

**LIVING APART TOGETHER?**  
**ON ETHNIC IDENTITY DYNAMICS AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS**  
**BETWEEN ALLOCHTHONS AND AUTOCHTHONS**

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Introduction

The challenging character of a society is often pushed to extremes when it comes to the relationship between autochthons and immigrants. A crucial concept to grasp this relation seems to be ethnicity, which constitutes an increasingly vigorous dimension in everyday life. It is quite clear that the ethnic identities of both autochthons and immigrants will influence their relation. At the same time, this relation itself will influence these identities.

In this chapter we will study the ethnic identity dynamics that come into play in the context of immigrants in a host society. Moreover, we will demonstrate that ethnicity is often strongly interwoven with religiosity. Roosens has offered a vast amount of empirical research in this domain. We will briefly present some aspects of his work that are relevant to our topic here. Then, we will present a social-psychological framework to analyze the topic. The objective of this chapter can be interpreted as a presentation and comparison of two approaches to ethnicity dynamics: an anthropological and a social-psychological approach. The social-psychological theorizing offers a conceptual framework that allows to systematize certain anthropological findings. On the other hand the anthropological insights constitute a healthy counterweight for the, occasionally, abstract and strict social-psychological theorizing. We will argue that both approaches are complementary. The integration of both approaches will eventually lead to more profound insights into the role of ethnic identity dynamics in intergroup relations.

Roosens on ethnicity

*The creative character of ethnicity*

Throughout his work, Roosens has elaborated on the dynamic and creative character of ethnicity (1982, 1988, 1989, 1994, 1998). From the start, he has reacted against the concept of ethnic groups as being merely passive bearers of differing cultures. In this vision the persistent contact between these ethnic groups would gradually result in the disappearance of cultural differences. As stated above, we

are however confronted with a rise in the salience of ethnicity. Roosens finds an explanation for this tendency in the instrumental function of ethnicity in the contemporary world: ethnicity has become a strategic tool to pursue economic interests in a more effective way than e.g., class, nation or religion. Due to the dominant ideology of equality, no government can refuse an ethnic group the right to its own identity without being branded as racist. 'If they refuse to favor the less economically advantaged or the members of a trade union, they are, at best, 'capitalists' or 'conservatives'" (Roosens, 1989). Thereby, Roosens joins Barth's (1969) emphasis on the distinction between the ethnic group and the 'objective', perceivable culture. An ethnic group is a type of social organization in which the participants themselves make use of certain traits from their past, a past which may or may not be historically verifiable. Roosens distinguishes two constituting features of an ethnic group, and as a consequence of ethnic identity.

#### *Two aspects of ethnic identity*

An important purpose of the process of self-definition by selecting traits out of the totality of the observable culture, is to create a social border between oneself and similar groups by means of a few cultural emblems and values and, by this, making oneself distinct from others (Barth, 1969). For the interpretation of this process Roosens goes back to a more psychological analysis of identity (De Vos, 1975; Epstein, 1978). In this respect the identification with an ethnic category is said to provide the person with psychological security, a feeling of belonging. Of course, each individual belongs to several social units at the same time: humankind, a continent, a nation, an ethnic group, a religious group, a family, and so on. The individual is at least cognitively aware of his membership of different categories. This is not to say that s/he values them all in the same way: some of these memberships will be more important for him/her than others and consequently s/he will identify with them more strongly. One can say that there is a hierarchy of identities for each person, e.g., a man or woman can see him/herself in the first place as a parent, secondly as a Catholic, Flemish, and so on. This hierarchy has a dynamic character: it can change in the course of time or one social identity can simply be more relevant than others in a specific context. Depending on the social identity that is relevant in a particular situation, one will feel similar to others who belong to the same unit and different from others who are members of comparable, but different units. In this way, ethnic identity creates an ingroup as well as an outgroup: it combines the source of differentiation with an internal source of identification.

In his more recent work Roosens (1994, 1998) stresses that the creation of a social border is not the sole source of an ethnic identity: the role of the reference to one's origin needs to be considered as well, moreover it should be considered as the prime source of ethnic identity. The ethnic border creates a distinction between people, while the origin creates similarity for people within a group. In this respect Roosens uses the 'family-origin metaphor': belonging to an ethnic group is like being rooted in a

family. This sense of continuity with the past logically precedes the ethnic border as a foundation of the ethnic identity. What a person is in ethnic terms has more to do with this reference to one's origin than with ethnic borders. It is exactly this genealogical dimension which differentiates an ethnic group from other social groups like linguistic or religious groups.

### *The intergroup context of immigrants*

Roosens (1994) states that both sources can be, in turn, more important than the other, depending on the historical circumstances and situations. At the same time he suggests a primordial position for the idea of the reference to the origin in the conceptualization of ethnicity. The dialectic relation between these two sources of ethnicity can be illustrated clearly in the context of an immigrant group in a host society. Both groups, the immigrants and the natives, can be said to refer to the origin or use the family-origin metaphor in their relations, each in their own specific way.

Roosens states that in the immigrant group the family metaphor will be more important than the creation of social borders. Some patterns of immigrant culture which function as ethnic markers and as elements of an ethnic boundary do so only in a secondary fashion: their primary meaning and function is to be understood from the perspective of the relationship between immigrants and their homeland or own immigrant communities (Roosens, 1994). In our opinion, these statements seem to apply mainly to the first generation immigrants. As far as the second generation is concerned, the boundary dynamics fully come into play, for the ties with the family in the country of their parents and with its culture have been diluted considerably (Roosens, 1994).

In this way, Roosens demonstrates the importance of the construction of origins and their maintenance in the hearts of the allochthons. At the same time he demonstrates that origins are also considered important by the natives for they determine the status ascribed to various groups of immigrants. Let us focus on the immigrant situation in Belgium. An interesting observation with respect to this matter is the dominant restriction of the label 'migrants' (which automatically implicates the idea 'migrant-problems') to non-European immigrants, more specifically Turks and Moroccans. This linguistical custom reveals the intergroup attitude of the natives: 'they' are different from 'us', in this respect 'us' also incorporates the European persons living in Belgium (Italians, Spaniards, etc.). This can only be understood by the reference to their own origin: as Europeans and Christians they are seen as 'totally different' from 'the Muslims.' Reference to one's origin (both the immigrant's as their own) functions in this way as a ground for representing cultural, and especially religious differences as absolute: social borders are created. In this way the creation of ethnic boundaries can be considered as emanating rather from the natives than from the (first generation) immigrants.

### A social-psychological approach: Social identity theory

It is interesting to compare these ideas, as they were developed from an anthropological point of view, with a social-psychological approach. In the next paragraphs we will outline one of the most influential (judging from the amount of research it has instigated) social-psychological theories of the last decades: the social identity theory. We will show that these different lines of thinking, who are traditionally not bound to cross, can be put in a dialogue which will reveal an interesting picture: they are compatible and at the same time they form a critical counter-weight for each other. More specifically, social identity theory gives a clear and systematic analysis of the different psychological processes involved in the creation and the dynamics of the existence of social groups. This analysis can be considered as a profound elaboration of the social-psychological foundation of ethnicity, which Roosens touches upon only briefly. At the same time, social identity theory elaborates on the implications of group membership for intergroup relations. On the other hand, the anthropological approach offers important insights and observations to complement the rather abstract theorizing of the social identity theory.

#### *The social group*

According to Roosens (1982), an ethnic group is created and maintained when a social group draws a dividing line between itself and other comparable groups by means of a number of cultural emblems and values which, according to the people involved, differentiate the group from these surrounding groups. This definition of an ethnic group is strikingly similar to the group definition used in recent social-psychological research on group phenomena. Following the theoretical insights developed by Tajfel (1978, 1981) and by Turner (1981, 1982), Brown (1988) arrived at the following definition: 'a group exists when two or more people define themselves as members of it and when its existence is recognized by at least one other. The 'other' in this context is some person or group of people who do not so define themselves.' According to this definition, a group becomes a social-psychological reality when a number of people share the perception that some of them belong to the same social unit while others do not belong to that unit. Furthermore, these perceptions of differential group membership do have important and predictable consequences for the attitudes and behavior towards ingroup and outgroup members. More specifically, the mere fact of belonging to one social group rather than to another does easily result in ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination. The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) has been developed in order to explain why people become attached to the groups they belong to and why these group memberships afflict the relationships with other groups within the social environment.

The social identity perspective departs from the observation that people do spontaneously perceive their social environment as consisting of a relatively limited number of mutually exclusive categories

within which the self as well as others are situated. This categorization process structures the social environment and it indicates also to which of these categories the self and others do and do not belong. This process thus constitutes the cognitive-perceptual basis of psychological group formation. A social group is conceptualized as ‘a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership of it’ (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Group identification is then the cognitive-perceptual process of locating oneself within a specific social category (Turner, 1982; Turner et al., 1987). Although group identification is described as a cognitive-perceptual process, it should be kept in mind that perceived membership of a social category often has important motivational and evaluative/affective consequences.

### *Saliency*

As already pointed out in the preceding section, every social situation contains many different categorization dimensions (gender, age, race, religion, language, profession, nationality, etc....) which can be used in order to perceive and structure the situation in a meaningful way. The question is then which of these multiple categorization dimensions is most likely to be used. According to Oakes (1987), a specific categorization dimension will be more salient (and is thus more likely to be used) as a function of its relative accessibility and of its fit with the situation at hand.

Accessibility refers to the relative easiness with which a perceiver can activate a specific categorization dimension. For instance, age, gender and race constitute core categories that appear to be immediately accessible when people want to describe other people (Fiske, 1993). Relative accessibility is also strongly determined by the tasks, goals and purposes the perceiver wants to accomplish. The relative importance of a particular group membership for an individual’s self-definition and the current emotional and value significance of a specific ingroup/outgroup categorization are also important determinants of its relative accessibility for that individual. For example, the black/white categorization will be more accessible for members of anti-racism groups or for members of fascist political parties than for others not so strongly involved in this societal issue, and more accessible for racially prejudiced individuals, blacks as well as whites, than for non-prejudiced people.

Fit is defined as the strength of the correlation between observed similarities and differences between people and their assignment to different social categories. When several dimensions are available for categorizing people, the best-fitting categorization will be the one that minimizes intracategory differences and maximizes intercategory differences (the principle of meta-contrast; Turner et al., 1987). Moreover, fit is not only determined by these cognitive-structural aspects but by normative elements as well. This means that the perceived correspondence between observed

communalities and differences between people and the assignment of these people to different categories must be consistent with the stereotypical content of that categorization dimension. For example, an old/young categorization will possess a better fit and will more likely be used in a context where the young people are actively and loudly moving around while the older people are passively and quietly sitting on their chair than when their behaviors would be the other way around. This normative determinant of category usage implies that a specific characteristic will more likely be used as a relevant categorization dimension when the behavior of the members of the ensuing categories corresponds to the stereotypical representation of these categories.

### *Categorization processes*

When a specific categorization dimension becomes salient, it will be used to structure the social environment. This categorization process proceeds according to a fundamental mechanism, namely categorical differentiation. Categorical differentiation implies an accentuation of perceived similarities between the different elements within the same category and of the differences between elements located in different categories (Tajfel, 1978). In this way, the social environment becomes more clearly structured because it is perceived as containing a relatively limited number of clearly distinct and quite homogeneous entities. Moreover, the perception of oneself as belonging to a social group will lead to an accentuation of the perceived similarities between the self and other ingroup members and of the perceived differences between ingroup members (including the self) and outgroup members on every dimension believed to be correlated with the categorization criterion (Doise, 1978; Eiser & Stroebe, 1972; Tajfel, 1969; Turner et al., 1987). In extreme cases, these cognitive accentuation processes can lead to the conviction that ingroup and outgroup members differ from each other on almost every dimension that can be used to differentiate between groups, and to a denial of the existence of communalities between the members of different groups. These processes can have pernicious consequences. For instance, some people who consider the autochthon-allochthon categorization as very important, are also inclined to state that the differences between these groups are insurmountable. As a consequence, efforts to promote mutual understanding and Cupertino between these groups are considered to be meaningless. Instead, one should 'respect' these differences and allow both groups to develop themselves along their own lines. This is also called 'apartheid.'

It is important however to recognize that these cognitive-perceptual categorization processes do not exclusively operate in these extreme cases. They are present in every social situation and they constitute the cognitive basis of what has been called the 'social identity.' The core idea of the social identity perspective is that the categorical differentiation process has as a result that group members (including the self) are perceived and described in terms of the general characteristics ascribed to the category as a whole rather than in terms of their unique and strictly personal attributes. This category

based definition of self and of others is called a 'social' identity, i.e. a self-definition in terms of category memberships.

### *Social identity*

According to Tajfel (1978), a social identity refers to 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from her/his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.' The social identity approach thus asserts that the process of group identification provides group members with a social identity due to the fact that they incorporate their group membership into their self-concept in the form of an ingroup prototype, i.e. a cognitive representation of the defining characteristics of their own group. Hogg et al. (1995) point out that these representations or social identities are conceived as being descriptive (indicating which characteristics are common to all members of a specific group), prescriptive (indicating how the members of a group should think and behave), and evaluative (indicating the relative position of the different groups on an evaluative dimension).

Social identity theory does not really elaborate on where the content of these representations comes from. When a specific group membership and thus a corresponding social identity becomes salient, how do the group members involved know which characteristics, norms, values, etc. should be considered as typical for that group? At the same time, it is regularly observed that most members of a group have very similar representations of the characteristics of a given target group and that these representations are quite stable over time. Moreover, different social groups can have quite different representations of the same target group. The relatively widespread character of a stereotypical representation within a group and also the differences between groups with respect to their stereotypical representations of the same outgroup have been explained via social learning mechanisms. This explanation is based upon the work of Allport (1954) who stressed that many stereotypes and prejudiced tendencies are acquired from the family context within which children grow up. At a later age, these stereotypical representations would be reinforced and transmitted via mass media, schools and interactions within peer groups. This social learning approach thus stresses the importance of intragroup and even of intra-family processes in the creation of stereotypical representations of the own and of the other group. These insights have, until now, been more or less overlooked by the social identity approach. However, Roosens' work on ethnic group membership puts these ideas again in the center of the stage. By making use of a family-origin metaphor, Roosens (1994, 1998) emphasizes that the defining characteristics for an ethnic group will be found in the group's past. By referring to a shared past, people can obtain a rich representation of what they are, of how they should behave, and of how they are different from other ethnic groups. It is very likely that such a reference to a group's past does not exclusively occur in the context of ethnic group formation. Further research could benefit from these insights by paying explicit attention to the potential

role of a group's (real and/or imagined) history as a crucial component in group formation processes in general.

### *Implications for intergroup relations*

The important consequence of these categorical differentiation processes is that they lead to a stereotypical perception not only of members of the other group but also of the self and of fellow ingroup members. A group member is perceived as relatively interchangeable with other members of the same group. This means that group members are 'depersonalized': they are no longer perceived and treated as unique individuals but as incarnations of the group prototype. Although this depersonalization occurs for the ingroup as well as for the outgroup, it is also true that it has a greater impact upon the way the outgroup is perceived than upon the way the ingroup is perceived. This means that the outgroup is often more homogenized than the ingroup: 'They' are really all the same while 'we' remain somewhat differentiated individuals (Simon, 1992; Vanbeselaere, 1991). This differentiated homogenization process can easily be illustrated by means of the observation that many people often talk of 'migrants' while neglecting the fact that this category contains people with different nationalities, different ethnic backgrounds, different languages and different religions. Moreover, outgroup members are also often perceived as holding more extreme positions than the members of the own group. For example, when an autochthon uses religion as a categorization dimension, s/he will stress that all autochthons belong more or less to the Christian tradition while the Muslim immigrants will be perceived as if they are all fundamentalists. This depersonalization phenomenon constitutes the basic psychological process that underlies group phenomena, such as group cohesion, shared norms and values, mutual social influence, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, collective behavior, etc.

The social categorization and the accompanying categorical differentiation processes do offer an explanation for these group phenomena in terms of a fundamental cognitive process. An important implication of this analysis is that group related phenomena such as crowd behavior, stereotyping, etc. do not have to be conceived as consequences of some aberrant personality type. Rather they originate from a fundamental characteristic of perfectly normal cognitive functioning. This statement does not imply that these phenomena should be considered as socially appropriate. On the contrary, this theoretical analysis leads to the insight that these cognitive processes render us all very vulnerable for the impact of such simplified stereotypical representations. This makes it also more easily understandable why these phenomena are so widespread and so often difficult to remedy (Brown, 1988; Vanbeselaere, 1994, 1996). Despite its strength, this purely cognitive approach has also a serious disadvantage. This approach can explain why social groups are stereotyped and differentiated from one another but it does not explain why these phenomena are so often asymmetrical. We do stereotype the ingroup as well as the outgroup but the ingroup stereotypes are generally evaluatively positive while the outgroup stereotypes are mostly evaluatively negative. We do make a clear distinction between our own



and the other groups by moving our own group towards the positive pole and the other groups towards the negative pole of the comparison dimension. Our own group is not only clearly distinct from but also better than the other groups. In order to explain this asymmetrical nature of the intergroup differentiation, it is necessary to invoke again the social identity concept.

According to social identity theorists (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987), the biased nature of the intergroup differentiation is a consequence of the fact that group memberships are part of the self-concept so that the relative evaluative position of one's own and other groups does have an impact upon one's self-evaluation. Tajfel and Turner (1979) start from the assumption that most people prefer to have a positive self-concept rather than a negative one. Since our self-concept is partly determined by our group memberships (our 'social' identity), it follows that we will prefer to belong to positively evaluated groups rather than to negatively evaluated ones. In order to determine the evaluative stance of our own group, we must compare our own group with the other groups in our social environment. When the outcome of these intergroup comparisons on some important value dimension appears to be favorable for the own group, membership of this group can contribute positively to our self-concept. When the comparison outcome would be negative for the own group, group membership would constitute a threat for our self-concept. Because of the implications of intergroup comparisons for the presumed need for a positive self-concept, it follows that group members will be inclined to perform these comparisons in a biased way so that the ingroup can indeed be distinguished favorably from the surrounding groups. Tajfel (1978) called this 'the establishment of positive distinctiveness.'

To summarize, when a specific categorical dimension (for example autochthon-immigrant) is regularly used in discussions about our society, the corresponding group memberships and social identities will become more salient. As a consequence, members of the different groups will perceive more similarity between themselves and their respective ingroup members. At the same time the differences between these groups will also be perceptually exaggerated. Group members will also perceive more congruence between their own and their group's values and norms, and intragroup competition and intergroup competition will increase. Moreover, this enhanced salience will also produce affective, evaluative, and behavioral consequences. Group members will like their own group and its members more, the difference between ingroup and outgroup evaluations will become more and more favorable for the own group, and they will treat ingroup members more favorably than outgroup members. Once such a sequence is started, these different effects will tend to reinforce each other by providing an 'explanation' and a 'justification' for one another.

This summary description could easily lead to the conclusion that intergroup relations are doomed to be characterized by tensions, conflicts, hostility, etc. Although such a negative view on intergroup relations has, more or less, been defended in some earlier publications (a.o. Turner, 1980), it is also true that this picture has recently become more balanced. These more recent publications (a.o. Mummendey, 1995) adhere to the view that negative intergroup relations are indeed easily aroused but that they are nevertheless not inevitable. The role of intra-group processes, especially of group norms, is currently

considered as constituting a very important determinant of the nature of intergroup relations. Based upon self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), Jetten et al. (1996) hypothesized that a salient ingroup-outgroup categorization will result in an increased conformity to ingroup norms. When these norms value Cupertino and friendly relations with the outgroup, enhanced ingroup identification will lead to an improvement of intergroup relations. When the ingroup norms stress the importance of being better than the outgroup, enhanced group identification will lead to a deterioration of intergroup relations. The results supported this view. A study by Van Avermaet et al. (in press) demonstrated that intra-group social influence processes have a strong impact upon intergroup behavior. These new findings corroborate the view that ingroup processes and characteristics do indeed play a crucial role in intergroup relations. This also suggests that an improvement of the relations between Belgians and immigrants could benefit more from changes within the Belgian group than from changes within the immigrants' group.

It is important to keep in mind that social identity theory views social identity as a highly dynamic construct. Although many social situations will activate the social part of our self-concept, it is also true that it depends upon the specific situation, which social identity will become activated. Several factors (accessibility, structural and normative fit) determine which categorization dimension will become salient. Which identity becomes salient will be largely determined by the immediate social context. And the activated social identity will determine what kinds of behavior are considered appropriate, namely those behaviors that are in line with the activated ingroup prototype. In other words, the content of our social identity at a given moment is largely contingent upon the specific outgroups we are confronted with.

Social identity theory thus points out that an intergroup situation incites the members of the groups involved to conduct ingroup favoring intergroup comparisons. This does not imply that the theory would neglect the fact that the outcomes of these intergroup comparison processes will often be constrained by the existing societal situation. The dominant groups in a society will be able to differentiate themselves positively from the other groups while minority groups will often experience a negative comparison outcome. In its so-called macro-social part, social identity theory has specified how these groups will either attempt to maintain their favorable position or how they will react (sometimes even revolt) against their unfavorable position.

#### Ethnic identity dynamics and intergroup relations

Social identity theory leads to an understanding of the origin, the existence and the management of a social identity. It is clear that the quest for a positive social identity is pursued in different ways in groups who differ in social status. A minority group will have to cope with a low social status, which will, at the least, threaten the social identity of its members. By contrast, a dominant group will have a

high social status, which implies that its members will try to maintain and defend their advantaged position. In the next paragraphs we will study these identity management processes in greater detail. We will illustrate the role of ethnicity and religious affiliation, both in an ethnic minority group and in the dominant group of the autochthons.

### *The perspective of an ethnic minority*

In this paragraph we will apply the different theoretical insights mainly to Moroccan immigrants, the second to largest immigrant group in Belgium. In 1996 about 9% of the Belgian population were foreigners (NIS). A broad range of studies have revealed the 'not unambiguously positive relation' of Belgians with the foreigners in their country (De Witte & Verbeeck, 1999; VRIND, 1999). Research shows that Moroccons and Turks are evaluated the least favorable by Belgians (Dooghe & Vanderleyden, 1974; De Baets, 1994). Moreover, Derycke, Swyngedouw and Phalet (1999) have demonstrated that Moroccons in Brussels have a stronger experience of systematic discrimination than Turks. All this makes the Moroccan immigrants in Belgium an interesting group to illustrate the ethnic identity dynamics in a low status group. First, we will present some anthropological insights in the different identity strategies that come into play in an immigrant group. Later, we will compare this approach with a social-psychological conceptualization.

### *An anthropological view of different strategies*

In our discourse on ethnic identity dynamics in migrants we need to make a distinction between first and second generation immigrants. A first intriguing difference involves the reference group, which is used in the social comparison process (Roosens, 1982, 1989; Leman, 1979, 1998). The phenomenon of the utopian idea of remigration among first generation migrants is well known and well-documented (Anwar, 1979; Roosens, 1982, 1989; Hermans, 1994; Leman, 1998; Sayad, 1991). The hearts of these immigrants never left their home country. They continue to see themselves as people who will return one day to their region of origin to enjoy the fruits of their labor. At the same time, they realize that they will probably never actually return because they do not want to leave their children, who have built their lives in the new country (Roosens, 1988). This orientation to the country of origin has an important implication for their experience and perception of their situation in the host country. They compare themselves with the people 'back home', and not with the Belgians here. In terms of this comparison, they have done relatively well, at least by social-economic standards. They have earned more money than the people in Morocco; their children have access to a good education;

they benefit from a social security system, and so on. Moreover, they experience this relative advantage in money, prestige and status during regular vacations in the home region.

As a consequence the ethnicity of first generation immigrants will be focused on maintaining a sense of continuity with their past (see the introduction of this chapter). This will be mainly manifested in the realms of family relations, sexual moral and religion (Sayad, 1991; Phalet, 1995). In this respect Leman (1998) points to the important role of religion in the creation of a social network among first generation immigrants: 'the mosque and the Ramadan are unquestionably among the public markers that from the very beginning of immigration lend themselves the most objectively to ethnic differentiation' (Leman, 1998).

All this has important implications for their experience of and coping with discrimination and racism, for one can not say that they are not aware of their disadvantaged situation compared with Belgian autochthons. But since they are focused on their home country, this awareness will not be associated with negative feelings about their own group. At the same time, their orientation will also keep them from taking real action against their disadvantaged situation (Roosens, 1982). One possible way of coping with this situation is turning to a more conservative, even fundamentalistic orientation of the Islam (Meurs, 1996; Leman, 1998). The affiliation with such a religious group can restore a sense of tradition in a situation where all values and norms seem to be lost as a consequence of their difficult social position (e.g., educational problems with their children, unemployment, traditional family roles diluting, ...). Over the years, these immigrants can even turn out to be more conservative than their counterparts in the region of origin, as far as the adherence to religious and cultural values and norms is concerned (Cammaert, 1992). We would like to emphasize that this 'conservative' reaction is only one alternative amongst others (Bastenier, 1998; Lesthaeghe, 1998).

When it comes to the second-generation migrants, a totally different story needs to be told. First of all, since they were born here, they are not immigrants. This simple observation has a fundamental implication for the reference group they use in their social comparisons: They will refer to Belgians as a relevant comparison group. The positive outcome of a comparison with the Moroccans in Morocco is diluted, since this comparison is irrelevant, as Morocco has become a 'foreign' country to them. Moreover, they are treated as 'foreigners' when they visit Morocco (Leman, 1998). Since the social position of the second generation migrants is considerably worse than the social position of their Belgian peers (Van de Voorde, 1998), this social comparison is bound to result in a negative outcome: They feel that they are not fully accepted by the dominant society. At the same time they come to see the life-style and values of their parents as dated and backward (Roosens, 1989).

Roosens and his research team point out different ways of coping with this kind of aversive situation. A first way of coping with the negative social status can be found in what Leman (1982) calls the 'second migration': a return to the ethnic roots. This can be done in a private way: Leman (1984) shows that many young adult Italians 'disappear' in mass public life in Belgium, while they maintain some degree of Italian life-style at home. This strategy will be relatively easy for Italians because unlike

the Muslim migrants they are not as visibly members of an ethnic minority. For Moroccons, this will be more difficult. A lot of these persons will be 'pushed back' in the category of the ethnic minority by the natives (Roosens, 1982). An external boundary is imposed and as a reaction, these people will intentionally make themselves visible as members of another culture. This is a clear example of ethnogenesis: the creation of social borders by actively constructing an ethnic identity. In this respect we can refer to Barth (1994) who states that among Muslims throughout the world, the dominant discourse on identity is indeed increasingly cast in terms of religion. Indeed, the social borders are the most visually manifested by means of religious symbolic markers. Leman (1998) expands on this topic. He concludes: 'It seems more accurate to speak of a construction by means of symbolic markers that are temporarily or more permanently integrated into the social identity of a person without being accompanied by the formation of a community based on these ethnic markers.' Anyway, it is clear that the dimensions of ethnicity and religion are very much entangled in the immigration context (Bastienier, 1998; Leman, 1992).

As one can see, different reactions to the membership of a low status group are possible. Roosens touches upon this topic only very briefly and occasionally. We would like to outline these different options in a more extensive and systematic way. We will also try to give some insights in the determinants of the different strategies and the underlying processes. To do this, we will turn again to the social identity theory.

#### *A social-psychological perspective*

In its so-called 'macro-social emphasis' (Hogg & Abrams, 1988), the social identity theory distinguishes three strategies that members of a low status group can adopt to improve their social identity: individual mobility, social competition, and social creativity. In addition, three structural characteristics of the intergroup relation are proposed to determine which specific strategy will be adopted: the perceived permeability of the group boundaries, the perceived stability of the intergroup stratification, and the perceived legitimacy of that stratification. At this point, we would like to stress that the model involves the subjective perceptions of intergroup situations, and not the 'objective' situations.

If group members perceive the boundaries between the groups as *permeable*, it is said that they possess a social mobility belief system. This means that they believe that it is possible for individuals to move from one group to another without too many barriers. These barriers can be situated in the outgroup (e.g., reluctance by members of the high-status group to accept new members), in the own group (e.g., a dominant norm of group-loyalty), or in the individual itself (e.g., a high identification with the own group). If these barriers are absent or weak, members of a low status group will attempt to leave their own group and try to pass into the high status group. This is called the individual mobility

strategy. By contrast, if group members consider these barriers as too strong, they will perceive the group boundaries as *impermeable* and adhere a social change belief system. In this case, the negative consequences of belonging to a low-status group cannot be overcome by simply redefining oneself as an individual into a high-status group. Instead, the members of the low-status group have to adopt group strategies aimed at improving the status of the own group. One way of achieving this is by directly competing with the outgroup on a relevant comparison dimension and trying to reverse the existing status hierarchy. This social competition strategy includes behaviors like lobbying, petitioning and protest marches.

Another strategy aimed at enhancing the group status is social creativity. Contrary to social competition, social creativity does not necessarily bring about any real change in the existing social hierarchy, but improves the group position by cognitively restructuring the intergroup comparison. For example, Moroccan immigrants may respond to the disadvantaged economic position in Belgium by creating new comparison dimensions in favor of their own group: 'The Belgians may be wealthier than us, but we have a richer religious tradition.' They could also redefine the value of the existing comparison dimension: 'Wealth leads to decadence!'. Or they could change the relevant comparison outgroup: 'We shouldn't compare ourselves with the Belgians, but rather with other migrant groups in Belgium.'

In order to predict whether group members will adopt social competition or social creativity, social identity theory invokes the concepts of stability and legitimacy. Stability refers to the perceived chance that the existing status hierarchy between the groups can be changed in the near future. Legitimacy refers to the perceived justification of that hierarchy. If members of the low status group perceive the status hierarchy as unstable and/or as illegitimate, they will perceive alternatives for their disadvantaged situation. This will motivate them to undertake social competition. By contrast, if the status hierarchy is perceived as stable and legitimate, they will not be able to perceive alternatives, and they will employ social creativity.

#### *A critical implementation of the theory*

What do these rather abstract concepts mean in the context of second generation immigrants in Belgium? Every theoretical model has to strive to the delicate balance between generalization and nuance. It has to be broad enough to be meaningfully applicable to a broad range of contexts, and at the same time it has to be differentiated enough to avoid reductionism and simplism. There is no doubt about the broad scope of contexts, which can be covered by the conceptualization of social identity theory (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). On the other hand, the implementation of the model in our context urges us to refine it in several ways.

First, the model suggests a peculiar sequence in the strategies that will be adopted. It is suggested that members of a negatively evaluated group will always in the first place try to make it on their own. Only when this does not work out, they will try to change the position of their group together with other group members. This assumption of an individualistic action tendency has been proved to be too simplistic (Mummendey, Klink, Mielke, Wenzel, & Blanz, 1999; Boen & Vanbeselaere, 1998). This observation coincides with the fact that the perceptions of the different socio-structural characteristics are defined in a too monolithic way. People do not have clear ‘either/or’-perceptions, even not ‘more/less’ perceptions: the perceptions will be differentiated in terms of situations and types of persons. For instance, an allochthon can perceive the intergroup relation as semi-permeable, i.e. permeable under specific conditions, e.g., only for people who do have specific cognitive capacities. The fact that such a person perceives permeability for himself does not exclude his experience of impermeability and illegitimacy at the group level. People can strive to improve their own individual position, and, at the same time, be involved in action aimed at improving the status of their ethnic group. This, in turn, implies that a non-mutually exclusive conceptualization of the different strategies would be more adequate to grasp the complex situation of migrants.

Taking these considerations into account, an interesting picture is painted by the implementation of the model: it offers a framework that allows to put the previously mentioned observations in a broader perspective. We will demonstrate this by implementing the model in the context of Moroccan immigrants and their descendants in Belgium, respecting the logical flow of the model. The following should be considered as a scheme of possible strategies and their determinants. We do not intend to make any statement about the actual choice of Moroccans in Belgium. Further research is needed to give a representative picture of the occurrence of the different strategies.

In this respect perceived permeability could be defined as ‘the perceived possibility for a person with a Moroccan origin to be fully accepted as a Belgian citizen.’ This concept of permeability can for instance be recognized in the observation of Roosens (1989) that second generation immigrants try to ‘disappear’ in public and even at work. He immediately adds: ‘without becoming totally assimilated.’ This illustrates that the individual mobility strategy does not necessarily imply leaving behind the own group. In fact, we could consider this behavioral strategy as a specific form of integration (Berry et al., 1992)<sup>1</sup>, namely a combination of assimilation in public life and culture maintenance in private life. Of course, besides this pattern of integration other patterns are possible (see also Roosens & Martin, 1992).

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<sup>1</sup> We use the concept ‘integration’ in the sense of Berry’s model of acculturation strategies (Berry, et.al., 1992). He distinguishes four acculturation strategies depending on the attitudes concerning the own group and the other group. When an acculturating individual does not wish to maintain his own culture and seeks intense interaction with the host society, then the *assimilation* strategy is defined. In contrast, when there is a value placed on holding to one’s original culture and a wish to avoid interaction with members of the host society, then the *separation* strategy is defined. When there is interest in both maintaining one’s original culture and in frequent interactions with members of the other culture, *integration* is the option. Integration is the strategy that attempts to ‘make the best of both worlds.’ Finally, when there is little interest in culture maintenance and in relation with members of the host society, then *marginalization* is defined.

It is clear that allochthons are in a disadvantaged socio-economic position, and that it is very hard for them to improve this situation exactly because of structural limitations (lower levels of education, discrimination, ...). This experience will eventually lead to the perception of impermeability: the experience of being refused the entrance ticket which one aspires, as Bastenier (1998) sharply puts it. Roosens (1982) also states that the process of disappearance fails most of the time: The individuals are confronted with social barriers imposed by the dominant group, which will eventually result in ethnogenesis. This process is perfectly parallel to what social identity theory describes as the experience of impermeability. As we said earlier, the barrier that gives rise to the experience of impermeability might also originate from the own group or from one's own attitude towards the own group. To remain acceptable as a member of the own community people have to respect specific norms that are considered to be basic. These expectations from the own community, and more specifically from friends and relatives, might be experienced as inhibiting one's self-development in the Belgian society. This tension will be most obvious in the relation between the generations (Phalet, 1995). A young woman in our interviews says: 'Sometimes I feel like they (the first generation immigrants) do not give us the opportunity to integrate. That they stop us. That, if they hadn't been there, or if they had let us develop, it would have been much easier for us, and that there would have been less problems.'<sup>2</sup> (Snauwaert, 1998).

What happens when people experience this impermeability? The model differentiates two types of strategies according to the perceptions of legitimacy and stability. These perceptions prove to be very prevalent variables in the immigrant context. This can be illustrated in the light of the distinction made between first and second generation immigrants: The experience of illegitimacy will be less strong in the first generation because of their orientation to the home country ('after all we are still guests here', De Morgen 15/11/1997, 17/11/1997, 26/11/1997, Knack 3/12/1997). Moreover, and more importantly, the perception of stability ('we can't do anything about it') is dominant in the first generation. This explains why first generation immigrants rarely adopt a strategy of social change. They will mostly focus on their own ethnic community and especially on their religious network to obtain a sense of positive social identity. On the level of the society they will often endure their low social status.

The second generation on the other hand has a vivid experience of illegitimacy (Hermans, 1994). Since they consider themselves Belgian citizens, they find it unjust to be treated in any other way than their fellow Belgian citizens. The behavioral consequence of this perceived illegitimacy depends on the perception of stability (= the pragmatic factor, 'is it possible?'). Persons who do not believe that they can actually change the current situation will not take any action in that direction, although they

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<sup>2</sup> Translation of: ' (...) dat zij soms ons de kans niet geven om ons te integreren. Dat zij ons tegenhouden. Dat als zij er niet waren geweest of ons meer hadden laten ontplooiën, dat het veel gemakkelijker zou zijn geweest voor ons en dan zouden er veel minder problemen zijn.'



perceive the situation as illegitimate<sup>3</sup>. They will rather adopt a strategy of social creativity. An example of this could be found in the return to the ethnic-religious roots as a source of a positive social identity, without actually trying to do something about the social position of the group. This return to the ethnic-religious roots can involve a certain degree of segregation, but this is not necessary (Van de Voorde, 1998). Bastenier (1998) differentiates between a more traditionalist, extrinsic adherence to religion and a more intrinsic one. Lesthaeghe (1998) finds that second generation immigrants adhere relatively more to both fundamentalistic and secularized attitudes than the first generation immigrants who tend to cling to the mainstream Islam.

A part of the second generation does not feel attached to the culture and religion of their parents at all (Bastenier, 1998; Leman, 1992). These youngsters find their sense of self-worth more in their peer-relations (Hermans, 1994). When people do not manage to get a certain sense of a positive social identity this can result in rather negative outcomes (Hebberecht, 1995; Strobbe, 1995; Deraeck, 1998; Eddaoudi, 1998). This might create a context of frustration, which in turn can be a reason for outbursts like riots (Body-Gendrot, 1995). Since these events are marked by their emotional and impulsive character, they can not really be considered as being manifestations of conscious social actions (Leman, 1998; Bastenier, 1998).

The next question is 'What happens when people do perceive a possibility of social change?'. Again, the theory needs refinement by using a more differentiated concept of stability. It makes quite a difference whether one sees social change as something that has to be accomplished by effective actions or whether one sees it as a transformation process that will automatically occur in the course of time, and whether this change is seen as possible in a short term or rather in a long term. These different perceptions will lead to different strategies. Obviously, the perception that the situation will eventually change by itself, will invoke an attitude of abidance: the prospect of change provides a reason to endure the current situation. At the same time one will not take concrete actions because they are not considered as effective. On the other hand the perception of social change as something that can be actively achieved will invoke specific actions, i.e. collective actions.

Collective strategies are defined as attempts to improve the position of the own group (Blanz et al., 1998). It is obvious that the strategy of collective action can take different forms. The following statement of the director of the Federation of Moroccan Democratic Organizations is illustrative: 'One can be 'good' like the first generation and one can take it into the streets and get smacked in the face like some of the youngsters of the second generation. But one can also show one's teeth in an intelligent way.'<sup>4</sup> (De Morgen, 17/11/1997). In the classic conceptualizations of collective actions, one always

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<sup>3</sup> In this we nuance the model which says that both the perception of instability and the perception of illegitimacy are sufficient conditions for social action. We argue that both are necessary conditions, but not separately sufficient.

<sup>4</sup> Translation of: 'Je kunt braaf zijn zoals de eerste generatie en je kunt op straat komen en op je smoel krijgen zoals sommige jongeren van de tweede generatie. Maar je kunt ook je tanden laten zien op een intelligente manier.'

refers to the more ‘spectacular’ types of actions like manifestations, petitions, strikes, organization of multi-cultural happenings etc. In reality, these forms of actions will be rather sparse. However, the absence of these ostentative forms of action, does not imply a passive attitude of immigrants. A whole range of less visible forms of collective action are present, e.g., voluntary social work on the level of the neighborhood (De Standaard, 06/12/1997).

In this manner we have outlined some crucial determinants of different strategies of coping with the low social status of one’s group. An important question is of course: ‘Where do these perceptions that are considered as the determinants of adopting specific strategies come from?’. One important factor in this respect is socialization. Individuals will be influenced by the attitudes and perceptions of their parents, relatives, friends and peers. Another important factor consists of the concrete experiences a person has. This makes it very likely that people will change their attitudes and perceptions according to their experiences. For instance, a person’s perception of permeability will be influenced by his/her concrete experiences in Belgian society. When s/he gets frustrated in getting a good job, for instance, s/he will come to see the Belgian society as rather impermeable. This perception will be enforced or attenuated by other experiences from everyday life. Moreover, it will be clear that the adopted attitudes and perceptions themselves will structure the perceptions to come. This is very clearly demonstrated in the rhetoric of both allochthons and autochthons. We will elaborate on this in the next paragraph. For now, let it suffice to point at the often-observed sensitivity of allochthonous youngsters for illegitimacy. On the basis of their experiences they have a strong perception of discrimination, this will result in a sharpened consciousness of illegitimacy. This can be illustrated by the following interview excerpt of a young second generation woman (talking to a Belgian interviewer): ‘When Moroccan boys get on a tram, you can see clearly how people hold on to their purses. It’s really obvious. But of course we pay attention to it, maybe you won’t see it. But for us that’s different, I mean: you get on a tram, but you’re not at ease. You just notice it. You just notice these details.’<sup>5</sup> (Snauwaert, 1998).

### *The perspective of the dominant group*

As already mentioned, Roosens stated that an important purpose of the process of self-definition is to create a social border between oneself and similar groups, thereby creating an ingroup and an outgroup. However, the role of referring to one’s origin is deemed even more important (cf. the ‘family-origin metaphor’). Whereas self-definition creates a distinction between people, referring to one’s origin creates similarity between the members of the group. We have already analyzed these processes

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<sup>5</sup> Translation of: ‘Als Marokkaanse jongens op een tram stappen dan ziet ge dus duidelijk dat de mensen hun sacochkes beter vastpakken, dat ziet ge dus duidelijk. Maar wij letten er op, misschien dat u dat niet ziet. Maar bij ons is dat anders, ik bedoel ge stapt op den tram, maar ge stapt niet op uw gemak op. Ge ziet dat gewoon. Die details ziet ge gewoon.’

from the viewpoint of (Moroccan) immigrants in Belgium. We will now consider this from the perspective of the autochthons. In doing so, we will argue that the autochthons, just like the Moroccans, often refer to their origin. In accordance with Roosens (1994), we will argue that the autochthons, rather than the immigrants, have installed the social border. Moreover, they are also (partially) responsible for its maintenance.

### *Referring to one's origin*

A fruitful starting point for this analysis is the observation that the 'migrant'-label is nowadays most readily used to refer to non-European immigrants, more specifically to Turks and Moroccans (Roosens, 1994). This is not merely a linguistic custom, but reveals the autochthons' intergroup attitude: 'They' are different from 'us.' 'Us' thus seems to include most non-Belgian European immigrants (Africans and East-Europeans are mostly referred to as refugees instead of migrants). This implies that a similar origin is attributed to all Europeans. This origin is assumed to be fundamentally different from the origin attributed to the allochthons and in particular to 'the migrants.' It is clear that neither nationality or ethnicity can be the core of this origin, since many different nationalities and ethnic groups can be found in Europe. As a consequence, we need to look for another ground, which differentiates between Turks and Moroccans on the one hand, and Europeans on the other hand. This leads us to the importance attached to the religious background. According to Barth (1994), the dominant discourse on identity among Muslims is indeed increasingly cast in terms of religion, and not in terms of ethnicity. This tendency will be accentuated in situations where a Muslim minority confronts a Christian majority, which suggests a change in the relative significance of arenas in which people perceive themselves. In this respect, 'we Europeans' are thought to share a tradition of Christianity, and to a certain extent, of secularization (which is, one could argue, itself typically Christian). This Christianity is one cornerstone for the perception of a *European cultural identity*. Another one is the ideal of democracy (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992). Many Europeans see themselves as a group which is radically different from the Turkish and Moroccan minority because the latter are perceived as having a less democratic and less secularized Muslim-tradition. Although it is objectively meaningless to speak about *the* Islam and *the* Christian tradition, this apparently subjectively meaningful religious-cultural origin functions as a playground for the creation and installation of the social border. Such a reference to one's imagined origin seems to be widespread and generally accepted (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992; Roosens, 1982). Of course, this does not mean that it installs unity in the autochthons' thoughts and opinions. Both Christianity and democracy have to be seen as value-systems. This implies that, although people refer to the same value-systems, different values from these systems can be highlighted and considered as constituting its core. These differences

will be reflected in the creation and maintenance of the social border, and especially in the strength of that border.

### *The creation of a social border*

We will contend that, although the social border is accepted and actively maintained by part of the Turkish and Moroccan immigrants, this boundary should be considered as emanating from the autochthons rather than from the (first generation) immigrants. First, we will look at some evident reasons why a social border would be in the psychological interest of the autochthons. Second, we will turn back to the social-psychological background provided by the social identity theory to explore its possible usefulness to clarify our point of view.

*The social border as a coping mechanism.* Earlier we argued that most first generation Moroccan immigrants continue to see themselves as people who will one day return to their region of origin. As a consequence, they will remain focused on a continuity with their past. This will become manifest in family relations, sexual morals and religion. We have also argued that some of them deal with religion in a conservative and rather fundamentalistic way, because this provides them the necessary stability to face their new and threatening situation. This attachment to a rather fundamentalistic version of the Islam, has accentuated the ‘otherness’ of these immigrants. Moreover the related looks, customs and habits have made them (even) more visible and thus more likely to become subjects of stereotyping: ‘*the immigrant is an Islam-fundamentalist.*’

To a lot of Christian autochthons the perceived attachment to (a rather fundamentalistic version of) the Islam of the immigrants may have become threatening because they do not know anything about this culture. In addition, this religion seems to conflict with their own religious tradition, thus posing a threat to their sheltered metaphysical outlook (although they might not be aware of it or they might not want to admit this). Whether the Islam will be perceived as threatening the autochthons’ metaphysical outlook and value-system or not, will depend upon how they themselves deal with their own religion. Moreover, studies have been carried out to look at the relation between religiosity of autochthons on the one hand and racism and negative attitudes towards immigrants on the other hand (e.g., Billiet 1995a, 1995b; Billiet et al., 1995). However, in all these studies religion has been operationalized through church involvement as an indicator of belief salience. It was typically observed that those who only occasionally go to church because tradition requires it, hold significantly stronger negative attitudes towards immigrants than both those who do not go to church at all and than those who go regularly. However, these studies mostly neglected the importance of the way religion is being dealt with. Therefore, recent studies on this topic have tried to demonstrate the importance of ‘religious styles’ (Duriez, Roggen, & Hutsebaut, in press; Duriez & Hutsebaut, in press). In essence, these studies argue

that the main distinction is not between being a regular churchgoer or not, but between a religious conviction based on 'closedness' and one based on 'openness.' In the closed religious conviction, the fear of existential meaninglessness hides itself behind an illusion of absolute religious certainty. Religion will thus serve as a sheltering constellation that gives the anxious (individual or collective) existence a foundation. Such rigid outlook will lead to attempts to neutralize every difference, for difference equals danger. Such an outlook will thus be in opposition to openness and receptivity for real alterity. In the open religious conviction, brotherly love and openness will be considered as constituting the core values of Christianity. Hence, religion is not meant to give certainty or to serve the established social order, but to ethically challenge this order (e.g., by helping foreigners who illegally reside in a country). Such an outlook will *not* be in opposition to openness and receptivity for real alterity. However, this does not necessarily exclude the possibility to question the openness of the stranger (Pollefeyt, in press).

In the above mentioned studies, church involvement, degree of religiousness and the importance attached to religion were found to be significantly positively correlated with age. Moreover, it has become less and less 'obliged' by tradition to attend masses. Therefore, the negative attitudes towards immigrants held by mainly young autochthons who do not consider themselves as Christians have to be cast in another way. To a lot of these autochthons the perceived religious fundamentalism of the immigrants may be equally threatening, but for different reasons: Fundamentalism sharply contrasts with their Western secularized outlook and might therefore be seen as traditionalist, old-fashioned and even medieval, and therefore as threatening our modern and democratic value-system (Vanden Bavière, 1995). The Islam is been cast in a historical-evolutionary perspective. Again, whether people perceive the Islam as threatening democracy or not, will depend upon how they themselves constitute this democracy. Although human rights are individual rights and democracy is a political system in which individual rights and minorities are supposed to give way to the majority, these notions got strongly connected (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992). It is therefore quite likely that some people will appeal to democracy in order to serve the majority while others will refer to it in order to preserve individual human rights and to protect the (ethical) demands of minorities. The former will then project certain individual rights, such as the right to self-determination, onto the collectivity of a people. They will also connect a people with a certain language, history, cultural homogeneity and territory. Immigrants will be considered to have lost their right to self-determination due to the fact that they left their territory. As a consequence, it will be considered to be their democratic duty to adapt themselves. The latter on the other hand will consider the neglect of their opinions, problems and needs to be against the core principle of democracy: the emancipation of minorities. Again this is to be seen as a clash of different values that can be considered to be of core importance.

We can easily illustrate these stances by referring to the reactions elicited by the custom of Muslim women to wear a headdress. These reactions tend to be negative. Partly because the custom is seen as the expression of belonging to a different culture and of adhering a different religion, and partly because

it is seen as the expression of anti-democratic fundamentalism (which is supposed to put women in an inferior position). These negative reactions will be more extreme when the woman wearing a headdress is a young and independent adult: 'They should already have adapted themselves to our society, but apparently they refuse to fulfil this democratic duty.' These kinds of habits and customs *might* then lead to a quite generally accepted, particular way of reasoning: 'Tolerance in a liberal democracy must not take the form of open or even only silent repression of the own values: freedom of expression, freedom of religion, equality between men and women, pluralism, separation of church and state' (Verhofstadt, in Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992). Such reasoning expresses a concern to pass these values on to the Islamic immigrant community, which implies two things. First the caricatural image that, because 'they' seem to have a slightly different outlook on the content of these values, these values itself are alien to 'them.' Second, this also implies the cultural superiority of the autochthons. This kind of reasoning can thus be said to be (covertly) racist.

Although a lot of studies try to marginalize the existence of racism by restrictively defining it as a hardcore extreme right-wing ideology (e.g., Billiet & De Witte, 1995; De Witte et al., 1994, 1996), racist feelings, xenophobia and negative attitudes towards immigrants are quite widespread (Commissie van de EG, 1989, 1997; Vanbeselaere, 1997; VRIND, 1998). Although many commentators declared to be 'shocked' by these observations, such negative feelings towards (ethnic) minorities are indeed far more widespread than we would like to believe. And this does not only happen in Flanders. Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) for instance, wrote that 'most white Americans develop beliefs and feelings that result in antipathy toward blacks and other minorities.' These negative feelings within the dominant group should not be characterized as real hostility or hatred but as feelings of discomfort, uneasiness, and sometimes even disgust and fear. They do not lead to intentionally aggressive and destructive behaviors but to attempts to avoid regular contact with members of these minority groups. As a consequence, members of the majority group will not like it when migrants come to live in their neighborhood, or when they have to collaborate with them in the workplace. But it is important to realize that most of these people will nevertheless maintain that it is morally wrong to discriminate against a person because of his or her ethnicity. This co-occurrence of an egalitarian value system and negative feelings towards members of an other ethnic group has been termed 'aversive racism.'

Aversive racists can thus be characterized as people who experience an ambivalence between feelings and attitudes connected with an egalitarian value system and their unacknowledged negative feelings and attitudes towards members of an ethnic minority. According to Gaertner and Dovidio (1986), these negative feelings and attitudes originate from two sources: in the first place, from historical (cf. the colonial period) and contemporary (cf. the common usage of the term 'third' world, the objective fact that many immigrants belong to the lower strata in our society) socio-cultural factors, and in the second place, from psychological processes leading to the development of stereotypes and prejudice. These psychological processes result from the cognitive and motivational consequences of social categorizations. As already described in the section on the social identity theory, categorizing the

social environment in terms of 'us' and 'them' leads to homogenization of ingroup and outgroup, to exaggeration of intergroup differences, to ingroup favoring attitudes and behavior, and to feelings of distrust (Vanbeselaere, 1993) and of anxiety (Stephan, 1985) with respect to the outgroup and its members.

These feelings of anxiety for the outgroup have also been extensively described by Blommaert and Verschueren (1992) and Watts (1996). They wrote that members of the dominant group will experience anxiety that these 'newcomers', who seem to hold different values, by misusing the autochthonous 'tolerance', will destroy 'cultural homogeneity' (and as a consequence the existing social order). According to them, this logic, which seems to deny the existence of differences within cultures and even to reject the possibility that these differences can exist, is rarely fundamentally questioned. According to Vanbeselaere (1997), this is not surprising since most people will not even realize that this way of thinking is a consequence of the way we all process information. Given the unrecognized origin of these feelings and beliefs, they will become wrapped up in a seemingly coherent and logical package that will be presented as ethically justified. Since such a discourse seems to offer an 'explanation' and a 'justification' for the experienced negative feelings, it will easily be accepted by a large part of the autochthonous population. In our opinion, it is exactly this mechanism that is responsible for the fact that the perceived threat that the immigrants seem to form for the existing social order, is often connected with socio-economic concerns. Moreover, such a connection is also induced and reinforced by several societal factors. First, the 'migrant'-label should be seen as a substitution for the outdated label 'guest workers.' The oil crisis of the 70s made these guest workers no longer needed and in fact no longer wanted. In 1974, Belgium took the protectionist decision to close its borders for this type of migration. Since the main reasons to do so were clearly economic, immigrants had to bear this burden. Even until now, they are still cast in this protectionist rhetoric and seen as a problem (Macey, 1992). As a consequence, a substantial part of the autochthonous population will believe and say that they hold rather negative attitudes towards immigrants mainly because of these socio-economic concerns (Billiet et al. 1992; De Witte & Haesen, 1998; Swyngedouw, 1992): The dread that immigrants might milk our social security system, steal the autochthons' jobs, etc. still remains (Billiet, Carton, & Huys, 1990). These fears are, at least partially, responsible for the fact that immigrants are kept in their lower status position. These needs to maintain the status quo will be more strongly felt by autochthons who themselves belong to a rather low status group. It should be kept in mind, however, that the cogency of such an explanation in terms of socio-economic concerns is at least partly based upon the consequences of cognitive and motivational mechanisms activated by the social categorization phenomenon (Tajfel, 1978).

*Some processes involved in border-creation.* We will now return to the social-psychological background by looking at what social identity theory has to say about the creation of a social border from the viewpoint of the dominant, high-status group of autochthons, or, in its terminology, for groups

for which the outcome of the intergroup comparison appears to be favorable. Although social identity theory's 'macro-social emphasis' focuses mainly on the reactions of low-status groups for which the outcome of the intergroup comparison is unfavorable, it also has some things to tell about the processes that are important for the behavior of the dominant group. First, there is what Tajfel (1978) calls 'the establishment of positive distinctiveness.' A dominant group will have a positive social status, which means that its members will try to maintain and defend their advantaged position. This provides a motivation for maintaining a social border since it is precisely the existence of this intergroup distinction, which contributes to their favorable position. This defence of the social border will occur even more strongly when there is reason to feel threatened by a minority (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). In the previous section, we argued that those feelings of threat *are* present in the group of Belgian autochthons. It is therefore appropriate to take a closer look at how this border is maintained. We have already pointed out that social identity theory distinguished three strategies that members of a low-status group can adopt to improve their social identity (individual mobility, social competition, and social creativity). Moreover, three structural characteristics of the intergroup relation would determine which specific strategy will be adopted (perceived permeability of the group boundaries, perceived stability of the intergroup stratification, and perceived legitimacy of that stratification). It is clear that the perception of permeability, stability and legitimacy will partially depend upon the attitudes of the dominant group. We also mentioned that stability and legitimacy will only influence the choice of a strategy when group boundaries are perceived as impermeable. This raises the question: 'Do the autochthons consider the boundaries as impermeable?'. The answer to this question is quite clear: They do not. The following quotation<sup>6</sup> is very illustrative in this respect. 'Belgium has always been a hospitable country. Throughout the centuries, foreigners from all over Europe have mixed with both the Flemish and the Walloon population, and they have adapted to the local manners and customs. (...) However, when Islamic immigrants are involved, this doesn't happen, every integration fails. (...) It has to be made clear to them that it's not the Belgians who do not accept them, but that they themselves are to blame for the fact that they remain outsiders to our community.' (De Standaard, 01/12/1997).

One reason for proclaiming permeable intergroup boundaries can be found in the Five-Stage Model of intergroup relations (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984), an extension of the macro-social framework of the social identity theory. According to this model, members of the low-status group will prefer individual mobility to social competition even when they perceive the high-status group as being only minimally open. Several experimental studies (Wright, Taylor & Moghaddam, 1990; Lalonde &

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<sup>6</sup> This is an excerpt from a reader's letter to a Belgian newspaper. Translation of: ' België is altijd een gastvrij land geweest. Door de eeuwen heen hebben vreemdelingen uit heel Europa zich in korte tijd met zowel de Vlaamse als de Waalse bevolking vermengd en zich aan plaatselijke zeden en gewoontes aangepast. (...) Met Islamitische immigranten lukt dat echter niet en faalt elke integratie. (...) Hen moet duidelijk gemaakt worden dat het niet de Belgen zijn die hen niet aanvaarden, maar dat het aan henzelf te wijten is dat zij buiten onze gemeenschap blijven staan.'



Silverman; 1994; Boen & Vanbeselaere, 1998; Boen & Vanbeselaere, in press) have indeed demonstrated that the perception of even a minimal chance to pass into the high status group is enough for members of a disadvantaged group to refrain from socially disruptive actions. This reliable finding has been labelled the ‘tokenism’-effect, because only a token amount of disadvantaged group members is allowed by the high status group. By contrast, when the high-status group is perceived as completely closed, members of the low-status group will become aware of the discrimination against their group, and they will engage in collective action to reverse the social order. Therefore, it is in the interest of autochthons to present their society as open for migrants, even if this openness is merely symbolical.

Moreover, this strategy of presenting the group boundaries as permeable perfectly fits the way (even intolerant) autochthons prefer to see themselves: They are members of a tolerant society and they are therefore in opposition to the (intolerant) Muslim-tradition. However, a closer look at this propagated ‘permeability’ reveals that very strict integration criteria have to be fulfilled before an immigrant can enter the high-status group. Integration is nearly always a euphemism for assimilation (Commissie van de EG, 1997; Hermans, 1994; Roosens, 1998) and the only exception to this general attitude concerns groups of allochthons with a strong socio-economic position (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992). The autochthons decide on their own when the finish is reached, and the distance to the finish will then vary according to the content of the value-system that is used as a frame of reference.

As a consequence, a lot of (second and third generation) immigrants feel that the border gets pulled further away from them as soon as they try to approach it. Therefore, some of them might become convinced that a small immigrant-elite is declared to be fully integrated and that it is put forward as an example to prove the non-existence of discrimination and the ‘openness of the high-status group’ (Wright, Taylor & Moghaddam, 1990; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992). Therefore, these immigrants will become aware of the unfair treatment of their group and they will adopt the strategies of social competition and social creativity (e.g., by going back to their roots and their own culture). Moreover, some immigrants are unwilling to blend in because of the value they attach to their roots. Anyway, social creativity and social competition are very likely to be seen by most Belgian autochthons as unjustified (since borders are permeable) and therefore improper. Social creativity will be perceived (depending on the content of their value-system) as mere unwillingness to adapt themselves, whereas social competition will be considered as arrogant, undemocratic or violent, depending on the form this strategy takes. Therefore, when immigrants choose one of these two strategies, they feed the argumentation that nothing compels them to stay, and that ‘they’ would better leave if they consider the opportunities ‘we’ offer them as unsatisfactory. A reasoning, which seems fair and reasonable to most autochthonous people, even though the allochthons they aim at are born here and therefore can not be considered as immigrants.

Although the social border thus came into existence during the confrontation with the first generation of immigrants, changes within the immigrant community are not very likely to affect these borders or even to be perceived by most (though of course not all) of the autochthons. The processes of differential homogenization (Simon, 1992; Vanbeselaere, 1991) and of depersonalization (Turner et al., 1987), as already extensively described previously, render these changes relatively unimportant. As a consequence of these processes, the most dominant image that is being held of (other) culture(s) will be characterized by a denial of flexibility and variability (see also Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992). Foreigners are likely to be attributed a generalized (*they* are like that) and a long-lasting different nature (*they are* like that). In this way, foreigners keep a certain *eternal otherness* which, strangely enough, only seems to get enforced by intercultural contact. Thus, whereas the consideration of the viewpoint of the immigrants forced us to make a distinction between the attitudes of the first and the second (third) generation, such a differentiated view will be considered by a lot of autochthons as constituting a quite trivial distinction with no impact upon the maintenance of the existing social border. As was noted in the previous section, one of the possible reactions to the rejection by the dominant society is a return to the ethnic roots. As a consequence, the allochthons will be 'pushed back' into the category of the ethnic minority by the autochthons for exactly the same reasons as for which the first generation was 'pushed back.' This will only stimulate the process of ethnogenesis. In some cases, the allochthons will intentionally make themselves visible as members of another culture and, in doing so, will reinforce a lot of the autochthons' convictions with respect to group cohesion, their stereotypes (which have in fact become self-fulfilling), ethnocentrism, collective behavior, etc. Although this expressive behavior might not at all be of core importance in the Islamic culture, it is often perceived by the autochthons as an essential element of this culture *and*, moreover, as a sign of fundamentalism. In this way certain behaviors (such as wearing a headdress) become to be perceived as symbols of voluntary resistance against the values of Belgian society. In short, we could state that the mere existence of this imposed external boundary and of the group processes that are activated by it, render it quite unlikely that this border will quickly disappear, even when color of skin, language etc. will become of less importance over time. The immigrants blending in are getting invisible. Those who do not are becoming 'typical.' However, considering the dominant logic of most autochthons, this typicality itself is the problem. It implies the existence of differences within the society, which does not seem to be tolerated by many autochthons. In this respect, Mummendey and Wenzel (1997) claim that intergroup relations can only be positive if both groups are seen as belonging to one superordinate category, for which the prototype is complex enough to allow for subgroup differences. Given the fact that many second-generation immigrants do have the Belgian nationality, there is already a superordinate category, which encompasses autochthons and many allochthons. The problem is, however, that the prototypical characteristics of this superordinate category are often completely defined in terms of characteristics of one of the subgroups, namely the autochthons. It follows that the typical characteristics of the

allochthonous subgroup are considered as deviant. Thus, even when the allochthons have the Belgian nationality, they will not be considered as 'real' Belgians. In order to eliminate such considerations, the Belgian prototype has to become more broadly defined, in a way that it includes characteristics of the autochthons as well as of the allochthons. Such a redefinition should lead to more tolerance for the diversity within a country.

### Conclusion

As we have come to the end of our story, it is appropriate to take another look at an initial question in our text: 'Is ethnicity primarily a matter of creating social borders or has it more to do with the reference to one's origin?'. We have shown that both aspects are important: It is essentially the interaction between the two that constitutes the dynamics of ethnicity. In this way, we have emphasized the importance of both intragroup- and intergroup factors in the creation and maintenance of ethnic identity. Ethnicity, interwoven with its religious component, can indeed be considered as 'reactive' to the specific intergroup context of immigrants in a host society. This intergroup facet of ethnicity can, however, not be simply reduced to the strategic exploitation of ethnicity as has been suggested (Roosens, 1989; Barth, 1969). We do not ignore that this instrumental function of ethnicity can come into play, but we do say that it is not the sole, not even the primordial drive of ethnicity. When we speak of the 'reactive character' of ethnicity, we refer to the process of identity management. We have demonstrated that the ethno-religious component of social identity is highly salient in the context of contemporary multicultural societies. At the same time, it would be too simplistic to reduce ethnicity completely to this 'reactivity': ethnic identity is also inherently driven by a desire for continuity with the past, the sense of being 'rooted.'

It is clear that social psychology and anthropology are very complementary in their study of ethnic identity dynamics. Our text presented a general overview of this compatibility. We outlined some crucial underlying processes and the way they lead to different strategies. We hope that, in this way, we will stimulate further 'alliances' between these two disciplines.

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*References to newspaper and magazine-articles*

*De Morgen*

- 15/11/1997 Het verkeerde gezicht.
- 17/11/1997 Vechten tegen kruidvat en sensatie.
- 26/11/1997 Allochtonen zijn betutteling moe.

*De Standaard*

- 01/12/1997 Wie zich als vreemdeling gedraagt, wordt ook als vreemdeling behandeld.
- 06/12/1997 Kuregemse vrouwen willen dat het verandert.

*Knack*

- 03/12/1997 De geur van de kolonies