



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

The Social Science Journal

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/soscij



People notice and use an applicant's religion in job suitability evaluations

Debbie Van Camp^{a,*}, Lloyd R. Sloan^b, Amanda ElBassiouny^c

^a Department of Psychology, Trinity Washington University, 125 Michigan Ave NE, Washington, DC 20017, USA

^b Howard University, Department of Psychology, 525 Bryant Street NW, Washington, DC 20059, USA

^c Spring Hill College, Department of Psychology, 4000 Dauphin St., Mobile, AL 36608, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 May 2014

Received in revised form 8 January 2016

Accepted 3 February 2016

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Religion, Bias, Intergroup relations
Workplace discrimination

ABSTRACT

Social identity theory suggests that people use social categories such as race and gender as the basis of interpersonal judgments and demonstrate biases favoring their ingroups, and that this discrimination against out-groups includes hiring and other personnel decisions. This research examines whether, in the context of other information, participants will use a person's religion and show typical intergroup biases often seen between racial groups. One hundred and seventy-five Black Christian participants viewed fictional job applicants of different religions (Christian/Muslim/atheist) and races (Black/White). Thirty-two percent of participants explicitly reported using the applicant's religion (but seldom reported using their race) as a source of evaluation and showed a consistent preference for Christian (ingroup) over Muslim and atheist (outgroup) applicants. In contrast, those who did not acknowledge using religion showed some racial ingroup bias but none for religion. This research has implications for workplace discrimination, hiring practices, and racial and religious group relations.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of Western Social Science Association.

1. Introduction

When we meet other people, we are often faced with a barrage of information about that person, some of it important and relevant to us and the impression that we form of them, but much of it not. Whether we wish it or not, we often allow irrelevant information, such as a person's gender, race, weight, clothing, and so forth, to impact our judgments of them. Workplace managers are unlikely to be immune to this bias. This kind of automatic processing of others has developed as a pervasive human tendency due to its processing efficiency benefits, which for the limited

human brain outweigh its accuracy costs (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). However, these accuracy costs have practical consequences that can be harmful for the person judged, and for interpersonal relationships. When a human resources department or manager evaluates an applicant for a job, the application materials includes a variety of information about that person. Much of this information is relevant to their decision, such as the candidate's experience and education; however, much of this information is not relevant, for example the candidate's age, gender, race, and so forth. As managers deal with increasingly diverse application pools and workplaces, these factors may be particularly salient. This research examines what – among multiple sources of information – people say that they use as the basis of their evaluations, in particular whether people notice the religion of others, and if so whether they show bias toward their own religious group.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 202 884 9247; fax: +1 202 884 9229.
E-mail addresses: vancampd@trinitydc.edu (D. Van Camp),
lsloan@howard.edu (L.R. Sloan), amandae19@gmail.com (A. ElBassiouny).

1.1. Categorization of others

One of the most enduring findings of social psychology is that we have an almost inevitable tendency to categorize each other, and that these categorizations have meaningful consequences for our interpersonal judgments, attitudes, and behaviors (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1981). The criteria we use to categorize others and ourselves can include relatively minimal or superficial groupings such as the color of an assigned tag or other experimenter-created groupings, even the simple toss of a coin (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989; Tajfel, 1970). However, more typically they correspond to social identities such as gender and race (Fiske, 1998; Kinzler, Shutts, & Correll, 2010; Messick & Mackie, 1989; Stangor, Lynch, Duan, & Glass, 1992). The consequences of categorization include the pattern of ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation, termed intergroup bias (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). Of particular concern are the subsequent group processes of prejudice and discrimination, which impact both intergroup and interpersonal relations (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Trawalter, 2005) and have wide-reaching practical consequences, including discriminatory hiring and workplace practices (e.g., Blommaert, van Tubergen, & Coenders, 2012; Foschi, 2000; Levin, Rouwenhorst, & Trisko, 2005; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Historically, much of the intergroup process work has focused on the categories of race and gender (Frable, 1997; Howard, 2000; Kinzler et al., 2010). Similarly, the literature concerning workplace bias has also traditionally focused on race/ethnicity (Blommaert et al., 2012; Foschi, 2000) and gender (Levin et al., 2005; Foschi, 2000; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

1.2. The threat of religious bias

There can be little doubt that religion is also a significant category for many Americans and we certainly might consider it among the categories that matter to people. Indeed, for many, religion is as important, if not more important, than their other social categories, including ethnicity (Brewer & Pierce, 2005). Religious identity has much in common with these other social identities (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010) and so it seems likely that it will function similarly to other key social groupings in terms of interpersonal categorization and biased evaluative judgments of outgroup members. However, in many ways religion is unique. Indeed, religious identity may be important to individuals precisely because of its unique content (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). In particular, religion is distinct because while it is often social in its practice, religion is grounded in an internal belief system. Similarly, unlike categories such as gender and race, religion has a moral framework that guides its members. This moral content has the potential to make religious identity quite different from other social identities and in particular calls into question whether precisely the same sorts of group biases will occur in interpersonal judgments based on religion. Most major world religions have some version of the Golden Rule or ethic of reciprocity (Kidder, 2003) represented in Christianity by the teaching “love thy neighbor”. This might suggest

that, even if we notice another’s religion, the very act of doing so makes our own religion salient and thus reminds us that we should be tolerant, accepting, and loving, and so discourage bias. On the other hand, classic research conducted by Allport (Allport, 1966; Allport & Ross, 1967) has linked extrinsic religiosity (religiosity as a means to an end, e.g., social status, rather than for its own sake) to racial prejudice. Therefore, the link between religion and prejudice generally remains somewhat unclear.

Until fairly recently, religion has been considered primarily for its role as either a protective or risk factor for prejudice toward racial outgroups, rather than as a dimension of categorization and prejudice in itself. However, there is increasing evidence to suggest that patterns of religious intergroup bias might be quite similar to other kinds of intergroup bias and that we will prefer our ingroup over outgroup members. Most notably, Christians in America have demonstrated a preference for their religious ingroup over a number of religious outgroups, including atheists (Jackson & Hunsberger, 1999; Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2012; Ysseldyk, Haslam, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011). This is in keeping with other evidence concerning attitudes toward atheists, including that they are mistrusted (Locke, 1689/2009; Norenzayan, 2010) and a socially acceptable target for negative attitudes and prejudice (Bioesch, Forbes, & Adams-Curtis, 2004). Likewise, Christian Americans have demonstrated biased evaluations of Muslims (Johnson et al., 2012; Ysseldyk et al., 2011). Researchers also report correlations between religiosity and prejudice toward a value-violating outgroup, such as gay men, Muslims, and atheists (Johnson et al., 2012).

1.3. Religious bias in the workplace

The research demonstrating religious intergroup bias has a number of drawbacks that may limit our ability to apply the findings to real world situations, such as the workplace. First, researchers typically ask participants in these studies to evaluate named social groups, for example “how warm/cold do you feel about Christians.” However, research has suggested that how we react to anonymous social groups and to an individual exemplar of such groups is frequently different (Crocker & Weber, 1983; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1981). Therefore, it is important to extend the research suggesting bias toward religious groups by assessing peoples’ judgments of individual members of different religions. This more individual evaluation has more relevance for the kinds of judgments managers and those in charge of personnel decisions might make.

Second, most of these studies utilized feeling thermometers and other general indices, rather than investigating more applied instances of bias. For example, research has not adequately investigated whether the influence of an individual’s religion extends beyond any generic feelings toward that person, or beyond judgments of them that might be considered relevant to their religious grouping (e.g., their devoutness, kindness, etc.), to include judgments of their seemingly unrelated abilities (e.g., their suitability for a job). Research suggests that social perceivers are often willing to use information about someone’s social category membership even when it is

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4761917>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4761917>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)