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Suppression and justification processes to reduce in-group bias in a multiculturalism diversity context



La suppression et la justification comme processus de réduction du biais pro-endogroupe dans un contexte de diversité multiculturaliste

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. – This study investigates the impact of an organisational multiculturalism perspective of diversity on in-group bias towards people of foreign origin.

Objective. – We hypothesise that organisational multiculturalism constitutes a norm which creates a positive context for intergroup relations. We expect that when workers perceive that their organisation recognises group differences, their own values are influenced, namely egalitarian values and perceived value violation. The value-related mediators are conceptualised in the frame of justification-suppression model (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) respectively as suppression and justification.

Method. – Data were collected from a sample of 402 workers who completed an anonymous questionnaire.

Results. – Based on structural equation modelling, results show that the perception of organisational multiculturalism is negatively and indirectly related to in-group bias through both suppression and justification processes.

Conclusion. – This study highlights that the perception of the normative context of an organisation is related to workers' attitudes. The results are discussed consistent with the literature on diversity.

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R É S U M É

Introduction. – Cette étude examine l'influence d'une perspective organisationnelle multiculturaliste de la diversité sur le biais pro-endogroupe des travailleurs à l'égard des personnes d'origine étrangère.

Objectif. – Nous faisons l'hypothèse que le multiculturalisme organisationnel constitue une norme dans les organisations qui crée un environnement positif pour les relations intergroupes. Plus particulièrement, nous nous attendons à ce que, lorsque les travailleurs perçoivent que leur organisation reconnaît les différences entre groupes, leurs propres valeurs, en particulier celles qui sont égalitaires et celles qui concernent la violation des valeurs, sont influencées. Ces deux processus explicatifs ont été conceptualisés dans le cadre du modèle justification-suppression (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), respectivement comme suppression et justification.

Méthode. – Les données ont été récoltées auprès d'un échantillon de 402 travailleurs qui ont complété un questionnaire anonyme.

Résultats. – Les données ont été traitées à l'aide de la méthode d'équations structurales. Les résultats indiquent que la perception de multiculturalisme organisationnel est négativement liée au biais pro-endogroupe et que cette relation est médiée par les processus de suppression et de justification.

Conclusion. – Cette étude met en évidence que la perception du contexte normatif de leur organisation est liée aux attitudes des travailleurs. Les résultats sont discutés à la lumière de la littérature sur la diversité.

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1. Introduction

For the past half century, Europe has experienced the immigration of millions of people (e.g., Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008), resulting in the growth of ethnic minorities in the workforce (Lemaitre, 2008). In 2006, 10.5% of the European workforce was comprised of people of foreign origin (Lemaitre, 2008). This situation gives rise to the question regarding the integration of immigrant workers in the labour market. In that regard, evidence of discrimination against these workers exists (e.g., Dipboye & Colella, 2005; Eurobaromètre, 2007; Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006; Triana, Garcia, & Colella, 2010). Discrimination refers to the “inappropriate treatment of individuals because of their group membership” (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010, p. 1085). In particular, compared to national workers, people of foreign origin are generally less often hired, promoted, or remunerated (e.g., ILO, 2007), and they are more often subjected to harassment (Goldman et al., 2006). To prevent these inequalities, non-discrimination legislation was adopted in the nineties at both international and national levels to encourage the development of diversity values and the implementation of diversity policies in the workplace. However, little is known regarding how organisations can decrease discrimination against minority groups, and more generally, reduce in-group bias. To address this gap in the literature, the present study investigates the role of the perception of organisational multiculturalism on psychosocial processes, a perception that can potentially be related to in-group bias in an organisational context. We expect that by decreasing the in-group bias of majority group workers, organisations will also reduce discrimination in the workplace.

2. Diversity perspectives applied to organisational settings

Diversity perspectives, which have been developed in the framework of acculturation theories within the intergroup literature (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995), initially referred to individual ideas and visions regarding “how groups should include and accommodate one another” (Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011, p. 338). Two perspectives have been frequently contrasted, namely, colour-blindness and multiculturalism (e.g., Gutierrez & Unzueta, 2010; Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). Their basic difference is that while the colour-blindness ignores group differences, multiculturalism values them (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010).

Some studies, designed to investigate in-group bias reduction and acceptance of minority groups (van der Noll, Poppe, & Verkuyten, 2010), have specifically focused on the multiculturalism perspective. The multiculturalism perspective considers that prejudice develops because of a lack of knowledge of other groups (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Sleeter, 1991). Consequently, it encourages taking into account, approving of and valuing group differences (Gutierrez & Unzueta, 2010; Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Ryan, Casas, & Thompson, 2010; Takaki, 1993; van der Noll et al., 2010). In this respect, individual endorsement of multiculturalism by a majority group is negatively associated with evaluative bias, support for social dominant orientation, conservatism (Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006), stereotypes (perceived variability), and in-group bias (Ryan et al., 2010). For example, the more Dutch adolescents endorsed multiculturalism, the more they assessed Muslim Turkish people positively (Verkuyten, 2005) and the more politically tolerant they were towards Muslims (van der Noll et al., 2010).

Experimental and field studies have frequently analysed the effects of diversity perspectives at an individual level (i.e., the personal opinion or preferences of individuals, e.g., Rattan & Ambady,

2013; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Verkuyten, 2005). While several scholars suggested the implementation of multiculturalism in the workplace (e.g., Bond & Haynes, 2014; Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008; Rattan & Ambady, 2013), to our knowledge, there are few, if any, studies that have investigated organisational multiculturalism and its underlying processes. There are at least two reasons, however, to investigate such a phenomenon. First, several scholars suggest distinguishing different domains of people’s lives with respect to acculturation strategies. One of these distinctions is between the public domain, such as workplaces, and the private domain (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003; Berry, 1997). The preference of the individual varies depending on the domain, which justifies the relevance for studying multiculturalism at the organisational level. Second, multiculturalism is a norm that contributes to an ideological context of attenuating hierarchies (De Oliveira, Dambrun, & Guimond, 2008; Levin et al., 2012). In that regard, Guimond et al. (2013) have found that the perceived multiculturalism norm in a country (i.e., diversity policy considered as an important element of socio-political context) is related to prejudice that extends beyond the effect of the individual endorsement of multiculturalism. Consistent with the Guimond et al. (2013) study, we suggest that organisational multiculturalism also shapes the organisational normative context.

Understanding the relationship between organisational perspective and in-group bias is of a critical importance. Three indications suggest that this relationship, which is similar to the relationship between in-group bias and individual endorsement of multiculturalism, is negative. First, some scholars suggest that organisational multiculturalism as a normative context promotes the creation of a positive climate of diversity that successfully reduces in-group bias (e.g., Bodenhausen, Todd, & Richeson, 2009; Plaut et al., 2009). Second, organisational multiculturalism has been conceptualised as being close to the ‘integration and learning’ organisational perspective proposed by Ely and Thomas (2001) (Iweins, Desmette, Yzerbyt, & Stinglhamber, 2013). This perspective states that the recognition and valorisation of diverse members provide learning opportunities that serve as a means to achieve the benefits of diversity, such as increased productivity or decreased discrimination. This is also supported by other scholars (e.g. Bond, 2007; Bond & Haynes, 2014; Cox, 1991, 1993; Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; Kochan et al., 2003; Shen, Chanda, D’Netto, & Monga, 2009). The social ecological framework of workplace diversity suggests that a primary factor behind diversity as an organisational asset is the extent to which the organisation values diversity. Third, recent work highlights the negative relationship between the perception of a multiculturalism norm with respect to individual prejudice (Guimond et al., 2013).

Beyond organisational multiculturalism, it is the perception of the normative context that needs to be the focus of our attention. Two workers within the same context could have different perceptions of their normative context as their attitudes are expected to be better predicted by their perception of the realities than by the realities themselves (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Stinglhamber, Bentein, & Vandenberghe, 2002). Therefore, beyond the establishment of a management that values differences in organisations, workers’ perceptions of organisational multiculturalism are expected to influence their own in-group bias. One study investigates, specifically, the perception of organisational multiculturalism, but it focuses on older workers. Its results indicate that the perception of a multi-age perspective is negatively related to stereotypes, negative attitudes, and intentions to discriminate towards older workers (Iweins et al., 2013).

In view of the above discussion, we claim that organisational multiculturalism and its perception must be addressed. In the following section, we question the underlying processes.

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