es1_4</i>	0.46
Caring by connecting to others	<i>Es2_5, es2_6, es2_7, es2_8</i>	0.60
Taking the perspectives of others	<i>es3_9, es3_10, es3_11, es3_12</i>	0.66
Working with interpersonal and group differences	<i>Es4_13, es4_14, es4_14, es4_16</i>	0.64
Preventing social bias	<i>Es5_17, es5_18, es5_19, es5_20</i>	0.45
Generating interpretations and options	<i>Es6_21, es6_22, es6_23, es6_24</i>	0.69
Identifying the consequences of actions and options	<i>Es7_25, es7_26, es7_27, es7_28</i>	0.53

lower indicates a good fit [31, 32]. For RMSEA a value less than 0.08 [33] explains a reasonable model fit, and more strictly values less than 0.06 shows a good model fit [32]. Considering incremental fit indices, it is generally suggested that a value close to 0.90 or above indicates a good model fit [30]. As the CFA's results showed, most of the indices had satisfactory values and they confirmed that the seven-factor structure of the ESSQ had a reasonable model fit with the sample data.

In order to improve the goodness fit of the model, a further investigation was conducted to modify the model. "The modifications are justified on the basis of assumed covariations between the errors of variances produced by the influences of social desirability and semantic similarity" [33]. The results of examining the modification indices suggested high error covariance between the following four pairs of items: *es7\_27* (I am aware of the ethical issues I face at school) and *es7\_28* (I am better than other people in recognizing new and current ethical problems); *es5\_17* (I recognize my own bias when I take a stand on ethical issues) and *es5\_18* (I realize that I am tied to certain prejudices when I assess ethical issues); *es3\_9* (I am able to cooperate with people who do not share my opinions on what is right and what is wrong) and *es3\_10* (I tolerate different ethical views in my surroundings); *es6\_23* (I am able to create many alternative ways to act when I face ethical problems in my life) and *es7\_28*. Accordingly, these four cases which had the highest error covariance between items were left out from the model. When these errors were freed, the results showed a significant improvement in the values of all fit indices ( $\chi^2 = 1055.52$  [df = 325;  $P < 0.00$ ], SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.06 with a 90% confidence interval of 0.059 and 0.068, CFI = 0.88, GFI = 0.94, IFI = 0.94, NFI = 0.92). This modification resulted in a good model fit of the sample data with regard to the seven dimensions of the ESSQ suggested in the original study [3].

**5.1. Reliabilities of the ESSQ Scores.** Using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient the reliability of the ESSQ was examined. The results showed that the overall reliability of the questionnaire was sufficiently high ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ). Researchers suggest that the overall reliability of the test score should be 0.80 or higher [30]. From this, we can conclude that the test ESSQ had a high internal consistency with this sample. In addition, the reliability of each of the seven dimensions is presented in Table 2; the dimensions 5 (Preventing social bias) and 1

(Reading and expressing emotions) resulted in the lowest reliabilities (with  $\alpha = 0.45$ ;  $\alpha = 0.46$ , resp.) Further inspection, with an inter-item covariance of both dimensions was made. The results suggested that, the item 5\_18 (I realize that I am tied to certain prejudices when I assess ethical issues) and the item 1\_3 (I notice if someone working with me is offended by me) had the highest covariance with other items in the mentioned dimensions. If we remove them, the reliabilities will increase to:  $\alpha = 0.49$  and  $\alpha = 0.50$  for dimensions 5 and 1, respectively.

In general, the reliability of the ESSQ is good. The low reliability scores in two dimensions might be due to cultural differences in the sample of our study (Iranian culture) with original sample (Finnish culture). Highly abstract concepts involving such as ethical and moral issues could be differently interpreted in various cultures.

**5.2. The Descriptions of Ethical Sensitivity in the Sample.** In this part of presentation of our results, we will present the nature and level of ethical sensitivity in the target sample. The results showed that the level of ethical sensitivity in the sample was high ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.36$ ).

Considering the differences in the dimensions of the scale with overall mean score of the ethical sensitivity, the results showed that except for "Identifying the consequences of actions and options", there were statistically significant differences between other dimensions with overall mean of the scale (as test value). Table 3 shows the results of other dimensions. As it is shown, "Taking the perspective of others" received the highest score ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) and showed a large mean difference with the overall mean of the scale (Mean.  $d = 0.51$ ). On the other side, "Reading and expressing emotions" had the lowest mean score ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ) and resulted in the largest mean difference with the overall mean of the scale (Mean.  $d = -0.59$ ).

Considering the three subgroups of the sample, the results suggested that there were no statistically significant differences among primary, middle, and high school teachers in the six dimensions of the scale. As shown in Table 4, in all dimensions, the perceived ethical sensitivity of primary and middle teachers was higher than that of high school teachers. In the dimension "Identifying the consequences of actions and options", the difference was statistically significant; the primary teachers ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) perceived their ethical sensitivity more highly than did the middle ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) and high school teachers ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD =$

TABLE 3: Mean differences of dimensions of ethical sensitivity with overall mean score of ethical sensitivity among Iranian Kurdish teachers ( $N = 556$ ).

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Mean. $d$	$t$	$P$
Reading and expressing emotions	3.26	0.59	-0.59	-23.77	0.000
Caring by connecting to others	3.67	0.61	-0.17	-6.57	0.000
Taking the perspectives of others	4.38	0.53	0.51	22.96	0.000
Working with interpersonal and group differences	4.00	0.58	0.18	7.56	0.000
Preventing social bias	3.71	0.50	-0.14	-6.94	0.000
Generating interpretations and options	4	0.58	0.16	6.53	0.000
Identifying the consequences of actions and options	3.88	0.51	0.03	0.65	0.51

Test value = 3.85, significance level (0.05).

TABLE 4: Mean differences of dimensions of ethical sensitivity based on level of school ( $N = 556$ ).

Dimensions	$M$	SD	$F$	$P$
Reading and expressing emotions				
Primary teachers ( $N = 125$ )	3.22	0.53		
Middle teachers ( $N = 221$ )	3.30	0.61	1.14	0.33
High school teachers ( $N = 210$ )	3.20	0.60		
Caring by connecting to others				
Primary teachers	3.69	0.58		
Middle teachers	3.72	0.62	0.71	0.54
High school teachers	3.64	0.62		
Taking the perspectives of others				
Primary teachers	4.45	0.48		
Middle teachers	4.39	0.56	1.46	0.23
High school teachers	4.32	0.52		
Working with interpersonal and group differences				
Primary teachers	4.04	0.58		
Middle teachers	4.06	0.55	0.27	0.84
High school teachers	4.02	0.59		
Preventing social bias				
Primary teachers	3.73	0.49		
Middle teachers	3.74	0.47	1.99	0.11
High school teachers	3.66	0.51		
Generating interpretations and options				
Primary teachers	4.03	0.56		
Middle teachers	4.02	0.59		
High school teachers	4.01	0.58		
Identifying the consequences of actions and options				
Primary teachers	3.93	0.45		
Middle teachers	3.91	0.51	2.99	0.03
High school teachers	3.79	0.43		
The ethical sensitivity (overall score)				
Primary teachers	3.87	0.34		
Middle teachers	3.87	0.35	1.54	0.21
High school teachers	3.82	0.37		

Significance level (0.05).

TABLE 5: Mean differences of ethical sensitivity dimensions based on gender ( $N$ : female = 224; male = 332).

Dimensions	Mean		SD		Mean. $d$	$t$	$p$
	Male	Female	Male	Female			
Reading and expressing emotions	3.39	3.07	0.56	0.57	0.314	6.38	0.000
Caring by connecting to others	3.74	3.60	0.59	0.63	0.146	2.77	0.006
Taking the perspectives of others	4.43	4.33	0.54	0.51	0.10	2.17	0.03
Working with interpersonal and group differences	4.08	3.99	0.53	0.63	0.09	1.81	0.07
Preventing social bias	3.74	3.66	0.48	0.50	0.07	1.80	0.07
Generating interpretations and options	4.04	3.98	0.54	0.61	0.06	1.26	0.20
Identifying the consequences of actions and options	3.89	3.84	0.49	0.53	0.052	1.19	0.23

Significance level (0.05).

0.43). The Hochberg's Post Hoc inspection, however, showed that the differences between high school with primary and middle schools were statistically significant, while the difference between middle and primary teachers was not statistically significant.

Looking at gender, the results showed that there was a statistically significant differences between male and female in three dimensions of ethical sensitivity: reading and expressing emotions ( $M$ : female = 3.07, male = 3.39;  $SD$ : female = 0.57, male = 0.56), caring by connecting to others ( $M$ : female = 3.60, male = 3.7;  $SD$ : female = 0.63, male = 0.59), and taking the perspective of others ( $M$ : female = 4.33, male = 4.3;  $SD$ : female = 0.51, male = 0.54). The other four dimensions resulted in no statistically significant differences. The results for gender differences are presented in Table 5.

## 6. Conclusion and Discussion

The present research was conducted on the premise that there was a need for measuring ethical sensitivity in different cultures and professional contexts. In line with this need, the Ethical Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ESSQ) was administered to a sample of 556 Iranian Kurdish teachers in order to (1) examine its validity in a different culture and (2) describe the level of ethical sensitivity in the targeted population. The ESSQ was originally developed by Tirri and Nokelainen and is based on Narvaez's theory [12] of seven dimensions of ethical sensitivity [3, 13].

The results of an initial Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) showed that the ESSQ reflected a reasonable model fit of these seven dimensions of ethical sensitivity. However, in order to improve the model's goodness of fit, we needed to do some changes based on suggested modification indices in the CFA. The modification indices were mainly related to high error covariance between four pairs of items (7\_27 and 7\_28; 5\_17 and 5\_18; 3\_9 and 3\_10; 6\_23 and 6\_28). These modification indices can be explained by their face and content similarities. In other words, these pairs of items are somehow similar and thus examine the same content. In this way, our study confirms the results of previous studies [3] that the ESSQ supports Narvaez's theory [12] of seven dimensions of ethical sensitivity. Like these studies, our results suggested that a systematic item reduction was needed in order to remove some items from the model, particularly

items with a high error covariance. Therefore, when we freed the error covariance of the mentioned pairs of items, the model's goodness of fit significantly increased according to various indices. In addition to validity, the reliability analysis suggested that the overall reliability of the scale was good. Regarding the seven dimensions, "Generating interpretations and options" and "taking the perspectives of others" resulted in the highest scores. On the other side, "Preventing social bias" and "Reading and expressing emotions" had lowest reliability scores. Further inspection suggested that removing two items (es5\_18 and es1\_3) with a high covariance resulted in better reliability scores for these two dimensions. As a result of validity and reliability analyses, we believe that the ESSQ supports a good model fit for studying the seven dimensions of ethical sensitivity, provided that the items with a high error covariance are removed from the model.

Further descriptive analysis with the ESSQ suggested that the level of perceived ethical sensitivity in the sample was high ( $M = 3.88$ ;  $SD = 0.36$ ). Such a result supports the idea of "teaching as a moral activity", which has been reflected in several important studies [34–38]. In these studies, "caring" is considered to be a fundamental competency for teachers in their day-to-day activities. The main idea of the so-called caring teaching is to conduct ethical and pedagogical actions so as to enhance the welfare of the students. In this way, ethical sensitivity is an initial and very important step in conducting caring pedagogy. This is why the teachers self-reported ethical sensitivity was high in this study and the other study in Finish context [28].

More in-depth analysis showed that the highest and the lowest self-reported dimensions of ethical sensitivity among Iranian Kurdish teachers were "Taking the perspective of others" and "Reading and expressing emotions," respectively. These results can be explained by two important phenomena. First, Iranians and particularly Kurds are known to have a collective culture and mentality in which "taking care of the perspective of others" has a significant place. Second, to be concerned about "the other" is the main idea of ethical sensitivity. As such, on the one hand, "taking the perspective of others" may reflect a part of Kurdish collective culture in which commitment to people and others is highlighted and considered as an essential value. Our results supported the previous findings where collective values predicted higher "empathic concern and perspective

taking” among Iranians [39]. According to Ghorbani et al., empathic concern and perspective taking presumably are central to maintaining an adaptive allocentric sensitivity to others [39]. On the other hand, “reading (and particularly) expressing emotions” somehow reflects “taking care” of “oneself” and thus may have caused less attention from Kurdish teachers. Other research shows that “assertiveness, autonomy, freedom, self-fulfillment, and a sense of personal uniqueness” are associated with individualist values in which commitment to reason is emphasized [39].

The last part of the descriptive results showed that the lower grade teachers generally perceived a high level of ethical sensitivity. However, it was only the dimension of “Identifying the consequences of actions and options” that resulted in statistically significant differences among primary, middle, and high school teachers. In general, primary and middle teachers reported higher ethical sensitivity than high school teachers, when it comes to identifying the consequences of their actions. This is due to the fact that the younger students are prone to more negative consequences as the result of careless activities on the part of their teachers. This part of our results opens up the idea that ethical sensitivity may be associated with different demographic and mediating variables. In various contexts, ethical sensitivity was found to be associated with age and the professional positions of the respondents [40], gender [41], culture [42] and giftedness [3]. As such, a further line of research will be to model the path structure of ethical sensitivity in different contexts, including teaching and teacher education.

Considering the main task of this paper, we suggest that the ESSQ is a promising tool for measuring the seven components of ethical sensitivity. However, a systematic item reduction and modification will be needed to increase the model fit of the scale. In this study, some modifications based on covariations between four pairs of items were suggested. It would be worth to reexamining the stability of the scale in line with this modification in other studies. In addition, we should point out that moral competency including ethical sensitivity deals with a lot of complex meaning and dimensions in different cultures. Thus, quantitative study and the instrument we used in this study may not fully cope with this complexity. In order to deal with this limitation, we suggest further qualitative study to gain more insights into teachers’ moral competencies including ethical sensitivity in an Islamic context.

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## Research Article

# Moral Development and Citizenship Education in Vocational Schools

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We investigate the objectives, practical application, and learning outcomes of moral education and citizenship education at three vocational schools in the Netherlands (VMBO). We explore teachers' and students' pedagogical, sociopolitical, and moral development objectives and how they deal with values, dialogue, and diversity. We continue with how the objectives get materialized in practice and teachers' and students' perceptions of the learning outcomes. The study shows that there is a strong agreement between teachers and students about the importance of objectives of moral education and citizenship education. Schools differ in how sharply they focus on social and political aspects, and in how reflective and dialogical their approaches are. The differences revealed in the moral education approaches can be largely linked with differences in their cultural environment.

## 1. Introduction

Citizenship development is an important theme in current political initiatives and public debate, and education has an important role to play. Governments in various countries have incorporated citizenship development into education in recent years [1, 2]. The Dutch Minister of Education submitted a legislative proposal in 2006 that asks schools to actively promote citizenship and social integration. The minister defines social integration as the participation of citizens in society and its institutions, as well as social participation and familiarity with and knowledge of Dutch culture. The government gives schools the freedom to interpret citizenship education further in their own way.

There is a strong international debate on citizenship education in the political and academic worlds, and given the cultural and social challenges facing Dutch society, we think it is important to examine how moral education and citizenship are being implemented in Dutch secondary education. In a first study we had a survey among teachers of secondary education [3]. In the next two studies we went more into the practice of schools. This study focuses on vocational (VMBO) schools. This VMBO study follows a

comparable study in preuniversity (VWO) schools [4]. VMBO schools are the lower tracks in vocational education; it is a four-year programme. The students involved are 15 years old.

Since schools have possibilities to interpret citizenship education, it is interesting to document examples of divergent practices in schools. We selected out of our survey study three schools with the greatest possible variety, in terms of location (rural, medium-sized town, and major city), school size (small, medium-sized, and large), and students' cultural background (mainly white, multiethnic, and minority ethnic schools).

The study in these three schools covered the research questions that goals teachers find important and what learning outcomes they observe. The reason that we focus on teachers is that they have the professional role of putting educational policy, the pedagogical concept of the school, and their own cultural-pedagogical aims into practice. Teachers make the curriculum and, consciously or not, they tend to influence their students' moral development. It is important for teachers to be aware of the moral values they wish to encourage, the type of citizenship they are aiming for, and what form of practical support they give students in

their personal moral development. Students' opinions about citizenship education are also important. They are, after all, the targets of citizenship education. Many advocates of citizenship education see students as active participants, who develop their identity through reflection and action. We have accordingly included the student perspective in the study.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

*2.1. Citizenship Education and Moral Development.* The current debate on young people's social development is imbued with the concept of "citizenship." The focus in citizenship education can differ. Citizenship education may focus on transferring knowledge on democracy, its institutions, and the structure of society [5]. Equally, the approach could be more on promoting particular social norms, or on an active construction of moral signification [8]. We endorse the latter approach, in which the individual's social performance is linked with participation in society [6]. Moral values to be developed in such a perspective are "justice," "autonomy," and "social and moral commitment."

Citizenship is not restricted to the political domain but also relates to the civil society, to the everyday relations between people, and to individuals' identity development [7]. If citizenship education is to be more than merely an explanation of rights and duties, or a sort of behaviouristic conformity, then it has to be anchored in a firm foundation of moral development. There is a growing tendency to link moral development and citizenship development [8–10]. The relationship between citizenship education and moral development is that the value development guides the citizenship development, in particular the development of attitudes. A morally founded citizenship education may encourage young people to actually apply their knowledge and skills, and to act morally and socially. Citizenship education may by improving moral reasoning and action also become more reflective and dialogical and therefore susceptible to changing attitudes [11].

In the Dutch policy on citizenship education the view is that the educational objectives for active citizenship and social integration must address the cultural diversity in society. Cultural and ideological diversity with values such as "tolerance" and "respect for differences" should be dealt with in education [12, 13]. Teachers can address these issues in various ways. They might, for instance, present the Netherlands as a multicultural society and attempt to start a dialogue in their lessons between different cultures and world views, or they can stress the Dutch historical canon with a focus on the Christian tradition. We pay attention to sociopolitical objectives in citizenship education because citizenship education is always embedded in political relations [14, 15]. The formal Dutch policy focus on social cohesion and social integration in citizenship education is a particular intervention in this power relationship. A key element in the sociopolitical objectives we investigate is attitude formation, which acts on two levels: "social involvement" (involvement with others, solidarity with others) and "political engagement" (the development of an attitude that promotes equality and democracy in society).

*2.2. Teachers and Values.* Values are an integral part of teaching, reflected in what is taught and also in how teachers and students relate to each other. Teachers express values through their choice of subject, the examples they use, and in how they supervise their students [16]. Teachers can convey certain values, but they can also create conditions in which multiple perspectives are presented. Teachers are always, whether consciously or hidden, trying to influence students' moral development. Education simultaneously stimulates the development of certain values and the skills to enable students to form their own opinions.

Curriculum researchers point out that attention is needed in research for the underlying pedagogical objectives that control the actual teacher actions [17]. Research into teachers' pedagogical actions refers consistently to the importance of objectives, particularly in value-laden contexts [18]. In earlier studies [19, 20], we presented teachers, students, and parents with pedagogical objectives based on the work of Oser [21], Berkowitz [22], and others. These studies produced a reliable and valid instrument for measuring the attention given to pedagogical objectives. The instrument itself covers "social development," "autonomy," and "disciplining."

Teachers can use different pedagogical-didactic methods in moral and citizenship education [8, 23]. We differentiate in this study between one oriented to practical social conduct ("social conduct"), one which revolves around actual, pre-defined values, ("value transfer"), and one in which values are the subject of reflection and communication ("value communication") [20, 24]. Moral dialogues in school are seen as a crucial aspect of moral education [9, 25, 26]. When examining how values are communicated in the citizenship education class, we distinguish between the opinion-forming process ("discussion") and the more "sociopolitical content of opinion forming."

In summary, in this study we are interested in the pedagogical objectives in citizenship education in particular in the sociopolitical domain, the moral development objectives that are interwoven with citizenship education, and how these objectives take shape in educational practice with particular attention to dialogues and diversity.

## 3. Research Questions

We formulated the following research questions based on the theoretical framework.

- (1) Which pedagogical and sociopolitical objectives find teachers and students important, and which learning outcomes do they observe?
- (2) Which are the learning outcomes in moral development observed by teachers and students?
- (3) Which forms of practical application of moral education are considered desirable by teachers and students, with regard to:
  - (a) the pedagogical-didactic approach,
  - (b) moral dialogues,
  - (c) cultural and ideological diversity.

Teachers shape moral education in a school in practice, and it is the students who experience moral education every day. In this study we used questionnaires to investigate teachers' and students' objectives, moral education practice, and assessment of learning outcomes. The survey was accompanied by observing lessons and interviewing teachers and students. The interviews involved the same moral education aspects as in the questionnaire, presented as open questions. We occasionally used data from the interviews and observations when interpreting the findings. The research questions explore what teachers think, what students think, and differences between the schools.

#### 4. Survey Instrumentation and Execution

*4.1. Teachers' and Students' Questionnaires.* The questionnaires were oriented to teachers' and students' goals, the practical application of moral education, and the reported learning outcomes. The content of the teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire were related. For example, if the teachers were asked to state the objectives they consider important and the extent to which they achieve them, the students were asked which objectives they consider important and how well they think they are achieved at school.

The questionnaire used in the survey was based on measurement instruments used in earlier studies and is similar to the study in preuniversity schools [3]. The questionnaire has six parts: "Pedagogical objectives," "Sociopolitical domain in the curriculum," "Moral development," "Pedagogical-didactic approach," "Moral dialogues in school," "Cultural and ideological diversity." Each part of the questionnaire involves one or more scales. The internal consistency of the scales used is good (Cronbach's alpha is between 0.75 and 0.93).

*4.1.1. Pedagogical Objectives.* The pedagogical objectives comprise three scales: "disciplining" (4 items,  $\alpha = .83$ ), "autonomy" (4 items,  $\alpha = .81$ ), and "social development" (7 items,  $\alpha = .89$ ). These scales were derived from an earlier survey [3]. The respondents were requested to rate the objectives they would like to achieve, and the extent to which they consider they have been achieved, on a 5-point scale.

*4.1.2. Sociopolitical Domain in the Curriculum.* Teachers' objectives in the social domain were measured with the "concern for others" scale from the Child Development Project [25]. This scale measures teachers' attention to "social involvement" (7 items,  $\alpha = .89$ ): solidarity with others and concern for and involvement with others. We developed a second, more politically oriented scale. Our "political engagement" scale (4 items,  $\alpha = .75$ ) measures teachers' attention to the development of an attitude oriented to creating equal opportunities for all, and a critical attitude towards inequalities in society. We also investigated how teachers consider these objectives have been achieved (learning outcomes).

*4.1.3. Moral Development.* We asked teachers what they thought students had learned in moral development, for

which we used the "Dimensions of Moral Personality Questionnaire" [20, 27]. The scales concerned were "exchange of points of view" (6 items,  $\alpha = .88$ ), "insight into sociomoral situations" (5 items,  $\alpha = .89$ ), and "sociomoral attitude" (5 items,  $\alpha = .87$ ).

*4.1.4. Pedagogical-Didactic Approach.* We examined teachers' pedagogical-didactic actions on three scales: (1) "value transfer" (5 items,  $\alpha = .76$ ), with items such as "I convey defined values and standards to the students"; (2) "social conduct" (6 items,  $\alpha = .81$ ), with items such as "I ensure that students behave in a social way"; (3) "value communication" (6 items,  $\alpha = .89$ ), with questions such as "I am happy for students to have different views on matters." For "social conduct" we use the "Promotion of social understanding and prosocial values" scale from the Child Development Project [25]. The other two scales we developed ourselves and have used them in an earlier survey [19].

*4.1.5. Moral Dialogues in School.* We investigated how communication on values took place in the class and what people wanted based on the two scales, "discussion" (7 items,  $\alpha = .91$ ) and "socio-political opinion forming" (5 items,  $\alpha = .84$ ). The questions were derived from the "Elicitation of student thinking and active discussion" scale from the Child Development Project [25] and the "Attitudes to open classroom climate" scale from the IEA Citizenship Education Study [1]. The CDP scale is oriented to the opinion-forming process, with items such as "I respond with more questions to students' answers" and "I establish connections between students' different points of view." The IEA scale is oriented to the sociopolitical content, with items such as: "I encourage students to form their own opinion on political and social issues."

*4.1.6. Cultural and Ideological Diversity.* In order to determine how much attention teachers wish to give to cultural and ideological diversity, and how much they actually do, we present them with statements such as "I give the students in my lessons an opportunity to speak about their own culture or religion" [20] (7 items,  $\alpha = .93$ ).

*4.1.7. Characteristics Teachers and Students.* We asked teachers their age, gender, and what subject they teach. We asked students their age, gender, personal religious beliefs, country of origin and school grade, and their chosen subjects. We wish to investigate whether the students of the three schools differ in these characteristics, and whether there might be a relationship between the student characteristics and their opinion on moral education.

*4.2. Participating Schools, Teachers and Students.* We selected the schools with a perspective to obtain the greatest possible variety, in terms of location (rural, medium-sized town, and major city), school size (small, medium-sized, and large), and students' cultural background (mainly white, multiethnic, and minority ethnic schools).

*4.2.1. Rural School.* School 1 is a small Roman Catholic rural school in the south of the Netherlands. The school site

that was involved in the study accommodates only third-year and fourth-year students, with some 250 students. About half of them, 128 students follow the office work vocational programme and participate in the research. The student questionnaire was administered by the mentors in all six classes, yielding 120 completed questionnaires. Of the participating students, 86% were of Dutch origin, and 14% of foreign origin (7% Turkish or Moroccan; 2% Surinamese/Antillean; and 5% from other countries, mainly West or Central African countries). The teacher questionnaires were issued to teachers whose students are in the third and fourth years of the vocational programme, which amounts to 58 teachers at this school. Of these, 28 teachers returned completed questionnaires, which is a response of 48%.

**4.2.2. Town School.** School 2 is a medium-sized Protestant Christian *town* school, also in the south of the country. It has 524 students at the school site where the study was conducted. Of these, 112 students are in the third and fourth years of the office work vocational programme. Mentors in the five classes administered the student questionnaires, 96 of which were completed. Of the participating students, 46% are of Dutch origin, and 54% of foreign origin (38% Turkish or Moroccan; 4% Surinamese or Antillean; and 12% from other countries). Of the 47 teachers of these students, 20 completed the questionnaire (response: 43%).

**4.2.3. Major City School.** School 3 is a nondenominational school for vocational education in Amsterdam (*major city* school). This is a very large school with 850 students at the study site. There are only 55 office work vocational students. There were therefore far fewer survey participants, both students and teachers, at this school. 48 of the 55 students filled in the questionnaire. These students, 6% were of Dutch origin, and 94% of foreign origin (59% Turkish or Moroccan, 10% Surinamese/Antillean; and 25% from West or Central African countries). Only 36 teachers work with this school's office business vocational and theoretical programmes. Questionnaires were issued to all these teachers, and 12 completed and returned them (response: 33%).

The teachers' responses of each school came from teachers of diverse subjects. The ratios of older and younger teachers, men and women, and their cultural backgrounds, were largely consistent with the actual ratios in the schools. There is no reason to doubt the representativeness of the respondents for the schools concerned.

**4.3. Data Analysis.** The differences between the schools were investigated with a one-way analysis of variance. Table 1 shows the teachers' average scores for the three schools for the objectives. Table 2 shows the corresponding scores for practical application.

## 5. Results

The first section discusses the teachers and the differences regarding teachers between the schools; the next section continues with the students of the various schools; finally the

third section comments on the differences between teachers and students.

### 5.1. Teachers

**5.1.1. Pedagogical Objectives and Social-Political Domain in the Curriculum.** The teachers at all schools state that they consider the pedagogical objectives "disciplining," "social development," and "autonomy" to be "important" (M 4.30, 4.47, 4.23). Teachers consider the more sociosocietal objectives ("social involvement" and "political engagement") to be less important, in particular "political engagement" (M 3.70, 3.39). The learning outcomes show according to the teachers a similar pattern. "Autonomy" and "social involvement" are not that easy to realise (M 3.30, 3.04). "Political engagement" is even difficult to realise (M 2.48).

We found no significant differences between teachers of the three schools in terms of pedagogical objectives. In terms of promoting "social involvement" and "political engagement" they differ. The teachers at the *rural* school want to focus less than teachers of the *town* school and the *major city* school on "political engagement" and they state that they achieve less "social involvement," among their students than teachers in the *major city* school. In the sociosocietal domain the rural school lags behind the two urban schools.

**5.1.2. Moral Development.** We inquired only the effects that are being mentioned, not the intended goals. The teachers report that their students acquire the more cognitive skill "exchange points of view," the more cognitive insight "social-moral insight," and the attitude "social-moral attitude" in equal measure (M 3.11, 3.13, 3.09). The teachers at the *major city* school estimate the learning outcomes for both dealing with "exchange points of view" and "social-moral" insight significant higher than their counterparts in the other two schools.

**5.1.3. Pedagogical-Didactic Approach.** The pedagogical-didactic approach to moral education can be oriented to "value communication," "social conduct," and "value transfer." All three approaches are important in moral education, as teachers invariably agree (M 3.91, 4.24, 4.30). Teachers score "value transfer" and promoting "social conduct" slightly higher than the more reflective "value communication." We observe this tendency both in the desired and the practical application (M 3.40, 3.82, 4.02). In practice teachers are a lot involved with the more ideological transfer of values, less with the more behaviour modification of social conduct, and much lesser with the more reflective and dialogical value communication. For these methods we find no significant differences between the three schools.

**5.1.4. Moral Dialogues in School and Cultural and Ideological Diversity.** We focused more on the didactics, in particular the more socio-political element. "Discussion" is more desired than "sociopolitical opinion forming" (M 4.09, 3.76), and the practice shows the same pattern (M 3.65, 3.47). Paying attention to "cultural and ideological diversity" is not

TABLE 1: Differences in objectives and reported learning outcomes.

	Schools	Teachers (N = 60)				Students (N = 264)						
		M	SD	sig	M	SD	sig	M	SD	sig		
Pedagogical objectives												
Disciplining	1	4.32	.39	##	3.50	.63		3.90	.72	#	3.74	.78
	2	4.21	.51		3.54	.87		4.07	.78		3.64	.78
	3	4.39	.56		3.86	.78		4.00	.83		3.71	.84
	Total	4.30	.46	##	3.58	.75	##	4.00	.83	#	3.70	.79
Social development	1	4.44	.30	##	3.49	.59	##	3.76	.79	##	3.14	.82
	2	4.44	.49	##	3.65	.85	##	4.07	.74	##	3.35	.85
	3	4.60	.28	##	3.74	.93		4.04	.68	#	3.41	.87
	Total	4.47	.37	##	3.59	.75	##	3.92	.76	#	3.26	.84
Autonomy	1	4.07	.43		3.13	.65	#	3.85	.79	*	3.51	.91
	2	4.33	.56		3.41	.74		4.14	.74	**	3.37	.84
	3	4.44	.57		3.52	.99		4.05	.69		3.71	.81
	Total	4.23	.52	##	3.30	.78	##	3.99	.76	#	3.50	.87
Sociopolitical domain												
Social involvement	1	3.54	.63		2.82	.68	*	3.30	.86	*	2.80	.86
	2	3.91	.60		3.11	.78		3.76	.82	**	3.18	.71
	3	3.73	.58		3.43	.85	###	3.31	.99	*	2.74	.99
	Total	3.70	.62		3.04	.77		3.46	.90		2.93	.85
Political engagement	1	3.11	.56	*	2.29	.54	#	3.22	.84	*	2.84	.80
	2	3.65	.75	**	2.64	.83		3.74	.84	**	2.98	.90
	3	3.63	.80	**	2.68	.99		3.63	.95	**	3.08	.99
	Total	3.39	.72		2.48	.79	#	3.48	.89	#	2.94	.87
Moral development												
Exchange of points of view	1			*	2.99	.55	*			*	3.17	.72
	2			**	2.69	.69	**			**	3.45	.70
	3			**	3.63	.74	**			**	3.65	.78
	Total			#	3.11	.68	#			#	3.36	.75
Social-moral insight	1			*	2.99	.51	*			*	3.14	.81
	2			**	3.04	.76	**			**	3.42	.68
	3			**	3.58	.82	**			**	3.62	.80
	Total				3.13	.70					3.33	.78
Social-moral attitude	1				3.02	.51				*	3.31	.77
	2			#	3.00	.75	#			##	3.48	.73
	3				3.42	.85				**	3.89	.80
	Total			#	3.09	.70	#			#	3.48	.78

Differences between the schools, marked with \* and \*\* are statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) (plotted vertically).  
Differences between teachers and students, marked with # and ##, are statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) (plotted horizontally).

TABLE 2: Differences in practical application.

	Schools	Teachers (N = 59)				Students (N = 263)							
		M	SD	sig	Practice	M	SD	sig	Practice				
Ped-didactics													
Value communication	1	3.83	.62	##	3.21	.52		3.34	.76	##	3.05	.77	##
	2	3.91	.69		3.49	.84		3.82	.74	**	3.19	.72	**
	3	4.11	.63		3.69	.84		3.85	.85	**	3.24	.88	**
	Total	3.91	.64	##	3.40	.72	##	3.60	.80	#	3.13	.76	#
Social conduct	1	4.18	.57	##	3.70	.54		3.54	.79	*	3.24	.83	*
	2	4.25	.57		3.86	.71		3.96	.70	**	3.41	.84	**
	3	4.41	.53	##	4.06	.74		3.90	.95	###	3.43	.99	###
	Total	4.24	.56	##	3.82	.64	##	3.75	.81	#	3.34	.86	#
Value transfer	1	4.36	.55	##	3.99	.38		3.66	.79	##	3.64	.76	##
	2	4.19	.75		3.99	.72		3.91	.75		3.68	.69	
	3	4.34	.50		4.13	.78		4.02	.83	**	3.79	.80	**
	Total	4.30	.61	##	4.02	.59	##	3.81	.79	#	3.68	.74	#
Dialogues													
Discussion	1	3.96	.83	##	3.60	.93	##	3.44	.86	##	3.08	.95	##
	2	4.09	.62		3.52	.74		3.80	.77	**	3.34	.83	**
	3	4.43	.46	##	4.01	.44	##	3.86	.77	###	3.46	.86	###
	Total	4.09	.72	##	3.65	.80	##	3.64	.83	#	3.24	.91	#
Sociopolitical opinion forming	1	3.57	.91		3.23	.94	*	3.38	.87	*	2.94	.94	*
	2	3.83	.72		3.50	.63		3.76	.84	**	3.17	.80	**
	3	4.08	.72		3.97	.82	**	3.75	.88	**	3.43	.96	**
	Total	3.76	.83		3.47	.86	##	3.58	.89	##	3.11	.91	#
Diversity													
Cultural and ideological diversity	1	3.25	.94	##	2.65	.86	*	2.76	.99	##	2.42	.89	*
	2	3.82	.84		3.41	.98	**	3.89	.77	**	3.21	.81	**
	3	3.84	.99		3.69	.99	###	3.46	.96	**	2.95	.98	###
	Total	3.55	.95		3.10	.99	##	3.30	.99	##	2.81	.94	#

Differences between the schools, marked with \* and \*\*, are statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) (plotted vertically).

Differences between teachers and students in a school, marked with # and ##, are statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) (plotted horizontally).

considered as very important and not much practised (M 3.55, 3.10).

There are differences between the schools. The *rural* school's relatively low scores are conspicuous. The teachers concerned say that they give less attention to "political opinion forming" than their counterparts in the *major city* schools. The teachers at the "mainly white" *rural* school report giving the least attention of all to cultural and ideological diversity, namely only "a little." This is in sharp contrast with the multicultural *town school* and in particular the ethnic minorities school in the *major city*, where the teachers appear to succeed well in giving substance to this element of moral education.

Interesting to see is that in the *major city school* there is only a small difference between the desired attention and the attention in practice for "political opinion forming" and "cultural and ideological diversity."

5.2. *Students.* What do students think about objectives, outcomes, and pedagogical-didactic methods?

5.2.1. *Pedagogical Objectives and Social-Political Domain in the Curriculum.* Students consider all pedagogical objectives "disciplining," "social development," and "autonomy" to be important (M 4.00, 3.92, 3.99). Students consider the sociopolitical objectives "social involvement" and "political engagement" less important (M 3.46, 3.48). There are several differences between the schools. The *town* school students attach great importance to the objectives social development and autonomy—unlike the *rural* school students. Regarding sociosocietal aspects, these *town* school students attach more importance than all other students to acquiring "social involvement." The students at the *town* school consider the importance of "political engagement" to be almost on a par with "social involvement." The situation is reversed at the *major city* school, where the students consider "political engagement" to be important "social involvement" somewhat less.

The learning outcomes show the same pattern as the desired objectives. The sociopolitical objectives (M 2.93, 2.94) are less realised than the pedagogical objectives (M 3.70, 3.26, 3.50). Students think that in particular they learn "disciplining" and also "autonomy." The *rural* school students lag behind in social and sociopolitical objectives ("social development," "social involvement," and "political engagement"), so are the learning outcomes they report.

5.2.2. *Moral Development.* Students think that they learn quite a lot of the three aspects of moral development: "exchange points of view," "social-moral insight," and "social-moral attitude" (M 3.36, 3.33, 3.48). Students at the three schools differ greatly in their opinions about moral development learning outcomes. Of all schools, the *major city* school students produce the highest estimates of learning outcomes for all moral development aspects; the *rural* school is the lowest on this point for all aspects. Surprisingly, vocational school students are the most optimistic about what is generally viewed as the hardest aspect of moral development: translating insights into attitudes. Maybe these students find

the more cognitive aspects relatively difficult, but attitude development comparatively easy.

5.2.3. *Pedagogical-Didactic Approach.* Students have no outspoken preference for one particular pedagogical-didactic approach; like the teachers, they opt for a combination of "value communication," "social conduct," and "value transfer" (M 3.60, 3.75, 3.81). The *rural* school students score consistently lower than the others on the amount of attention they think should be given in practice to the various approaches. According to the student's teachers do a lot on value transfer and less on value communication (M 3.13, 3.34, 3.68).

5.2.4. *Moral Dialogues in School and Cultural and Ideological Diversity.* Students desire "discussion" and "sociopolitical opinion forming," and to a lesser extend attention for "cultural and ideological diversity" (M 3.64, 3.58, 3.30). The *rural* school students also have the lowest scores of all students: they have the least desire of all to learn to conduct dialogue or to learn to put forward substantive arguments for political opinion forming. The attention they wish to give to cultural and ideological diversity is likewise the lowest of all students. The *town* school and *major city* school students want considerable attention to be given to teaching skills for conducting dialogue and for political opinion forming.

Students of the *rural* school assess their school as the one in which the least attention is given to all these moral education aspects in practice. For example, they consider that their school pays only "a little" attention to the cultural and ideological diversity theme. The *major city* school students give scores for actual practice that are higher than those for the other two schools. Students of the *town* and *major city* students assess the amount of attention given to these themes in practice as higher than the assessment in the *rural* school. These scores are relatively high for such a difficult theme.

5.3. *Differences between Teachers and Students.* We examine the differences between teachers' and students' scores in order to ascertain:

- (i) whether what teachers want in terms of objectives and practice corresponds with what students want;
- (ii) whether students confirm teachers' assessment of what proceeds in practice;
- (iii) whether students actually perceive the learning outcomes that teachers claim to achieve.

The statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) differences between teachers and students are shown in Tables 1 and 2. The differences can be seen on the horizontal axis, as distinguished by the # and ## marks.

5.3.1. *Pedagogical Objectives and Social-Political Domain in the Curriculum.* The data show that students assess all pedagogical objectives ("disciplining," "social development" and "autonomy") and "social involvement" as less important than their teachers do, whereas the students attach even more importance than the teachers to the "political engagement"

objectives. In all the three schools students find “political engagement” more important than the teachers. In all the schools there is a strong discrepancy between teachers and students on the social development objectives. Teachers find them far more important than students. The differences between teachers’ and students’ assessments of the importance of “disciplining” are most pronounced at the *rural* school.

**5.3.2. Learning Outcomes.** The assessment of learning outcomes shows interesting patterns. Students estimate the learning outcomes higher than the teachers for “disciplining,” “autonomy,” and in particular “political engagement.” Teachers score higher than students for the “social development” and “social involvement.”

The *rural* school students differ from their teachers in their estimates both of how much “autonomy” and of how much “political engagement” they learn at school. The *rural* school students state that they learn less social development than their teachers claim, and the *major city* school students perceive that they learn less social involvement than their teachers think. There are no significant differences between students and teachers in the *town* school.

**5.3.3. Discrepancy between Desired Objectives and Learning Outcomes .** If we examine the differences between the scores for the desired pedagogical and sociosocietal objectives and the learning outcomes of these objectives, the teachers exhibit a greater discrepancy than the students between what they want and what they think is being learned (the discrepancies in the teacher scores are between .70 and 1.00; and in the student scores up to .75). There is one interesting exception to this pattern. The *major city* school teachers are reasonably satisfied with the amount of “social involvement” acquired by their students (difference only .30), whereas the students perceive a greater difference between what they want to learn in this area and what they observe (difference is .60). The *major city* school students apparently think that they do not learn enough “social involvement” at school.

**5.3.4. Moral Development.** The students are generally more optimistic than the teachers in their assessment of moral development at the end of their school careers. Students state that when they finish school they will be able to deal with diverse opinions “moderately well,” that they have “moderate” insight into the interrelationship between their own experiences, attitudes, and opportunities compared with those of other people (“socio-moral insight”), and know how to behave accordingly (“socio-moral attitude”). The greatest difference in assessment between students and teachers is evident at the *town* school, where there are statistically significant differences between the teacher scores and the student scores for all moral development clusters.

**5.3.5. Pedagogical-Didactic Approach.** There is no clear-single-dominant approach in vocational schools. The teachers and students in all three schools want a combined approach, which they also apply or receive in practice. Attention in practice for “value communication” lags somewhat

behind “value transfer” and focuses on “social conduct.” Both teachers and students may have difficulty with reflecting on values, clarifying personal values, and entering into dialogue with each other. Students in general want the various pedagogical-didactic approaches to be applied less than teachers would like, and they also think that less attention is given in practice to value communication and value transfer than teachers believe. We observe these differences in assessment most clearly in the *rural* school.

**5.3.6. Moral Dialogues in School and Cultural and Ideological Diversity.** If we look at a more specific interpretation of moral education in practice, at the opinions about moral dialogues in school, it is striking that the pattern is the same as described above: students want less attention to this aspect than teachers (this difference is significant at two of the three schools). Even more interesting is the observation that both parties actually agree completely about the desirability of “political opinion forming.”

In terms of the attention given to cultural and ideological diversity, it would appear that each school presents a different picture. The *rural* school students want less attention to this point than the teachers, whereas both parties agree that the realized attention is low; it is conspicuous that teachers and students at the *town* school are close to agreement on how much attention is needed and how much attention is actually given to this theme; whereas a salient point at the *major city* school is the students’ considerably lower assessment of attention in practice compared with the teachers. It is striking that the diversity theme at the “mainly white” *rural* school is hardly an issue either for teachers or students, while they agree on its importance at the multiethnic *town* school.

## 6. Conclusions and Discussion

The schools involved in this study differed considerably: a mainly white *rural* school, a multiethnic, medium-sized school in a medium-sized *town*, and a large, ethnic minorities school in a *major city*.

If we turn our attention to the teachers, it would appear that the *rural* school lags conspicuously behind in the broad, social area compared with the other vocational schools. This is true in terms of both objectives (deeming “political engagement” least important of all schools); and pedagogical-didactic approach (little attention to “political opinion forming” and “cultural and ideological diversity”). The school likewise scores lower than the others in the social area. This school conveys the least “social involvement,” and the low scores for “exchange of points of view” and “socio-moral insight” point moreover to a lack of learning in the area of moral reflection.

The teachers at the multiethnic *town* school did have a clear social interest: “political engagement” was deemed important and considerable learning outcomes were reported in “cultural and ideological diversity.” This school differs markedly from the mainly white *rural* school in this respect. If we compare this school with the ethnic minorities school in the *major city*, the two schools do not differ in

their abstract pedagogical objectives and pedagogical-didactic approach, but have dissimilar reflective objectives.

The teachers in the *major city* school report the greatest learning outcomes for the cognitive aspects of moral development (“exchange of points of view” and “socio-moral insight”) and for “socio-political opinion forming.” This means that the teachers in the major city perceive that lessons are learned for being able to exchange points of view and having respect for different opinions, and having insight into sociomoral situations. They also perceive that their students learn to give more attention to the sociopolitical content in moral dialogue and to make up their own minds about political and social issues.

As perceived by the students, there is a difference between the mainly white *rural* school on the one hand, and the multiethnic *town* school and the minority ethnic *major city* school on the other. The students view their mainly white *rural* school as the least social, the least reflective, and the least socially oriented in terms of methodological and learning outcomes. This is consistent with what they themselves want: these students themselves have the lowest aspirations of all students in these three areas. They have the lowest scores on objectives for “social development” and “autonomy,” as well as for “social involvement” and “political engagement.” They also have the lowest aspiration of all students for attention to discussion (learning to enter into dialogue) and “cultural and ideological diversity.”

The students at the multiethnic *town* school have the clearest desire for a combination of social, reflective, and social aspects. They have the highest aspirations for both “social development” and “forming critical opinions,” as well as for “social involvement” and “political engagement.” Although the students at the minority ethnic school in the *major city* report the highest learning outcomes for moral development, the students of this school report that they learn the least “social involvement” of all students.

In summary, we may draw the following conclusions.

- (i) There is a reasonable consensus among teachers and students that moral education at the mainly white *rural* school is neither reflective nor socially or society oriented. The students are therefore inadequately prepared for the multicultural society.
- (ii) Teachers and students of the medium-sized *town* school with the multiethnic student population consider that moral education impinges upon all three of the areas: social, reflective and societal (with the reflective, and moral development somewhat under pressure).
- (iii) Teachers and students of the ethnic minorities school in the *major city* combine social attention with a reflective attitude; but the social aspect is at risk of falling behind. Students are prepared for the multicultural society, but compared with the attention given to the political and cultural aspects, too little is given to the social aspect.

We are cautious in explaining the differences between the schools. The three main differences are: cultural diversity

of the school, denomination (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Nondenominational/Public), community (rural, town, and major city). The community is strongly linked to the cultural diversity of the schools in the research. The denomination seems less directly linked to the outcomes. For example, in the Protestant school are many students from a Turkish or Moroccan origin.

*6.1. Student Population and Cultural Diversity.* It emerged from our earlier study of three mainly white preuniversity schools that they paid not a lot of attention to “socio-political opinion forming” and dealing with “cultural and ideological diversity” [4]. However, the students at these schools were in favour of attention being given to just these aspects. Their interest is more social and more society and politically engaged than their teachers tend to think.

This study of vocational schools shows that when there is a substantial or dominant proportion of students of foreign origin, more attention is given to “cultural and ideological diversity” and learning to deal with differences. The more multiethnic schools are, the more teachers and students tend to be aware of the importance of these aspects. As student interviews confirm, the diversity already exists within the school, and the students encounter the dialogue in and outside the school. The students at the minority ethnic school in the major city were the most familiar with the diversity theme. They were unanimous that “the more nationalities at a school, the fewer problems there are”: they simply rub along together, as a matter of routine. However, they do point out that their teachers tend to be reluctant to raise strongly value-laden themes. Some of the students consider this actually to be outside the teachers’ duties, while others disapprove of them sidestepping these issues. All students agree that they learn to get on with each other in a broad sense in particular on the playground—not so much in the classroom. From the point of citizenship education you can question if attention for cultural diversity is strongly linked to the presence of ethnic minorities. Should not it be a normal objective for all schools, regardless of the diversity of its students?

*6.2. Moral Development and Political Development.* Although the high students’ “socio-moral attitude” scores would appear to be reason for optimism, in that attitude forming is a vital part of moral development, a focus on the moral and cognitive foundation of attitudes should nonetheless not be overlooked. It continues to be important to focus on the more reflective “social insight” and “exchange of points of view” if social behaviour is to be grounded in personal moral identity, and not merely adapted to the situation at hand.

The observed versatility in the pedagogical-didactic methods is favourable (with attention to transferring values, value communication, and good conduct), but teachers and students find value communication awkward. Learning to reflect on values, clarifying personal values, and entering into dialogue about values deserve additional attention in vocational education, also with embedding moral attitude forming, as mentioned above.

A very interesting point is the reluctance of teachers in the sociopolitical domain, in particular for “political

engagement.” Teachers seem to be anxious to be too political and prefer to focus more on the abstract pedagogical objectives “disciplining,” “autonomy,” “social development” and less on “social involvement” and “political engagement.” Students themselves point to the desirability of political opinion forming; in particular the students of the major city school want to include the sociopolitical domain more. These results really ask for more theoretical and empirical research on the relationship between the moral and the political in citizenship education.

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