

# Cognitive Complexity, Religious Cognition, Cognitive Development, and Religious Judgment: An Empirical Study of Relationships Amongst “Normal” and “Gifted” Young People

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This study examined whether level of cognitive complexity in religious cognition, using measures rooted in the Model of Hierarchical Complexity, mediates the relationship between level of general cognitive development, and religious judgment, in children and adolescents. The study was conducted with 189 children and adolescents drawn from Catholic schools in France. General cognitive development level was measured using the WISC and WAIS. Level of cognitive complexity in religious cognition was measured using the *Religious Cognition Questionnaire: Pastor-Parishioner Scenario* (RCQ). Religious judgment levels were measured using the *Religious Reflection Questionnaire* (RRQ). Results indicate that the relationship between IQ and religious judgment is mediated by level of complexity in religious cognition. The results provide further empirical evidence for the conceptual validity and research utility of the Model of Hierarchical Complexity in the domain of religious cognition, and the power of the concept of complexity in religious cognition for explaining relationships between general cognitive development using IQ measures and other domains where the judgment of social, moral, and philosophical issues are concerned. The results also provide further empirical evidence for the distinctive, and relatively advanced, capacity of gifted young people to think critically about religious and philosophical issues.

*Keywords:* cognitive complexity, religious judgment, gifted children

Recent decades have seen a significant rise in the number of studies focusing on gifted children, their cognitive and emotional functioning, and educational strategies that might support their cognitive, affective, and social development. There is general agreement that scores superior to 130 on standard measures of intelligence, such as the WISC–III, WISC-IV, WAIS-III, and WAIS-IV constitute the baseline criterion for some to qualify as gifted (Grégoire, 2010; Grégoire, Vlieghe, & Lebrun, 2010).

Meanwhile, cognitive ability measured by IQ is not the only element characterizing the functioning of gifted individuals. Costa and McCrae (2007) showed that the gifted are more likely to entertain novel ideas, and to adopt nonconventional attitudes and values compared with their nongifted peers. Piirto, Montgomery, and May (2008) demonstrated that intellectually gifted subjects showed significantly higher levels of emotional hyperstimulability. Kalbfleisch (2009) showed that elevated IQ levels in the gifted range were associated with precocity of maturation in the frontal cortex region of the brain. They furthermore showed that this earlier brain development was associated with gifted children’s and adolescents’ capacity to perceive with exceptional clarity and lucidity elements in the world and in social functioning which largely escaped the notice of their nongifted peers. This is consistent with Gregoire’s (2009) assertion that gifted persons’ cognition is characterized by reflexive thinking, and Gregoire et al.’s (2010) finding that gifted individuals ob-

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tained significantly higher scores on « openness » measures of personality on the *Brief Big Five* (BB5) scale. Kieboom (2011) clearly showed that gifted people show a particularly acute and more highly developed concern with questions of social justice. Silverman (2013) remarked that the development of gifted children and adolescents is characterized by asynchronous patterns; if their intellectual development is markedly accelerated compared with nongifted peers, their emotional development is not. If anecdotal evidence reported in the clinical and popular literature have suggested that gifted children and adolescents were particularly given to preoccupations with classical philosophical and religious questions, there has been little or no empirical evidence, until now, to support this observation.

### Religious Cognition and Gifted Young People: From Anecdotal Observation to Empirical Evidence

What is religious cognition, and how has it been measured? What measures might be appropriate for examining how gifted children and adolescents think about religious issues, and whether there are significant differences between their functioning in religious cognition compared with nongifted peers? To address this question, we review, briefly, some of the relevant literature, a widely used model of religious judgment, and more recent contributions, drawing from the Model of Hierarchical Complexity, exploring relative complexity in thinking about religious questions and issues.

Day and Naedts (1995) summarize the widely used concept of *religious judgment* (Oser, Gmünder, & Ridez, 1991), rooted in the *cognitive-developmental* tradition, as follows:

Oser defines religious judgment as a kind of cognitive pattern of religious knowing of reality. What makes religious knowing possible is a deep ‘mother-structure’ that is a basic religious-cognitive structure. This fundamental structure is universal, and underlies whatever specific religion or even atheistic position comes into view when religious questions are discussed. Its aspects are, for example, searching for the meaning of life, hope, freedom, transcendence, eternity. Contextual factors, culture-specific and time-specific content, as well as different forms of religious socialization shape the mother-structure, at least in the influence the features have on the rate of development of certain individuals, or groups of individuals in a given society. (pp. 6–7)

In Oser’s view, what counts in measuring a person’s development in religious cognition is not their adherence to a particular faith position, or membership in a religious or spiritual group, tradition, movement, or set of practices, but the quality of their justifications in judging religious questions, issues, and dilemmas where religious elements are at play. For Oser and his colleagues, religious questions include meaning in life, sources of hope in living, human freedom, questions about transcendence, and notions of eternity, or the eternal (Day, 2011b).

In speaking of *religious cognition* we are concerned with how people cope with, and mobilize, both numbers and complexity of variables when considering religious questions, and dilemmas where religious elements are concerned. The number, and complexity, of variables employed by a person faced with the need to resolve a practical problem or hypothetical dilemma in experimental settings constitutes their level of complexity in religious cognition (Day, 2013c).

Instruments used in the assessment of developmental levels in religious judgment (Oser, Day & Naedts) and complexity of religious cognition (Day), have their roots in the cognitive-developmental research and models of Piaget (1932) concerning cognitive development and development in moral judgment. As is widely known, Piaget conceived cognitive development as moving through a series of structural transformations, moving from relative heteronomy to relative autonomy in the capacity to manage information, consider and operate on variables both concrete and symbolic, form judgments, and solve intellectual and practical problems. Piaget regarded *moral judgment development* as a universal category of cognition, because all people, regardless of context, are confronted with, and use language to describe, questions of fairness, equity, and justice. In judging moral issues, Piaget held, humans have the potential as they do in other domains of development, to move toward increased autonomy, and the ability to take increasing numbers of perspectives into account in solving both hypothetical and real moral problems. Kohlberg’s elaboration of Piaget’s initial insights and research, and subsequent studies using Kohlberg’s, and Kohlbergian measures (see, e.g., Gibbs, Basinger, Grime, & Snarey, 2007 review of the literature) of thousands of chil-

dren, adolescents, and adults, broadly confirmed Piaget's vision, further developed Piaget's model to include three developmental levels (preconventional, conventional, postconventional), each with two stages, and convincingly demonstrated relationships between moral judgment, and moral action; the levels described by Kohlberg have been shown to be universal (see, e.g., Snarey's (1985) review of 35 studies in 27 countries, and Gibbs' meta-analytic study, alluded to above, of scores of studies from across the globe showing the robustness of the model) and with increases in moral judgment development come more pro-social behavior, greater resistance to temptation, lower levels of delinquency, and more adept strategies of coming to fair and caring solutions for real-life problems (Day, 2011b; Gibbs et al., 2007).

Influenced by Kohlberg's contributions in the domain of moral judgment, Oser et al. (1991) formulated a model of religious judgment development comprising 5 stages.

### **I. Orientation of Religious Heteronomy (Deus ex Machina)**

God is understood as active, intervening unexpectedly in the world. The human being is reactive. The ultimate being is all-powerful and makes things happen.

### **II. Orientation of "Do ut Des" (Give So That You May Receive)**

God is still an all-powerful being, who may either punish or reward. The human being can, however, influence him by good deeds, promises, and vows.

### **III. Orientation of Ego Autonomy and One-Sided Responsibility (Deism)**

God's influence is consciously reduced. Transcendence and immanence are separated from each other. The human being is autonomous, responsible for his and her life in the world. Religious and other authorities are often rejected.

### **IV. Mediated Autonomy and Salvation Plan**

The human being has an indirect relationship with the Ultimate Being, which gives meaning and hope and the possibility of human freedom.

Various forms of religiousness emerge, all accepting a divine plan that bring things to a good end.

### **V. Orientation to Religious Intersubjectivity and Autonomy**

Universal and unconditional religiosity. Transcendence and immanence interact completely. The Ultimate Being is present in a very human commitment and in intersubjective action. Solidarity with all human beings.

The *Religious Reflection Questionnaire* (RRQ; Day & Naedts, 1995; Day, 2011b) is an empirically robust instrument for the measurement of Oser's concept of religious judgment, developed in collaboration with Oser's research group at the University of Freiburg (Switzerland).

Our measure for *complexity of religious cognition* is also rooted in Piaget's initial research and insights into the nature and development of human cognition, and draws from the neo-Piagetian research and theoretical contributions embodied in the *Model of Hierarchical Complexity (MHC)* elaborated by Commons and Richards (1984) and their *general theory of development*. Commons and Richards validated the stages laid out by Piaget, and showing that there exist 15 stages of cognitive development, including four post-formal stages (that is, four stages more complex than that of formal operations proposed by Piaget). The theoretical power and empirical precision afforded by the MHC make it particularly appealing for considering organismic development across species, and more precise modeling for cognition-action relationships across a variety of domains as Commons and Richards (2003) and Commons and Pekkers (2004) have demonstrated. Day's (2007b) *Religious Cognition Questionnaire: Pastor-Parishioner Scenario*, (RCQ) is an empirical instrument for the measurement of cognitive complexity in religious cognition (Brandt, 2013; Day, 2011b, 2013a, 2013b).

### **Empirical Testing**

The study reported here was conducted to better understand relationships among intellectual development, religious judgment, and com-

plexity in religious cognition, as well as to appreciate whether there was accelerated development in religious judgment and complexity of religious cognition in gifted young people as compared with their normal peers. Studying gifted children and adolescents as well as non-gifted peers allowed a broad range of IQ scores and relatively higher scores in the sample than had we conducted our study in a group without a high percentage of gifted participants. For the sake of this article, we report only the data pertinent to the hypothesis that cognitive complexity in religious cognition influences the relationship between IQ and religious judgment scores.

To accomplish this, we asked whether intellectual development (measured by IQ) predicted religious judgment (measured by the RRQ) levels, and whether the relationship between IQ and religious judgment was mediated by complexity of religious cognition, as represented in Figure 1.

### Method

This study is part of a larger research project on gifted children's and adolescents' psychological development, especially their sense of justice, and related issues pertaining to their intellectual, affective, and social development, integration, and education.

### Participants

Participants were drawn from Roman Catholic schools in France whose directors and governing boards are cooperating with us in the

larger research project. It should be noted, that though the schools are Catholic, courses on religion, and moral philosophy, are optional, and thus not required. Being in a Catholic school, in highly secular France, doesn't mean one's parents attend church, or adhere to Christian, let alone Roman Catholic, dogmas, doctrines, or are otherwise involved with organized religion. Our sample contains a broad diversity on measures of religious affiliation and participation, from children whose parents are actively engaged in attending church and integrate religion into everyday family life, to those whose parents aren't at all involved in religion, and who have no acquaintance with religious belief or practice from their home settings.

One hundred ninety-two pupils participated in our research. Their participation was entirely voluntary. None were required to participate, and no reward was offered for their involvement. All the subjects were from middle, upper-middle, or upper-class families. Only two didn't respond to the RRQ questionnaire, and one didn't respond to the RCQ. Thus our sample consisted of 189 pupils ( $N = 189$ ). All were native French-speakers.

Of the 189 subjects, 122 were not classified as gifted ( $M_{IQ} = 107.34$ ,  $SD_{IQ} = 13.072$ , IQ range: 80–129,  $M_{age} = 13.799$ ,  $SD_{age} = 1.8280$ , age range: 10.0–18.5 years, 72 boys and 50 girls), and 67 were classified as gifted ( $M_{IQ} = 142.22$ ,  $SD_{IQ} = 7.521$ , IQ range: 131–160,  $M_{age} = 13.231$ ,  $SD_{age} = 1.6057$ , age range: 9.0–17.0 years, 48 boys and 19 girls). In these schools the content of school programming is

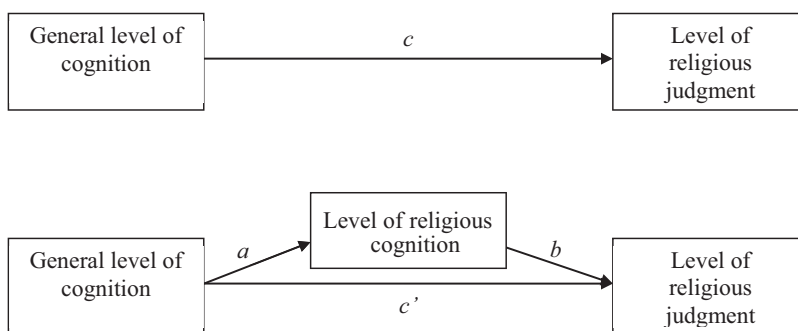


Figure 1. Model of mediation explaining the relationship between general cognition level (IQ) and religious judgment level.

exactly the same for the gifted and nongifted pupils.

We collected information on, and controlled for the type of religious/philosophical education received at home which we classified in four categories; atheist, no particular religion or defined world view, religious belief without participation in organized religion, and religious belief with participation in organized religion. We also controlled for whether the pupils attended optional religious or moral education courses. Religious belief and involvement, and participation in religious and moral education scores neither predicted, nor were otherwise correlated with levels of religious judgment development in statistical analyses looking at these two variables.

### Procedures

All of the pupils' parents gave written consent to their children's participation in the larger research project, and to this specific study. All of the questionnaires were completed under the supervision of the first author, and were completed within one hour's time.

### Instruments

**IQ.** Age appropriate, French-language instruments were used: WISC-III (Wechsler, 1996), WISC-IV (Wechsler, 2005), or WAIS-IV (Wechsler, 2008). In a few cases where reliable scores were not available from previous testing, the Abbreviated IQ Measure was used (Grégoire, 2007), consisting of four subtests (Similarities, Number and Letter Sequences, Matrices, and Symbols).

**Religious judgment development levels.** Level of religious judgment development was measured using the *Religious Reflection Questionnaire* (RRQ; Day & Naedts, 1995). This questionnaire, is based on the model of religious judgment development as conceived by Oser et al. (1991) as outlined above, and has excellent concurrent validity with the original Religious Judgment Interview used in their research. The questionnaire presents six dilemmas containing religious content presented as open questions. The measure was constructed to permit testing with large numbers of children, adolescents, and adults, and to permit comparisons with moral judgment scores obtained using the Socio-Moral Reflection Questionnaire developed

by Gibbs et al. (Day, 2010; Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992). In keeping with Oser's neo-Kohlbergian conceptions of stage and structure in his understanding of religious judgment, here the assessment of religious judgment level isn't based on the content of subjects' religious beliefs, but on the structural features of their argumentation in responding to the open-ended questions, and in justifying their responses to the presented dilemmas.

The score obtained ranges from stage structures on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 to 5, derived from analyses of stage structure present in the participants' responses. Every response is assigned a stage score, and the mean score for the six responses is calculated.

**Level of cognitive complexity in religious cognition.** Levels of cognitive complexity in religious cognition were measured using the *Religious Cognition Questionnaire: Pastor-Parishioner Scenario* (RCQ; Day, 2007a, 2008), an instrument based on the Model of Hierarchical Complexity. In this questionnaire, subjects are confronted with five ways pastors give advice in a scenario in which a parishioner seeks help from a pastor (in other uses of the questionnaire, we have successfully substituted *priest, imam, rabbi*, etc. in function of the religious context where the instrument was employed) for help in solving what the parishioner takes to be a serious problem. It is explicitly stated in the questionnaire that (a) all five pastors devote the same amount and care of attention to the parishioner's request, (b) all five pastors recommend the same content of solution, and (c) the differences across the pastors' advice is only a matter of the way they frame the problem and propose solutions.

Five pastors' framing of problems and solutions are assessed by the subjects, each corresponding to one of five stages of the Model of Hierarchical Complexity (MHC), then employed as five development stages in cognitive complexity in religious cognition: Pastor Brown's advice is associated with the *concrete stage*; Pastor Kent frames a solution at the *abstract stage*; Pastor Bower proposes a *formal stage* way of solving the problem; Pastor Flynn's framing corresponds to the *systematic stage*; and Pastor Allen offers a *metasystematic* assessment of the parishioner's problem. The order in which the pastors' responses are presented to the participants is out of order from

the stage ordering: concrete, metacognitive, abstract, systematic, and formal. No mention of stage is included in the questionnaire. Subjects are asked to rank the pastors' responses on a 5-point scale ranging from *extremely bad* to *extremely good*. Subjects' responses are evaluated on the basis of their capacity to align the responses of extremely bad to extremely good on the grounds of hierarchy of complexity involved. If they rank the pastors' responses from 1 to 5 corresponding to the lowest to highest stages in complexity, they obtain a score of 5. The stages in order of increasing complexity in keeping with the Model of Hierarchical Complexity are *concrete*, *abstract*, *formal*, *systematic*, and *metacognitive*. Previous studies showed robust validity in both the conception of the stage structures in the descriptions of the pastors' responses, and that nearly all subjects in the validation studies using religious diverse samples from Belgium, England, and the U.S.A. selected preferred stages as extremely good, and ranked the corresponding lower stages in descending order of preference, entirely in keeping with the logic of the Model of Hierarchical Complexity (Day, 2008, 2011a, 2011b, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c).

### Data Analysis

To test the mediating effect of level of complexity in religious cognition on the relationship between IQ and religious judgment, the model of mediation of Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. The model we tested is found in Figure 1. According to the model,  $a$  represents the direct effect of the independent variable on the mediating variable, whereas  $b$  represents the direct effect of the mediating variable on the dependent variable, without taking the independent variable into account. The independent effect of the independent variable is calculated as the product of  $a \times b$ . Thus,  $c = a \times b + c'$ . This model permits both the testing of the total effect and the direct effect of IQ on religious judgment, as well as the indirect effect of cognitive complexity in religious cognition on religious judgment.

As Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1177) point out, applying this model requires doing three regression equations: the first concerning the mediating variable on the independent variable; the second measuring the independent var-

iable's impact on the dependent variable; and the third on the dependent variable in relationship to both the independent variable and the mediating variable. To establish the existence of mediating effects, Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1177) indicate that three conditions must be satisfied in order to conclude that there is such an effect: (a) The relationship between the independent variable and the mediating variable must be significant in the first equation; (b) The relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable must be significant in the second equation; and (c) The relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable must be significant in the third equation. If these three conditions are satisfied and the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is weaker in the third equation than in the second, that is, if  $c' < c$ , then the effects are established as being in the direction predicted in the model.

To conclude that there is a significant indirect effect ( $a \times b$ ), we did two procedures, following Hayes (2013): (a) We did a Sobel test to calculate an estimate of the margin of error of  $a \times b$  to obtain a confidence interval for the indirect effect; and (b) did a *bootstrapping* SPSS analysis, employing macro PROCESS by generation, and random sampling of 10,000 samples.

### Results

We tested a model with general level of cognition (IQ) as the predictor variable, religious judgment as the dependent variable, and level of religious cognition as proposed mediator.

Using Baron and Kenny's (1986) verification procedures, we obtained the following results: (a) First, we did a simple linear regression analysis between IQ and Cognitive Complexity in Religious Cognition on scores obtained from the Pastor-Parishioner Scenario, observing a significant relationship ( $a = 0.032$ ,  $SE_a = 0.003$ ,  $p < .001$ ). (b) Next, we did a simple linear regression analysis for the relationship between IQ and Religious Judgment obtained from the Religious Reflection Questionnaire. Again, the relationship was significant ( $c = 0.007$ ,  $SE_c = 0.001$ ,  $p < .001$ ). (c) We then conducted a multiple regression analysis, looking at both religious judgment level, complexity of religious cognition, and IQ, finding the cor-

relation between level of complexity in religious cognition and religious judgment level to be significant ( $b = 0.159$ ,  $SE_b = 0.029$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas the correlation between IQ and religious judgment level became nonsignificant ( $c' = 0.002$ ,  $SE_{c'} = 0.001$ , *ns*). (d) The effect of IQ on religious judgment level was inferior to the total effect size  $c = 0.007$ , signifying that the effects of the different variables upon one another corresponded to our hypotheses about them.

Using the Sobel test to obtain the level of confidence for the indirect effect of IQ on religious judgment level, one finds that the indirect effect is equal to  $a + b = 0.032 \times 0.159 = 0.0051$  and that the margin of error is equal to  $SE_{ab} = 0.0010$ . The interval of confidence at 95% is [0.0030 – 0.0072]. The fact that the confidence intervals excluded zero indicates a significant indirect effect. Thus one can affirm that with a risk of error of 5% that the indirect effect of IQ on religious judgment would probably hold in the general population as well as in our sample.

Using SPSS *bootstrapping* applications, involving macro PROCESS generating techniques, and random selection, of 10,000 samples, one finds that the indirect effect = 0.0051, and that the margin of error on this indirect effect equals  $SE_{ab} = 0.0009$ . The confidence interval at 95% est [0.0034 – 0.0070].

The two methods produce convergent results and allow confirmation that the indirect effect of IQ on religious judgment level as mediated by level of complexity in religious cognition is significant. Moreover,  $R^2 = 0.299$ , signifying

that the mediating variable of complexity of religious cognition explains 30% of the variance level of general cognition as measured by IQ and level of religious judgment.

The mediating effect of complexity in religious cognition on the relationship between IQ and religious judgment is illustrated in Figure 2.

### Interpretation

1. With every significant increment in IQ, the model predicts that complexity in religious cognition will increase by an incremental value of 0.032.
2. When IQ is controlled, the model predicts that with every significant increment in complexity of religious cognition, there will be a corresponding incremental value of 0.159 in religious judgment level.
3. When complexity in religious cognition is controlled, the model predicts an increment in IQ will produce a corresponding increment of 0.002 in religious judgment.

The effect of IQ can be understood in two parts: (a) Direct effect of IQ on religious judgment (without considering the mediating effect of complexity in religious cognition) coefficient  $c' = 0.002$ . (b) An indirect effect of IQ on religious judgment level (via the mediating variable of complexity in religious cognition):  $a$  via  $b$ , or  $0.032 \times 0.159 = 0.005$ .

The total effect = direct effect + indirect effect =  $c = c' + a \times b = 0.002 + 0.033 \times 0.155 = 0.007$ .

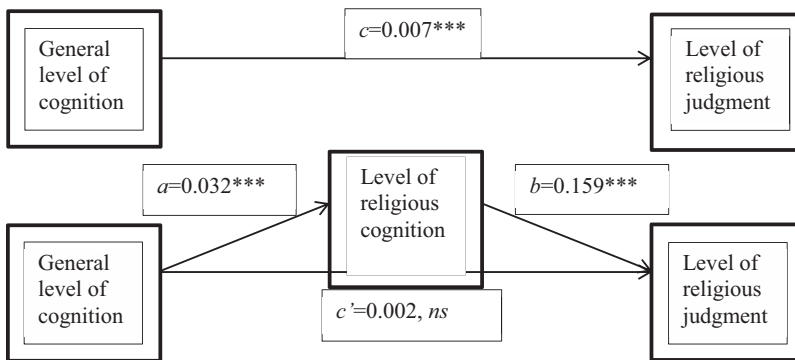


Figure 2. Model of mediation explaining the relationship between general cognition level (IQ) and religious judgment level. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

In this light, we need to conceive of partial mediating effects because the introduction into the model of the mediating variable (CR for complexity of religious cognition) doesn't entirely nullify the direct effect of IQ on the dependent variable RR (religious judgment).

It is thus clear that the relationship between IQ and religious judgment is mediated by the variable of complexity of religious cognition.

### Discussion

This study examined the mediating effect of complexity in religious cognition on the relationship between general cognition, as measured by IQ, and religious judgment levels. This model of mediation was tested on a sample of francophone adolescents with a large spectrum of IQ scores. The results show that complexity in religious cognition, as measured using an instrument rooted in the Model of Hierarchical Complexity, has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between IQ and religious judgment level.

From this research, it seems clear that the relationship between IQ and religious judgment levels is mediated by level of complexity in religious cognition. Although there is a clear correlation between IQ and religious judgment development, and some direct of IQ on religious judgment, complexity of religious cognition mediates this relationship in an important way. Increases in IQ, alone, does not account for increase in ability to explain a person's reasoning in solutions they articulate in the face of dilemmas with religious content. With greater capacity for managing, assessing, and producing cognitive complexity in religiously specific contexts, subjects add to the power of general cognition, as measured by IQ, for arriving at solutions to hypothetical, and, potentially, real-life, problems, where religious elements are involved.

This research also lends further evidence to the utility of Day's (2007a, 2008, 2010, 2011b, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c) construct of complexity in religious cognition, and its utility in understanding relationships among stage, structure, and problem-solving where religious elements are involved in intellectual, interpersonal, and social dilemmas, with repercussions for understanding both psychological development and implications for applied domains such as social,

moral, and religious education, as well as clinical practice and pastoral accompaniment in religious settings.

A key feature of the Model of Hierarchical Complexity, and of Day's complexity in religious cognition measure, is its insistence that development involves increments in capacity for both numbers, and complexity of variables involved in problem-solving. In Day's measure, higher levels involve the capacity to consider increasing numbers and complexity in the perspectives that might be involved in a problem-solving dilemma, as taken into account (or not) by the « pastor » and his or her way of proposing ways for assessing and solving the issues involved. This perspective-taking ability is more elaborated in the MCH-cognitive complexity measure of religious cognition than in Oser et al.'s model of religious judgment development. This may be a key component in understanding, in keeping with Piaget's, and Kohlberg's appreciation of role-taking as a key component in intellectual and interpersonal-social development both for the appreciation of hypothetical dilemmas and with applications, and effects on behavior, in real-life problem-solving situations, pro-social behavior, and the like. In our case, Oser's privileged « end point » of universalism is served by the increasing capacity for perspective-taking evidenced in what is measured by the complexity of religious cognition measures.

Finally, this research, and the larger project from which it is drawn, shows convincingly that the MHC-inspired measure of complexity in religious cognition can be used with children and adolescents, and that hypothesis-testing regarding differences in judging moral issues and thinking about classical philosophical problems and dilemmas involving religious content, between gifted and nongifted.

### Conclusion

For years scholars in psychological science, especially in the psychology of human development, and the psychology of religion, have been interested in the question how psychological science can contribute to understanding religious behavior, including how people think about religion, and how they behave in the face of dilemmas involving religious elements and issues, whether hypothetical dilemmas, or real-



life intrapersonal, relational, or interpersonal and social problems. Oser's concept of religious judgment, rooted in Kohlberg's elaborations of Piaget's work in moral judgment development, arguing that there is a « deep structure » of thinking people do about what are classically considered « religious » concerns and questions, has been an important contribution to related quests and debates. More recently, the Model of Hierarchical Complexity and elaborations in Day's modeling of complexity in religious cognition have made contributions to these same considerations. The research reported in this article helps us understand the relationship between the two constructs, and their relationship to general intellectual development, showing that complexity in religious cognition mediates the relationship between IQ and religious judgment. This opens the way to further research on how complexity in religious cognition, and religious judgment, develop, and for further research and practical contributions to applied-developmental psychology.

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