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



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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.

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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.

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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

not relevant to the task at hand (Fein & Spencer, 1997; Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2002). For example, Fein and Spencer (1997) found that even when provided with relevant information about personality, life circumstances, or qualifications relevant to a job, participants allowed seemingly irrelevant social category information to influence substantially their judgments of the target's personality and suitability for a job. Similarly, when we encounter a person who belongs to a different religious group than our own, we are exposed to a variety of other information about their personality and background in addition to their religion, raising the possibility that religion might not be noticed. Therefore, the current research investigates whether, in the context of a variety of other information about the person, people notice the religion of others, and whether they use this categorization information when making evaluative judgments about the persons suitability for a job.

1.4. Religion versus race

Our focus is on religion and on whether people notice a target's religion in the context of other information. However, race is included in this study as a comparative evaluative dimension, which allows us to assess both religion and race as potential dimensions of bias in hiring decisions. Therefore, we recruited Black Christians as our participants. As members of a racial minority, these participants have likely experienced prejudice and discrimination and so might be less likely to discriminate against others. However, in addition to being a racial minority, these participants are members of the religious majority, and so discrimination of the minority by the majority might be expected. In addition, by considering the intergroup attitudes of Black participants, we differ from much of the prejudice and discrimination research that has focused on the biased evaluations of racial minority group members by majority group members. This is important because to understand the complexities of intergroup prejudice we need to consider all perspectives (Shelton, 2000). Studies that have treated Blacks as active perceivers rather than passive targets typically find the same ingroup biases observed in majority participants (Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, & Monteith, 2003; Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, & Kraus, 1995; Livingston, 2002) and this has included prejudiced interview and hiring decisions (O'Leary, Durham, Weathington, Cothran, & Cunningham, 2009). Therefore, although race is not the primary focus of the current study, our results nonetheless contribute to the body of research which examines the racial attitudes of Black participants, and more importantly does so with an applied focus.

1.5. Current research aims

This study examines whether, in the context of the variety of information presented on a job application, evaluators will notice and use the applicant's religion in their judgment. Furthermore, if these participants do use information about the applicant's religion, then will their judgments show the typical negative biases seen in other intergroup contexts? That is, will they prefer religious

ingroup members over outgroup members? Therefore, this research adds to the literature that examines religious intergroup bias but more crucially assesses whether such bias is relevant to workplace decisions.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

One hundred and seventy-five Black Christian undergraduates from a historically black university participated in return for partial course credit; 86.3% self-identified as African American, 6.3% as African, and 7.4% were Caribbean. Seventy-six percent were female and 91% were 18–21 years old with all but one person in the remaining 9% aged 22–29. We recruited participants from an Introduction to Psychology pool and they voluntarily signed up to be part of this study. A preamble described the study and its procedures and we inferred participants' informed consent from their subsequent decision to participate in the study.

2.2. Design and procedure

Upon arrival at the research laboratory, experimenters randomly assigned the participants to a computer (visually isolated from other participants) which then presented them with all materials and instructions using Medialab software (Jarvis, 2006). Participants viewed the job application of a fictional person who had applied for the position of senior administrative assistant at a hypothetical organization. The applicant varied on both religion and race resulting in a 3 (applicant religion: Christian/Muslim/atheist) × 2 (applicant race: Black/White) between-subjects design. We chose Muslims and atheists as the religious outgroups to be consistent with previous literature. Participants then rated the target individual on their suitability for the job and a variety of job relevant personality traits. To investigate what information participants used in their judgments – and/or what they were willing to admit that they used – participants were asked to list things they had thought about when assessing the applicant's job suitability. Finally, participants completed demographic measures.

2.3. Materials

2.3.1. The target of evaluation: Job applicant

All participants viewed a generic application of a female job applicant named Aisha, with information suggesting that her work experience and academic record made her well suited to the position. The applications varied only on the applicant's race and religion. We manipulated Aisha's religion by varying her photo. In the Muslim condition, she was pictured wearing a hijab, and in the Christian and atheist condition she was pictured without a hijab. In addition, the application indicated a few of her religiously affiliated personal activities. Most crucially, at the end of the application a demographic section explicitly listed Aisha's religion as Muslim, Christian, or atheist. We manipulated the applicant's racial group by varying her photo (Black/White) and the demographic section explicitly stated her racial group.

Similar studies have used basic demographic information to vary the applicant's ethnicity (e.g., Blommaert et al., 2012).

2.3.2. Basis of evaluations

Participants listed three things about Aisha that they used as information when making the judgments about her suitability for the job. Two of the authors – an assistant professor and a graduate student, both familiar with religious identity literature – coded the participants' responses for explicit mentions of religion, race, or relevant information such as previous work experience and education. Initial inter-coder reliability was high for all categories: religion $\kappa = .93$, race $\kappa = 1.00$, and relevant information $\kappa = .90$. Subsequent discussion resolved all differences until coder agreement was 100%.

2.3.3. Trait ratings

Participants rated Aisha along five work-specific positive traits: intelligent, ambitious, motivated, trustworthy, and creative ($\alpha = .84$).

2.3.4. Suitability rating

Participants rated, on a 7-point scale from 1 (*very much disagree*) to 7 (*very much agree*), the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: "I would recommend this candidate for the position" and "Overall I liked this candidate" ($\alpha = .84$).

2.3.5. Demographics

Participants responded to demographic questions such as gender, age, parental income, class standing, religion, and ethnicity. In addition, participants indicated the extent to which they identified with their ethnic group and religious group both from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*completely*).

3. Results

3.1. Basis of evaluations

When asked to list the things that they thought about when evaluating Aisha's suitability for the job, 83% of participants reported that they used the relevant information provided in the job application, such as Aisha's previous work experience and education. Aisha's religion had no impact upon whether or not relevant information was reportedly used as the basis of their decision $\chi^2(2) = .02$, $p = .99$, $\Phi_c = .01$.

Thirty-two percent of participants explicitly mentioned Aisha's religion. A chi-square test revealed that whether or not participants mentioned religion was related to Aisha's religion, $\chi^2(2) = 8.04$, $p = .02$, $\Phi_c = .21$. In the Christian and atheist conditions, significantly fewer participants reported using religion as a basis of their evaluation of Aisha than did not report using religion (Christians: 21 vs. 53, atheists: 8 vs. 33). In the Muslim condition however, the numbers of participants mentioning religion or not was comparable (33 vs. 27). The degree of the participant's own religious identification was not different for those who explicitly mentioned or did not mention Aisha's religion as a basis of their suitability evaluation, $t(173) = .68$, $p = .50$,

$d = .11$. Particularly notable, on the other hand, is that only 1% of participants mentioned Aisha's race as something they considered when evaluating her suitability for a job.

We asked participants to list three things that they thought about when evaluating Aisha, which allows for the possibility that they mentioned multiple characteristics. Indeed, of the participants who said they used Aisha's previous experience and education many also said they used Aisha's religion or race as basis of their evaluation—29% of those who mentioned relevant information also mentioned race, or more typically, religion. Perhaps more concerning, are the 8% of the total sample who mention religion but make no mention of Aisha's experience or education.

These initial results seem to suggest that although participants reported that they used relevant information in their evaluative judgments of Aisha's job suitability, many – regardless of the strength of their own religious identity – also reported that they used the irrelevant information of Aisha's religion, and some even used this instead. In striking contrast, very few participants mentioned using Aisha's race. This is more notable when we consider the participants' self-reported religious and ethnic identification. On a scale of 1–6 participants rated their own religious group identification as moderate ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.28$) but their ethnic group identification significantly higher ($M = 5.15$, $SD = .99$), $t(175) = 7.06$, $p = .001$, $d = -.54$. This suggests that the participants' ethnicity/race is more central and salient to them than their religion, and yet they explicitly report the use of religion far more than race when judging others.

3.2. Differences in judgments

Participants noticing or being willing to say that they used the applicant's religion may not be very problematic unless this resulted in differential judgments of applicants from different religious groups. Therefore, we examined job suitability and job-relevant trait ratings made by those participants who said that they used Aisha's religion in their evaluations, that is those participants who are perhaps more conscious of others' religion. We expected that any differences in evaluations across the applicant's religion (Christian/Muslim/atheist) would reflect typical intergroup biases, including ingroup favoritism, and that such differences would be less strong for participants who did not state they used Aisha's religion as information.

Fifty-six participants explicitly mentioned Aisha's religion when asked what information they used to assess her suitability for the job. The data for these participants – who we will call the religiously conscious participants – were subjected to a series of 3 (applicant religion: Christian/Muslim/atheist) \times 2 (applicant race: Black/White) ANOVAs. There was a significant main effect of Aisha's religion for the suitability ratings, $F(2, 50) = 3.94$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .14$, and trait ratings $F(2, 50) = 5.98$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .19$ ¹. Post-hoc analyses showed that participants rated

¹ These main effects are replicated in an analysis controlling for age, parental income (as a measure of SES), gender and ethnic identity. There was a significant main effect of Aisha's religion for trait ratings $F(2, 42) = 5.84$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .22$ and a marginal main effect for the

Table 1
Means and standard deviations for religiously conscious participants trait and suitability ratings of Christian/Muslim/atheist Applicants.

	Christian		Muslim		atheist	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Work-specific positive traits	5.56 ^a	.76	4.78 ^b	.62	4.83 ^b	1.23
Suitability for job	6.33 ^a	.48	5.79 ^b	.90	5.52 ^b	.90

Note: In all cases higher numbers mean higher endorsements of the item. All rating used a 7-point scale. Means which do not share a superscript are significantly different from one another at $p < .05$ or better.

Christian Aisha as most suitable and higher on work-specific positive traits (see Table 1 for means). When we repeated this analysis for those participants who did not indicate using religious information about the applicant in their judgments, there was no significant effect for religion. This supports the interpretation that information about a person's religion may influence the judgments of those who both notice and say that they are willing to use religion more heavily than on those who do not notice or do not state that they use religion as a basis of their evaluation.

3.3. The impact of applicant's race

The results thus far strongly suggest the importance of an applicant's religion for participants when making judgments about their suitability for a job, at least among the participants who stated that they use this information. On the other hand, only a small minority of participants stated that they used Aisha's race in their evaluations. It is of course possible that participants are simply unwilling to admit to using race as a source of information but nonetheless show bias toward their racial ingroup. To test this we examined the impact of the race and religion on evaluations for the remaining participants who did not explicitly mention religion. We expected that these participants – who are perhaps less attuned to religion – might show the typical robust racial group bias. One hundred and nineteen participants did not mention religion when asked what information they used in assessing Aisha's suitability for the job. Data from these participants showed a main effect of race for the ratings of suitability, $F(1, 113) = 6.19, p = .01, \eta^2 = .05$, with higher ratings for Black Aisha ($M = 5.96, SD = .81$) than White Aisha ($M = 5.45, SD = 1.28$)².

4. Discussion

This research investigated whether Black Christian participants would notice and use information about another person's religion when forming impressions and making judgments of their suitability for a job. The data provide evidence that many participants did indeed notice, and

reportedly used, information about a person's religion when making judgments, even to the relative exclusion of other information frequently observed to have powerful biasing effects (i.e., race). Perhaps more importantly, participants noticed and apparently used religion even in the context of other more relevant information, such as related professional experience. This has direct implications for how managers and other hiring personnel evaluate the variety of information presented to them on applications or at interview. In addition, this research adds to the body of work suggesting that religion is an important social identity (e.g., Ysseldyk et al., 2010), which may result in typical intergroup biases, specifically a preference for one's religious ingroup (Jackson & Hunsberger, 1999; Johnson et al., 2012; Ysseldyk et al., 2011). However, this work extends the literature by using job suitability as the evaluative dimension, suggesting that religious intergroup bias may result in the same kinds of discriminatory hiring practices as racial and gender biases are known to (Blommaert et al., 2012; Foschi, 2000; Levin et al., 2005; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Our study was also novel in that we specifically asked our participants what information about the applicant they used when making judgments. While most did not admit to using, or were unaware that they used, the applicant's race – despite evidence that race did somewhat influence their judgments – many stated that they used the applicant's religion. This indicates that participants are either more aware, or at least more willing to admit, that they used religion as an evaluative dimension, even for a judgment for which religion was not relevant. This supports the assertion that while religious intergroup bias may have much in common with other kinds of group biases, there may be important ways in which religion acts differently (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). One such difference might be the social norms regarding how socially undesirable it is to discriminate based on religion versus race, for example. This in turn has important implications for diversity training and workplace policy.

When interpreting the meaning of these findings, it is crucial to keep in mind that our religiously conscious participants – that is, those who stated that they used Aisha's religion in their judgments – noticed, used, and admitted to using, the applicant's religion as a basis of judgment even in the context of other more job-related information. For example, we gave participants information about the applicant's experience and qualifications, which seems far more relevant to their judgments of suitability for a job. That participants showed religious intergroup bias – even though religion was presented as just one element in the context of other more relevant pieces of information

suitability ratings, $F(2, 42) = 2.89, p = .07, \eta^2 = .12$. The reduced effect size for suitability ratings likely reflects insufficient power for analysis with six factors/covariates.

² These results are partially replicated in analysis controlling for age, parent income (as a measure of SES), gender and ethnic identity. Race remains a significant factor when controlling for age, parental income and ethnic identity, $F(1, 110) = 6.35, p = .01, \eta^2 = .06$; however including gender as an additional factor results in no significant main effects or interactions.

– is consistent with those studies that have found racial or gender bias in the evaluation of equally well-qualified applicants or workers (Blommaert et al., 2012; Levin et al., 2005). Of course, many participants used all facets of this information, mentioning the applicant's experience and qualifications as well as their religion among the things that they say they considered, and although most did not list it, many participants showed substantial evidence of using race. However, even if they used this other information, for many participants the applicant's religion was still influential enough to result in intergroup bias and a preference for ingroup applicants over equally qualified and experienced outgroup applicants. These results further suggested that in the context of hiring practices, religion might function much as race has been known to, if not more powerfully for the religiously conscious perceiver, who is likely not a rare beast in the religious United States.

4.1. Applications

These findings have important implications for workplace training and policies. Evidence of bias toward religious outgroup members, particularly a bias that extends to judgments of an applicant's suitability for a position, suggests that the same sorts of protections for religious minorities that exist for racial and ethnic minorities may need to be widely implemented and monitored seriously. Furthermore, religiously conscious participants were open and willing to admit that they use religion as a basis of evaluation. This might be concerning since it implies a sense that such religious intergroup bias is socially acceptable, or at least not as unacceptable as other biases, such as racial bias, are known to be. Thus, efforts to formalize guidelines and legal policies to further prevent or reduce religious discrimination may be needed. Taking a more positive view, this willingness to admit to the use of religious information does allow for the possibility that sensitivity training designed to educate people about why religious bias is just as unacceptable and damaging, could be effective. At the least, such sensitivity training could be provided to those individual decision makers who seem to need this awareness enhancement the most—those who by their admitted use of religion as the basis of their judgments seem to suggest that they do not see this as an unacceptable bias.

At a very practical level, one simple step toward preventing the impact of religious bias on employment decisions is to withhold this information from the decision maker. Explicit requests for religious affiliation information on employment applications should be eliminated, just as requests for racial and gender information often have been in recent practice. Indeed, on many applications all demographic information is voluntary. However, more challenging, and indeed less acceptable, would be a suggestion to the applicant themselves that they should strive to avoid presenting any cues denoting religious affiliation. Such cues may be as simple as one's name and in-person interviews and photographs (easily available with a quick Google search of an applicant) can often unavoidably provide some of that outgroup cueing information,

certainly in the case of some Muslim women and Jewish men, among others.

4.2. Limitations

Perhaps the most obvious apparent limitation of the current research is the use of solely Black Christian participants. Of course, anytime a study uses a homogenous population of participants, the degree to which the results can be generalized is somewhat constrained. However, in this case the use of Black participants was purposeful and might be considered a strength. By focusing on the perceptions of Black participants, this study adds to the literature that takes the perspective of the active Black social perceiver, rather than treating them as the passive target of discrimination (Shelton, 2000). At the same time, this research helps to confirm the patterns of religious intergroup bias that researchers have found with other, typically predominantly White, samples. It is also the case that – as is often the case when using student populations – our sample was disproportionately female. However, our main finding of religious intergroup bias among religiously conscious participants remained significant when controlling for gender (as reported in footnotes above) as well as in an analysis that randomly selected from the female participants to create a gender-balanced sample (not reported here). Future research should examine to what extent various demographic factors of perceivers might moderate religious intergroup bias.

Similarly, the current study used a female as the target of evaluation. We chose to utilize a female target because it allowed us to manipulate religion in part by using a hijab as a visual cue. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the gender of the target may interact with their religion and/or race to influence participants' evaluations, and that the findings represented here may not extend to the evaluation of male targets. Further analysis is needed to explore the boundary conditions and moderators of the findings we report here. Our use of the hijab as a partial means of manipulating the target's religion may also pose a limitation. In particular, in doing so we created a Muslim condition that differs from the other conditions not only in the religion of the target but also in its inclusion of the hijab. Therefore, the participants' reaction to this target may be a reaction to her religion or to her wearing of the hijab as an outward expression of religion. However, as the post-hoc analysis made clear, the crucial difference in evaluations was between the Christian target and the other two targets – Muslim and atheist – whose evaluations did not differ. Therefore, the findings cannot be fully explained as the result of our participants reacting negatively to the hijab. Nonetheless, we encourage future research that incorporates a fourth condition in which the target is a Muslim without a hijab in order to explore more fully any unique influence of these two components.

The experimental manipulation of religion in a lab setting may have relatively low mundane realism. However, the current procedures mirror those frequently used by researchers who have examined racial bias in hiring decisions and the benefit of experimental manipulation is the degree of control over extraneous and confounding

factors. That is, we know that the only reason Christian Aisha was preferred is because she was Christian, since everything else was held constant. More importantly, the assessment of a person for a position based on the limited information provided on a job application is all too realistic. We purposefully strongly manipulated the applicant's religion with a photo and explicitly stated religion, things not typically seen on every job application. However, other cues such as applicant's names would likely have similar effects (Blommaert et al., 2012; Oreopoulos, 2009) as might behaviors such as arriving for an interview wearing religious attire.

We identified our religiously conscious perceivers by asking participants what they thought about when they rated Aisha. It is of course quite possible that what participants believed they thought about is not a true representation of what they actually thought about, and this ontological gap should certainly be kept in mind when considering the results. The information we believe we use in judging others does not always match what we actually use. However, it seems more likely that this disparity would be in the opposite direction; that a participant would believe they did not use, or at least not be willing to admit that they used, irrelevant information such as religion, when in fact they – perhaps subconsciously – did so. More importantly, the pattern of intergroup bias seen in the judgments of our religiously conscious perceivers, and not in the rest of our participants, supports the interpretation that in this case our participants are in fact quite accurate in their report of what they are thinking about and using as the basis of their judgments.

5. Conclusions

This research investigated whether people will notice and use information about another person's religion when judging their suitability for a job. These results suggested that many participants did indeed use information about a person's religion when making judgments, even though this information was presented in the context of other information, including relevant qualifications and education as well as race. Indeed, this research indicated that the religious intergroup bias demonstrated by explicitly religiously conscious participants is stronger even than the robust and powerful racial ingroup bias that has been so extensively demonstrated elsewhere. In addition, these religiously conscious participants were quite willing to say that they were using this information, indicating that it may not be socially undesirable to admit using someone's religion in this way, even for such irrelevant and important decisions as to whether to hire them. This research has implications for hiring practices and workplace discrimination as well as religious group relations.

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