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Growing Up in a Diverse Society: Adolescents' Interest in Parental Religious Socialization Messages

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ABSTRACT

Because Western societies are becoming increasingly religiously diverse, the sociocultural context in which young adolescents currently grow up differs from that of their parents. This raises the question to what extent adolescents are interested in communicating with their parents about religion. In a cross-sectional study of 498 Belgian adolescents ages 12–18-years (mean age = 14.94, *SD* = 1.34), we examined how adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion was related to the link between parental religious socialization messages and adolescent religious out-group attitudes. Testing two models, we aimed to understand whether (a) adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion mediated the link between parental religious socialization and adolescent religious out-group attitudes or (b) parental religious socialization mediated the link between adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion and adolescent religious out-group attitudes. Results revealed a dynamic interplay between study variables, and highlighted the importance of considering adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion.

Contemporary societies are increasingly becoming ethnically, racially and religiously diverse. Achieving social solidarity in these diverse societies has quickly become an important political challenge as negative out-group attitudes may lead to increased discrimination, marginalization and even civil unrests (Blogowska, Lambert, & Saroglou, 2013; Doosje, Loseman, & van den Bos, 2013; Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq, & Van Egmond, 2015). Adolescence is a period marked by the exploration of belonging to social groups and developing an attitude towards out-groups (Phinney, 1989; Phinney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1997). Therefore, studying out-group attitudes among adolescents is particularly worthwhile.

Although attitude formation among adolescents is the result of complex interactions between multiple developmental and sociocontextual factors, parents are often considered to be an important source of information when it comes to adolescent religious out-group attitudes (Bebiroglu, Roskam, & van der Straten Waillet, 2015; van der Noll & Dekker, 2010). However, the current sociocultural context in which adolescents grow up differs significantly from that of their parents', especially in terms of diversity. This contextual divergence between parents and their children may challenge parental influence on adolescents' religious out-group attitudes, as well as the extent to which adolescents have an interest in talking with their parents about religion and hearing their parents' opinion about religion. Very little is known about the communication process between parents and adolescents when it comes to religion-related topics. Accordingly, the present study focuses on early adolescents' religious out-group attitude and seeks to bring data to bear on the role of adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion in explaining the link between parental religious socialization messages and religious out-group attitude.

Out-group attitudes

Much research on intergroup attitudes has been guided by the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which posits that individuals strive for a positive identity. This positive identity of the self can at least be partly obtained by comparing the in-group with the out-groups and evaluating the in-group more positively. Beyond this mere categorization, scholars have proposed several factors that can influence attitudes toward out-groups, including demographic factors such as ethnicity or socioeconomic status (Phinney et al., 1997), cognitive factors such as perceived cultural difference or perceived threat (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), or affective processes such as intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

Research has shown that intergroup attitudes are developed at an early age. For instance, already at four years of age, children distinguish between members of their own groups and other groups (Aboud, 2003; Aboud & Amato, 2001). Furthermore, studies point to age-related changes when it comes to negative out-group attitudes. A recent large-scale meta-analysis (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011) found an initial increase in negative out-group attitude between ages two and four, with a peak around middle childhood (five to seven years) followed by a gradual decline until the age of 10. Importantly, the study could not identify one systematic developmental trend in adolescence. That is, there were both increases and decreases in negative out-group attitude after the age of 10. This result highlights the importance of the immediate social environment in which adolescents grow up (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011). Adolescents' social interactions with their parents can therefore be a key contextual factor in shaping their out-group attitude.

Parental religious socialization

The important role parents can play in the development of their children's out-group attitudes has been noted repeatedly (Aboud & Doyle, 1996; Verkuyten, 2002). Although adolescents do not simply model their parents' religious out-group attitudes, research suggests that they can absorb their parents' messages about out-groups. For example, van der Noll and Dekker (2010) examined Dutch adolescents' attitudes towards Muslims and Islam, and found that adolescents evaluated Muslims less positively if they perceived their parents to be less positive about them.

Parents exchange their knowledge, behaviors, values, customs, norms and beliefs about religion with their children through a process called parental religion socialization (Krause, 2012; Seol & Lee, 2012). This process of exchange seems to be important for youth to construct their own understanding of religion and religiosity (King, Furrow, & Roth, 2002). In the literature, there are generally three models that describe parental religious socialization: unidirectional, channeling and bidirectional models. Studies that use a unidirectional approach focus on the correspondence that exists between adolescents' and parents' religiosity. For instance, if parents encourage certain religious behaviors, such as church attendance, their children are more likely to report similar behaviors (Krause, 2012; Myers, 1996; Schwartz, 2006).

However, in this model, children are merely seen as passive recipients of their parents' socialization messages. The channeling model of religious socialization extends the socialization agents to include peers, religious mentors and schools. According to this model, parents remain the main socialization agent by choosing, and therefore channeling their children into particular social environments that match their religious commitments. Indeed, studies have demonstrated that peer-group religiosity and school-level religiosity mediate family influence on adolescent religiosity (Himmelfarb, 1980; Martin, White, & Perlman, 2003; Regnerus, Smith, & Smith, 2004).

Finally, the bidirectional model of parental religious socialization gives adolescents a more active role in the socialization process, by suggesting that parents and children may mutually influence each other. Most studies on religious socialization that use the bidirectional model focus on parent-adolescent communication about religion. These studies demonstrate that adolescents actively participate in religion-related discussions, initiate conversations, ask and exchange questions related to religion (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008; Layton, Dollahite, & Hardy, 2011; Layton,

Hardy, & Dollahite, 2012). Although these studies give important information about parent-child communication about religion, they can be improved in several ways.

First, most research on parent-child communication neglect the perspective of children under 18. In fact, results of a recent content analysis indicated that only 3.7% of published articles in communication research involved children under the age of 18 as participants (Miller-Day, Pezalla, & Chesnut, 2013). We need to move beyond examining adult conversations to study children and understand their perspectives. In addition, we believe it is important to expand existing research to include families where most members are nonbelievers or nonpracticing believers, as is the case in Western European societies (Vermeer, Janssen, & De Hart, 2011; Voyé & Dobbelaere, 2001), and to use quantitative methods such as self-reports.

Hughes and colleagues (Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009) formulated a widely used framework to study parental ethnic-racial socialization. According to these authors, parental ethnic-racial socialization messages have three main dimensions: *cultural socialization*, messages that refer to instructing children about their racial-ethnic group by giving knowledge about their cultural heritage, history and traditions; *pluralism*, messages that highlight the importance of diversity and encourage children to find out about other racial-ethnic groups; and *promotion of mistrust*, messages that aim to give cautions and warnings about racial-ethnic out-group members and emphasize the need for wariness and distrust in intergroup interactions (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006; Quintana et al., 2006).

Extensive research has established the link between cultural socialization and pluralism and favorable child outcomes, such as fewer externalizing behaviors (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002), higher self-esteem and ethnic identity (Bebiroglu & Pinderhughes, 2012; Gartner, Kiang, & Supple, 2014; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009), higher problem solving skills (Caughy et al., 2011), and motivation (Huynh & Fuligni, 2008). On the other hand, messages that promote mistrust have been associated with lower social connectedness and higher stress and discomfort in social interactions (Tran & Lee, 2010) and higher externalizing and internalizing behaviors (Caughy et al., 2006).

Although much of this research has been applied to out-groups defined in ethnic-racial terms, it can also be applied to religious out-groups, especially because minorities are increasingly defined in terms of their religious—in particular Islamic—affiliation. Religion has thus been racialized, and migrants, who used to be defined based on their ethnic origin, are increasingly defined as 'Muslims' (Bunzl, 2007; Dunn, Klocker, & Salabay, 2007; Kalkan, Layman, & Uslaner, 2009). Recent studies that attempted to use a quantitative approach to study religion-related communications between parents and adolescents successfully applied these three dimensions to the domain of religion (Bebiroglu et al., 2015; van der Straten Waillet & Roskam, 2012).

Religion-related *cultural socialization* incorporates the elements of instructing and giving knowledge of cultural socialization but focuses on religious heritage, history and traditions. Religion-related *pluralism* highlights the importance of religious diversity. And finally, religion-related *promotion of mistrust* conveys caution about religious out-group members and emphasizes the need for wariness in interreligious interactions (Bebiroglu et al., 2015; van der Straten Waillet & Roskam, 2012). Results from these studies suggested that for adolescents of various religious groups (i.e., Catholics, Muslims, or nonbelievers) receiving more messages of pluralism (regardless whether they are positive or neutral in nature) was associated with more positive religious out-group attitudes, whereas receiving more promotion of mistrust messages was linked to more negative religious out-group attitudes (Bebiroglu et al., 2015).

Most studies that examine the link between the three dimensions of parental socialization and child outcomes have a constrained view of children. That is, parents act towards children and children change. However, children may have goals or interests that differ from those of their parents. Therefore, parents who wish to influence the values of their children may need to accommodate to their children's interest and design more accurate strategies to promote their agenda (Kuczynski, 2003; Maccoby, 2003). Recent studies on parent-child communication on religion provide support for this model. For instance, Fife, Leigh Nelson, and Messersmith (2014) demonstrated that the degree to which families created an open climate to discuss a wide array of topics was associated with stronger religious faith in young adults.

In addition, Colaner, Soliz, and Nelson (2014) found that religious difference between parents and their children was associated with decreased relational satisfaction. However, the communication style of the parents transcended the religious differences. That is, if a parent had an *accommodative communication style* based on respect, acceptance and tolerance of religious views, children reported higher relational satisfaction and shared family identity. Similarly, by qualitatively analyzing interviews, Dollahite and Thatcher (2008) found that parent's conversational approach mattered when they talked about religion.

If parents controlled and dominated conversations, adolescent children were less likely to explore religion and be engaged in future conversations about religion. However, if conversations were focused on their needs, questions and time constraints, adolescent children reported more interest. These results highlight that to better understand how parental socialization messages function we need to incorporate children's perspectives. Accordingly, we tested two models that address the link between parental religious socialization messages and adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion and how they relate to adolescent religious out-group attitude.

Adolescent interest as mediator model

In this model, we tested to what extent adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion mediated parental religious socialization and out-group attitudes. Following Maccoby (1999, 2003), we argue that there is a power asymmetry between parents and children. Parents have greater knowledge and control over resources, monitor their children and administer discipline. Thus, they have a higher power in influencing their children. Therefore, we anticipated parental religious socialization messages to increase adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion in topics related to religion, and in turn, adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion to be linked to more positive religious out-group attitudes. The support for this model comes from extensive empirical research on the role of parents in influencing their children's religious beliefs and behaviors in general (Krause, 2012; Myers, 1996; Schwartz, 2006) and their interest in religion in particular (Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008).

Parental religious socialization as a mediator

In the second model, we tested whether adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion was mediated by parental religious socialization. Despite their higher power, parents are vulnerable to the power exercised by their children (Kuczynski, 2003). Therefore, we expected the interest of adolescents to trigger parental religious socialization messages, and in turn, these messages to relate to adolescent religious out-group attitudes. The support for this model comes from studies on how adolescents can influence their parents' behaviors and attitudes (e.g., Kerr & Stattin, 2003; Miklikowska, 2016; Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012; Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2004).

Although these two models are competing models, we believe both models merit exploration. We investigated both models in the context of a region in a specific European country, Wallonia, Belgium. Belgium is traditionally a Roman Catholic country that has become more religiously diverse in the last three decades. This diversity is due to the decreasing rates of religiosity among native Belgians and increasing rates of immigration (Krysinska et al., 2014). Currently, 64.2% of the population identify as Christian, 29% as unaffiliated, and 5.9% as Muslim (Pew Research Center, 2014). Immigrants constitute about 10% of the Belgian population and most important non-European Union immigration comes from Morocco and Turkey, comprising 8.5 and 4.5% of all immigrants, respectively (European Migration Network, 2012).

Method

Sample and procedure

Cross-sectional data were collected in April/May, 2014 and February/March, 2015 at three secondary schools in Wallonia, the French-speaking region of Belgium. The participating schools were selected

through convenience sampling, which involved calls to school directors, parent associations, education agencies, and mass media announcements. We included respondents from regular public schools who were between 10 and 18 years of age. The analyses of the current study are based on 498 adolescents (49% female) with a mean age of 14.94 ($SD = 1.34$) during data collection. The majority (97%) were Belgian citizens and identified themselves as Catholic ($n = 329$), nonreligious ($n = 137$) or other ($n = 17$). Data collection was conducted in classrooms by trained research assistants. Respondents completed a short paper-and-pencil questionnaire and participation was voluntary.

Measures

All measures used in this study were derived from adolescent self-reports. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations.

Parental religious socialization

To measure parental religious socialization, adolescents indicated the frequency of their parents' engagement in communication about religion and religious groups on a four-point rating scale ranging from *never* to *often*. The items of this scale have been adapted from existing racial socialization scale (Hughes & Chen, 1997, 1999; Hughes & Johnson, 2001), and have successfully been used in previous studies (e.g., Bebiroglu et al., 2015; van der Straten Waillet & Roskam, 2012).

The dimension of *cultural socialization* was measured by two items assessing parental teaching about their own religious culture and heritage ($r = .67$). A sample item was "My parents talk to me about texts related to their religious and philosophical convictions." *Pluralism* was measured by three items assessing how frequently parents talked about other religious groups (Cronbach's $\alpha = .63$). A sample item was "My parents talk to me about the rituals of other religious and philosophical convictions". *Promotion of mistrust* was measured by four items emphasizing the need for wariness and distrust in interreligious interactions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$). A sample item was "My parents tell me to trust only people who share their religious and philosophical convictions". The parental religious socialization scale has been reported to have adequate reliability in previous studies (e.g., Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$ for cultural socialization, .76 for pluralism, and .72 for promotion of mistrust, Bebiroglu et al., 2015). The mean score for three dimensions was calculated separately, higher scores indicating higher levels of socialization.

Religious out-group attitude

We measured adolescents' *religious out-group attitude* by means of two questions frequently used in previous studies. First, we used the "feeling thermometer" as a global measure of out-group feelings. This scale has been shown to be a reliable and precise measure of feelings towards various groups (Alwin, 1997; Verkuyten, 2007). On a scale of 0–100, adolescents indicated to what extent they had warm or favorable feelings towards six different religious groups listed in the following order: Buddhists, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, nonbelievers, and Protestants. Second, on a five-point scale ranging from

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of religious out-group attitudes, dimensions of parental religious socialization and adolescent interest.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Religious out-group attitudes	0.48	0.25				
2. Cultural socialization	1.58	0.72	.16***			
3. Pluralism	1.75	0.61	.41***	.39***		
4. Promotion of mistrust	1.34	0.65	–.19***	.04	–.09	
5. Adolescent interest	2.79	1.07	.26***	.41***	.47***	–.02

Note. *** $p < .001$. Higher scores indicate more positive perceptions of religious out-groups, higher levels of socialization, and more interest in religious communication.

not at all to *very much*, adolescents indicated to what extent they wanted members of the same list of religious groups as their neighbors.

This question was intended to measure sympathy towards (racial) out-groups (Bogardus, 1947) and has been used in large-scale surveys and studies (e.g., van der Noll & Dekker, 2010; World Values Survey, 2012). Because we were more interested in adolescent's religious out-group attitude towards religions that represented minority groups in Belgium, our measure of religious out-group attitude did not include adolescent's out-group attitude towards Catholics and nonbelievers.

In other words, if an adolescent identified himself/herself as a Catholic (or nonreligious), his/her out-group attitude score included his/her rankings for Buddhists, Jews, Muslims and Protestants. For adolescents who identified themselves as Buddhist, Jew, Muslim or Protestant, this ranking was based on three religious out-groups. For instance, if an adolescent identified himself/herself as a Muslim, his/her out-group attitude score included his/her rankings for Buddhists, Jews, and Protestants. To obtain a composite score, we transformed all scores into a 0–1 scale, and calculated the average, with a higher score indicating a more positive attitude.

Adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion

We assessed *adolescents' interest* by adapting the subscale of “Political discussions with parents” (Flanagan, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2007; Syvertsen et al., 2009). On a Likert-type five-point scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, respondents rated whether (1) they talk to their parents about religion, and (2) they are interested in their parents' opinions about religion ($r = .78$).

Results

Preliminary data analyses

Adolescents had general mid-point rankings for Buddhists ($M = .49$, $SD = .27$), Jews ($M = .48$, $SD = .28$), Protestants ($M = .50$, $SD = .28$), and Muslims ($M = 0.42$, $SD = 0.31$). Factor analyses revealed one underlying factor of religious out-group attitude (factor loadings $> .77$, explained variance 71%, $\alpha = .95$), and this general religious out-group attitude will be the focus of our analyses. Interestingly, adolescents reported they did not frequently talk with their parents about religion: 42% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement “I talk with my parents about religion” and only 23% agreed they talked about religion with their parents. In line with this, 41% of adolescents indicated that they were not interested in the opinion of their parents when it came to religion. Less than one third (31%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they were interested in their parents' opinion on religion.

Testing the models

We tested the two mediation models (“adolescent interest as mediator” and “parental religious socialization as mediator”) using the regression-based approach of Hayes (2013). We conducted bootstrap tests using the PROCESS macro (Model 4), embedded and operated in SPSS. The PROCESS macro provides coefficients for direct effects and gives bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals for indirect effects.

Adolescent interest as a mediator

In the first model, we examined the way adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion mediated the relationship between religious socialization and out-group attitude. Given the three dimensions of religious socialization, we ran a separate PROCESS model for cultural socialization, pluralism, and promotion of mistrust. Through this method, estimates for direct and indirect effects are obtained separately for each independent variable (Hayes, 2013). The direct and indirect effects of cultural socialization, pluralism, and promotion of mistrust on adolescent religious out-group attitude through adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Adolescent interest as mediator model.

				95% CI	
	Coefficient	(SE)	p	LL	UL
Direct Effects					
Cultural socialization → Adolescent interest	.41***	(.06)	.000	.29	.53
Pluralism → Adolescent interest	.62***	(.07)	.000	.47	.76
Promotion of mistrust → Adolescent interest	.00	(.06)	.991	−.13	.13
Cultural socialization → Out-group attitudes	−.01	(.02)	.743	−.04	.03
Pluralism → Out-group attitudes	.15***	(.02)	.000	.11	.19
Promotion of mistrust → Out-group attitudes	−.06**	(.02)	.001	−.09	−.03
Adolescent interest → Out-group attitudes	.03*	(.01)	.027	.00	.05
Indirect Effects					
Cultural socialization → Out-group attitudes	.01	(.01)		.01	.02
Pluralism → Out-group attitudes	.02	(.01)		.01	.03
Promotion of mistrust → Out-group attitudes	.00	(.01)		−.01	.01

Note. SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Cultural socialization, pluralism, and promotion of mistrust accounted for 29% of the variance in adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion. The total effect model explained 20% of the variance in adolescent religious out-group scores. Cultural socialization and pluralism had a significant and positive association with adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion. No such association was found for messages of promotion of mistrust. The indirect effects of cultural socialization and pluralism on adolescent religious out-group attitude through adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion were significant.

Parental religious socialization as mediator model

In the second model, we checked whether parental religious socialization messages mediated the relationship between adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion and out-group attitude. The direct and indirect effects of adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion on adolescent religious out-group attitude through cultural socialization, pluralism, and promotion of mistrust are presented in Table 3. This model explained 8% of the variance in adolescent religious out-group scores.

Adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion had a significant positive association with cultural socialization and pluralism and explained 17% and 22% of the variance in cultural socialization and pluralism, respectively. Adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion had a direct effect on religious out-group attitude. The indirect effect of adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion on religious out-group attitude through pluralism was significant, that is, pluralism mediated the link between adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion and religious out-group attitude. No such effect was found for cultural socialization and promotion of mistrust.

Comparing the models

According to Hayes (2013), the causal ordering of a correlational model can be determined by creating alternative causal flows to see whether the direct and indirect effects are consistent with what the alternative models predict (see Schrodtt & Phillips, 2016 for an example). If the indirect effects in competing causal models no longer remain significant, one can rule out the alternative explanations. Our data showed that adolescents who reported higher cultural socialization messages tended to have higher interest, and this interest was associated with more positive out-group attitude. However, there was no evidence of an indirect effect from adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion to out-group attitude through cultural socialization. Taken together, these results suggest that the relationship flows primarily from cultural socialization to adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion and not the other way around. Because the indirect effect of pluralism through adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion and the indirect effect of adolescent

Table 3. Parental religious socialization as mediator model.

				95% CI	
	Coefficient	(SE)	p	LL	UL
Direct Effects					
Adolescent interest → Cultural socialization	.28***	(.03)	.000	.23	.35
Adolescent interest → Pluralism	.27***	(.02)	.000	.23	.32
Adolescent interest → Promotion of mistrust	−.01	(.03)	.645	−.07	.04
Adolescent interest → Out-group attitude	.03*	(.01)	.027	.00	.05
Cultural socialization → Out-group attitude	−.01	(.02)	.743	−.04	.03
Pluralism → Out-group attitude	.15***	(.02)	.000	.11	.19
Promotion of mistrust → Out-group attitude	−.06**	(.02)	.001	−.09	−.03
Indirect Effects					
Adolescent interest → Out-group attitude through cultural socialization	.00	(.01)		−.02	.01
Adolescent interest → Out-group attitude through pluralism	.04	(.01)		.03	.05
Adolescent interest → Out-group attitude through promotion of mistrust	.00	(.01)		−.01	.01

Note. SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

interest in communicating with parents about religion through pluralism were significant in both models, the data obtained were not sufficient to identify one causal order.

Discussion

We examined the role of adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion on the link between parental religious socialization messages and adolescent religious out-group attitude. Testing two different models, we aimed to understand whether (a) adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion mediated the link between parental religious socialization messages and adolescent religious out-group attitude and (b) parental religious socialization messages mediated the link between adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion and adolescent out-group attitude.

The results of direct effects and mediation analyses generally supported both models. Considering cultural socialization, once adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion was in the model, cultural socialization lost its direct association with positive adolescent religious out-group attitude. This finding challenges the unidirectional “parent to child” models and suggests that merely hearing parental messages about one’s own religious culture and heritage does not relate to positive religious out-group attitude. That is, if adolescents are not interested in talking about religion, regardless of the amount of cultural socialization messages they receive, they may not have higher levels of positive religious out-group attitude. These results are in line with studies on adolescent autonomy and agency, suggesting that at this age, parents cannot impose their vision on adolescents but adolescents have the ability to filter messages coming from their parents (Beyers, Goossens, Vansant, & Moors, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Adolescents may be an important phase of development where we cannot truly gauge the effects of parents on adolescents without considering the effect of adolescents on parents. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of parent-adolescent communication about religion may necessitate the attunement of unidirectional socialization models and the consideration of adolescents’ level of interest.

The results from both models additionally highlighted an interesting association between pluralism, adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion and adolescent religious out-group attitude. We found that if adolescents received higher number of pluralism messages, they were more interested in talking about religion and had higher positive out-group attitudes. Similarly, if adolescents were interested in talking about religion, adolescents perceived their parents to give more pluralism messages, which were then linked to their positive out-group attitude. These reciprocal associations between parents and adolescents suggest that both parents and their children constantly interpret and negotiate each other’s perspectives. Such results highlight the importance to consider integrative theories

such as relational developmental systems theories (Lerner, 2002; Lerner & Schmid Callina, 2013) or dialectics models of socialization (Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015), which emphasize the dynamism of the socialization processes that happen between parents and their children.

Promotion of mistrust messages were not related to adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion. Adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion did not trigger promotion of mistrust messages and similarly promotion of mistrust messages did not motivate children to be more interested in talking about religion. The absence of such an association may suggest that children's interest in religion may be more readily influenced by positive content (e.g., tolerance) than negative content (e.g., caution). This result is in line with previous research on communication that demonstrates the importance of an accommodative communication style based on tolerance and acceptance of others (Colaner et al., 2014).

Although this study is cross-sectional in design, it provides indirect support for the causal effect of cultural socialization on adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion. We found that the more parents gave information about their own religious heritage, history, and traditions the more interested adolescents were in talking about religion. It remains to be determined whether pluralism leads to adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion or adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion triggers more messages of pluralism, which is then linked to more positive out-group attitudes. Theoretically, both chains of events are possible. Another possibility is that there is a reciprocal causation between pluralism and adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion, which suggests that pluralism and adolescent interest in communicating with parents about religion are reciprocally related and mutually reinforcing (Hayes, 2013). However, we need additional studies to understand the causal relation between these two variables.

In contrast with previous research (e.g., Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008), most adolescents in our sample reported that they were not interested in talking about religion and hearing their parents' opinion about religion, which possibly reflects the Western-European perspective of having a less favorable public attitude about religion (Vermeer et al., 2011; Voyé & Dobbelaere, 2001). Despite the low levels of interest reported by adolescents, the more interested adolescents were in having conversations with their parents about religion, the more positive religious out-group attitude they held. Therefore, programs designed to increase adolescent out-group attitude may be more effective if they create an open climate where adolescents can get information about religion and freely ask, discuss and express their viewpoints.

Our data show how pluralism messages are directly linked to increases in adolescent out-group attitude. Giving information about other religious groups may lay the foundation for adolescents to seek situations in which they have contact with religious out-group members, which may in turn be linked to their positive out-group attitudes. Therefore, programs designed to increase adolescent out-group attitude may consider giving information about the cultural heritage of religious out-groups.

Our findings underscore the important role parents have in influencing adolescent religious out-group attitude. Parents can potentially promote adolescent religious out-group attitude through messages of cultural socialization and pluralism or undermine adolescent out-group attitudes through messages of promotion of mistrust. Therefore, programs and interventions should include parents as their partners and encourage parent-adolescent discussions on religious in- and out-groups.

Limitations

The current research has some limitations. First, because of the cross-sectional design of the study, the patterns of covariation that we report are descriptive and do not imply causality. We cannot answer whether and how much adolescents and parents influence each other without a longitudinal cross-lagged design that considers transactional influences. In addition, all measures included relied on adolescent self-reports. As such, we do not know to what extent these findings can be replicated by using different methods (e.g., observations, open-ended questions) and additional sources (e.g., the parents). We also

did not specifically measure whether parent-adolescent communications were conversation oriented or conformity oriented. Given that these family patterns of communication are associated with the religious orientation of children (Fife et al., 2014), it may be important to see how they can relate to adolescent religious out-group attitude. Future research could therefore benefit from having a longitudinal approach and using additional methods, sources and scales.

Despite its limitations, the present study extends previous work on parental religious socialization. Research on the link between parental religious socialization and adolescent out-group attitudes has largely applied a unidirectional perspective of socialization. Results of our study indicate that adolescents are not merely passive recipients of their parents' messages, but instead can play an active role in determining the type, content, and frequency of messages they receive from their parents about their own religious group, as well as other religious groups.

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