CONTENT

Editorial
Educational sciences and a media ecology perspective
Antti Räsänen
Teenage religion - religiousness among Finnish 8th and 9th graders
Harri Pitkäniemi
How the Teacher’s Practical Theory Moves to Teaching Practice
Joakim Larsson, Annica Lofdahl, Hector Pérez Prieto
Rerouting: Discipline, Assessment and Performativity in Contemporary Swedish Educational Discourse
Birgit Andersson
Introducing assessment into Swedish leisure-time centres - pedagogues’ attitudes and practices
Damaris Ngorosho and Ulla Lahtinen
The role of the home environment in phonological awareness and reading and writing ability in Tanzanian primary schoolchildren
Tomas Englund
Questioning the parental right to educational authority – arguments for a pluralist public education

Umeå School of Education
Umeå University
Sweden
EDUCATION INQUIRY

Education Inquiry is an international on-line, peer-reviewed journal with free access in the field of Educational Sciences and Teacher Education. It publishes original empirical and theoretical studies from a wide variety of academic disciplines. As the name of the journal suggests, one of its aims is to challenge established conventions and taken-for-granted perceptions within these fields.

Education Inquiry is looking for lucid and significant contributions to the understanding of contextual, social, organizational and individual factors affecting teaching and learning, the links between these aspects, the nature and processes of education and training as well as research in and on Teacher Education and Teacher Education policy. This includes research ranging from pre-school education to higher education, and research on formal and informal settings. Education Inquiry welcomes cross-disciplinary contributions and innovative perspectives. Of particularly interest are studies that take as their starting point, education practice and subject teaching or didactics.

Education Inquiry welcomes research from a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches, and invites studies that make the nature and use of educational research the subject of inquiry. Comparative and country-specific studies are also welcome.

Education Inquiry readers include educators, researchers, teachers and policy makers in various cultural contexts.

Every issue of Education Inquiry publishes peer-reviewed articles in one, two or three different sections. Open section: Articles sent in by authors as part of regular journal submissions and published after a blind review process. Thematic section: Articles reflecting the theme of a conference or workshop and published after a blind review process. Invited section: Articles by researchers invited by Education Inquiry to shed light on a specific theme or for a specific purpose and published after a review process.

Education Inquiry is a continuation of the Journal of Research in Teacher Education, which is available in printed copies as well as electronic versions and free access at http://www.use.umu.se/forskning/publikationer/lof/

Editor
Professor Per-Olof Erixon, Umeå University, Sweden

Receiving Editor
Linda Rönnberg, Umeå University, Sweden

The editorial board
Professor Marie Brennan, School of Education, UniSA, Australia
Professor Bernard Cornu, Directeur de la Formation – CNED, Directeur de CNED-EIFAD, France
Professor David Hamilton, Umeå University, Sweden
Professor Brian Hudson, Universiti of Dundee, UK
Professor Gloria Ladson-Billings, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA
Professor Martin Lawn, University of Edinburgh, UK
Assistant Professor Eva Lindgren, Umeå University, Sweden
Assistant Professor Linda Rönnberg, Umeå University, Sweden
Professor Kirk Sullivan, Umeå University, Sweden
Professor Gaby Weiner, University of Edinburgh, UK
Professor Pavel Zgaga, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Language Editor
Murray Bales, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Guidelines for Submitting Articles
Articles should not normally exceed 5–6 000 words. They should be typed, double-spaced and A 4 paper, with ample left- and right hand margins, author’s name and the paper only. MS Word with formatting is preferred. Manuscript must be submitted digitally via email attachment. Please include:

• 1 digital copy with separate graphic files
• list of 4 or 5 keywords
• 100-word abstract
• a separate file with names and contact information for all authors (include name, highest degree, mailing address, phone, fax and institutional affiliation).

Send Manuscripts to: EducationInquiry.Editor@adm.umu.se

Education Inquiry’s homepage: http://www.use.umu.se/english/research/educationinquiry

©2010 The Authors. ISSN online 2000-4508
Teenage religion – religiousness among Finnish 8th and 9th graders

Antti Räsänen*

Abstract
This article examines religiousness among Finnish 8th and 9th graders. It is explored using the RJT, an instrument developed on the basis of religious judgment theory. The frame of reference processes teenage religiousness and Oser’s theory. The research data are based on a survey in which 617 adolescents from four different localities participated. According to the theory of Religious Judgment five sum variables were made to describe religiousness. The results prove a low level of religiousness in adolescence, some gender differences and associations between age and religiousness. The effect of home religious upbringing was greater than the effect of school religious education.

Keywords: religiousness in adolescence, religious education, upbringing, Religious Judgment Test

Introduction
This article aims to examine religiousness among Finnish 8th and 9th graders. The research questions (explained in detail later) concern the features of the image of God in adolescence. The image of God is explored with a particular instrument, namely the Religious Judgment Test (RJT) that has been developed in Finland during the last six years. Further, gender differences, age differences and the association with religious upbringing in the home are also considered in this text.

What do we know about teenagers’ religiousness? The answer depends on the perspective under consideration. When we think about teenage religiousness from the point of view of the psychology of religion, the approach is individual and the question is, for the most part, which internal processes are regulating the individual’s religiousness. Early childhood and puberty are the most crucial periods of an individual’s religious development. Many factors make teenagers sensitive to religious issues: First, their cognitive development reaches an adult level. When an adolescent has attained the capability of abstract thinking (normally at the age of 14 years), they have all the preconditions to solve complicated problems, to understand and to recognise complex causal connections. All of this improves their self-respect but at the same time it confuses and produces uncertainty since young people impugn the existence of God. Secondly, a strong fear of loneliness and a feeling of disparity drive them towards God and further their interest in religious issues. Thirdly, the incipi-
ent sexuality (and possibly the feeling of guilt) increases their religious motivation. Finally, the feeling of independence can start the crisis and the quest for identity in which the relation to transcendence is a fundamental element. These four elements are very natural developmental tasks in adolescence and they all support the individual’s religious quest, which, in favourable circumstances, turns to religious motivation (Vergote 1970; Räsänen 2004).

Considering teenage religiousness from the sociological aspect, the crucial point is the lack of religious commitment. For example, commitment to the Church decreases dramatically between the ages of 10 and 18, but it does not necessarily mean the collapse of religiousness. The results of an Austrian survey showed that 80 percent of 10- to 11-year-olds accept the statement “*They know in the Church what is the right belief*” but only 47 percent of 14- and 15-year-olds accept it. The statement is approved by only 12 percent of 18-year-olds (Bucher 1996). Research results from other countries confirm the above. In addition, Finnish results prove that church attendance declines after adolescence (Mikkola, Niemelä & Petterson 2007). A large American follow-up study attests that belonging to religious communities and religious activity decrease between the ages of 13 and 20 (Denton, Pearce & Smith 2008).

According to James W. Fowler’s theory of faith development, an adolescent is in the “Synthetic-Conventional” stage of faith development. This is the stage of mutual interpersonal perspective taking, but it lacks the third person perspective taking, which often makes young people overdependent on the evaluations of significant others. Personal qualities of accepting love, understanding, loyalty and support appear in representations of God. A split between emotional and cognitive functioning is seen in adolescence. Fowler argues that this may result in the dismissal of God as a constructive self-object because it reflects our earliest and most salient object relations (Fowler & Dell 2006).

The theory of the development of religious judgment by Fritz Oser and the empirical studies concerning his theory are crucial standpoints of the Religious Judgment Test (RJT), which is utilised in this article. Before dissecting the RJT’s methodology, it is necessary to understand the substance of Oser’s theory of the development of religious judgment.

Oser’s developmental Theory of Religious Judgment is about the way one copes with situations of contingency. According to the theory, individuals produce religious judgments especially faced with border, i.e. contingency, situations of life. These life situations are, in practices, not only border situations with death, fear, loss but also with joy and gratefulness. The first key concept of Oser’s theory is the concept of religious judgment, which is a cognitive pattern of religious knowing of the reality. Religious judgment is activated by the abovementioned contingency situations. Further, as someone interprets their experiences, prays, studies religious texts or takes part in religious life, they actualise their personal religious consciousness, in other words the system of rules that concern his/her relationship to the Ultimate.
This relationship appears in verbal form in religious judgment (Levenson, Aldwin & D’Mello 2005; Oser 1980; Oser & Gmünder 1991; Räsänen 2003).

The other key concept in Oser’s theory is the developmental stage construct. Five developmental stages are differentiated and form a hierarchal sequence. Each of the five stages of religious judgment development must be seen as a unique depth-structure, which can have various contents. Oser claims that the stages have universal, cross-cultural validity, although the content can vary at specific stages. Usually, the transition from one stage to the next involves a period of uncertainty. The relation of an individual to God is qualitatively different depending on their developmental stage.

With a view to eliciting an individual’s developmental stage, Oser uses hypothetical dilemmas, i.e. stories, which are simulated situations, illustrated to a testee, to provoke a religious judgment. Real-life contingency situations, for example when somebody has encountered an accident or death, are excluded for ethical reasons. After the testee has a dilemma situation illustrated to them, they are interviewed. The questions concern whether one has obligations to God, the reality of God’s will and the consequences of not keeping the promise. The transcribed interview data are coded according to guidelines given in a coding manual; every single answer is given a stage ranking from 1 – 5 and the final stage is the mean of all rankings. The research instrument including the dilemma stories and a semi-clinical interview, as well as the coding method, was borrowed from Lawrence Kohlberg’s moral development theory (Levenson, Aldwin & D’Mello 2005; Oser, 1980; Oser & Gmünder, 1991; Vossen 1988).

The five developmental stages focus on various forms of relationship between the human and the divine (Ultimate being). The stages begin with religious heteronomy in which divine intervention influences procedure effects, followed by a second stage, reflecting the ability of the individual to influence the divine by their good deeds and prayers. The third stage is the hidden divine and completely responsible individual, and the fourth stage reintroduces the divine as self, where an individual can co-operate with the divine. Finally, the fifth stage is an experience of union with the divine (Levenson, Aldwin & D’Mello 2005; Oser & Gmünder, 1991).

The stages can be called orientations, which form the following hierarchal sequence:

1. **Orientation of religious heteronomy**. One understands God as active and the human being as reactive. God is all-powerful and makes things happen.

2. **Orientation of “do ut des”** (Give so that you can receive). God is furthermore an all-powerful being. He may either punish or reward. The human being can influence him by good deeds, promises and vows.

3. **Orientation of ego autonomy and one-sided self-responsibility** (Deism). Transcendence and immanence are separated from each other. When religious and other authorities are often rejected, it is natural that the human being is autonomous, responsible for his or her life and the world (outside).
4. **Orientation on mediated autonomy and salvation plan.** The human being has an indirect relationship with God, which gives meaning and hope and the possibility of human freedom. Many different forms of religiousness emerge, all accepting a divine plan that brings things to a good end.

5. **Orientation to religious intersubjectivity and autonomy.** Religiousness in this stage is universal and unconditional. Transcendence and immanence interact completely. God is present always and everywhere. Solidarity with all human beings comes true (Oser 1991; Oser & Gmünder 1991; Räsänen 2002).

According to Oser’s empirical studies, the third stage is typical in youth and young adulthood. The third stage is generally not possible before reaching the phase of abstract thinking. Communication between human beings and their objects of religion is minimal, if even necessary at all. At this stage, people become aware of the fact that religion cannot explain the complex reality of the world. The idea of Deism is the nucleus representing religious thinking in the third stage. The idea that God once created the world but then He left it to fend for itself (Oser, 1991; Oser & Gmünder, 1991; Räsänen 2002; Tamminen 1996).

The stage theory has also been criticised. Basically, it has been criticised by theologians for its wide concept of religion; Oser even seems to view atheism as a special form of religious belief. Reich (1991) goes to the foundations of Oser’s theory when he argues that cognitive stage theory consists of either/or reasoning based on familiar Aristotelian logic supplanted by complementary reasoning. It also seems unclear how the stages are related to the dilemmas presented to the respondents. Stage three is the crucial point in Oser’s theory, and it has been prone to criticism: Fetz and Bucher (1987) argued that if Oser’s stages were reconstructed, stage three would not occur at all. Räsänen (2002) elicited empirical evidence that the third stage can be skipped and Schweitzer and Bucher (1989) asked if stage three is a religious developmental stage *par excellence*. Stage five has been criticised for being clearly dependent on religious or spiritual experience, and its universal character is therefore questioned (Levenson, Aldwin & D’Mello 2005). The same critics deal with stage four.

**Method**

In this research, teenage religiousness will be studied from one particular aspect (RQ1), and the results are interpreted from two other aspects (RQ2). The research questions, with their sub-questions, can be expressed in the following manner:

(RQ1) What kinds of features are there in adolescents’ images of God? It is measured by the Religious Judgment Test (RJT), which proves respondents’ reactions to statements constructed from the five developmental stages of Oser’s theory.

(RQ2) What kinds of group differences exist? Are there any differences between female and male respondents? Are there differences between 8th and 9th graders? Do students aged 14, 15 and 16 years deviate from each other? Finally, the interdependence of RJT, school religious education (RE) and home religious upbringing are explored.
Oser’s theory evolved from Kohlberg’s theory of development of moral judgment and Kohlberg’s developmental stages. Oser uses the same research instrument as Kohlberg. Overall, these two theories interact with each other a great deal (Bucher 1985; Bucher & Reich 1989; Reich 1992; Räsänen 2003). Because of the epistemological, structural and methodological congruent with the two preceding theories, it is logical that new instruments developed from Kohlberg’s and Oser’s theories resemble each other.

However, when new research instruments of religiousness (built on Oser’s theory) are generated, there are two important sources which cannot be ignored: James Rest’s Defining Issue Test and Georg Lind’s Moral Judgment Test. They are both based on the work of Lawrence Kohlberg.

The Defining Issue Test (DIT) was designed by James Rest and colleagues at the University of Minnesota. The DIT is the instrument most frequently used to measure moral reasoning skills. The test involves six ethical dilemmas that are presented to the subject. After the dilemma, they are asked to decide what facts about each situation are relevant for deciding on the correct course of action. The responses are scored according to the type of moral reasoning they indicate. The DIT enables many measures of a subject’s approach to moral issues and the most commonly used score is the P-index which can be interpreted as the percentage of times a subject selects stage 5 or 6 statements as the most relevant moral arguments (Oser & Althof 1992; Rest 1979).

Georg Lind constructed the Moral Judgment Test (MJT) to assess a subject’s moral judgment competence in Kohlberg’s sense. The MJT uses moral dilemmas. In brief, the research process proceeds as follows: First an individual reads the dilemma and thereafter they give their opinion on the object’s behaviour on a scale from -3 to +3. Then, the subject has to assess how much they accept or reject a set of arguments which are in favour or against the behaviour of the dilemma’s subject (the scale is now from -4 to +4). The arguments represent the six different moral reasoning stages described by Kohlberg. Then the main score, the C-index, is calculated. It indicates the degree to which moral principles have become necessary knowledge for the respondent.

Both the DIT and MJT have many advantages: they are easy to use and the statistical procedure is feasible. Because the tests do not require the subjects to articulate a reply in their own words, they measure recognition knowledge, a type of tacit knowledge rather than explicit verbal knowledge. One way of using the test is to define what the moral ideal of the subject is (Lind & Wakenhut 1985; Oser & Althof 1992).

One problem with the developmental stages of Oser’s theory is the difficulty of operationalising the stages. They may describe religiousness in a proper manner but does an individual represent a particular stage or can they have components of many stages at the same time? The Religious Judgment Test (RJT) is an attempt to simplify the measurement of Oser’s stages, whereby the advantages of DIT and MJT are exploited.

The Religious Judgment Test was developed in Finland and the first version of the test was first introduced in 2004. At that time, the measuring instrument, i.e. state-
ments, was presented with data concerning 168 sixth-graders (12- and 13-year-olds) from two different locations in Finland. During the last six years, the test has gone through developmental and psychometric testing processes. At present, version two of the RJT is valid and it is administered as follows:

The test consists of three parts. First, the testees answer questions concerning the religiousness of their family, religious traditions at home and personal background information. The scales vary from nominal to interval scales. Second, the testees are presented with a set of statements which rest on the five developmental stages of Oser’s Theory of the Development of Religious Judgment. The third part of the RJT involves open questions where the testees are simply asked: “What kind of questions would you like to ask God?” and “What would you like to enquire from a someone who believes in God firmly?” Although the RJT has much common with the DIT and MJT, the RJT is different in many ways. Firstly, it lacks the dilemma text. Next, the scale is dissimilar; it is posed in a five-point Likert format from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Then, neither of the P- or C-indexes are applied because the test is used to investigate the subject’s attitudes to each stage of religious reasoning and the stages that were most preferred. Unlike previous tests, the RJT contains open questions which yield qualitative information about religious thinking.

Sample
The sample consists of 617 Finnish 8th and 9th grade elementary school students aged 14 to 16. All of them participated in the RJT. The tests were executed during school lessons in May 2006, December 2007 and January 2008. Unexpectedly, there were more males (N = 325, 52.7%) than females (N = 292, 47.1%). The participants came from four different locations in Finland. The first location was a comprehensive school in Lammi (n = 203, 30.9%) and the second was the Hämeenlinna comprehensive school in Hämeenlinna (n = 208, 31.6%). The third part of the data came from the Urheilupuisto comprehensive school in Mikkeli (n = 172, 26.1%), while the rest were from the Maaninka comprehensive school (n = 75, 11.4%). The two last municipalities are located in Eastern Finland. Mikkeli is a city with 48,835 inhabitants (2007) and Maaninka is a little rural community with a population of 3,855 (2008). The municipality of Lammi has 5,584 inhabitants (2007), with nearly one-fifth working in agriculture or forestry. The number of inhabitants in Hämeenlinna is 47,335 (2007), which means it is quite a typical Finnish provincial city.

|               | 8th grade students | 9th grade students | Total |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|
|               | N (%)              | N (%)              | N (%) |
| 14 years      | 248 (95)           | 12 (5)             | 260 (40.6) |
| 15 years      | 74 (26)            | 212 (74)           | 286 (44.4) |
| 16 years      | 5 (5)              | 89 (95)            | 94 (14.4) |
| Total N       | 327 (51)           | 313 (49)           | 640 (100) |
Table 1 shows that it is necessary to investigate the variables “grade’ and “age’ separately. Possible differences between 8th and 9th graders may prove something about the effects of learning. It is noteworthy that Finnish youth usually go to confirmation classes or confirmation camp during summer between 8th and 9th grade. However, if we interpret the theories of religious development correctly, we can assume that age, by definition, is one variable that influences religious thinking and then differences may occur between 14-, 15- and 16-year-olds.

**Statistical analyses**

On the basis of the Theory of Religious Judgment, five sum variables were made to describe the stages of religious judgment. Hence, these are named dimensions of religiousness. The first descriptive statistics, i.e. means and standard deviations, help to characterise the research data. The research questions were analysed with parametric statistical methods as the measurement level of dependent variables was an interval scale. The differences between two groups were investigated using Student’s t-test. The significance of Pearson’s correlation coefficient was tested when the interdependence between school success, home religiousness and dimensions of religiousness was explored. Partial correlations were examined when the effect of the intervention variable was postulated.

**Results**

The results of the RJT will be reported first. On the grounds of Oser’s five developmental stages and on the basis of our earlier research, formed five dimensions or factors, one for each developmental stage (see Oser & Gmünder, 1991; Räsänen et al., 2004; 2007). The five dimensions of religiousness and the Cronbach alpha coefficients of each dimension are illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2. Comparison of five RJT dimensions (The scale was 1–5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)**

| Dimension Description                                                                 | 8th graders (N = 327) | 9th graders (N = 313) | (N = 640) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Orientation of religious heteronomy                                                | 2.4 (.76)             | 2.3 (.79)             | .83       |
| Orientation of “do ut des” (Give so that you can receive)                          | 2.5 (.92)             | 2.4 (.89)             | .89       |
| Orientation of ego autonomy and one-sided self-responsibility (deism)              | 3.0 (1.0)             | 2.9 (.97)             | .77       |
| Orientation on mediated autonomy and salvation plan                                | 2.6 (.99)             | 2.6 (.93)             | .89       |
| Orientation to religious intersubjectivity and autonomy                            | 2.8 (.97)             | 2.8 (.92)             | .82       |

* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.
When the results of all five dimensions are considered comprehensively, it is clear that adolescents do not emphasise any dimension of religiousness to a high degree. All students accept most of the statements of the third stage. This is very logical because this stage of religious judgment is the most common in adolescence. The means of dimensions four and five were higher than the means of the first and second dimensions, which was contrary to expectations. The Religious Judgment Test itself explains this result. The fourth and fifth dimensions contained statements that were easy for young people to approve. The statements represented spirituality and God’s existence in our world and were interpreted as representing spirituality very broadly. On the other hand, the statements measuring the first and second dimensions were moral, representing “black-and-white” reasoning.

No statistically significant differences between the 8th and 9th graders were found. A cautious interpretation of this is that religious education in school does not influence the image of God in adolescence. We will come back to this question later.

The data were divided into three age groups, 14-, 15- and 16-year-olds. In total, three significant differences between age groups 14 and 15 were found: DI: (M_{14} = 2.4, \ M_{15} = 2.2; t = 3.28 \ p = .001), DII: (M_{14} = 2.6, \ M_{15} = 2.3; t = 3.35 \ p = .001) and DIV: (M_{14} = 2.7, \ M_{15} = 2.5; t = 2.65 \ p = .008). The means of the age groups reveal that the 14-year-olds scored the highest in those dimensions which portrayed childhood religiousness. Participation in confirmation school explains the result to some extent. Finnish 15-year-olds receive religious instruction in confirmation classes and that education reduces the acceptance of the DI and DII dimensions.

Next, we will examine three particular issues: the association of gender with the five dimensions of religiousness, the relationship of the dimensions of religiousness with family religiousness and success in school.
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and gender comparison of five RJT dimensions (The scale was 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree), family religiousness measured with the discussions of religious issues at home = D and church-going of the family = C and success in RE and school.

|                           | girls (n = 292) | boys (n = 324) | t*  |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|
|                           | M  | SD  | M  | SD  |     |
| DI Orientation of religious heteronomy | 2.32 | .72 | 2.34 | .80 | -.39 |
| DII Orientation of “do ut des” (Give so that you can receive) | 2.47 | .89 | 2.43 | .92 | .59 |
| DIII Orientation of ego autonomy and one-sided self-responsibility (deism) | 2.85 | .98 | 3.08 | .99 | -2.83b |
| DIV Orientation on mediated autonomy and salvation plan | 2.74 | .94 | 2.53 | .96 | 2.67b |
| DV Orientation to religious intersubjectivity and autonomy | 2.94 | .92 | 2.67 | .94 | 3.58c |
| D Discussions of religious issues (scale 1=never and 5=every week) | 2.17 | 1.04 | 1.87 | .96 | 3.77c |
| C Church-going (scale 1=never and 5=every week) | 1.91 | .95 | 1.72 | .98 | 2.47d |
| R Religion (scale 4-10) | 8.01 | 1.23 | 7.29 | 1.32 | 6.70c |
| S Success in school (scale 1-6) | 4.12 | .88 | 3.68 | .93 | 6.05c |

*aStudent's t-test value between girls and boys.
*bsignificant at .01 level; *significant at .001 level; *significant at .05 level.

Many gender differences appear, with some being very familiar from previous research like girls’ better success in school generally and in RE specifically. A statistically significant difference in the third dimension illustrates that God is more distant from boys than girls. Girls emphasise the immanent existence of God more than boys, which is manifested in the means of dimensions IV and V. If we look at the gender differences in each of the three age groups, the following situations arise:

DIII: \( (M_{female14} = 2.9, M_{male14} = 3.2; t = -2.13 p = .03) \) and \( (M_{female15} = 2.8, M_{male15} = 3.0; t = -1.99 p = .05) \)

DIV: \( (M_{female15} = 2.7, M_{male15} = 2.4; t = 1.97 p = .05) \)

DV: \( (M_{female15} = 2.9, M_{male15} = 2.5; t = 3.23 p = .001) \)

The differences above strengthen the impression that girls progress or develop faster in their religious development. It is probable that the gender differences decrease along with age because 16-year-olds scored equally in religious development.

Overall, young people rarely discuss religious issues with their parents and they go to church very infrequently (Table 3). These results do not confound but the gender differences in variables D (=discussions with parents of religious issues) and C (=church-going) lead to a variety of speculation. One has to ask whether parents discuss religious issues more with girls than boys or are boys simply more reluctant to report their experiences of home upbringing.
The interconnections between the five dimensions of religious judgment demonstrate two interesting details (Table 4). First, the approval – or disapproval – of dimensions I, II, IV and V is strongly linked together. Together, these dimensions formulate general features of “religiousness”. Second, the third dimension correlates negatively with all other dimensions. The feature describing the third dimension is non-religious.

General success in school (measured in terms of average school success in all subjects) and good success in RE correlate, by definition, strongly and positively. Home religiousness (measured by conversations between parents and adolescents concerning religious issues) as well as church-going are positively related to success in school and the second, fourth and fifth dimensions of religiousness respectively. The third dimension has a negative correlation with success in RE, home religiousness and church-going.

To clarify the status of two important variables (RE and home upbringing) for religious dimensions, the technique of partial correlations was utilised. A binary hypothesis was formulated: if (1) controlling for the variables D (=Discussions between parents and adolescents concerning religious issues) and C (=Church-going) eliminates the correlations between the variables DI–DV and RE, and if (2) controlling for the variable RE involves a considerable increase in the correlations of variables DI–DV, D and C, the impact of family religiousness explains students’ religiousness more than religious education in school (Table 5).
Table 5. Pearson correlations and partial correlations between variables D1–D5, RE, D and C.

|                          | RE (r) | RE (r’) controlled for D and C | D and C (r”) controlled for RE |
|--------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| DI Orientation of religious heteronomy | .078*  | .013                          | .167***                        |
| DII Orientation of “do ut des” (Give so that you can receive) | .172*** | .077                          | .231***                        |
| DIII Orientation of ego autonomy and one-sided self-responsibility (deism) | -.132*** | -.045                         | -.237***                       |
| DIV Orientation on mediated autonomy and salvation plan | .241*** | .125**                         | .331***                        |
| DV Orientation to religious intersubjectivity and autonomy | .260*** | .154***                       | .309***                        |

According to Table 5, both elements of the binary hypothesis were confirmed. Success in school RE correlates significantly with all five dimensions of religious judgment, although the coefficients are low. When D and C are controlled, the correlations are going to zero (DI, DII and DIII) or sinking from low to very low (DIV and DV). The conclusion is that success in school – when studied separately from other background factors – does not interrelate with the development of religious dimensions. Controlling for RE, for one, strengthens the ties between family religiousness and dimensions of religious judgment. We can conclude that home upbringing and religious commitment support religiousness in adolescence. It is noteworthy that both religious and non-religious dimensions are affected by family religiousness, as the positive and negative coefficients prove.

Discussion

The results partly fit in with the Theory of Religious Judgment: adolescents stress the third dimension most, which describes the third stage of religious judgment. The fourth and fifth dimensions obtained higher means than expected. Previous studies in the field of moral reasoning show that when the interview method is replaced with other data gathering instruments, for example gauging statements, moral ideals arise (Lind & Wakenhut 1985; Oser & Althof 1992; Rest 1979). Apparently, this is true with the RJT which seems to measure the subject’s religious ideals. In that regard, the results are encouraging: teenagers prefer mature spirituality, which is promising for their religious development in the future because the spirituality of an adult is often encapsulated in the conceptions that are learned in childhood or during adolescence (Räsänen 2002). Religious development can come to a stop before an individual knows anything of a more broadminded and more mature image of God/spirituality.

Confirmation school may explain the differences between adolescents aged 14 and 15. Instruction redirects participants in confirmation school from a childish religiousness to a more mature religiousness. The fact that there were no differences between the 15- and 16-year-olds supports this conclusion; certainly, the conclusion concerning the effect of confirmation school should be taken somewhat critically because it is not empirically proven.
According to the results, Finnish boys typically see God as being more distant than girls. The result confirms the findings of previous international research (see Krejci 1998; Stark 2002; Wink et al. 2007). Some earlier research has illustrated (see e.g. Tamminen 1994; Tamminen 1996) that pre-adolescent girls progress faster than boys in their religious development. An interesting question is whether girls receive more religious upbringing from their parents than boys. This is actually one reason for the gender differences in religiousness. This finding suggests that most females in our sample are at a higher level of religious thinking than male respondents of the same age.

The intercorrelations between the five dimensions of religious judgment reveal that adolescents evaluated statements according to the “religious – non-religious” dichotomy. The nuances between statements representing different stages of religious judgment are not clarified in their minds. This result is a challenging task for the further development of the RJT. Luckily, there are many ways to examine the RJT data in more detail; the distributions of individual statements can be studied separately (without using mean and deviations) and new data should be gathered. People of different ages and varying religious backgrounds can probably broaden the understanding of religiousness and the reliability of the RJT might increase as well.

An interesting question is how much school teaching, on one hand, and family upbringing, on the other, influence religiousness. The results of this study show that the family has a greater impact on adolescent religiousness than the school. Previous research supports the findings of the study at hand. According to Spilka and his colleagues, few researchers argue with the conclusion that parents are the most important influence when it comes to developing religious attitudes and practices in their offspring. When Canadian university students and older people were asked to rate the 10 strongest religious influences in their lives, both the students and older persons ranked their mothers and fathers first and third, respectively. School was ranked ninth and eighth (Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger & Gorsuch 2003).

When we estimate the RJT and this research process in its entity, the results are promising. Compared with earlier results, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) of the RJT have improved. In the 2004 RJT survey (see Räsänen, Tirri & Nokelainen 2004; 2007), they varied between .55 and .77, and most recently they were .77 to .89. The developing process of the test has brought good outcomes. However, new data are needed to further develop the RJT. At the moment we have only Finnish data and an international comparative survey would be interesting, and equally useful for continuing the development of the RJT. Large age comparisons are also necessary.

Antti Räsänen is a Professor of Religious Education at the University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu Campus. He is also a docent at the University of Helsinki, Finland. He worked as a classroom teacher before starting his university career. His main areas of specialisation are Psychology of Religion, Religious Education, Teacher Training, Practical Theology and Childhood and Youth Research. More information: www.uef.fi/filtdk/skope-joensuun-henkilosto antti.j.rasanen@uef.fi
References

Bucher, A. (1985) Development of Religious Identity: Religious Judgment, its Stages and its Genesis. Provisional Translation Copyright.

Bucher, A. (1996) Bedingt kirchlich – massiv sinkend: Alterstrend in der Einstellung zu Religion und Christentum bei 2700 österreichischen Schülerinnen und Schülern. Teoksessa Oser, F. K. & Reich, H. K. (eds.) Eingebettet ins Menschsein: Beispiel Religion. Aktuelle psychologische Studien zur Entwicklung von Religiosität. Lengerich: Pabst Science Publishers.

Bucher, A. & Reich, H. K. (1986) Stufen religiöser Entwicklung: Fakten oder Fiktionen? In Bucher, A. & Reich, H. K. (eds.) Entwicklung von Religiosität: Grundlagen, Theorieprobleme, praktische Anwendung. Freiburg (Schweiz): Universitätsverlag.

Denton, M., Pearce, L. D. & Smith, C. (2008) Religion and Spirituality on the Path Through Adolescence. Research Report No. 8. National Study of Youth and Religion. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Fetz, R. L. & Bucher, A. (1987) Stufen religiöser Entwicklung? Eine rekonstruktive Kritik an Fritz Oser/Paul Gmünder, Der Mensch - Stufen seiner religiösen Entwicklung. Ein strukturgenetischer Ansatz. In Biehl, P., Bizer, C., Heimbrock, H-G. & Rickers, F. (eds.) Jahrbuch der Religionspädagogik. Band 3 (1986). Neukirchen-Vluyn (Germany): Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins GmbH.

Fowler, J. W. & Dell, M. L. (2006). Stages of Faith from Infancy through Adolescence: Reflections on Three Decades of Faith Development Theory (34–45). In: Roehlkepartain, Eugene J., King, Pamela E., Wagener, L. & Benson, Peter L. (eds.) The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Krejci, M. J. (1998) Gender Comparison of God Schemas: A Multidimensional Scaling Analysis. The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion 8(1), 57–66.

Levenson, M. R., Aldwin, C. R. & D’Mello, M. (2005) Religious Development from Adolescence to Middle Adulthood. In: Paloutzian, R.F. & Park, C. L. (eds.) Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality. New York: The Guilford Press.

Lind, G. & Wakenhut, R. (1985) Testing for Moral Judgment Competence. Teoksessa Lind, G., Hartmann, H. A. & Wakenhut, R. (eds.) Moral Development and the Social Environment. Studies in the Philosophy and Psychology of Moral Judgment and Education. Chicago: Precedent Publishing Inc.

Mikkola, T., Niemelä, K. & Petterson, J. (2007) The Questioning Mind. Faith and Values of the New Generation. Publ. No. 58. Tampere (Finland): Church Research Institute.

Oser, F. K. (1980). Stages of Religious Judgment. In: Brusselmans, C. (ed.) Toward Moral and Religious Maturity. The First international Conference on Moral and Religious Development. (pp. 277-315.) Morristown (USA): Silver Burdett Company.

Oser, F. K. (1991). The Development of Religious Judgment. In Oser, F. K. & Scarlett, W. G. (eds.) Religious Development in Childhood and Adolescence. New Directions for Child Development. No. 52, Summer 1991. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Oser, F. & Althof, W. (1992) Moralische Selbstbestimmung. Modelle der Entwicklung und Erziehung im Wertebereich. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Oser, F. & Gmünder, P. (1991). Religious judgment: a developmental perspective. Translation of Der Mensch-Stufen seiner religiösen Entwicklung made by Norbert F. Hahn. Birmingham (USA): Religious Education Press Inc.

Reich, K. H. (1991) The Role of Complementary Reasoning in Religious Development. In Oser, F. K. & Scarlett, W. G. (eds.) Religious Development in Childhood and Adolescence. New Directions for Child Development. No. 52, Summer 1991. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
Antti Räsänen

Reich, H. K. (1992) Religious Development Across The Life Span: Conventional and Cognitive Developmental Approaches. In Featherman, D. L., Lerner R. M. & Perlmutter, M. (eds.) Life-Span Development and Behaviour. Volume II. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erbaum Associates Publishers.

Rest, J. (1979) Development in Judging Moral Issues. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

Räsänen, A. (2002) Aikuisen uskonnollisuus. Tutkimus Fritz Oserin uskonnollisen arvioinnin kehityksen teoriasta ja sen pätevyystä aikuisilla suomalaisilla koehenkilöillä. [Religiousness in Adulthood. A Study of Fritz Oser’s theory of the Development of Religious Judgment and Finnish Religiousness; in Finnish; Doctoral Dissertation]. http://ethesis.helsinki.fi. Helsinki (Finland).

Räsänen, A. (2003). Das religiöse Urteil und die Glaubensvorstellungen: Eine finnische Untersuchung. Archiv für Religionspsychologie 24, 194–215.

Räsänen, A. (2004). Usko itsenäistyvän nuoren elämässä. [Faith in Adolescent’s Life; in Finnish] In Aaltonen, H., Pruuki, L. & Saarainen, P. (eds.) Rippikoulun käsikirja. Helsinki: Kirjapaja. (103-128).

Räsänen, A., Tirri, K., & Nokelainen, P. (2004). The Differences in Religious Thinking between Gifted Students and Average-ability Students. In Proceedings of Educational Technology for Gifted Education: From Information Age to Knowledge Era Conference. European Council for High Ability.

Räsänen, A., Tirri, K. & Nokelainen, P. (2007). Religious Thinking and Giftedness. In: Tirri, K. & Ubani, M. (eds.) Holistic Education and Giftedness. Käytännöllisen teologian laitoksen julkaisuja 111. Helsingin yliopisto.

Schweitzer, F. & Bucher, A. A. (1989) Schwierigkeiten mit Religion. Zur subjektiven Wahrnehmung religiöser Entwicklung. In: Bucher, A. A. & Reich, H. K. (eds.) Entwicklung von Religiosität: Grundlagen, Theorieprobleme, praktische Anwendung. Freiburg (Schweiz): Universitätsverlag.

Spilka, B., Hood, R.W., Hunsberger, B. & Gorsuch, R. (2003) The Psychology of Religion. An Empirical Approach. New York: The Guilford Press.

Stark, R. (2002). Physiology and Faith: Addressing the “Universal” Gender Difference in Religious Commitment. Journal of Scientific Study of Religion 41(3), 495–507.

Tamminen, K. (1994). Religious Experiences in Childhood and Adolescence: A Viewpoint of Religious Development between Ages of 7 and 20. The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion 4(2), 61-85.

Tamminen, K. (1996). Gender differences in religiosity in children and adolescents. In Francis, L. J., Kay, W.K. & Campbell, W. S. (eds.) Research in Religious Education. Herefordshire (UK): Gracewing.

Vergote, A. (1970). Religionspsychologie. Olten: Walter-Verlag.

Vossen, E. H. J. M. (1988) Chronicle. Stages of religious development: fact or fiction? Journal of Empirical Theology 1(1), 77

Wink, P., Ciciolla, L., Dillon, M. & Tracy, A. (2007) Religiousness, Spiritual Seeking, and Personality: Findings from a Longitudinal Study. Journal of Personality 75(5), 1051–1070.