Interpersonal Negotiation Styles and Dealing with Religious Diversity. Conceptual Clarification and New Empirical Evidence

by

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CONTENT

ABSTRACT

The paper addresses the question of developmental-stylistic preconditions for the capacity of dealing with religious diversity. Based upon the author's previous typological portrayal of inter-personal and inter-religious negotiation styles – which have emerged from a critical divergence from, and a constructive modification of, Fowler's faith development theory –, the paper presents both further conceptual clarification, but, perhaps even more importantly, new empirical evidence. For conceptual clarification, prominence is given to philosophical reflections on the relation to the Other, the Strange (xenosophy) and its consequences for inter-religious dialog. Empirical evidence is based on questionnaire data and faith development interviews from a large sample of research participants from Germany and the USA. The conceptual clarification and the empirical evidence for the profile of inter-religious negotiation styles and their arrangement in a developmental model finally leads to conclusions about the chances of nurturing capacities needed for dealing with religious diversity in the classroom communication in religious education.

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What do children, adolescents and adults have to learn in order to be prepared for religious diversity? Can we describe developmental trajectories and learning processes? What are the most excellent models delineating the avenues toward an increasingly adequate way of dealing with religious diversity? What are the preconditions for such developments? Can we, as a first step, identify corresponding developments in other domains such as inter-personal negotiations?

In this text, I address this series of questions and present my answers. I shall present theoretical contours and some empirical evidence of my model of inter-religious negotiation styles. Issues of inter-religious negotiations, in turn, may be a perfect occasion for discussing the practical and societal relevance of the faith development perspective – especially when we reconstruct faith development theory in terms of religious styles.

Most religious educators' first association with the theme of inter-religious negotiations may be the classroom: children's and adolescents' ways of dealing with religious diversity, dealing with the other religion. This is an important focus also here in my text and I shall draw some conclusions for religious education at the end, but I want to highlight, from the start, that inter-religious negotiations have preconditions and consequences which by far transcend the interpretative realm of an educational setting which we create for children and adolescents and in which societal praxis appears mostly as themes to get to know, come to terms with, reflect upon and construct hypothetical proposals for ethical action. We do not need to refer to genocides, terrorism or fundamentalist violence in which religion plays a generic role to call attention to the practical relevance and necessity of advanced inter-religious negotiation styles. Many conflict situations in the small life worlds, on the communal level of society and in religious organizations underscore that it is the realm of *praxis* in which the development of inter-religious negotiation styles has its relevance and should stand the test.

1   Inter-Religious Relations: Toward a Concept of Dialog

1.1   From 'Multi-' to 'Inter-'Religious Relations

What do children, adolescents and adults have to learn in order to be prepared for religious diversity? Many, if not the majority, spontaneously answer to this question: They have to learn *tolerance*. Certainly, tolerance is a great achievement over against attitudes of dominance and acts of violence, suppression or expulsion. But it has the connotation: an oppressor generously withdraws from a position of dominance and control. In many conflicting regions today, it certainly would be great step of détente, if all would agree to a statement like: "everybody has a right to live – even in my neighbourhood," but tolerance does not need to go beyond indifference, unconcern or religious relativism. We may imagine a still better world.

In regard to religious education, we acknowledge that objective information about the other may promote tolerance and understanding, even if it works with an approach of objectification. From this perspective, the so-called "systems approach" (cf. Hull, 1996) or the "multi-religious" model (cf. van der Ven & Ziebertz, 1995) deserves recognition – even though religious educators should envision a still better world and should initiate learning processes which are not restricted to factual knowledge, but transcend objectification of the Other and the other religion. As approach to such vision, a proposal has gained recognition: the inter-religious model. Inter-religious learning is defined by the change of perspectives. In contrast to mono-religious and multi-religious learning, inter-religious learning, according to van der Ven and Ziebertz, consist in a double, reciprocal interpretation of one's own and the other's religion by oneself and by the other. Students, van der Ven and Ziebertz propose, should be able to see and argue for their own religion not only from their own religion's perspective, but from the other religious framework, to see one's own religion not only with one's own eyes, but also with the eyes of the other, in another religious frame.

This definition and profile of inter-religious learning is a significant step forward when viewed on the background of the multi-religious and mono-religious models. There is more in inter-religious

communication and dialogue than an exchange of truth claims from an objective third-person perspective: a perspective change which may involve the attempt to (rationally) reconstruct the truth of the partner in communication in his or her own terms.

But there is also non-understanding.[1] The truth of the other may appear as embedded in a foreign rationality. Therefore, the question needs to be asked: When 'interpretation' and 'understanding' are the main key concepts, where is the account for non-understanding, perplexity, irritation, feelings of strangeness and possible misinterpretation? Could inter-religious encounter also lead to a double reciprocal experience of foreignness? It is just because of my high regard for the inter-religious model, that I propose a qualification and suggest to transcend the hermeneutical model of perspective change. Perspective change as the hermeneutical attempt to take the perspective of the other is very valuable, but it would be more valuable, if account for irritation and the experience of strangeness could be included.

1.2   Profiling the 'Inter-' in Inter-Religious Relations – Xenosophic Perspectives on Religion

'The strange ... brings itself to attention as surplus which precedes and exceeds every observation and treatment of the strange. Not only the reduction of the strange to one's own, but also the attempt of a synthesis between the two belongs to the violent acts which silence the demand of the strange.' (Waldenfels 1999 p. 50, transl. H.S.)

With these words, Bernhard Waldenfels (1999) warns us against the assimilation and reduction of strangeness into a framework of one's own. The act of assimilating the strange is a violent act. The strange, Waldenfels (1990; 1997a; 1997b) says, is a challenge, a 'goad' [Stachel], which does not conform to and confirm one's own identity, but triggers new insights and thus offers a surplus.

In general agreement with Waldenfels, Yoshiro Nakamura (Nakamura, 2000), in his study on *Xenosophy*, calls this assimilation of the strange *exoticism*, which he defines as 'replacement of the experienced strange with an orchestrated strange [inszeniertes Fremdes], replacement of strangeness with otherness' (p. 72).[2] In this (radical or neo-) phenomenological philosophical perspective, a conceptualization of the strange is suggested which calls for explication in terms of learning and in terms of development: the experience of the strange as a challenging, curiosity-eliciting and demanding resistance or obstacle.

1.3   Conclusion: Inter-Religious Dialog

From this reflections on the 'inter' in inter-religious relations and its qualification by the xenosophic appreciation of the strange and its reminder of the great potential of creativity from the encounter with the strange, this is my conclusion, we derive an adequate and well-defined concept of inter-religious dialog. This conceptualization of inter-religious dialog needs to be flashed out in regard

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[1] Non-understanding is not always a lack or failure of hermeneutical carefulness, but there are – we have to insist on this especially in regard to religion! – limitations to rational reconstruction (understanding). In the debate on the possibility of 'rationality' (Wilson, 1970) in understanding the foreign or strange, especially in 'understanding a primitive society' (Winch, 1964), the validity of the one and only kind of rationality (our own) as measure of the world has been questioned. To opt, in light of such questioning, for more hermeneutical carefulness, is certainly a valuable step. But here the limits of the hermeneutical paradigm, even when the carefulness is very great, become visible: The aim of the hermeneutical attitude is finally to understand and "grasp" (Zilleßen, 1994). And it is an illusion to require perfection in perspective change as a presupposition for inter-religious dialogue. The metaphor of 'touching,' the experience of perceiving, but non-understanding, the development of foreignness and estrangement have their own right and should be taken into account. This suggest a more complex understanding.

[2] This exposure and critique of such violent assimilation and reduction of strangeness opens a critical perspective on programs such as Theo Sundermeier's (1996), which aim at an 'understanding of the strange' at the cost of the encounter with the 'unexpected strange'; it also allows for a clarifying re-interpretation and appraisal of Ortfried Schäffter's (1991) fourth modus of 'complementarity,' which he correctly juxtaposes against the modi of understanding the strange as 'counter-image' to, as 'resonance corpus', or as 'enrichment' of one's own; Schäfter's fourth modus – as border experience – is intended to keep the possibility open for the experience of the unexpected strange which cannot be integrated and assimilated.

to its application in religious education, but it also has a critical potential in respect to developmental models. In both domains, it specifies and highlights the prescriptive character and dimension.

In turn, the conceptualization of inter-religious dialog with such depth and such heavy weight of xenosophic grounding calls for a step-to-step delineation of educational processes and, as theoretical and empirically researchable precondition for a pedagogical perspective, a delineation of developmental processes. This is what I will turn to in the next section.

2 Inter-Religious and Inter-Personal Negotiations. The (Faith) Developmental Perspective

2.1 Inter-Personal Negotiations as Framework

It is no accident that James Fowler (1981) saw the need to include aspects of inter-personal relation in the design of his model of faith development. He designed and added the aspect 'Bounds of Social Awareness.' But it is especially the aspect of 'Perspective-Taking' which Fowler had taken from Robert Selman's work that indicates the rather high importance of the inter-personal realm for the development of faith. If we furthermore consider Fowler's claim that every single aspect can be taken as a window to a person's faith, the relation between the inter-personal and inter-religious domains is envisioned to be very close.

Furthermore, it is particularly on Stage Five, 'Conjunctive Faith,' that the relation to the Other and the other religion explicitly becomes a central stage characteristic. This casts some light back also on the previous stages: the embeddedness within one's own group (with the danger of a "tyranny of the they") on Stage Three and the readiness to make a previously strange and foreign world view one's own on Stage Four belong to the key descriptions of these stages. We can conclude that the difference, in particular between Stage Five and Stage Four, is predominantly defined by differences in the inter-personal domain.

In *Stages of Faith,* Fowler has included his aspect of 'Perspective-Taking' with reference to Selman's (1980) early model and therefore as rather cognitive line of perspective coordination. It is interesting however that Selman and his team, working with troubled children, saw the need to modify the model and in particular to include a functional perspective. They explicitly have added and described the action choice dimension of inter-personal negotiations. In Table 1, I summarize Selman's model with reference also to later texts (Selman, Demorest, & Krupa, 1984; Selman & Schultz, 1988).

Levels of Coordination of Social Perspectives (CSP)	Action Choice / Styles of inter-personal Negotiations
Depth Psychological or Societal-Symbolic CSP (Level 4)	**Negotiation for intimacy through depth psychological understanding / Change of perspectives**
Third Person CSP (Level 3)	**Strategies of collaboration with other for mutual interests**
Self-Reflective CSP (Level 2)	**Reciprocal action in the service of the self's perspective / Strategies of mutual persuasion**
Subjective / Unilateral CSP (Level 1)	**One-way Directives or Requests**
Egocentric / Impulsive CSP (Level 0)	**Strategies of physical violence / Non-verbal methods**

Table 1. Levels of inter-personal negotiation corresponding to levels of social perspective coordination (Selman and colleagues)

The qualifications which Selman and his team have introduced are important also in regard to inter-religious relations: this suggests to describe also the inter-religious domain in functional terms, in

terms of inter-religious *negotiations.* This is what I present below. To prevent misunderstanding, however, I should first explain another decisive qualification of the structural-developmental model: the suggestion to talk about styles, rather than about stages.

## 2.2	Religious Development in Terms of the Second Developmental Turn

We owe to Jean Piaget what we may term a first developmental turn: the ingenious idea to search for, construct and introduce genetic epistemology. This first developmental turn has left its highly influential imprint not only in the developmental psychology of cognition, but has also influenced the understanding of morality and religion.

The critique against and qualification in the Piagetian family of theories which we are witnessing in more recent years do not call into question the idea of development itself, but its specific understanding in the Piagetian tradition, especially in regard to domains other than cognition. The relatively narrow focus on a unidirectional and mono-causal development and, related to this, the lack of explanatory power in regard to domains other than cognition – not to speak of phenomena such as fundamentalist turns – highlight the need for re-thinking these models of development. This needs to be said especially in regard to religion and inter-religious attitudes. A second developmental turn is needed. And it is in progress. It is my thesis that a new way of conceptualizing and investigating religious development may open up and contribute to a new perspective also on inter-religious relations.

We need another developmental turn. For this, I refer to some puzzles and predicaments in developmental theories. Previously I have pointed to the predicament of structural-developmental theories of providing an explanation of fundamentalism. But this affects also the persistence or revival of xenophobic and anti-inter-religious attitudes in persons with supposedly advanced developmental niveaus – persons who are able to perform formal operations and to apply individuative-reflective thinking in most dimensions of every-day life. It seems that some people are not in the position to apply their most advanced developmental achievements and competencies to religious and inter-religious questions. Traditional developmental theories, including Fowler's theory, lack an explanation. They do not account for regression and, related to this, they do not have a sound explanation of developmental stagnation which is obvious from the fact that many adults do not have the tendency to develop beyond Stage Two or Stage Three. What are the forces that produce development or stagnation? A plausible explanation could result from a loss of *function*.[3]

The second developmental turn features the variety and complexity of human development,[4] and this applies also to the domain of religion, and – this is my focus here – to inter-religious attitudes. We do not need to re-invent the wheel: there are theories[5] which have developed critical standpoints and alternatives to the structural-developmental model, theories which make us aware that human

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[3] This is the critique and explanation put forth by Rainer Döbert (1991) in regard to Oser's (1984) theory of religious judgment; but his argument does affect and include, to great extent, also Fowler's theory.

[4] While Piaget continues to be acknowledged as pioneer researcher in the field of children's cognitive development, the assumptions about a context-independent, cross-domain invariant sequence of stages which replace each other has been challenged. It has been widely accepted that cognitive changes can occur in different areas of interest and independently of each other (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2004) and that social and contextual influences on cognitive development are to be considered. Stages may describe development as evaluated with specific tasks and in specific domains (Bjorklund, 2000). Recent studies on children's causal thinking suggest that an animistic stage may not be replaced by a following scientific stage, but that both views persist eventually into adulthood and will continue to be applied in specific areas of life (Subbotsky, 2000a; 2000b).

[5] Here I should at least mention the lively discussion on post-formal operations (Commons, Richards, & Armon, 1984; Alexander & Langer, 1990; Sinnott, 1994; 1998; Cartwright, 2001) and wisdom (Staudinger & Baltes, 1994; Sternberg, 1998; Sternberg, 2000; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Kramer, 2000; Pasupathi, Staudinger, & Baltes, 2001; Pasupathi & Staudinger, 2001), the growing awareness and research on cross-domain variance (Labouvie-Vief & Diehl, 2000; Boyer, Bedoin, & Honore, 2000).

development may involve more than cognition.[6] The life-span developmental perspective (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 1998; 1999) deserves special attention here.[7] The life-span development perspective may be inspiring and helpful for an advancement of understanding religious development, since it provides strong arguments and opens the perspective on the variety and complexity of human development. These innovative contributions to developmental psychology can help us clarify the contours of a revised model of human and religious development, because …

a. they allows us to take a step back from mono-causal, unidimensional and unifunctional explanations which have overstated the Piagetian "logic of development" and have assumed that cognition is the motor of development;

b. they suggest integrating the dimension of *function* and the psychodynamic and symbolic-narrative content dimensions;

c. they suggest a life-span perspective from the start and thus take for granted the integration of adult life and old age;

d. they re-open the factor field of human development and religious development for a fresh approach of scientific exploration – e.g., by suggesting that we consider the dynamics of compensation.

My own proposal has its basis in Fowler's faith development theory and research. The label 'faith styles' should indicate disagreement with most of Kohlberg's criteria for ("hard") developmental stages. This does however not mean to relinquish concern with stages of faith altogether, but it means to embed and integrate them into a more comprehensive and complex framework. I have argued for this and presented this model elsewhere (Streib, 1991; 1997; 2001a; 2003a; 2003b; 2005a).

2.3   Inter-Religious Attitudes and Negotiations - Styles of Strangeness and Familiarity

A new approach to inter-religious attitudes and negotiations results from the faith styles perspective. This parallels a new interpretation of fundamentalism.[8] Now I explicate the faith styles perspective with a special focus on the field of attitudes toward the *other*, towards the *other religion*. This is of particular importance for inter-religious relations and inter-religious learning.[9]

The best way of introducing the model of inter-religious negotiation styles and the related styles of strangeness and familiarity is explaining Table 2.

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[6] With Noam (1990), I share the suspicion that cognitive developmentalists have put the cart before the horse – the cart of cognitive competencies before the horse of life history: "It is my view that cognitively based theorists have overlooked the central structuring activities of the self by defining the epistemic self as the sole representative of structure. In the process, I believe, the cart was placed before the horse, life history became content to the structure of the epistemic self ... Epistemology replaced life history." (Noam 1990: 378)

[7] Baltes and colleagues suggest a more radical departure from extant theoretical models of development (cf. my contribution to the conference "One Hundred Years of Psychology of Religion", Streib, 2003b). Their proposal is an even more flexible construction of development, namely a model of "development as selective age-related change in adaptive capacity" which, in contrast to the traditional monolithic view of development as universal growth toward a single end point, accounts for *cross-domain differences*. Consequently, the new model accounts for both losses and gains in development.

[8] As result of the faith styles perspective, I present a new developmental explanation of fundamentalism (2001a; 2001c; Streib, 2001d; 2006a). If we do not assume that stage two attitudes and styles which are particularly characteristic of fundamentalism are not abandoned and overcome at the advent of new and more advanced developmental niveaus, but reside into the background, into deeper layers of our psychic resources where they are available when there is need to apply them, then one could imagine and understand the simultaneous vitality of more advanced styles of reasoning in some domains of life and the presence of mythic-literal or do-ut-des patterns in the existential domain. A split of religious styles, a clash of styles, or, as I prefer to call it: a *revival* of earlier styles are the interpretation of fundamentalism in terms of religious styles.

[9] I refer also to my publications on the subject of inter-religious negotiations and attitudes (Streib, 2001b; 2004; 2005b; 2006b).

Styles of Inter-Religious Negotiation	Strangeness & Familiarity in Inter-Religious Encounter		Religious Styles (Streib 2001a)
	Styles of Strangeness	Styles of Familiarity	
Dialogical / Inter-Religious Perspective change as appreciation of the other as a gift which cannot be objectified and "grasped", as openness for self-critique and learning through the encounter with the other / the foreign	**Strangeness as 'Resistance' and Challenge** Strangeness of the other's (and one's own) religion as challenge and curiosity-eliciting ob-ject (resistance) which offers a 'surplus'	**Familiarity as Selfhood** Familiarity as sense of 'oneself as another' (Ricoeur 1990); Sense of strangeness also toward one's own religion	**Dialogical**
Explicitly Multi-Religious Either "hard"-pluralistic notion of incompatibility and rejection or (partial) reflective assimilation of the other religion (identifying common ground); Pre-occupation with guarding the authenticity of one's own religion	**Strangeness as Otherness** Interpretation of the strangeness of the other religion as otherness, as object of reflective assimilation or rejection	**Familiarity as Identity** Familiarity as reflective identification with one's own religion and selective identification with the other religion	**Individuative-Systemic**
Implicitly Multi-Religious Either "soft"-pluralistic search for harmony (nice-weather-collaboration) with the other religion or convention-based rejection of the strange religious tradition	**Strangeness as Dissonance** Convention-based, implicit sense of strangeness toward the other religion to which it is reacted with rejection, harmonizing, or exotism	**Familiarity as Resonance** Familiarity as resonance with the religion of the other – while strongly holding on to the religion of one's own group	**Mutual**
Imperialistic Mono-Religious Inclusive or exclusive claim of the superiority for one's own religion	**Strangeness as Xeno-Polemic Fear** Experience of the strangeness of the other religion and reaction to it with xeno-polemic fear	**Familiarity as Un-Reflected Egocentrism** and egocentric suppression of alternatives to one's own religion	**Instrumental-Reciprocal**
Xenophobic Mono-religious Verbal one-way directives (or even non-verbal methods) to force consent to one's own religion	**Strangeness as Xenophobic Anxiety** The other religion, as every experience of the foreign, results in xenophobic anxiety. Consequences: blind aggression or escape	**Egocentric Lack of Alternatives** 'Blind' egocentric familiarity with one's own religion	**Subjective**

Table 2. Styles of Inter-religious Negotiations, Strangeness and Familiarity

Corresponding to the religious styles (in the right column), the styles of inter-religious negotiation are presented (in the left column); they advance from bottom to the top from xenophobic and imperialistic mono-religious negotiation styles, through implicitly and explicitly multi-religious negotiation styles, to a dialogical or inter-religious style. Corresponding to these inter-religious negotiation styles, the styles of experiencing strangeness and familiarity are presented (in the middle columns). Strangeness can be seen to advance from xenophobic anxiety and xeno-polemic fear, through an unspecific sense of dissonance, then through a style of clear-cut otherness, and finally to a style of attractive, but challenging and demanding object in the sense of encounter with a phenomenon which resists assimilation. Here we explicitly include the xenosophic revision of the inter-religious concept, as outlined above.[10]

Now we turn to the negotiation styles in more detail and again we start from the bottom. Using violence to extinguish the un-believers, i.e. the adherents of another religion, is beyond – or below – the scope of a negotiation schema. But it has some parallels with the xenophobic and imperialistic mono-religious attitudes: Both rest on the assumption of the superiority of one's own religion. The difference is primarily the choice of the means of how to put the attitude into action – whether physical force is used or verbal directives. Obviously, these lower styles of inter-religious negotiation have a close relationship to fundamentalism, since the superiority claim for one's own religion is mostly grounded in a literal understanding of religious texts and associated with the image of a taskmaster deity. The schema qualifies these xenophobic or imperialistic, xeno-polemic attitudes and actions as styles on the lower end of a developmental scale, but, at the same time, this shows possibilities of growth and development to more adequate styles.

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[10] See 1.2 for a more detailed description..

It can be seen as progress, when the one-way requests for consent to one's own religion and claims of superiority are transformed into a nice-weather-collaboration with the other in the service of mutual interest in harmony. We may call this style of inter-religious negotiation 'implicitly multi-religious', since it applies a kind of "soft" pluralism which is attracted to, or even fascinated by, similarities in the other religion (exotism) and which experiences strangeness with as dissonance that is either ignored or resolved in harmony. This, of course, is much better than using verbal or even physical force to bring about consent to one's own religion, but this is not the best style we may imagine.

Different from this – and still another step forward – is the style of explicitly multi-religious negotiation. The individuative and reflective capacities of this style result either in the "hard"-pluralistic notion of an irreconcilable incompatibility and other-ness of the strange religion, or in a clearly evident partial identity. While this style may, to a certain extent, include the recognition of a certain interdependence between the religions and also an awareness that every religious tradition has its own right and dignity, it is still preoccupied with guarding the self's intimacy and authenticity. Thus this rather "hard"-pluralistic multi-religious negotiation style is not the best of all possible attitudes either.

We can think of an even more adequate style of dealing with the strange. The dialogical style of inter-religious negotiation develops appreciation for the other as a gift; it is open for self-critique and learning through the encounter with the strange. On this level, the strange is not regarded as something we are able to fully comprehend and "grasp" in order to either assimilate or reject it, but the strange remains something mysterious, challenging, curiosity-eliciting and demanding – something that may offer a surplus.

2.4   Conclusion

The model presents a spectrum of ideal types of inter-religious negotiation styles which imply a teleology, a hierarchical order. This expectation of an ideal development also suggests a perspective on inter-religious *learning:* the learning progress consists in increasing complexity of dealing with, negotiating and appreciating strangeness. The hierarchy of inter-religious negotiation styles and styles of dealing with strangeness is evident however primarily on the basis of theoretical, philosophical, ethical and, in our case, xenosophic reflection.

The possibility of reconstructing a psychologically evident 'logic of development' here is an open question. In any case, I call into question the possibility of providing that evidence in the framework of a mono-causal 'logic of development' which refers on cognitive structures only. It would be overly simplistic to assume that the preference of one inter-religious negotiation style over another would depend solely on the one and only structural-developmental progress of cognitive competencies, e.g. of perspective coordination. *Functions* and *contexts,*[11] but also psychological factors such as *personality traits* or *psychodynamic needs,* and not at least *subjective theological contents* such as *God representations* – all have an impact and all have their specific development dynamic.

Such complexities create challenges for the attempt to empirically evidence our model of inter-religious negotiation styles. The aim to measure inter-religious *development* would be by far too ambitious; but it is possible to search for evidence that the differences between the styles exist and that they correlate with other measures.

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[11] It also deserves to be noted that there is no reason to assume that a certain person would solely apply one style in all situations and in interaction with all partners. Conversely, it heavily depends on the situation and the kind of partner which style comes to be used. For example, as Selman and others have observed, children use different negotiation styles in interaction with peers from those they apply in interaction with adults. "Relationships with peers, although never ideally equal, have greater likelihood of having more symmetry and reciprocity, which facilitates relationships that are more likely to come to be, or to come sooner to be, structured by cooperation and collaboration. This view suggests that adolescents may more readily develop and use reciprocal or collaborative strategies in the context of their interactions with peers, and then perhaps transfer these skills to negotiations with adults." (Selman et al., 1988: 222)

3   Empirical Evidence for the Styles of Inter-Religious Negotiation

3.1   Insights from Qualitative Exploration

From qualitative research, we derive some insight in the differences between the styles of dealing with the other, the strange religion. Video-taped classroom research and video-taped interviews with students help us identify and understand the profile of certain styles of inter-religious communication. I have published selected results elsewhere (Streib, 2001b; 2005b; 2006b). These pieces of qualitative research have yielded some explorative insights. Below I shall focus on quantitative results.

3.2   Results from Quantitative Research

3.2.1   Research Questions

We derive further empirical evidence for the model of inter-religious negotiation styles from our recently completed research[12] which, among other sorts of data, consists of more than 300 classical faith development interviews and more than 1000 questionnaires – a major part of which included a test run version of our Faith Style Scale (FSS), a quantitative scale to measure faith development.[13] This can be regarded as solid data base from which we may expect answers to specific questions about the relation between inter-religious styles, inter-personal styles and faith development.

The following questions focus our search of empirical evidence for our model of inter-religious negotiation styles:

1. Is consent to inter-religious statements related to faith development stage/style? Do our data provide us with some evidence for the formula 'the higher the faith development stage assignment, the stronger agreement to inter-religious statements'?

2. Does the difference between 'inter-religious' and 'multi-religious' attitudes emerge from data analysis? Can we find evidence for the difference between dialogical and individuative-reflective styles, between inter-religious dialog and religious relativism?

3. What is the relation between inter-religious and inter-personal attitudes? Does this relation change over the spectrum of faith stages?

4. Can we identify preconditions for advancements in inter-religious negotiation style? As candidates for such preconditions, we could consider personality traits such as openness for experience or achievements in psychological well-being such as positive relations to others.

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[12] The Bielefeld-based cross-cultural study of deconversion began in 2002 with a focus on deconverts from fundamentalist new religious groups; in 2004 we moved into the second phase including less oppositional and also mainstream religious orientations. Comparison between Germany and the U.S.A. has been a primary goal; thus we were forming two samples of equal size and structure in each country. Research teams based at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and the University of Bielefeld, Germany were engaged in conducting the field work. Now we have a data base which includes more than 100 deconverts, about equally distributed in USA and Germany who have deconverted from a broad variety of religious organisations which span from fundamentalist new religious groups to mainline churches; all deconverts have also completed a faith development interview and a questionnaire. The data base furthermore includes a total of about 1000 members of the religious groups which these deconverts have left. From all of theses subjects, we have questionnaire data and from almost 200 of them, we have a faith development interview.

[13] Because we don't have all sorts of data from all research participants, the numbers on which the following analysis is based vary greatly and range from 828 cases for which we have results for the Big Five (NEO-FFI according to: Costa & McCrae, 1985), the Ryff scale (Ryff & Singer, 1996) and the Faith Style Scale test run, 221 cases in which we can relate the NEO-FFI and Ryff scales to faith development interviews, but only 99 cases for which we can relate the faith development scores to the Faith Style Scale items. This is in part due to the fact that I had to complete this paper before the last portion of faith development rating has been completed and is entered into the data base.

3.2.2   Method and Instruments

In order to find answers to theses questions on the basis of our data, I have constructed three new variables. For these variables, I have taken items from the test version of our new Faith Style Scale (FSS) and from Altemeyer's and Hunsberger's (1992) Religious Fundamentalism Scale (RF). These variables are supposed to measure attitudes for 'inter-religious dialog', for 'religious relativism' and for 'interpersonal dialog.' The following list of items give an impression about these variables.

Items for variable 'Religious Dialog' are taken from the Faith Style Scale section of our questionnaire; they ask for consent to statements such as the following:

> "I like to engage in conversation with people of other faiths and cultures that contradict my own." "We can learn from each other what ultimate truth each religion contains." "Religious stories and representations from other religions can deeply touch the soul more than words can say." "The truth I see in other world views leads me to re-examine my current views."

Items for the variable 'Religious Relativism' are taken from the Religious Fundamentalism Scale (RF) which has been included in our questionnaire. Interestingly enough, the items in Altemeyer's and Hunsberger's scale, especially the reversed scored items, ask for consent to a rather relativistic, multi-religious view which the authors regard as opposite to a fundamentalist world view.[14] This can be seen from the following statements which I have included in the new variable 'religious relativism':

> "Different religions and philosophies have different versions of the truth, and may be equally right in their own way." "No single book of religious teachings contains all the important truths about life." "Parents should encourage their children to study all religions without bias, then make up their own minds about what to believe."

Finally, the items for the variable 'Inter-Personal Dialog' are taken again from the Faith Style Scale section of our questionnaire ask for consent to statements such as the following:

> "It is important for me to walk in the other's shoes." "I wish to relate to people from other cultural backgrounds because they can help expand my personal perception." "It is important to understand others through a sympathetic understanding of their culture and religion."

The test for reliability show high results for the variable for 'religious relativism' ($\alpha = .83$), also good results for the variables 'religious dialog' ($\alpha = .74$) and 'inter-personal dialog' ($\alpha = .70$). These are sufficient preconditions for a search of correlations with our primary candidates from the Big Five and the Ryff Scale, and not at least with the faith development interview scores. The faith development interview scores result from evaluation of classical faith development interviews according to the third edition of the *Manual for Faith Development Research* (Fowler, Streib, & Keller, 2004) by a team of trained and experienced researchers of English and German mother-language background; a sufficient part of the interviews has been checked by second ratings.

3.2.3   Results from Correlation and Stage-Wise Analysis

3.2.3.1   Correlations analysis

Correlations analysis – this is my first point – reveals significant correlations between the faith development interview scores and consent to inter-religious dialog statements ($r = .34^{**}$). This can be understood as suggesting a positive answer to our question whether high agreement to inter-religious dialog is related to advancement in faith development. This becomes relative, however, in light of the higher correlations of faith development scores with religious relativism ($r = .42^{**}$). Taken together with the very strong correlation of faith stage with openness for experience ($r = .44^{**}$), these results suggest that faith development scores may indicate religious relativism and openness for experience, rather than readiness for inter-religious dialog. Regression analysis appears to confirm this: with $\beta = .45$ in stepwise regression analysis, religious relativism shows up as the key predictor for faith stage, followed by openness for experience. Thus we have a new problem to investigate: What does faith development scores really measure? Are they indicative of religious relativism, rather than or of inter-

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[14] This is a new aspect of Altemeyer's and Hunsberger' Religious Fundamentalism Scale which, because of very high correlation with the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale such as $r = .82$ in our data and r's ranging from .73 to .76 in cross-cultural comparison of three cultures USA, Germany, and Romania (Krauss, Streib, Keller, & Silver, 2007), has raised the suspicion to measure authoritarian religion, rather than fundamentalism.

religious dialog? Perhaps both; and the way to find out more about these relations would be a more detailed analysis of the stages separately. It has to be kept in mind that nevertheless there exist significant correlations between the faith development interview scores and consent to inter-religious dialog statements.

Second, results of the correlation analysis also show high correlations between inter-religious dialog and religious relativism (r = .54**). The two appear to go hand in hand. Thus from this result we may conclude that our data do not reveal the difference between the two. This can be due to the fact that the instruments are not sharp enough to show the difference; it could also be that our research partners do not see much of a difference here. But again: a more detailed portrait may emerge from stage-wise analysis.

Third, results of the correlation analysis also show high correlations between inter-religious dialog and inter-personal dialog (r = .50**). We can draw from this that our respondents do not see much of a difference between the two; inter-religious dialog could be just the other side of inter-personal dialog in the religious domain. But here again, we may see more details when we take the stage separately into account.

3.2.3.2   Stage-wise Analysis

The stage-score-specific relation between faith development and our three constructed variables for inter-religious dialog, religious relativism and inter-personal dialog can be best visualized in line diagrams (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Despite the rather large variation which is visible in Figure 1 and which has been reduced in Figure 2, because the faith stages have been rounded to whole stage numbers, we clearly see that agreement to inter-religious dialog statements continuously increases from stage to stage. This can be taken as evidence that readiness for inter-religious dialog increases along with increasing faith stage.

Figure 1. Inter-Religious Dialog, Religious Relativism and Inter-Personal Dialog over Whole Faith Stage
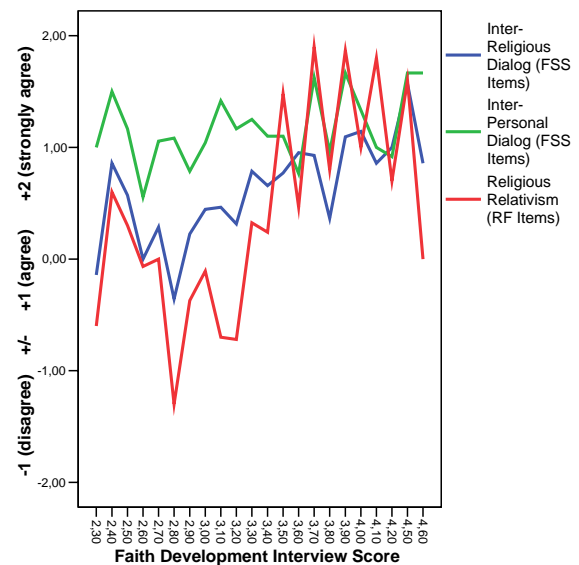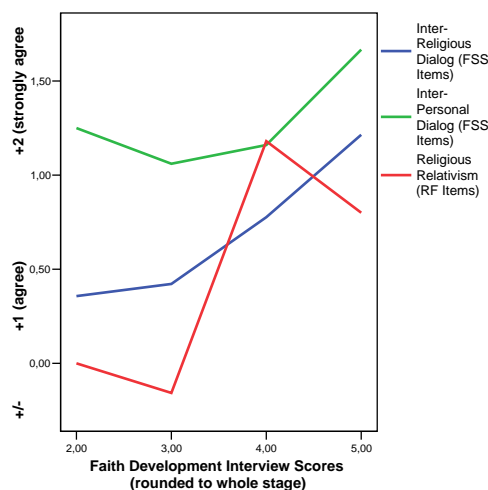
Figure 2. Inter-Religious Dialog, Religious Relativism and Inter-Personal Dialog over Faith Scores

Most interesting is also the extraordinary rise of religious relativism between Stage Three and Stage Four. It rises from neutral (indifference with a slight tendency to disagreement) on Stage Three to clear agreement on Stage Four. This corresponds exactly to what faith development theory assumes: freedom, or even encouragement, for an independent world view and multi-religious or relativistic plurality is opposed or suppressed on Stage Three, while Stage Four favors independent reflection, an explicit world view and multi-religious or relativistic plurality. This may even provide an explanation for the result of regression analysis: Since the majority of our respondents maneuver around stage three and stage four, it is no surprise that religious relativism shows up as key predictor for faith development in our sample.

The curve for inter-personal dialog finally is interesting, because it remains on the agreement niveau throughout the various stages of faith – with an increase on Stage Five. That inter-personal dialog, together with the inter-religious dialog, moves upwards towards Stage Five, can be understood as indication of a close relation between the two the higher faith development advances. That inter-personal dialog is high on Stage Two and Stage Three, while inter-religious dialog is low on theses stages, appears surprising at first sight; however it may be support for the author's thesis that fundamentalism (which is supposedly high on Stage Two and decreasing along with stage advancement) may be characterized by rather high proficiency in inter-personal and other non-religious competencies and, at the same time, rather low values in explicitly *religious* attitudes and competencies.

3.2.4   Discussion

All questions regarding empirical evidence which were raised above appear to find a positive answer:

Consent to inter-religious statements is increasing along with increase in faith development. The higher the faith stage, the stronger is the agreement to inter-religious statements. A difference between inter-religious and multi-religious / relativistic attitudes does emerge from the data. Thus a difference between the dialogical and the individuative-reflective style derives some evidence from our analysis. The relation between inter-religious and inter-personal attitudes does change over the faith stages.

Thus in this data analysis, the stages or styles of faith can be reconstructed and evidenced to some extent and with focus on the domains of inter-religious and interpersonal dialog. Thereby, to be sure, we do not derive any evidence for *development* (this would require longitudinal research), rather stages or styles are profiled and differentiated against each other; in other words, when 'stages' imply a structural logic of development, the focus of our analysis is on the difference between *styles,* rather than on stages. However, the hierarchical arrangement of styles, especially in regard to inter-religious negotiation, is reflected in our results.

From correlation analysis, we can also see that the personality trait 'openness for experience' and the psychological well-being factor 'positive relation with others' have strong affinity to the readiness for inter-religious dialogue. This may even suggest that these factors, with some probability, play a generative role for the readiness for inter-religious dialog.

4   Outlook on Inter-Religious Attitudes and Inter-Religious Learning

The hierarchical arrangement of inter-religious negotiation styles and of the styles of dealing with the strange religion, as presented in the model, suggests and may lead to envision a learning process. Xenosophic insights however suggest that learning in inter-religious affairs proceeds precisely through the encounter with the other, the strange – in increasingly adequate understanding and attitude. If this is true, the aim of (religious) education is not the reduction or elimination of strangeness, but the 'cultivation of strangeness' – in the sense that strangeness becomes embedded in a culture of non-violence, a culture of perspective change, a culture of mutual dialogical inspiration. The strange owns a dignity and has to offer a surplus, a gift. In such culture, even experiences of strangeness within one's own religion do not need to be suppressed; also these experiences promote learning.

The talk about the experience of strangeness as challenge and as a gift which should not be destroyed by the violent act of assimilation, reminds of John Hull's (1996; 2000) talk about religion as a gift to the child. For him, the gift character of religion is however not limited to one's own religious tradition. "Islam," Hull (1998) says, "is not merely for Muslim children. Islam is for everyone. All children have something to learn from the spirituality of Islam."

It appears that, already eight years, after these words have been published, they find less agreement than before and sound strange to more ears than before. In light of the model outlined in this text, it is my suspicion that there is much to learn in the domain strangeness – and not only for students.

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