EMPIRICAL RESULTS ON RELIGIOUS PRAXIS
AND DE-INSTITUTIONALIZED RELIGION
ARE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS RELEVANT IN DAILY LIFE?

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The concept of practice is used in different meanings and contexts. It can denote socially defined actions, which serve specific ends and require expertises. Examples are medical practice, business practice or juridical practice. However, practice can also denote the whole activity of an individual, his or her daily “practice of life”. In considering religious practice, we should keep in mind both meanings of practice. First, the religious character of practice depends on the fulfilment of specific socially defined actions, for instance church attendance or personal prayer. Second, the religious character of practice depends on the relevance of religious contents for the subjective “construction” of reality, including processes of perception, of evaluation, and of experience. The more these processes are mediated by religious concepts and beliefs, the more daily “practise of life” can be characterized as religious. The most extreme case is that all personal constructions of reality are affected by religious constructs. Saints, like Mother Theresa, may be examples of such cases.

The article presented is concerned with the second meaning of religious practice. The focus of interest is on the discussion of a measurement method for the investigation of the relevance of religious beliefs in daily life. It discusses three main topics:

1. First, a psychological model of religiosity will be sketched. It is inspired by the “Psychology of Personal Constructs” by George Kelly (1955). The core of the model is the distinction between centrality and content of religiosity (Huber, 2003). The central thesis proposes that the practical relevance of religious beliefs depends on the position of the religious construct-system within the hierarchy of all construct-systems of a specific personality. Only if the religious construct-system is situated in a central position, religious beliefs can be powerful enough to influence subjective experience and behavior.

2. Second, the measurement of the centrality of the religious construct-system is discussed, referring to the five core-dimensions of religiosity as defined by Glock and Stark (1968). It is first argued