Intercultural and Religious Sensitivity of Finnish Lutheran 7th - 9th Grade Students

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Abstract. This study presented a 29-item Intercultural and Religious Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (IRSSQ) that is based on the Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Psychometric properties of the IRSS were tested with an empirical sample of 249 seventh, eighth and ninth grade students of the Finnish comprehensive school attending Lutheran religious education. Two research questions were examined: 1) Are there any differences in the intercultural and religious sensitivity between non-confirmed, seventh and eighth grade students and confirmed, ninth grade students? 2) Are there any differences in the intercultural and religious sensitivity between female and male students? Results regarding the first research question showed partial support for our initial hypothesis that confirmation school and religious education in school might increase teenagers’ intercultural and religious sensitivity. Results regarding the second research question showed that male students expressed more negative or aggressive attitudes towards different cultures than females, also viewing Finnish culture superior to the other cultures. On the other hand, males were more likely than females to consider their own religion (Christianity) more brutal than other religions, also regarding Finnish people less tolerant than the others. Female students, instead, found themselves more empathic in intercultural relations than males did. They also had a tendency to value cultural and religious plurality more often than their male peers.