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A waffle-shaped model for how realistic dimensions of the Belgian conflict structure collective memories and stereotypes

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Abstract
Belgium has a long-standing history of conflicts between Flemings and French speakers. We posit that the content of the collective memories associated with each group are organized around two objective dimensions: (1) linguistic policy and (2) financial and political autonomy. A model is proposed that predicts that different justice principles will be applied by each community regarding the distribution of specific resources depending upon which dimension of the conflict is salient and their group membership. Respect or violation of these principles predicts stereotype content. Collective memories can be used to justify the in-group's justice principles and to present such stereotypes as anchored in the past. We conclude by drawing general implications of the model for the study of the role collective memories play in intergroup conflicts.

Keywords
collective memory, intergroup relations, moral judgment, stereotypes, social identity, social justice

Belgium has been a fragile country since its independence in 1830. Originally, its frailty was mainly due to threats from powerful neighbors, but since the early 20th century, the conflicting relationships between the two main linguistic groups has become Belgium's main source of frailty: Flemings,[1] who inhabit the northern part of the country and speak Dutch, and French speakers, who mainly live in Wallonia – south of Belgium – and Brussels (which is geographically located in Flanders but is predominantly French speaking). The history of the country has been punctuated by the demands of the Flemish movement regarding two main fields: linguistic policy (with the recognition of Dutch as a national language) and financial and political autonomy. In this article, we argue that

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these two aspects of the conflict organize the collective representations the two groups hold about each other as well as their representations of the history of their relations.

In order to do so, we proceed in four steps. First, to lay the basis of our argument, we start by reiterating a few general theoretical points regarding the role of social memory in intergroup conflict. Second, we provide a short overview of the history of the Belgian conflict. In the third, central, part of this article, we put forward a model tying the use of collective memory to the two dimensions organizing the current intergroup conflict between French speakers and Flemings: territorial linguistic policy and autonomy. This model remains partially speculative. We cannot substantiate all of its aspects with data yet given the lack of social psychological studies addressing the Belgian case. We, however, believe that it provides a useful basis for addressing this and other conflicts and for generating fruitful research on these topics. Finally, we build on this model in order to draw more general implications on the relation between collective memory and intergroup conflict.

A social psychological approach towards collective memories

According to Halbwachs (e.g. Halbwachs, 1992[1950]), individual memory is shaped by the belongingness to communities. People remember and forget as members of social groups. Memory thus depends on the 'social frameworks' in which individuals are inserted. In this sense, Halbwachs castigated purely psychological views of human memory, arguing that memory is inherently collective. Representations of the past are expressed and transmitted through collective practices, such as erecting monuments (van Ypersele, 2002) or participating in commemorative rituals (Frijda, 1997), and through institutions such as national school system (Olick, 1999).

Thus, every social group develops its own collective memory. However, collective memories are not always shared among all members of a society. They often differ, from subtle nuances to radical differences (Licata et al., 2007). To parallel the distinction introduced by Moscovici (1988), social representations of the past can be shared by a whole society (hegemonic); they can originate from a collectivity but be gradually adopted by other collectivities (emancipated); or they can be the focus of disputes between collectivities (polemical). Polemical collective memories are particularly likely to occur in multiethnic nations such as Belgium because these memories are central to the definition of social identities.

Collective memories and social identity

Social identity was defined by Tajfel and Turner (1986: 16) as 'those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging'. Collective memory can serve various functions with regard to social identity (Licata et al., 2007). First, collective memories contribute to the definition of the group. According to Liu and Hilton (2005: 537):

> History provides us with narratives that tell us who we are, where we came from and where we should be going. It defines a trajectory which helps to construct the essence of a group's identity, how it relates to other groups, and ascertains what its options are for facing present challenges.

Even though narratives about the group's history are distinct from the real history of that group, sharing representations of the group's past confers psychological reality to that group (Campbell, 1958), thus facilitating identification with it (Sani, 2008).

Second, collective memories help define the group's value. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), people are motivated to hold a positive view of their group because their

social identity is an intimate part of their self-concept, and a group's value is assessed through a process of intergroup comparison. As a consequence, one needs to belong to a group that compares positively with relevant out-groups in order to derive a positive self-esteem. A group's past successes and failures, its moral or immoral actions therefore contribute to defining its relative value. Hence, social groups compare their respective pasts, and generally try to derive a positive sense of their identity through this comparison. This can explain why collective memories are often biased towards positive accounts of the in-group's past and/or negative accounts of out-groups' actions in history (Baumeister and Hastings, 1997). Third, collective memories can be used to legitimize past, present, or planned actions of the group. For instance, representing the group's history in terms of victimization is a powerful way of justifying reprisals against an out-group presented as the victimizer (Bar-Tal et al., 2009). Fourth, collective memories can be used to mobilize members of a social group to accomplish a particular collective – often political – project in the name of their shared identity (Reicher and Hopkins, 2001). Thus, group leaders may emphasize different aspects of their group's history depending on the nature of the audiences they address: This can be explained in terms of the specific actions they expect from these audiences in the service of their political project (Klein and Licata, 2003; Klein et al., 2007).

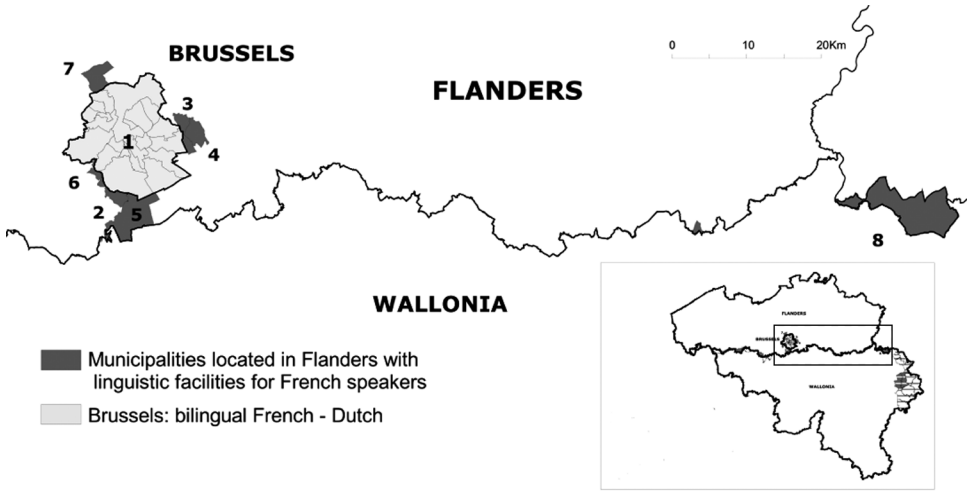
The way a social group relates to its past can be envisioned in two different manners: Either collective memories are viewed as weighing on the group's present, or they are viewed as influenced by the group's present (Lavabre, 1994; Rosoux, 2002; see also Rosoux and van Ypersele, this issue). For example, one can appraise memories of a collective trauma as something that has a bearing on the present, independently of group members' will. By contrast, collective memories can also be adapted to fulfill current identity needs, or to justify or initiate current or future behaviors. As Assmann (1997 cited by Wertsch and Roediger, 2008: 320) pointed out 'The past is not simply "received" by the present. The present is "haunted" by the past and the past is modeled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present.'

The conflict between Belgian linguistic groups

In order to examine the functions that collective memories fulfill in this context, we shall consider the two dimensions of the conflict already mentioned above: linguistic policy and territory, on the one hand, and political/financial autonomy on the other. Although these two dimensions are obviously interrelated, they can be distinguished in terms of their history and the justice considerations they involve.

Linguistic policy and territory

The linguistic conflict has remote historical roots. From its creation in 1830 to the 1960s, Belgium was dominated by the French-speaking elites, even though Dutch speakers were (and still are) more numerous than French speakers (in a proportion of roughly 60–40%; see Hooghe, 2004). Dutch was only recognized as an official language in 1898, whereas French had been the only official language since 1831. This official recognition was only obtained after years of struggle from the Flemish movement (Vos, 2002). The Flemish movement then continued to claim more recognition for Flemish identity and political autonomy. Whereas its initial claim was a better recognition of Flemish culture and language within a united Belgium, the Flemish movement evolved towards a sub-nationalism defined in ethnic terms (Martiniello, 1998). The German occupier, first during the First World War then the Second World War, exploited the anti-Belgian sentiment that was spreading in some parts of the Flemish movement. Some of its leaders were seduced by the prospect of splitting Belgium to create a monolingual Dutch-speaking area (Vos, 2002). These Flemish activists were repressed



1. Brussels region : 88.8 % of votes for French speaking lists ; 11.2 % of votes for Dutch speaking lists.
2. Linkebeek : 83.8 % of votes for French speaking lists.
3. Kraainem : 76.4 % of votes for French speaking lists.
4. Wezembeek-Oppem : 76.0 % of votes for French speaking lists.
5. St-Genius-Rhode : 63.9 % of votes for French speaking lists ; 1.8 % of votes for bilingual list.
6. Drogenbos : 41.4 % of votes for French speaking lists ; 58.6 % of votes for bilingual lists.
7. Wemmel : 25.2 % of votes for French speaking lists ; 43.4 % of votes for bilingual lists.
8. Voeren : 39.2 % of votes for French speaking lists

Figure 1. Municipalities with linguistic facilities surrounding Brussels (+Voeren)
Source: CRISP, 2011. Raw data communicated by the Secretary General of the CRISP (Research and Information Center on Belgian Politics), Vincent de Coorebyter, to the first author.
Given that linguistic censuses are not authorized by Belgian Law, estimations of the linguistic composition of Belgium are based on votes accorded to electoral lists as a function of their language. For municipalities outside Brussels, estimations of the percentage of votes are provided when the minority is above 30% (based on the 2006 municipal elections). For Brussels, percentages are based on the 2009 regional elections, which yield better estimations of the linguistic composition of Brussels because of the electoral system.

after the First World War, but the movement came back to the foreground during the Second World War, when some of its members collaborated with the Nazis, and were again put on trial and condemned as traitors after the war. Unlike in other countries, no amnesty was ever granted to these Nazi 'collaborators'.

In 1932, the territorial unilingualism principle was adopted: Flanders became officially Dutch speaking and Wallonia became officially French speaking, whereas Brussels became a bilingual area. In 1963, a fourth small German-speaking unilingual area was also recognized.

The early 1960s were another key moment in the elaboration of the conflict. In 1962, the Belgian parliament approved a law fixing a permanent linguistic border in Belgium. This law was primarily supported by Flemish politicians who perceived the spreading of French language – represented as a higher status language – as a threat. The intergroup conflict was taken to Brussels at that period (Hooghe, 2004). As shown in Figure 1, Brussels and its surroundings are geographically located in the monolingual Dutch-speaking region. The main site of the current linguistic conflict bears on six municipalities that are located in the suburbs of Brussels, but are officially Flemish. Yet, French speakers form a considerable part of their population (often the majority, cf. Figure 1) and have specific rights, which are called 'linguistic facilities'. These facilities cover a wide range of domains (culture, schooling, voting) and grant them the right to benefit from public services administered in French, which is unlike the rest of the Flemish region's territory. Although they were the result of a compromise, divergences exist as to their interpretation. According to a first interpretation, shared among Flemish politicians, the facilities were a temporary measure meant to facilitate the

integration of the minority. According to the second interpretation, shared among French-speaking politicians, they permanently acknowledged the cultural and political rights of French speakers. Not surprisingly, then, Flemish political parties demand their eventual abrogation, whereas the French-speaking representatives generally want to maintain them indefinitely.

French speakers mostly defend the 'personality principle' in the Flemish boroughs (including those with facilities) – mostly around Brussels – where large numbers of French speakers live, while the 'territoriality principle' is generally defended by the Dutch speakers (Mercy, 2008). According to the 'personality principle', each citizen has the right to deal with the local administration in their own mother tongue, wherever they live. However, according to the 'territoriality principle', all regions – except Brussels – are unilingual. This means that, although French speakers represent a large minority, or the majority, of the population, in these municipalities, the administration only deals with them in Dutch.

This short summary highlights that the very definition of the sub-groups composing the country is far from self-evident. It is part and parcel of the conflict as the criteria (such as language, territory, ethnicity) determining these categorizations are themselves a matter of contention.

Autonomy and economic disparities

Besides this territorial-linguistic issue, one cannot appraise the current conflict without considering that Belgium's prosperity up until the Second World War originated mainly from the steel and mining industries of Wallonia with the, mainly agricultural, economy of Flanders contributing much less to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Quévit, 1982). Yet, the prosperity of the Flemish part of the country has been steadily increasing since the Second World War (due in large extent to the importation of raw material by sea and the subsequent industrialization of Flanders), whereas the reverse trend has been observed in Wallonia (the overlap between the two regions' GDP per capita occurred in 1965). In 2007, the GDP per capita for the Flemish region almost reached 32,000 euro, whereas in Wallonia it was below 23,000 (Institut des Comptes Nationaux, 2010). The difference in unemployment rates between the two regions also illustrates this economic disparity: in February 2009, the unemployment rate was 16.5 percent in Wallonia and 6.7 percent in Flanders (ONEM, 2009).

Together, the aspiration to linguistic homogeneity in Flanders and the economic disparity between the two regions are two major explanatory factors for the quest for more autonomy in Flanders, whereas the French-speaking Belgians are calling for maintaining solidarity principles between the northern and the southern parts of the country. This quest for solidarity vs. autonomy is currently the crucial issue that divides the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking parties.

A general framework for understanding the conflict

Having now provided a rough summary of the two main dimensions of the conflict, we shall turn to the presentation of a model accounting for the influence of these dimensions on mutual perceptions between Flemings and French speakers. This model is based on the assumption that intergroup conflicts involve the control over the distribution of resources. Azzi (1992) distinguishes different types of resources. Distributive resources can be directly distributed across groups: for example, each group can receive a specific amount of money or territory. Other resources are called procedural. Procedural resources involve control over decision-making processes. An example would be the number of seats allocated to a group in an assembly, thus determining its decisional power. Among distributive resources, some can be characterized as material (e.g. money, territory) whereas others are symbolic (e.g. the reputation of the group). In intergroup conflicts, symbolic resources are generally collective and cannot be divided between its members. For example, both the reputation of the in-group and its national anthem constitute collective resources.

Table 1. Content of collective memory and stereotypes as a function of the relevant dimension of the conflict and the linguistic group

Source		Flemings	Francophones
Type of Conflict			
Territory	Justice principle	Group based – reciprocity, territoriality	Personality principle Individual rights
	Out-group stereotype	Contemptuous, arrogant	Racist, intolerant
	In-group stereotype	Simple, honest	Open minded, free
	Collective memory	French-speaking bourgeois, officer during the First World War, Leuven before the splitting	Collaboration, expulsion of Leuven
Autonomy	Justice principle	Group-based equity	Individual needs / Temporal reciprocity
	Out-group stereotype	Lazy, profiteer, incompetent	Selfish, nationalist
	In-group stereotype	Hard working, competent	Generous, hedonistic
	Collective memory	Unemployed Walloon workers, corrupt Walloon politicians	Early economic support of Wallonia to Flanders

Conflicts generally occur when groups negotiate the rules that should be applied for the distribution of specific resources. These rules depend on justice principles. These principles can be applied either at an individual or at a group level depending upon the criteria for attributing resources. For example, in both the Federal and Brussels governments, the numbers of ministers representing the two main linguistic groups are equal. Thus, the number of ministers of one linguistic group is not proportional to the group's size. By contrast, the federal parliament reflects, to a greater extent, the relative proportion of the two groups, which is in line with an individual-level justice ('one man, one vote').

As we have seen, the Belgian case involves two interrelated conflicts: one concerns a symbolic resource (language use) and how its use can be regulated on the territory (should each language be confined to a segment of the country or not?). Another conflict relates to the distribution of financial and procedural resources (political power) between the regions (or communities)[2] and the Federal State. Depending on the social and political context, each dimension can be more or less salient. The media plays an important role in this respect as it reports the micro-incidents that punctuate the larger conflict on a daily basis (Sinardet et al., 2007). We suggest that the content of shared representations by the two groups involved in this conflict can be understood as a function of:

1. Which dimension of the conflict is made temporarily salient by the social context (territory vs. autonomy).
2. The position of each group within this conflict.

This analysis can be represented through a two-by-two ('waffle shaped') table as a function of the dimension of the conflict that is highlighted and the identity of the group (French vs. Dutch speaking) (see Table 1). Using this framework, we can address the content of different representations, including stereotypes and collective memories.

Similar perspectives (e.g. Alexander et al., 1999; Fiske et al., 2002; Phalet and Poppe, 1997) have already been developed with respect to the content of stereotypes, i.e. beliefs regarding the traits possessed by members of a social category. These perspectives posit that stereotypes reflect aspects of the structural relations between groups by attributing psychological traits to their members.

Thus, Phalet and Poppe (1997) contend that perceptions of conflict are associated with the evaluation of an out-group on the 'morality' dimension (e.g. out-groupers seen as honest or trustworthy); whereas perceptions of power predict attributions of 'competence' (e.g. out-groupers seen as intelligent or dynamic) to the out-group. In this perspective, stereotypes serve to interpret group goals, which are themselves a function of perceived power and conflict. In a later development of this approach by Fiske et al. (2002), they serve to justify the existing social structure.

Whereas such perspectives provide useful insights, they suffer from at least three limitations. First, they consider social stereotypes in isolation from collective memories. We suggest, in line with Halbwachs (1992[1950]), that a conflict provides a 'social frame' that forms the basis of socially shared memories. The novelty of our approach resides in the fact that we attempt to map specific memories with dimensions of the conflict. Self-categorization Theory (Turner et al., 1987) suggests that stereotypes are flexible interpretational devices that can vary in content depending upon their capacity to provide a coherent and shared interpretation of the social world. Extending this approach to collective memory, we suggest that the accessibility of these representations will vary depending upon the most salient dimension of the conflict (territory vs. autonomy) at the time.

Second, while we agree that shared representations such as stereotypes and collective memories may be used to convey a symbolic value to the actors of a conflict (who become 'moral' or 'immoral'; 'nice' or 'aggressive'), the categorical dimensions used in the 'sociostructural' models of stereotype content may be too general. This is particularly true of 'competition' (Fiske et al., 2002) and 'conflict' (Phalet and Poppe, 1997), which may have different implications depending on the nature of the resources that are at stake and on the perspectives of the two groups regarding the justice principles that should govern their allocation. Specifically, beliefs as to which justice principle is appropriate may differ depending on the dimension of the conflict on which one focuses (i.e. territory or autonomy) and on the status of the out-group (high vs. low; powerful vs. weak; majority vs. minority, etc.) relative to the in-group.

We further posit that these justice principles are associated with moral categories in such a way that different moral traits will be applied depending on the justice principle that is violated (or respected). According to Folger et al. (2005), an act is endowed with moral value to the extent that someone is held responsible for the deliberate transgression of an ethical principle (or conversely for respecting it). Morality implies an attribution to a specific actor. In an intergroup context, a conflict is moralized because the out-group is viewed as having violated a justice principle. We propose that the out-group stereotypes held by group members engaged in a conflict can be associated with this violation of specific justice principles. The opposite traits, which reflect conformity to these principles, will be applied to the in-group.

The territorial dimension

Let us consider the territorial conflict first. One of the most recurring threads of Flemish political discourse regarding the use of language suggests that refusing to speak Dutch on the Flemish territory breaches a principle of reciprocity. Thus, following this position, if Flemings go to Wallonia, they do not expect people to speak Dutch. This could be traced back to the fact that Wallonia has always been monolingual (with the exception of the small German-speaking enclave), whereas Flanders was partly French speaking and only became monolingual in 1932, an evolution that some French speakers still acknowledge reluctantly. Flemings often condemn the asymmetrical posture of the French speakers of Brussels periphery, who claim rights that Flemings do not enjoy in Wallonia. In doing so, they present group-based equality as the proper rule, yielding a form of reciprocity ('I speak your language in your home so you speak my language in my home') grounded in the territoriality principle (cf. above). The violation of these principles is endowed with a moral dimension. For example, refusing to address the Flemish administration in Dutch is not considered only as the manifestation of a

divergent, though legitimate, political stance but as reflecting a form of disrespect or contempt for the Flemings. This was clearly evidenced in a study conducted in 2008 among individuals participating in the Gordel, a cycling and walking event organized since 1981 by Flemings in order to emphasize the Flemish nature of the municipalities surrounding Brussels (Van der Linden and Licata, 2009). When asked to explain why the federal negotiations were still in a stalemate, a participant underlined the 'stubborn refusal of French speakers to do … their best to speak Dutch'. Another participant declared 'In Flanders, one should speak Dutch. Integrate and adapt is elementary courtesy.'

Conversely, from a Francophone's point of view, restrictions on French speakers' language use are seen as a form of Flemish intolerance. This point of view was forcefully expressed by some of the Brussels' residents we surveyed in 2007 (Van der Linden and Licata, 2008). Condemning the language restrictions, a respondent concluded 'Flemings … seem to forget that other citizens live on the Belgian territory. A little bit of tolerance and understanding would be welcome.' Another respondent specifically criticized Flemish politicians for their 'thirst for power and their lack of respect for minorities'.

This moralization of the conflict surrounding justice principles is then translated at the level of social stereotypes. Specifically, some of the central traits of the Flemish stereotypes about French speakers refer to a breach in reciprocity from a high status group. These traits, commonly found in surveys, are 'arrogant', 'contemptuous', 'haughty' or 'feeling superior' (Nuttin, 1976; Van der Linden and Licata, 2008; see also Heenen-Wolff et al., this issue). Thus, when the territorial aspect of the conflict is salient, the Francophone is seen as arrogant and contemptuous (in opposition to the simple, honest in-grouper), which explains French speakers' demand for linguistic rights by an inherent lack of respect. It is noteworthy, however, that this stereotype is anchored in a representation of the times when French speakers 'dominated' the region. Arrogance and contempt are typically associated with high-status groups (Fiske et al., 1999). In the present case, this high status does not reflect a material reality: on most objective indices (numerical size, financial power, income, gross national product per capita), French speakers constitute a lower-status group. Thus, one can only interpret these traits as a function of the frame of reference provided by a collective memory depicting French speakers as holding a higher status.

From the French speakers' perspective, the territorial conflict is interpreted according to another justice principle: using one's language in public settings is viewed as an individual right that should be respected. This is embodied in their adhesion to the personality principle (Mercy, 2008). By denying these rights, Flemings are perceived as violating basic moral values that we could characterize as a form of secular humanism. Thus, according to this interpretation, Flemings do not implement their own, legitimate interpretation of the use of language on the Flemish territory. Rather, they negate individuals' integrity by preventing French speakers from using their language. The individual-level justice endorsed by the Francophones is opposed to the group-level justice endorsed by the Flemings. The tension between these two forms of justice again results in a moral reading, which views disrespect for individuals as a form of 'racism' or 'nationalism' to the extent that it is grounded in collective justice principles. This explains why Flemings are characterized as 'racist' or 'intolerant' in surveys, compared to the 'open-minded' and 'tolerant' in-groupers (Klein and Licata, 2001; Leyens and Yzerbyt, 1992; Provost, 1998). Such labels are commonly attributed by stigmatized group members to powerful out-group (see, e.g. Crandall et al., 2000). In both cases, the in-group is perceived as threatened (having to adapt to the Francophone's use of French or being prevented from speaking French by the powerful Flemings). The greater virtue attributed to the in-group can be interpreted as a defensive response to this threat (cf. Yzerby et al., 2005).

Collective memories play an important role in this framework. First, it provides a temporal perspective on this territorial conflict (Liu and Hilton, 2005). Results of a recent comparative survey

with 1078 French-speaking and Dutch-speaking participants (Mesquita et al., 2010) showed that Flemings (particularly Flemish nationalists) tend to view the conflict as more ancient than French speakers. This suggests that the two groups view the conflict through a different time frame. From a Flemish point of view, the radicalization of the conflict in the 1960s could be seen as a legitimate response to French-speaking cultural and political domination. In contrast, for most French speakers, the linguistic issue became a reality only when the Flemish movement radicalized. Both groups therefore view themselves as victims (see also Heenen-Wolff et al., this issue): Flemings as past victims of arrogant Francophones; and Francophones as present victims of a dominant and nationalist Flanders. The feeling of victimization contributes to reinforce the positive moral status of each group (Bar-Tal et al., 2009).

Second, collective memories serve to anchor the current conflict by providing historical analogies that further highlight the legitimacy of the justice principles endorsed by the in-group. Such analogies are rhetorically effective to the extent that they provide a concrete image of the conflict, rendering it more objective. They operate by providing extreme historical examples of violation of these principles and by associating them with the more benign current disputes. The illegitimacy of the violation committed in the past can hardly be discussed and reflects the current standing of the out-group, which is therefore stigmatized.

To illustrate this analysis, we shall mention two examples of how collective memories have influenced the territorial/linguistic conflict. First, consider the figure of the First World War French-speaking military officer who gave orders to the Flemish soldiers in French. As a consequence, the soldiers were killed because they – allegedly – could not understand the orders. This image has been heavily used by the Flemish movement (see De Vos and Keymeulen, 1989 for an analysis of the historical accuracy of this myth; Slembrouck, 1995; see also, Beyen, this issue and Rosoux and van Ypersele, this issue). The more benign behavior of the French speakers residing in Flanders who request to be addressed in French by their administration can be interpreted in light of the First World War officer's behavior and thereby 'demonstrate' the persistence of an enduring contempt towards the Flemings and their language. This image, by providing an almost visual incarnation of the 'contemptuous Francophone', exerts a strong rhetorical and emotional impact.

The second example is the regular use by French speakers of the collaboration of Flemings during the First World War and the Second World War. For example, the Francophone political leader Olivier Maingain qualified the refusal of the Flemish government to nominate the French-speaking mayors in the municipalities with linguistic facilities as 'reminiscent of the Occupation' (Buxant, 2010). French speakers have tended to view themselves as resisting the German occupant, contrary to the 'treacherous' Flemings (Lagrou, 2000). Based on this historical comparison, the denial of French speakers' linguistic rights can be associated with Nazi collaborations, implicitly yielding a disturbing equation (Flemings = Nazis / French speakers = *Résistants*). Again, a relatively low-intensity conflict is anchored in an extreme comparison that depicts the out-group as violating basic individual rights. And it provides a concrete image that associates Flemings with the figure of the 'collaborator'.

The autonomy dimension

Different justice principles are also heralded by the two groups when the second dimension of the conflict – economic autonomy – is at stake. From a Flemish perspective, each group should rely on its own means to achieve its goals rather than depend on resources produced by the out-group. Hence, the concept of 'responsibilization' of the regions, which includes a separation of the income tax between the two regions, was put at the center of the crucial negotiations of 2010–11 to form a new federal government by all the Flemish parties. This logic reflects the Equity principle (Walster et al., 1978):

Each individual or group should be rewarded in accordance with its own contributions. This principle can be applied at an individual or group level. Again, the violation of this justice principle can be endowed with a moral value. Specific stereotypes embody adherence or violations of these values. Those who respect them are viewed as 'independent', 'autonomous', 'hard working', etc., whereas those who violate them are considered as 'lazy', 'dependent', 'profiteers', etc. These two poles reflect to a large extent the view Flemings hold of themselves and of Francophones, respectively (Leyens and Yzerbyt, 1992; Nuttin, 1976; Provost, 1998).

By contrast, French-speaking political representatives mainly rely on a need-based justice. They tend to argue that the more well off should help the less privileged. Note that justice is defined here at an individual rather than at a group level. For example, Elio Di Rupo, the leader of the *Parti Socialiste*, the largest French-speaking party, repeatedly talks about preserving 'interpersonal solidarity' among all Belgians (Deendooven, 2010). This contrasts with the Flemish rhetoric that emphasizes the illegitimacy of group-based 'transfers', thereby condemning a need-based justice (and transposing it at a group level). This contrast between equity and solidarity is also structured along a political right (equity) versus left (solidarity) dimension, which partly overlaps the linguistic distinction, Flanders being predominantly right wing and Wallonia, left wing. Again, violating the need-based justice principle can be interpreted in moral terms by the French speakers as reflecting 'selfishness' or 'nationalism', whereas the in-group is perceived as 'generous' and 'open' (Leyens and Yzerbyt, 1992). Francophones may stress these positive traits to compensate their negative image on the 'competence' dimension (cf. Yzerbyt et al., 2005).

Contrary to the stereotypes associated with the territorial conflict, those revolving around the autonomy dimension are consistent with the socio-structural models of stereotype content described above and reflect an opposition between the 'competent but cold' high-status group (here, the Flemings) and the 'incompetent but warm' low-status group (the Francophones). This second conflict is more recent and is to a large extent dependent on the reversal of the respective positions of the two groups since the Second World War. This means that the image of the successful Fleming vs. the lazy French speaker cannot be assimilated to representations of their ancestors in a remote past. Rather, relatively recent representations are used. For example, following financial scandals in the 2000s, the image of the corrupted French-speaking politician who squanders public money (see, e.g. Sinardet et al., 2004) can be easily incorporated into the Flemish representation of this aspect of the conflict. This image was often used by Flemings who participated in the Gordel (cf. above) for political reasons (Van der Linden and Licata, 2009). Another example is the image used by the Flemish far-right party 'Vlaams Belang' suggesting that, because of the financial transfers between Flanders and Wallonia, it is like every Flemish family offered a small size car every year to every Walloon family. This image provides a vivid illustration of the claim that the group-based equity is violated.

However, collective memories play an important role in how autonomy is perceived as well, although its role may be qualitatively different from that played by the territorial dimension. With respect to autonomy, collective memories seem to operate by contrast rather than by assimilation: The humiliated, poor and dependent Fleming of the past is contrasted with the well-off, self-reliant, and successful Fleming of today. Thus, the trajectory from the upper row of Table 1, which describes an ancient conflict, to the lower row traces a narrative: It describes the History of Flanders as liberation from Francophone domination leading to economic prosperity and autonomy. As noted by Wertsch (2002), such narratives are endowed with a moralizing impulse: The 'good' Flemings find redemption by escaping the domination of the French speakers. In this tale, the quest for autonomy, which is typical of nationalist discourse (Gellner, 1983), is further legitimized.

For the French speakers, collective memories are also used to legitimize the application of a need-based justice. In order to do so, they can invoke the rich past of Wallonia. Thus, using a temporal

comparison, some French speakers argue that, when Flemings were less well off, the French speakers supported them, which made their current economic development possible. For example, a participant declared 'Now that wealth has moved to the North, they [the Flemings] want more autonomy. They forget that in the 19th century the situation was reversed' (Van der Linden and Licata, 2008). In this view, Flemings who aspire to a greater autonomy violate a principle of temporal reciprocity. Thus, the equity principle ('you should treat us like we treated you') is applied diachronically. We can also consider this contrast with the past as part of a moral narrative. This narrative tells the story of an inherently generous French speaker, who is now faced with the ingratitude of those he helped in the past.

This analysis highlights how groups tend to utilize representations of the past that portray them in a favorable light, as suggested by Licata et al. (2007). This is specifically done by using collective memories to endow the group with moral virtues that differentiate it from the out-group (a common strategy: Leach et al., 2007; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). But people do not blindly seek to define their group positively. They use moral dimensions that are relevant to specific and salient dimensions of the conflict. Whichever the dimension that is salient, it is also important to consider the level of categorization (Turner et al., 1987) used by both groups to ground the application of their claims in relation to their collective memories. As we have suggested, Flemings rely mainly on principles defined at the group level, i.e. group-based equity on the one hand and group-based equality (or reciprocity) on the other, whereas the French speakers seem to emphasize individual-level justice, both in terms of language rights and interpersonal solidarity. Importantly, however, this form of individual justice implicitly functions against the backdrop of the super-ordinate national group, Belgians. French speakers who want to be addressed in French in the Flemish periphery of Brussels do so on the grounds that French is an official language of Belgium. Similarly, the justice of needs and interpersonal solidarity demanded by the French speakers presupposes that the framework for this solidarity will be Belgium: rich Belgians should help poor Belgians, regardless of their language. As Flemings tend to identify more with their linguistic community, and less with Belgium than French speakers (Billiet et al., 2003), the use of justice principles grounded in different levels of categorization comes as no surprise. Thus, the application of justice principles goes hand in hand with specific identities. Indeed, in a study conducted with former students at the University of Louvain (Mercy, 2008) regarding the crisis that led to its splitting (the most vivid illustration of the territorial conflict), we found, as expected, that Dutch speakers were more attached to the territoriality principle while French speakers favored the personality principle. However, the difference in the endorsement of the two principles among the French speakers and the Dutch speakers depended upon the strength of their identification with Belgium. The more the participants were committed to Belgium, the less extreme were their beliefs in linguistic rights.

Furthermore, the function of collective memories should not only be considered in relation to the present, i.e. as ad hoc interpretational devices that help make sense of the current conflict and/or boost self-esteem by presenting the in-group in a favorable light. These memories should also be understood in relation to the groups' aspirations for the future and their political projects (Klein et al., 2007; Reicher and Hopkins, 2001). For the Flemings, for example, the image of the unilingual officer may be used to justify the aspiration to a more autonomous, or independent, Flanders.

Conclusion

In this article, we have sought to outline a social psychological interpretation of the current conflict between linguistic groups in Belgium. Our model (see Figure 2) can be summarized as follows: the realistic aspects of intergroup relations (territory, finances ...) are based on a competition over specific

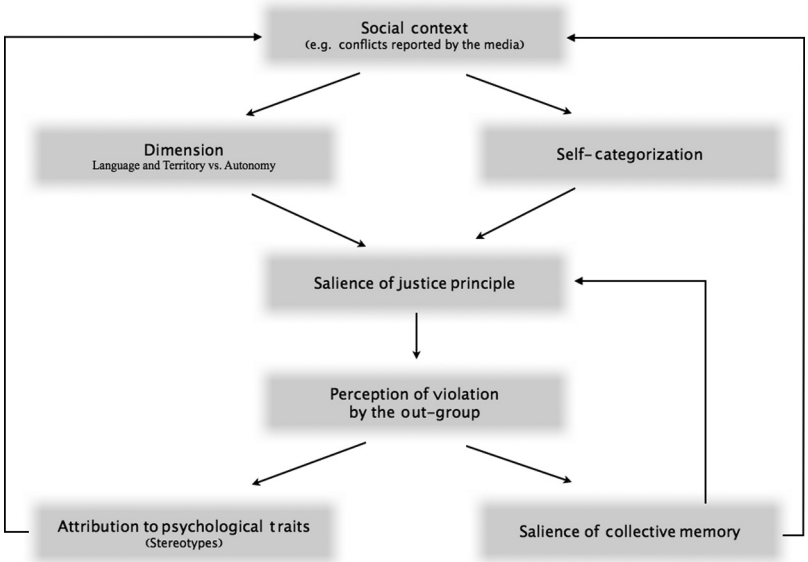


Figure 2. Influence of conflict on salience of social stereotypes and collective memory

material and symbolic (e.g. language) and procedural (e.g. power) resources. Each group believes that the allocation of these resources should follow different *justice principles*. In the present case, we argue that two *dimensions* of the conflict play critical roles in the mutual representations of the two groups as well as their representations of the history of their relations: linguistic policy in the territory, and financial and political autonomy vs. solidarity. These dimensions of the conflict can be made salient depending upon the *social context* (e.g. the media). The *violation* of these principles is endowed with a moral value. This context also affects the level of *social categorization* that is salient at a point in time (e.g. self-categorizing as linguistic group members or as nationals). When linguistic identity is salient, the in-group is viewed as possessing personality traits that reflect respect for these moral values whereas the out-group is attributed personality traits diagnostic of their violation (*attribution of psychological traits*). *Collective memories* that exemplify these violations of justice principles are also made salient, which validate these stereotypes by presenting them as anchored in the past and, in turn, legitimizes the justice principle at stake. In turn, these collective memories and stereotypes influence the social context by feeding the current collective understandings and projects of both groups.

This model is very general and simplifies a complex reality. It is based on some general trends commonly found in political discourses from both sides of the linguistic border. However, it would be both unfair and false to reduce the representations and opinions of all group members to those trends. Indeed, many Flemings have publicly disagreed with the nationalist stance of some of their politicians, and criticism towards French-speaking politicians' attitudes towards the Flemings is not rare either among the French speakers. Thus, the level of consensus within each community, especially along political (e.g. conservative vs. liberal) and regional (e.g. Brussels vs. Wallonia) lines should not be overestimated.

Furthermore, although this model is theoretically grounded, it remains tentative. Empirical research is needed to substantiate it. For example, a systematic study of political arguments would be useful to ascertain that different justice principles are evoked as a function of group membership and of the issue at stake (language or economic autonomy). Experimental studies should also examine whether rendering one justice principle salient facilitates access to the collective memories used to legitimize

it, and to the corresponding stereotypes. Furthermore, the effects of identification at the linguistic group or at the national group level on collective memories, stereotypes and intergroup attitudes should be investigated.

Of special interest, in our view, is the double role played by collective memories. Particular historical events or figures are made salient as a function of the current intergroup situation, i.e. the justice principles that are at stake. In that sense, collective memories are influenced by the present. However, in turn, collective memories are drawn upon to legitimize those justice principles in the present, and to justify moral judgments and stereotypical traits ascribed to the out-group. Thus, the influence also goes from collective memories to present ideological positions. This double movement has been observed in other contexts. For instance, Schuman and Rodgers (2004) showed that, following the 9/11 attacks, American participants listed, as significant national or world events of the last 70 years, events that all involved war or an attack against an American institution. Further, Kruglanski et al. (2007) proposed that drawing analogies between the 9/11 attacks and the Munich agreement of 1938 or to Pearl Harbor led to an understanding of the situation through the prism of a war metaphor, which in turn legitimized attacks on Afghanistan, then Iraq. In line with our description of the Belgian conflict, this example suggests that present situations influence the choice and interpretation of particular memories, which, in turn, are used to make sense of the present situation and to tailor people's attitudes and behaviors. Collective memories therefore tend to bolster intergroup conflicts to the extent that these memories are often made salient *by* the intergroup conflict. Hence, contemporary concerns, attitudes, values and principles are projected onto past events and historical figures. This confers a concrete reality to them and thus conveys the illusion that current states of mind or ideological choices are based on objective historical facts. Finally, these past events or figures, which actually objectify present concerns, can then serve to make sense of the present situation and inform collective actions aimed at changing the social context.

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Notes

1. The term 'Flemings' is used interchangeably with the term 'Dutch' speakers, although a minority of Flemings define themselves as French-speaking, whereas French speakers include Walloons as well as inhabitants of Brussels and its surroundings who generally do not consider themselves as Walloons (Deprez et al., 1996–97).
2. Actually, two parallel divisions organize the Belgian institutions: three 'regions' (Flanders, Brussels, Wallonia) are defined on a territorial basis and deal mainly with economic policy whereas three 'communities' (Dutch speakers, French speakers, German speakers) defined on a linguistic basis deal with cultural and educational policies. Both the French- and the Dutch-speaking communities are active in Brussels.

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