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***RACISM AND POST-CRITICAL BELIEF:  
A NEW APPROACH OF AN OLD PROBLEM***

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## **SUMMARY**

The purpose of the present study that was conducted in Flanders was to investigate the relationship between the religious social identity, racism and four religious dimensions. As a measure of the religious social identity, we used the ‘religion/spiritual life’-subscale, taken from the ‘commitment to social identity’-scale constructed by Jackson (1981). As a measure of racism, we used the relevant part of the ‘ethnocentrism’-scale constructed by Billiet & De Witte (1991). The religious dimensions were orthodoxy, external critique, historical awareness and relativism (Hutsebaut, Fontaine & Duriez, 1998). Results showed that the religious social identity in itself has become remarkably insufficient to predict racist opinions and that the religious dimensions are necessary intermediating variables. This shows that what is important is the way people deal with their ‘religion’ and the associated contents rather than their religious social identity.

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## **1. Introduction**

It could be argued that all world religions teach universal brotherly love (Batson et al., 1978, 1982, 1985, 1993, 1994). Yet, history is littered with examples in which religion has provided the justification, if not the instigation for atrocious inhumanity to out-groups. Think of the Crusades, the Inquisition, witch hunts, slavery, missionaries' obliteration of native cultures, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, ... The list is endless. Even as recent as in 1990, a European country broke apart as a consequence of a war in which the three major Western religions fought each other. Because of these kinds of events, certain theologians and historians have growingly become convinced religion is, or at least has been, a catalyst for prejudice, social distance, anti-Semitism, intolerance, ethnocentrism, nationalism and racism (e.g. Almog, 1988; Berkovits, 1973; Burggraeve et al., 1995; Flannery & Oesterreicher, 1985; Isaac, 1964; Poliakov, 1974; Rubenstein, 1968; Salemink, 1995). In order to find out whether or not this claim is justified, numerous empirical researches have been conducted. In this article we will give a brief summary of this research and of the main differences in approach (2.1.-2.5.). This way it will become evident that the research tradition of the so-called Low Countries departs to a certain extent from the dominant American approach (2.6.). In our own investigation, we will try to conceal both of them, whilst trying to maintain their separate value (3.). After giving an introduction to the method we have used (4.), we will have a look at our results (5.), after which we will attempt to draw some conclusions and some guidelines for future research (6.).

## **2. Lessons from the past**

### **2.1. The traditionally found relationship**

Allport and Kramer (1946) were probably the first to empirically examine this topic. In their study, they found protestant and catholic students to be more prejudiced than students who didn't show any church involvement. Soon Adorno et al. (1950) and Stouffer (1955)

were to show up with similar results, using a ‘church-going’-measure. A lot of psychologists and sociologists were to follow this research line and quite soon the opinion that -at least among white, middle-class Christians in the USA- religion is not associated with increased love and acceptance, but rather with increased intolerance, prejudice and bigotry, became strongly established (see also Eisinga et al., 1988 :1). Batson et al. (1993) summarized 47 findings -based on 38 studies conducted between 1940 and 1990- which are relevant to the relationship between one or more of three indices of amount of religious involvement (church membership or attendance, positive attitudes towards religion, and orthodoxy or conservatism of religious beliefs) and one of four types of intolerance (ethnocentrism, racial prejudice, anti-Semitism, and other prejudice). Overall 37 out of these 47 findings clearly point to the existence of a positive relationship, whilst only two of them clearly point to the opposite.

## **2.2. The revision of the traditionally found relationship**

The early findings, however, caused a lot of consternation both among religious leaders and certain social psychologists. Allport (1950) was the first to argue that it is not enough to measure whether or even to what degree a person is involved in religion. He argues that it is also necessary to measure how a person is dealing with this religion. Therefore, he introduces a distinction between what he initially labels ‘mature’ and ‘immature’ religion. Because of the value-laden connotations of this distinction, he changed the labels to ‘interiorised’ vs. ‘institutionalized’ (Allport, 1954) and finally to ‘intrinsic’ vs. ‘extrinsic’ (Allport, 1959). These final concepts are also better defined than the former (Allport, 1966; 1973; Allport & Ross, 1967). Moreover, Allport gradually (Wilson, 1960; Feagin, 1964; Allport & Ross, 1967) came to the conclusion they were not just opposites, but rather independent dimensions, which was supported in later research (Batson et al., 1993 :161; Hood, 1970; Hunt & King, 1971; 1977 :149; King & Hunt, 1972 :31). However, the operationalization of Allport’s concepts was never

freed from criticism (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989; Hunt & King, 1971; 1977 :150; King & Hunt, 1972 :31-32; Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990; Weima, 1989; Wulff, 1991; 1997).

Allport was not the only one who held the conviction that this kind of distinction is necessary to understand the relationship between religion and prejudice. At about the same time Adorno et al. (1950) proposed a quite similar distinction ('taking religion seriously' vs. 'neutralized religion'), and somewhat later Lenski (1961) and Allen and Spilka (1967) proposed theirs (respectively 'associational' vs. 'communal' religion and 'committed' vs. 'consensual' religion). All these different conceptions have a lot in common (see also Batson, et al. 1995; Dittes, 1969; Spilka, Hood & Gorsuch (1985)). Each of them suggest two different ways of being religious: one in which religion is used for intrinsic means and one in which religion is used for extrinsic means (note that we prefer to use Allport's terminology for it is definitely the most widespread).

In accordance with these ideas, the opinion that religion is associated with increased intolerance, prejudice and bigotry soon became displaced with the opinion that this association is only true for people who deal with religion in an extrinsic way. Batson et al. (1993) summarized 41 findings, based on 32 studies that were conducted between 1949 and 1990, which are relevant to the relationship between measures of intrinsic vs. extrinsic religion and one of four types of intolerance (ethnocentrism, racial prejudice, anti-Semitism, and other prejudice). In these studies, sometimes a simplified measure of intrinsic vs. extrinsic religiosity is being used, namely church-involvement. Researchers using this measure assume the extrinsically religious will limit their involvement. Overall 39 out of these 41 findings clearly support the hypotheses that although the extrinsically religious may be high in intolerance, ... the intrinsically religious (supposedly a rather small minority amongst the religious) are relatively low.

### 2.3. In search of more accuracy

Firstly, not everybody agrees with a simple 2-dimensional typology. Hunt (1972), for instance, reasoned that a lot of the procedures used to classify people according to religiosity are so simple that they leave 'symbolic' believers no other opportunity but to disagree with the presented statements. As a consequence, according to him, a lot of persons get wrongly classified as being not (so) religious. This implies that a lot of the correlations found are at least meaningless. In order to ameliorate this artifact, he developed his own attitude-measure (the LAM-scales) in which he gives people three answering-possibilities: a literal, an anti-literal and a mythological-symbolical one. The little research that was done with his scales, or with an adapted version of it, could back up his claims (Poythress, 1975; Van der Lans, 1991).

Secondly, although Gorsuch and Aleshire (1974) presented five studies to back up Allport's claim that intrinsic religiosity is negatively correlated with prejudice, this was not enough to satisfy most researchers who merely accept that the relationship is non-existing (Donahue, 1985). Batson et al. (1982) even questioned the entire conclusion that intrinsic religiosity is associated with relatively low prejudice. They do not agree with Allport's operationalization and moreover, they think it necessary to add a third dimension: the quest-dimension. According to them, a 'mature' religion cannot be found in 'intrinsic religiousness', but is to be found in this quest-dimension. The revised traditionally found relationship would be an artifact of social desirability: the extrinsic items (as well as the prejudice-items) would be less socially acceptable and the intrinsically religious would be more concerned about this. On the basis of their research results (e.g. Batson et al., 1978) they conclude that a quest dimension is related to low prejudice, whilst an intrinsic orientation is related only to the appearance of low prejudice. Of course not everybody agrees with this conclusion (e.g. Watson, 1993 in Hood et al., 1996), but it has to be admitted that Batson et al. nuanced and clarified this research-problem.

Thirdly, Eisinga et al. (1988 :66) claimed that the measures used by Allport & Ross are culturally influenced and that they are no longer appropriate in a modern society. According to them, this is the reason why these scales are so sensitive to socially acceptable answering. Due to this criticism certain researchers (see Eisinga et al., 1988 :66-69) decided no longer to use this typology. Instead they focus on the ‘salience’ of religious belief (the importance in everyday life). Although this may look like neglecting a whole research tradition, ‘salience’ still captures the essence of intrinsic religiosity.

#### **2.4. Empirical research in the Netherlands**

After doing a thorough reading of relevant literature (Eisinga et al., 1988), Eisinga et al. (1989 :123) concluded that it is still totally unclear to them why there exists a positive relation between Christian religiosity and ethnocentrism. In fact, they claim that, although a lot of research has been done concerning the relation between religion and prejudice, real theoretical explanations are rarities. In order to reach this point, Eisinga et al. (1988; 1989; 1990) felt it necessary to focus on non-religious factors (in particular: authoritarianism, anomie, conformism and localism). In doing so, they chose to see ‘salience’ no longer as an explanatory factor in itself, but merely as a necessary prerequisite for Christian faith to exert an influence on all kinds of non-religious attitudes and behaviors.

In their research, they find a curvilinear relation between church involvement and racial prejudice (which was to be expected on the basis of the American tradition) which disappears when these non-religious factors are taken in account. Moreover, the relation between Christian faith and racial prejudice turns out to be no longer significant, except amongst core church members, for whom Christian faith -opposed to the expectations- turns out to be *negatively* related to racial prejudice. This conclusion was repeated by Eisinga et al. (1991) and in a more recent study, Eisinga et al. (1993) concluded that religiosity should probably be excluded from the list of social sources of ethnic and racial bias.

Eisinga et al. (1990a) tried to provide theoretical explanations for their initial findings. Firstly, they state that, possibly, core church-members let themselves be guided more by the religious teaching of brotherly love than modal members and marginal members. Secondly, they state that religion might have a different meaning for core members. They would be less eager to submit themselves to external agents and would be more concerned about the social and humanistic side of religion. Religion would then work as an antidote for ethnocentrism. Thirdly, they claim that modal and marginal members are more likely to be racially prejudiced because they are more conventional (since strong religious involvement is certainly no longer the norm in Dutch society, it could be argued that core church members have a less conformist identity).

Apart from these theoretical explanations, Eisinga et al. (1989) as well as Scheepers et al. (1989) have tried to offer a coordinating theoretical perspective to capture the relation between religion and ethnocentrism: the Social (Contra-)Identification-theory, based on the Social Identity Theory (developed by Tajfel and Turner during the '70's). The processes stipulated by this Social Identity Theory (especially social Categorization and social Identification) along with the process of social Contra-identification are supposed to be the underlying mechanisms that can explain the exerted influence of (non-)religious factors on ethnocentrism.

## **2.5. Empirical research in Flanders**

Billiet (1993; 1995), Billiet and Carton (1991; 1992; 1993), Billiet, Carton and Huys (1990) and Billiet and De Witte (1991) did some research in which the most important American and Dutch findings were exported to test them in the face of Flemish (and Belgian) reality, thereby formulating some extra hypotheses.

Billiet, Carton and Huys (1990) and Billiet and Carton (1991; 1992) set out to examine whether mainly religious factors, the social aspects to it (anomie, age, education and welfare),



or a combination of both influence racial prejudice. Their results again point to the existence of a curvilinear relation between church involvement and racial prejudice, but in Flanders, the effects of church involvement do not disappear when its social aspects are taken into account. Billiet and De Witte (1991) came to the same conclusion in their study about racist attitudes, taking into account anomie, age and education. However, they construct a hypothetical model for further studying, in which church involvement only holds indirect effects via anomie and cultural conservatism. Although the conformism-explanation could still be a valid one, Billiet & Carton (1991) proposed a changed 'Christian socialization' as the most likely explanation for the lesser amount of racial prejudice among young core members. They argue that this socialization, after Vaticanum II, shifted its focus from authority and obedience towards humanitarian values.

In later studies concerning the relation between religion and ethnocentrism, Billiet, Eisinga and Scheepers (1992) and Billiet and Carton (1993) introduced extra factors in order to get a broader view on the explanatory processes. In both studies the factor 'Christian belief' turned out to have neither a direct nor an indirect effect. Billiet and Carton (1993) conclude that religion's moderating effects are not rooted in the belief system itself but in other aspects of church involvement. Church involvement did have an effect in the 1992-study, though it was rather small. In the 1993-study, in which only a restricted sample (Catholics only) was analyzed, church involvement did not have an effect. According to them, this could have been due to the fact that complex influences cancel each other out, but more likely this is due to the 'membership of voluntary organizations'-factor used in this study. They consider this factor related to church involvement because of the 'pillarisation', which is so typical to Flemish Catholicism (see also Billiet, 1988; Billiet & Dobbelaere, 1976). The findings thus seem to suggest that the moderating effect of church involvement is to be found in its prevention of feelings of anomie as well as in its socialization into the humanistic values of socio-cultural Christianity.

Later on, Billiet (1993; 1995) found additional evidence for these conclusion. He recapitulates the importance of the social environment (education, income, age, church involvement, membership of voluntary organizations, ...) and claims anew that church involvement seems to exert a positive influence, direct as well as indirect, on racial prejudice. In line with the Dutch and Flemish tradition, Billiet (1993) states that an environment which prevents social identification and which makes people feel powerless and isolated leads to contra-identification: people then start defining themselves in contrast to foreigners.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

After looking at the research that's been done concerning the relationship between religion and racism, we can conclude that this has been studied in a variety of ways. Especially, there appears to be a big difference between the American approach and the Dutch-Flemish one.

Griffin, Gorsuch and Davis (1987) concluded that there is no single relationship between religious orientation and ethnic prejudice, and that researchers must take particular religious and social norms into account. This implies we should favor the Dutch-Flemish approach. However, it is our opinion that the core of the American tradition was partly neglected. Both traditions agree on the fact that there is a differentiation to be made amongst the group of the religiously if one wants to come to meaningful conclusions. The Dutch-Flemish tradition, however, tries to make this differentiation using church involvement. In our opinion this implies a partial neglecting of the American tradition which focuses on the different ways of dealing with religion. One of the reasons for neglecting this psychological side probably holds ground in the fact that the Dutch-Flemish tradition is a sociologist one.

Another things lacking in the Dutch-Flemish tradition is that although there was a tendency to rely on Social Identity Theory, this theory has never been operationalized and actually used. The supposedly underlying mechanisms therefore remain hypothetical. Our investiga-

tion can be seen as a first step to re-appreciate American thinking as well as a first empirical test of Social Identity Theory as a possible explanatory basis for this research problem.

### **3. Our investigation**

#### **3.1. Flanders**

Since we are aware that religion can only be studied in its particular sociological environment, we feel it necessary to tell a few things about Flanders first. Based on the last official statistics released by the Roman Catholic Church (1995) we can safely state that 70% of the Flemish population sees their entry, and 85% of this population sees their exit in life being sacralized by this church. Between 1968 and 1995, the percentage of Flemish people that could be classified as regular churchgoers dropped from 51% to 13%. The majority of the population can be regarded as marginal Catholics, who only participate in the ‘rites de passage’.

Yet, nonetheless the fact church involvement decreased so rapidly, most people still label themselves as being Catholics: in 1992 72% of the population still did so, although this figure dropped to about 60% in the post-world-war-II-generation (see also Billiet, 1995b). The fact most people still label themselves this way is strongly dependent on Flemish history. Firstly, throughout the years, there has been a strong identification of the concepts ‘Flemish’ and ‘Catholic’. Secondly, as already stated before, Flemish Catholicism is characterized by ‘pillarisation’, which means that a lot of primarily profane activities, such as schools, youth movements, newspapers, trade unions, ... are being organized on a religious or ideological basis. The social relations offered this way are of major importance to the people’s social identities.

#### **3.2. Dimensions**

The purpose of this study was on the one hand to introduce a more psychological approach in the Dutch-Flemish research-tradition. On the other hand we tried, for the first time in a study on this topic, to include a concept that is closely linked to Social Identity Theory in or-

der to provide an initial exploration of its potential explanatory relevance to the relation between racism and religion.

One's Social Identity is being constituted by one's knowledge of belonging to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance of that group-membership (Tajfel, 1972 :31). This significance will lead people to feel committed to these social groups or to this part of the social identity. Since one kind of such groups consists of the religious ones, people might feel committed to them. Therefore, in our research, we included a dimension of possible commitment to this plausible part of the social identity.

Furthermore of course we needed to include a racism-dimension and some dimensions of religion. Concerning religion we decided to include the three religious-belief-factors, which Hutsebaut (1996) found: Orthodoxy, External Critique and Historical Relativism. These dimensions were found in several studies after factoranalysis on religious items. They can be situated on the two dimensions proposed by Wulff (1991 :631; 1997 :635): *literal vs. symbolic thinking* and *acceptance vs. rejection of transcendence*.

**Orthodoxy** means a person is interacting with religion tending to hold the opinion that on each religious question there is only one right answer, which is sustained by authority and remains the same over time. The prototypical orthodox believer accepts those answers from persons seen as religious authority figures, tends to be very certain about his or her belief and has a positive relation with God, which nevertheless includes elements of frustration, guilt and anxiety. In addition, this subject is a rather literal religious thinker and believer, who tends to accept any religiously colored statement. This religious style is positively correlated with anxiety for new questions and feelings of anomie (Desimpelaere et al., 1997). Orthodoxy is thought to be a measure of what Wulff (1997 :635-636) calls Literal Affirmation.

**External Critique** implies a tendency towards non-belief, or at least implies both the meaning and the possibility of religious belief is fundamentally questioned. The prototypical external critical person wants to be sure of his or her belief contents (which he or she isn't)

and rejects literal as well as symbolic thinking about religious statements. Moreover this person tends to have rebellious feelings towards God, wants to be autonomous and wants to rely on his or her own norms. This religious style is positively correlated with fear of uncertainty and with feelings of anomie (Desimpelaere et al., 1997). External Critique is thought to be a measure of what Wulff (1997 :637-638) calls a Reductive Interpretation.

**Historical Relativism** implies a tendency towards believing, but also a tendency to think and speak about belief in a historical relativist way. The prototypical historical relativistic believer deals with religion in a symbolical and metaphorical way and is therefore aware other opinions are also possible and meaning can change over time. This subject refers to the absolute as a searching process and as a possibility beside other possibilities. This religious style is positively correlated with openness to complex questions and negatively with anxiety towards new questions and feelings of anomie (Desimpelaere et al., 1997). Historical Relativism is thought to be a measure of what Wulff (1997 :638-639) calls a Restorative Interpretation.

Recent data (Hutsebaut, Fontaine & Duriez, 1998), however, have shown that Historical Relativism in fact falls apart in two different clusters: one in which the awareness of the fact that the bible was written in a certain historical context is combined with the restoration of its symbolical message (Historical Awareness) and one in which is mainly emphasized a religious outlook is nothing but a possibility among other (Relativism). This last cluster is independent of the personal religious stance.

### **3.3. Hypotheses**

Social Identity Theory argues that individuals strive to obtain and maintain a positive self-concept, which is derived from both personal and social identity. People thus strive to obtain and maintain a positive social identity (Tajfel, 1972; 1974; 1978; 1981; 1982; 1984; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Furthermore this theory states that it is impossible to value the own group positively without degrading the value of out-groups (Tajfel, 1981). The Dutch-Flemish research-

tradition, however, has shown that valuing the in-group positively doesn't necessarily imply degrading the value of out-groups (Scheepers et al., 1989; Billiet & De Witte, 1991). This way the universality of Social Identity Theory might be questioned.

More doubts about this universality arose from the theoretical considerations of Hinkle and Brown (1990), who stipulated the processes described in Social Identity Theory may not be applicable to all existing group(member)s. In order to predict whether these processes will be applicable to a certain group or a specific member, they propose a simple two-dimensional typology. According to them, Social-Identity-processes will only really be applicable to group(member)s characterized by a collectivist orientation towards the own group and by a comparative orientation towards other groups, and to a lesser extent or even not at all to group(member)s who are more individualistic and/or less comparative in orientation.

Because we acknowledge the value of the considerations made by Hinkle and Brown, we feel it necessary to make a change in the assumption, made by the Dutch-Flemish tradition, that the relation between religion and ethnocentrism (and therefore racism as well) in essence is due to the processes, stipulated by Social Identity Theory, that start working as soon as someone feels committed to a certain religious group. According to us, this identification is only a prerequisite and whether or not those processes will start operating depends on one's way of dealing with religion and religious content. We then would like to propose our religious dimensions as an application of the Hinkle and Brown taxonomy to the religious field. More specifically, firstly we believe those who deal with religion in a rather orthodox way to be characterized by a collectivist orientation towards the own group and by a comparative orientation towards other groups. These people not only emphasize the importance of rituals and the like (which implies collectivity), but also tend to view their religious convictions as the only ones containing 'the truth' (which implies the necessity of a positive comparison with other 'religious' groups who also seem to claim to hold 'the truth'). Therefore we believe this way of dealing with religion will be positively associated with racism, since the processes as

described in Social Identity Theory will be activated. Secondly, we believe those who deal with religion in a rather external critical way to be characterized by a rather collectivist orientation towards the own (scholarly) group, since they tend to claim they hold a privileged perspective on reality, and by a rather comparative orientation towards other groups, since they tend to see their claim as the only valuable one as well. Therefore we believe this way of dealing with religion will positively, though to a lesser extent, be associated with racism, since the processes as described in Social Identity Theory will be activated as well, though to a lesser extent. Thirdly, we believe those who deal with religion in a rather historically aware or relativist way to be characterized by an individualist orientation towards the own group, since their faith is of such personal importance they don't need to rely on others for reinforcement, and (in particular for the more relativistic subjects) by a non-comparative orientation towards other groups, since they are aware they have found something important for themselves which is in itself only a possibility amongst other possibilities. Therefore, the processes as described in Social Identity Theory will not be activated, and we believe these ways of dealing with religion to be not or even negatively associated with racism.

Shortly our hypothesis can be formulated this way: Social Identity Theory in itself will not provide us a suitable explanation concerning the relation between religion and racism, since the processes described by this theory will sometimes not or only partly be activated, depending on how a certain individual deals with his religion. On the basis of these hypotheses, we formulated a theoretical model, which can be tested (see Figure 1). We consider the Social-Identity-processes to be subject-characteristics: we consider everybody to be committed to the religious part of the Social Identity to some extent. Whether or not, however, this will lead to the activation of the rest of the Social-Identity-Theory-processes and thus to some degree of racism, will be dependent on the outlook of the individual concerning the own religious group as well as other religious groups. In other words: this will be totally dependent on one's way of dealing with religion, which we see as a kind of cognitive style.

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FIGURE 1 about here  
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## **4. Method**

### **4.1. Subjects**

Our questionnaires were distributed in (mostly Catholic) schools and universities, via various movements or via and among family and friends. The total number of returned questionnaires was 517. Of all respondents, 230 were male (44.5%) and 287 were female (55.5%). We classified all subjects into six age-groups: 16 to 18 years of age (n=117 or 22.6%), 19 to 25 (n=132 or 25.5%), 26 to 35 (n=55 or 10.6%), 36 to 45 (n=58 or 11.2%), 45 to 65 (n=114 or 22.1%) and above 65 (n=41 or 7.9%). Of all subjects, 273 (52.8%) were not married, 207 (40.0%) were married, 7 (1.4%) were divorced, 13 (2.5%) were widow(er) and 17 (3.3%) were clergymen, nuns or the like. The subjects were also sorted in six levels according to their educational level. The most highly educated group (n=88 or 17%) consisted of subjects who obtained a university-degree or who were students at university. The second group consisted of 158 (31.2%), the third of 159 (31.4%), the fourth of 51 (10.1%) and the fifth of 22 people (or 4.3%). The lowest group (n=28 or 5.5%) consisted of people who completed elementary school only. The subjects in our study were thus highly educated in comparison to the general population. Considering attendance at weekly church service: 24.1% (n=123) of the subjects attended every week, 16.6% (n=85) attended often, 32.9% (n=168) attended on special occasions only and 26.4% (n=135) never went, not even on special occasions. These percentages do not represent the average church-attendance in Flanders, since only 13% of the people go to church regularly. Of all subjects, 30.3% (n=155) described themselves as being religious, 19.9% (n=102) as being catholic, 23.0% (n=118) as being Christian, 7.4% (n=38) as being agnostic, 8.0% (n=90) as being a non-believer, 2.9% (n=22) as being atheist, 7.2% (n=37) as



being a free-thinker and 1.2% (n=6) as belonging to other religious groups. Finally subjects had to choose one out of six belief-statements: a) absolute believers (19.4%, n=100), b) believers with questions (24.7%; n=127), c) doubters (24.5%, n=126), d) rather non-believers (14.4%, n=74), e) non-believers (9.7%, n=50) or f) agnostics (7.4%, n=38).

## 4.2. Instrumentation

Our investigation was based on a questionnaire, containing items to which subjects responded on seven-point Likert-type scales (1=complete disagreement, 4=neutral, 7=complete agreement). Firstly, the scale we used to operationalize commitment to the religious Social Identity, was based on the ‘religion/spiritual life’-subscale (taken from the ‘commitment to social identity’-scale) which Jackson (1981) constructed (see Appendix). Our scale consisted of 23 items, and we’ll refer to it as *Commitment to (Religious) Social Identity*. Secondly, the scale we used to operationalize racism was taken from the ‘Ethnocentrism-scale’ constructed by Billiet and De Witte (1991). Our scale consisted of 9 items and was supposed to capture two dimensions: a negative attitude towards migrants and (biological) racism (see Appendix). Finally, to operationalize religion, we made use of the 24-item ‘Post-Critical Belief’-scale proposed by Hutsebaut (1996). This scale contains 8 items that intend to measure *Orthodoxy*, 8 that intend to measure *External Critique* and 8 that intend to measure *Historical Relativism* of which 3 were expected to load on *Historical Awareness* and 5 on *Relativism* (see Hutsebaut, Fontaine & Duriez, 1998). These items had already been used in earlier research (e.g. Hutsebaut, 1996; 1997) which led to the expected factors (see Appendix).

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Social Identity Theory

The responses to the 23-item ‘*Commitment to (Religious) Social Identity*’-scale were subjected to an iterative exploratory factoranalysis using squared multiple correlations as prior

communality estimates. The principal factor method was used to extract the factors, and this was followed by a varimax rotation. We decided to retain any factor that accounts for at least 10% of the common variance. Using this criterion, we retained two of them. In interpreting the rotated factor pattern, an item was said to load on a given factor if its loading was .40 or greater for that factor, and less than .40 for the other. Using these criteria, 12 items were found to load on the first one, which was subsequently labeled the '*Religiosity As A Way Of Life*'-factor. Ten items were found to load on the second one, which was labeled the '*Religiosity As Of Secondary Importance*'-factor (see Appendix). Cronbach's Alfa was respectively .94 (n= 478) and .89 (n= 480). The factors turned out, as could be expected, to correlate strongly negatively ( $r(517) = -.62, p < .0001$ ). The mean score of our subjects was 2.81 (n=517, SD= 1.46) for *Religiosity As A Way Of Life* and 4.17 (n=517, SD=1.50) for *Religiosity As Of Secondary Importance*.

## 5.2. Racism

Responses to the 9-item '*Racism*'-scale were subjected to an iterative exploratory factoranalysis using squared multiple correlations as prior communality estimates. The principal factor method was used to extract the factors. The 100%-Explained-Variance-criterion pointed to only one instead of the supposed two factors (the measure of a negative attitude towards migrants was highly correlated with the measure of (biological) racism). An item was said to load on this factor if its loading was .40 or greater. This was the case for all items. The Cronbach's Alfa was .89 (n=501). The mean score of our subjects was 2.54 (n=518, SD=1.37).

## 5.3. Religion

Responses to the 24-item '*Dealing With Religion*'-scale were also subjected to a similar factoranalysis. This time we decided to retain any factor that accounts for at least 10% of the

common variance. Using this criterion, we retained three of them. In interpreting the rotated factor pattern, an item was said to load on a given factor if its loading was .35 or greater for that one, and less than .35 for the others, and if its loading-pattern fitted face-validity. Using these criteria, 8 items were found to load on the first one, which was subsequently labeled *Orthodoxy*. Seven items were found to load on the second one, which was labeled *External Critique*. Five items were found to load on the third one, which was labeled *Historical Relativism*. The Cronbach's Alfa was respectively .78 (n=477), .77 (n=497) and only .58 (n=483). Because of the low Alfa for *Historical Relativism* and taking in account the findings of Hutsebaut, Fontaine and Duriez (1998), we decided to subject the 8 items that were supposed to capture *Historical Relativism* to a new, similar, factoranalysis. Using the 100%-Explained-Variance-criterium, we retained two factors. Three items were found to load on the first one, which was labeled *Historical Awareness* and 5 items were found to load on the second one, which was labeled *Relativism*. The Cronbach's Alfas was respectively .84 (n=508) and only .59 (n=486). *Orthodoxy* turned out to correlate negatively with both *External Critique* ( $r(517)=-.14$ ,  $p<.005$ ) and *Relativism* ( $r(518)=-.19$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) and positively with *Historical Awareness* ( $r(517)=.42$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Furthermore, *External Critique* turned out to correlate positively with *Relativism* ( $r(517)=.34$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) and negatively with *Historical Awareness* ( $r(517)=-.45$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) whilst the latter were found to correlate positively ( $r(517)=.14$ ,  $p<.005$ ). The mean score of our subjects was 2.45 (n=518, SD=1.23) for *Orthodoxy*, 3.71 (n=517, SD=1.35) for *External Critique*, 3.90 (n=517, SD=1.88) for *Historical Awareness* and 4.58 (n=518, SD=1.32) for *Relativism*.

#### **5.4. Relations**

A correlation-analyses showed there were no significant correlations between our measures of Social Identity Theory and Racism. *Religiosity As A Way Of Life* and *Religiosity As Of Secondary Importance* correlated respectively .07 (n=517, n.s.) and .04 (n=517, n.s.) with

*Racism*. These findings, however, were rather unexpected, since these measures can be seen as alternative measures of ‘salience’, which is traditionally found to correlate with racism. Nonetheless, this was consistent with the unexpected results of another analysis: in doing a one-way anova-analysis (between-groups-design) to examine the potential influence of church-attendance, religious self-definition and the belief-statements on *Racism*, we found neither church-attendance ( $F(3, 507)=0.09$ , n.s.) nor the belief-statements ( $F(5, 509)=0.73$ , n.s.) to resort any effect. Religious self-definition did ( $F(7, 504)=2.52$ ,  $p<.05$ ), but a Tukey’s HSD-test made clear that this effect was solely due to the fact that those who labeled themselves as Catholics on the average scored somewhat higher than the Agnostics ( $p<.05$ ).

Since we could not find the expected correlations between the Social-Identity-constructs and *Racism*, this relationship could not, as our hypothesis stated, disappear when taking dealing with religious in account. However, the Social-Identity-processes could still exert an influence on the religious styles, and those religious styles could in turn still influence *Racism*. In this respect, an initial correlation-analysis revealed that at least there were significant correlations between the Social-Identity-processes and the religious dimensions on the one hand, and between those religious dimensions and *Racism* on the other hand (see Table 1).

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 TABLE 1 about here  
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Our theoretical model was then put to the test in a path-analysis, using a Lisrel8-procedure. This procedure makes use of the Maximum Likelihood parameter-estimate-method. In our case we departed from the correlation-matrix. The sample-size for this test was 516 subjects. On the basis of some frequently used ‘Goodness Of Fit’-indices, however, we had to conclude our model did not fit the data too well ( $GFI=.93$ ,  $Adj.GFI=.65$ ). Especially the frequently used ‘Badness Of Fit’-criterion pointed to a bad fitting ( $\chi^2(6)=214.72$ ,  $p=.0000$ ). The Root Mean<sup>2</sup>

Residual was not satisfactory either (RMR=.076). A modification-index suggested we should add paths or error covariances between our religious dimension, but since we cannot provide a theoretical foundation for this we nevertheless kept model as it was. The results of our path-analysis, along with the significant standardized path-coefficients are presented in Figure 2.

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 FIGURE 2 about here  
 -----

The path-coefficients show that *Racism* is positively influenced strongest of all by *Orthodoxy*, which is itself strongly positively influenced by *Religiosity As A Way Of Life*, and, to a lesser extent, by *Religiosity As Of Secondary Importance*. Moreover, *Racism* is also positively influenced, though to a lesser extent, by *External Critique*, which is itself positively influenced by *Religiosity As Of Secondary Importance*, and negatively by *Religiosity As A Way Of Life*. However *Racism* is not influenced at all by *Historical Awareness*, which is itself strongly positively influenced by *Religiosity As A Way Of Life*, and faintly negatively by *Religiosity As Of Secondary Importance*. Finally, *Racism* is negatively influenced by *Relativism*, which is itself positively influenced by *Religiosity As Of Secondary Importance*, and not at all by *Religiosity As A Way Of Life*.

## 6. Conclusion

The results seem to support our hypothesis: being committed to a religious social identity does not necessarily lead to such things as ethnocentrism and racism. Merely detecting that someone values his religion thus appears not to provide any information on profane attitudes. This appears to hold ground in the fact that people can deal with religion in a variety of ways. People who consider it as a way of life, can either be dealing with it in an Orthodox or in a Historically Aware way, as well as in a Relativist way of course (which is an outlook inde-

pendent of whether or not one regards his religion as important). Stressing External Critical thinking however seems to be prevented by this. People who consider religion as of secondary importance for their lives, can either be dealing with it in an External Critical, an Orthodox or a Relativist way. However, not to consider religion as very important seems to prevent religion being dealt with in a Historically Aware way. Contrary to the 'salience' of belief, the way in which people deal with religion does seem to affect profane attitudes, such as racism. All this seems to depend on how religion is being dealt with.

We should not forget three important remarks, however. Firstly, it is evident that our results are strongly dependent of the way our concepts were operationalized (other operationalizations could lead to different patterns) as well as of the methodology we have used (the use of questionnaires will most likely remain open to debate forever). Therefore, in future research we plan on the one hand to broaden and elaborate (some of) our operationalizations, and on the other hand to include some in-depth interviews. Secondly, we have to admit that the fit of our theoretical model was not that good. Apparently our model is characterized by too much simplicity. One possible reason for this is that explaining racism is terribly difficult, and religiosity alone might after all not be that important (cf. the research tradition of the Low Countries). Nevertheless, this simplicity is not bad, for it allows us to see a few relations more clearly concerning the pure influence of religion, which can serve as a guideline for (our) future research on this topic. Thirdly, we must not forget that our model is based on a sample which is not thought to be representative for the whole Flemish population. The fact that we did not find any direct relation between the Social-Identity-constructs and racism could be rooted in this. Especially because the relation between 'salience' and racism was quite firmly established in the past, we should be reluctant to generalize these findings to the broad population. However, it is also likely that religious involvement no longer directly affects racism because, whilst the number of believers drops, the percentage of believers that no longer deal with religion in an Orthodox way is growing. It might be the case that an overall relationship

between religion and racism is non-existent at the moment because the different ways of dealing with religion momentarily counterbalance one another. Whilst Allport argued that non-ethnocentric churchgoers were only a small minority, we believe secularization caused the religious population to change. Further research will have to examine whether or not this is true, and whether or not this supposed direction of change would be continued. In future research, we also plan to empirically test if our religious dimensions can indeed be seen as a substitute for the 'Hinkle and Brown'-taxonomy.

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## 8. Appendix

In order to provide more insight in the operationalization of our concepts, we will give some examples of items for each scale, thereby indicating which dimension they belong to. It is, however, not our aim to list all items that were used. The full scales can be obtained by contacting us.

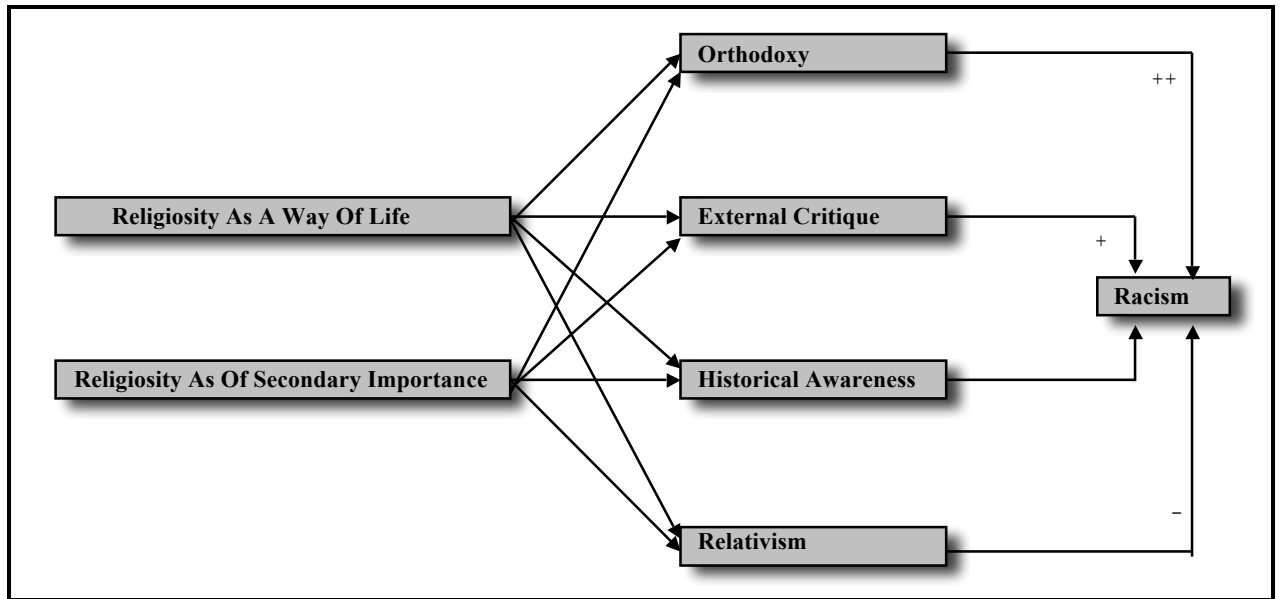
The '*Commitment to (Religious) Social Identity*'-scale fell apart in two dimensions: '*Religiosity As A Way Of Life*' and '*Religiosity As Of Secondary Importance*'. Examples of items that belong to the former dimension are: 'If I come across an article related to religion, I probably will read it with interest' and 'When I meet new people, it is important to me that they know I am religious'. Examples of items that belong to the latter dimension are 'Being religious is of little value to me' and 'I rarely devote much time to my religious life'.

The '*Racism*'-scale was supposed to consist of two dimensions: '*negative attitude towards migrants*' and '*(biological) racism*'. Examples of items supposedly belonging to the former are: 'Generally speaking, immigrants can't be trusted' and 'Guest workers come here to exploit our Social Security'. Examples of items supposedly belonging to the latter are: 'Every-

thing taken together, the white race is superior to other races' and 'We have to keep our race pure and to oppose mixing with other races'.

The '*Post-Critical Belief*'-scale was supposed to consist of four dimensions: 'Orthodoxy', 'External Critique', 'Historical Awareness' and 'Relativism'. Examples of items belonging to the first are: 'Only a priest can give an answer to important religious questions' and 'I think that Bible story should be taken literally, as they are written'. Examples of items belonging to the second are: 'Too many people have been oppressed in the name of belief; this is another reason why I have my doubts' and 'The scientific clarifications of human life and the world have made religious clarifications superfluous'. Examples of items belonging to the third are: 'For me, the bible holds a deeper truth which needs to be revealed by personal reflection' and 'Despite the fact that the Bible has been written in a completely different context from ours, for me, it retains a basic message'. Examples of items belonging to the fourth are: 'I am well aware of the fact that each assertion on God is determined by the time in which it is formulated' and 'For me, assertions regarding the absolute, like dogma's, will also always remain relative, because they are pronounced by human beings at a certain period of time'.

FIGURE 1: *Our theoretical model.*





TABEL 1: *Correlations between the studied dimensions.*

	<b>orthodoxy</b>	<b>external critique</b>	<b>historical awareness</b>	<b>relativism</b>
<b>religiosity as a way of life</b>	.62 (n=517)****	-.48 (n=516)****	.67 (n=516)****	-.12 (n=517)*
<b>religiosity as of secondary importance</b>	-.27 (n=517)****	.53 (n=516)***	-.47 (n=516)****	.15 (n=517)***
<b>racism</b>	.36 (n=518)****	.15 (n=517)**	-.03 (n=517)	-.15 (n=518)***

\* = significance at level  $p < .005$   
 \*\* = significance at level  $p < .001$   
 \*\*\* = significance at level  $p < .0005$   
 \*\*\*\* = significance at level  $p < .0001$

FIGURE 2: *The results of our path-analysis.*

