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Applicant Religion and Work Qualifications Impacting Hiring Decisions

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APPLICANT RELIGION AND WORK QUALIFICATIONS IMPACTING HIRING
DECISIONS

by

WILLIAM TYLER CAGLE

(Under the Direction of Michael Nielsen)

ABSTRACT

The underlying effect of religious bias towards Muslims has negatively impacted their chances of receiving equal employment opportunities. The current study attempts to observe this effect by having Christian participants pretend to be a boss of a company and asking them to evaluate a fictitious resume and rate the applicant on their suitability for the managerial job at hand. The applicants were either Christian or Muslim. Based on the justification-suppression model, we also attempted to observe the effect having different hiring qualifications had on the applicant ratings. To do this, applicants either had a high or low GPA, and they either had managerial or marketing work experience. Finally, we wanted to observe if the level of religiosity a participant had could impact their suitability scores. A 2x2x2 ANOVA was used to analyze the interaction of religion, GPA, and work experience, while two regression analyses were run for the Christian and Muslim applicant groups separately. The data did not support our first hypothesis, as the difference in suitability scores for Christian and Muslim applicants did not vary significantly. We were not allowed to test the justification-suppression model as the interaction of religion, GPA, and work experience was not significant. We also did not find support for an effect that level of religiosity impacted ratings. It should be noted that many participants had to be excluded due to not being Christian or not successfully passing attention checks. There was also a flaw in the methods that could have led to these results.

INDEX WORDS: Religious bias, Employment, Applications, Muslims, Christians

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WILLIAM TYLER CAGLE

B.S., Georgia Southern University, 2019

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ingroup Bias

From an evolutionary standpoint, humans place themselves in groups as a key tactic in survival (Bowles, 2006). However, as the age of hunting and gathering for the pack have ceased, humans now may rely on social constructs to facilitate their survival. Whether it be a biological factor (age, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) or a grouping by choice (religion, geographical location, profession, etc.), these are the constructs people rely on to distinguish themselves from others. One result of this proclivity to create social separation is the natural tendency to prefer one's own group over other groups; this phenomenon is known as an ingroup bias (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, one study found that Christian participants preferred fictional characters who were also Christian over characters who were Atheist (Hunter, 2001), which demonstrates the biased thinking that contributes to ingroup-outgroup evaluations. While this sway may not affect everyone in the ingroup, it has been shown that people do tend to adopt the beliefs of their ingroup (Verkuyten & Nekuee, 1999), while also projecting their own beliefs back into the group (Clement & Krueger, 2002). Perhaps one of the most unassuming but dominant forces of ingroup bias can be observed in the realm of religion and how its influence can underhandedly impact decision making processes.

Religion as an Ingroup

Of the multitude of social identities, religion is considered one of the most valuable to people living in the United States (Hill, et. al., 2000) and is considered to be one of the strongest and most important social ingroups (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman,

2010). As with other ingroups, religion provides people with a sense of togetherness and stability within one's community (Kinnvall, 2004). Like other close-knit ingroups, religion is a robust factor because it brings together people with similar attitudes and beliefs (Preston, Ritter, & Hernandez, 2010). However, this connection between people and their religion has an influence on how they view the world. Research conducted in the United States has found religion to be associated with increased levels of traditionalism (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). More specifically, Christians have been associated with higher levels of conservatism and are less likely to change their values (Roccas, 2005). In consequence to these findings, the followers' ideals are more likely to be in-line with the teachings of their religion, which impacts how they view other religious outgroups.

In another line of experimentation, it has been suggested that priming people with religious ideals, i.e., making the participants think about what their religious leader would do in a situation, can actually create prosocial behaviors within one's ingroup, like decreasing the chances of cheating (Preston & Ritter, 2013). Another study, which utilizes the priming of "God" and how they are always watching, demonstrates how religion can affect prosocial behaviors, like donating more money when given the opportunity (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007). However, this idealistic extension of moral righteousness may not extend to every situation. Researchers wanted to observe a possible increase in helpful behaviors towards homeless people and illegal immigrants when conducting a survey outside of a place of worship (e.g., a church) as opposed to a secular site (e.g., a civic center) (Pichon & Saroglou, 2009). Surveys gathered at the church demonstrated that the interviewees wanted to help the homeless, but not the immigrants, solidifying the idea that priming religious ideals can only impact people's beliefs to a certain extent.

Research shows that religious people have prejudicial attitudes towards other religious outgroups. For example, when a religious person is presented with someone who is non-religious, that person is more likely to create negative stereotypes about the non-religious person (Harper, 2007), because as the differences between two ingroups increase, the more ingroup bias is created (Abrams, Rutland, Cameron, & Marques, 2010). Other studies have found that White Christian participants displayed negative attitudes towards Muslims (Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2012), gay people (Batson, Floyd, Meyer & Winner, 1999; Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2012), atheists (Ysseldyk, Haslam, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011), and African Americans (Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2010). Religious fundamentalists were found to even blame gay people and single mothers for their unemployment problems because they go against their beliefs (Jackson & Esses, 1997). Another experiment, which observed Christians' attitudes towards working with a Muslim coworker, found that the degree of religiosity had an effect on their attitudes, such that highly religious participants displayed more apprehension in working with a Muslim (King, Mckay, & Stewart, 2014).

Researchers have found that a possible reason behind ingroup bias is that people try to eliminate uncertainty (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007). A study performed by Gordon Hodson and colleagues (Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2002) demonstrated this by presenting White participants with fictional college admission test scores of either a Black or White applicant, and they were asked to rate them. When the test scores for the applicants were all consistently either strong or weak, participants displayed no discriminatory prejudice. However, when the test scores were ambiguous, there was an increase in prejudicial ratings only for those who received the Black applicant's scores. These findings indicate that conflicting information about an outgroup member may allow for an increase in prejudicial

attitudes. Another possible explanation for this phenomenon is people use intergroup discrimination as a way to increase their own self-esteem (Abrams & Hogg, 1988).

Another possible explanation of intergroup conflict can be demonstrated through the justification–suppression model of prejudicial behaviors (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). This model suggests that some people who hold negative beliefs towards other outgroups restrain themselves and do not fully express their feelings entirely. However, when the outgroups display stereotypical traits which mirror the beliefs held by the people with prejudice, then the people with prejudice feel as if they are justified in holding their negative beliefs and release them in the form of discrimination. An example of this model can be observed in a study by King and Ahmad (2010), where they found that Muslim applicants that were stereotype-consistent elicited more negative behaviors from participants than both non-Muslim and stereotype-inconsistent Muslim applicants.

As one might expect, major issues arise in response to intergroup conflict. In general, the discrimination caused by an ingroup bias can elicit psychological and physiological stress in those targeted (Major & O'Brien, 2005; Tsuno, et. al., 2009). A more focused example can be observed in the workplace, where people with a multitude of various ingroups interact. Coworkers who are the victims of intergroup conflict often are ostracized by their colleagues, less likely to receive help, and are more likely to have conflict with other coworkers (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). In the United States, the most prevalent group who often faces the brute force of intergroup conflict within the workspace are Muslims (Sheridan, 2006).

Islam as an Outgroup

Religion sometimes forms an ingroup – outgroup boundary that results in people fighting with each other (Wellman & Tokuno, 2004), and due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, hate crimes against Muslims have increased steadily over the years (Kishi, 2020). The attacks of 9/11 heightened tensions between American citizens and Muslims because the incursion symbolized an attack on the American lifestyle, while also serving as a reminder that we are all susceptible to death (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). Media coverage also plays a role in keeping terrorism fresh in the minds of U.S. citizens by portraying Muslims as a group to be uncivilized, barbaric, anti-democratic terrorists (Nurullah, 2010), or overall as an “alien other” (Saeed, 2007). Even before the 9/11 attacks, the media portrayed Muslims as wild, violent, religious fanatics (Kamalipour, 2000). One study demonstrated that the exposure to terrorism increases anxiety and anti-Arab attitudes (Bar-Tal & Labin, 2001), while others found that reminders of death can increase negative feelings towards Muslims (Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino, & Sacchi, 2002; Cohen, Soenke, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2013). These negative feelings towards Muslims most likely arise in response to fear or a lack of security because people are more likely to turn to their ingroup in times of distress (Muldoon, Trew, Todd, Rougier, & McLaughlin, 2007).

Bias Against Muslims in the Workplace

In workplace settings, evidence has shown that Muslims are consistent victims of employment and workplace discrimination (Bartkoski, Lynch, Witt, & Rudolph, 2018; Lindley, 2010; Sheridan, 2006). While religious minorities are protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 from any form of employment discrimination based around their religion (Eades, 1980), research demonstrates that Muslims are still subjected to lower chances of being hired, lower entry pay, fewer job callbacks from employers (Drydakis, 2010), and lower salary

assignment (Park, Malachi, Sternin, & Tevet, 2009). One study, which altered the name on fictitious applications to either be White or Arab “sounding,” indicated that the resumes with Arab-sounding names were scored with a lower job suitability rating than the applications with white-sounding names (Deros, Nguyen, & Ryan, 2009). A large number of studies, which used fictional resumes, found that applications with a Muslim-sounding name received significantly fewer callbacks than the control groups (Carlsson & Rooth, 2006; Stasio, Lancee, Veit, & Yemane, 2019; Wallace, Wright, & Hyde, 2014; Wright, Wallace, Bailey, & Hyde, 2013). Finally, one study utilized religious identifiers to distinguish an applicant’s religion and had the participants rate the person on multiple hiring criteria; overall, the Muslim applicant, who was wearing a hijab, was rated lower than both the Christian and Jewish interviewees (Goro, 2009). The results of this experiment highlight the impact religious identifiers, more specifically the Hijabs Muslim women commonly wear, have on employment practices.

Hijabs are a valuable part of the Islamic faith, because it is not only viewed as a requirement for Muslim women to wear, but it is also an expression of devotion to the religion (Kapteijns & Ahmed, 1993) and a power assertion of their identity (Droogsma, 2007). However, this physical presentation of their religion may lead to an increase in outgroup prejudicial behavior as the Hijab acts as an indicator of their social group, and as a group identity becomes salient, people tend to stop seeing the individual but rather the group as a whole (Turner & Oakes, 1997). Religious identifiers also elicit attitudes people have about the religion the identifier represents (Chia & Jih, 1994). For example, someone who has a positive opinion about Christianity could see someone wearing a cross necklace and connect their positive attitudes towards the religion and extend it on to the individual, even without knowing anything personally about the person with the necklace. This example can also extend to Muslims who

choose to wear a Hijab as the clothing has been associated with stricter Islamic beliefs (Brenner, 1996), and therefore the women might be assumed to be more religiously fundamental, which could create a larger outgroup bias.

Wearing a Hijab does appear to have major effects on multiple aspects of employment procedures, as wearing one makes Muslim women more identifiable, which in turn makes them more susceptible to discrimination (Ali, Liu, & Humedian, 2004). Muslims who wear Hijabs are more likely to be selected for lower status jobs and less likely for higher status work (Ghumman & Jackson, 2008), receive fewer callbacks and chances to fill out applications (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013), are rejected more rapidly and accepted more slowly than women who do not wear Hijabs (Unkelbach, Schneider, Gode, & Senft, 2010), are seen as less intelligent (Mahmud & Swami, 2010), and experience overall job dissatisfaction when experiencing workplace discrimination (Ali, Yamada, & Mahmood, 2015). Other research also demonstrates that Muslim women are fully aware that wearing Hijabs will decrease their chances of employment opportunities (Ghumman & Jackson, 2010), some even claiming it to be a “barrier” to employment (Syed & Pio, 2010). For these reasons, many Muslim women decided to stop wearing a Hijab post 9/11 (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). However, even with this knowledge, most Muslim women still hold the belief that they wish to express their religion in western workplaces (Huang & Kleiner, 2001) and some claim they do so to affirm their American-Islamic identity to combat an area with anti-Islamic ideas (Haddad, 2007) and western culture (Hamdan, 2007).

Why Some Workplace Discriminatory Practices Go Undetected

While formal discrimination practices (i.e., refusing to hire or help an employee) are illegal and explicit in nature (King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, & Turner, 2006), Muslims nevertheless experience unfair bias. The reason for this is that there are multiple forms in which

bias can take shape. While the current study focuses more on explicit bias, which is a conscious form of discrimination, implicit bias may go undetected by the person committing the prejudicial behavior (Blommaert, Tubergen, & Coenders, 2012; Nosek, 2007). For example, one group of researchers wanted to compare the evaluation scores of applications between participants who explicitly mentioned using religion in their ratings and those who did not (Camp, Sloan, & Elbassiouny, 2016). The results of that study indicated that both groups yielded about the same scores, implying that the group who claimed they did not use religion in their evaluation might have implicitly done so without conscious awareness. This serves as an example of why it is difficult to identify and abolish these types of attitudes (Dipboye & Colella, 2005) because people may not even intentionally know that they have concealed opinions towards people in outgroups (Nosek, 2005) or they refuse to acknowledge their prejudicial behavior. It is also more difficult for this type of discrimination to accumulate mass attention, because only explicit forms of discrimination are commonly noticed (Fazio & Olson, 2003).

Research indicates that people do hold implicit bias towards Muslims (Park, Felix, & Lee, 2007), more specifically when presented with a Muslim-sounding name (Rowatt, Franklin, & Cotton, 2005). One employment study found that when participants were asked to rate applications from a person with a Muslim-sounding name, even though only half of the participants explicitly mentioned the applicant's religion as an issue, almost all of the participants displayed bias towards the person (Agerström & Rooth, 2008). While the current study does not contain a measure of implicit bias, it is still necessary to understand the possible underlying factors to discrimination, while also being able to distinguish implicit and explicit forms of bias.

The Present Study

In the present study, I sought to observe a possible relationship between the religion of an applicant, employer, and the suitability rating given by the employer to the applicant. Given the information of the Camp, Sloan, and Elbassiouny study (2016), I predicted a similar effect of ingroup bias based on the applicant's religion. However, this study tried to increase the realism of actual hiring practices by altering the applicant's grade point average (GPA) they graduated with and type of previous work experience, as these criteria have been shown to be of importance in hiring practices (Sulastrri, Handoko, & Janssens, 2015; Won, Bravo, & Lee, 2013). As opposed to the Camp, Sloan, and Elbassiouny study, where the hiring qualifications (i.e., GPA and work experience) were controlled across the different applications, this study attempted to expand their research and create a more "real-world" situation by modifying the hiring criteria, as not every applicant necessarily enters with the same credentials.

Hypotheses

In the present study we test three predictions. Based on Camp, Sloan, and Elbassiouny (2016), we first hypothesize a main effect for target religion such that, on average, the Muslim applications will be rated lower in suitability for the job relative to the Christian applications. This will be qualified by a 2 (Target religion: Christian vs. Muslim) x 2 (GPA) x 2 (Work Experience: Managerial vs. Marketing) interaction, depicted in Figures 1 (Christian) and 2 (Muslim). Second, specifically in terms of the applicant's GPA scores, within the High GPA groups, based on Crandall and Eshleman's (2003) justification suppression model, we predict a greater difference in the scores for the Muslim applications than the Christian applications. We predict this because we believe when a Muslim applicant has a negative hiring qualification (i.e. a low GPA), this gives a prejudicial employer the justification to release their bias, which will

result in the employer giving a lower score to the Muslim applicant. Finally, based on King, McKay, and Stewart (2014), I predict that Christians with a higher score for centrality of religiosity are more likely to give lower suitability scores to the Muslim targets; this is depicted in Figure 3.

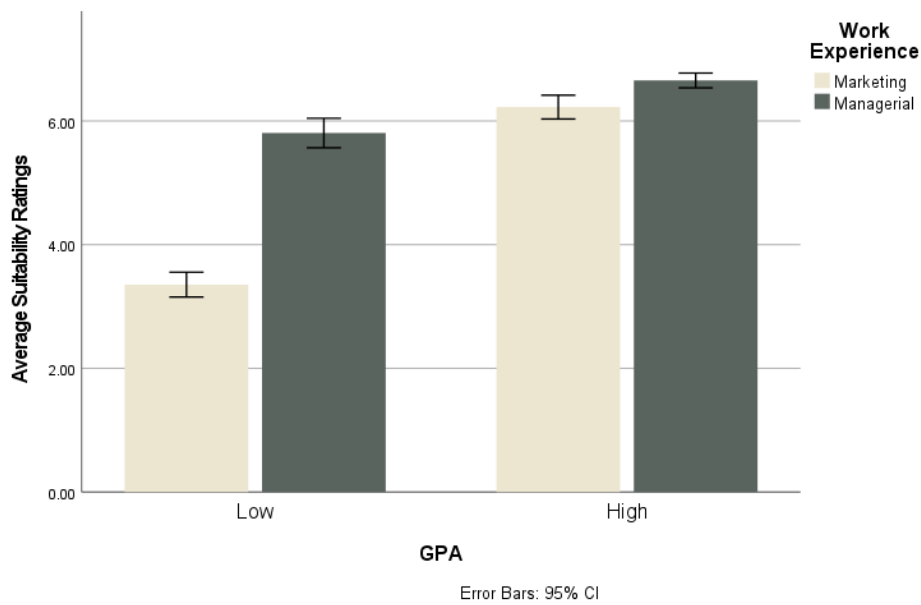


Figure 1. Expected Results for Christian x GPA x Work Experience Suitability Ratings

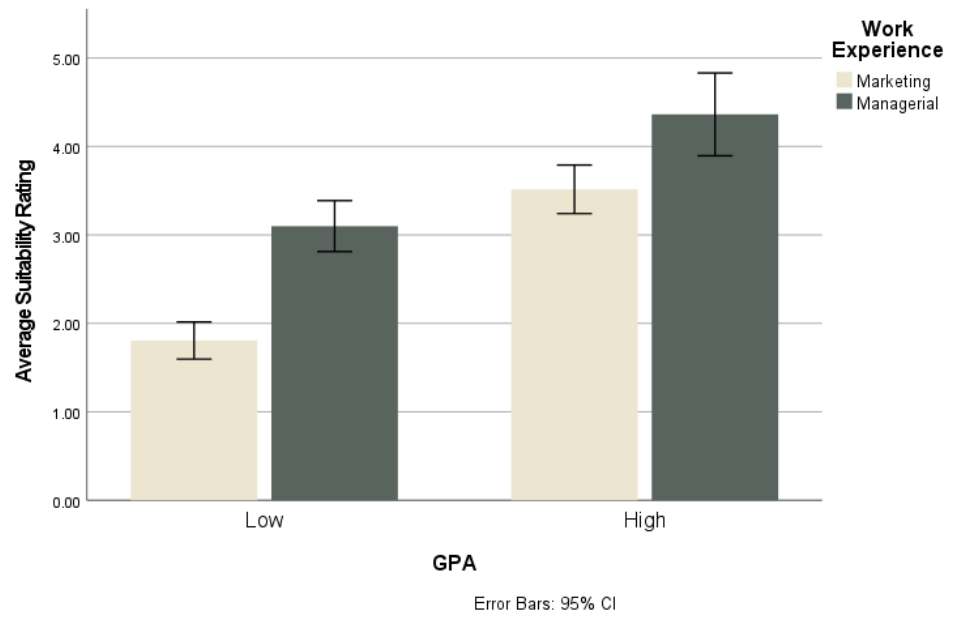


Figure 2. Expected Results for Muslim x GPA x Work Experience Suitability Ratings

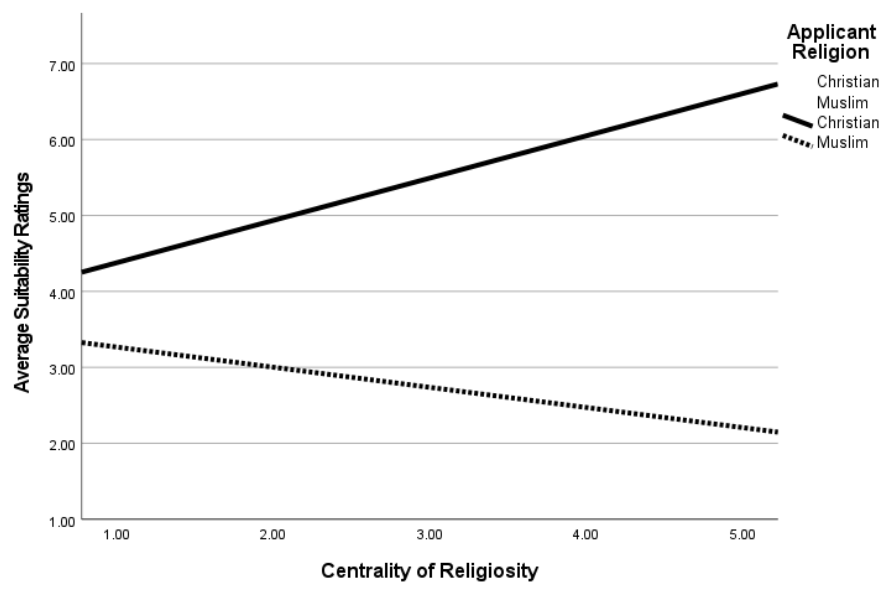


Figure 3. Expected Results for the Applicant Religion x Participant Centrality of Religiosity x Average Suitability Ratings

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk. All participants had to be over the age of 18 and from the United States to take the survey. Though only Christian participants' data were analyzed, we did not restrict other participants from taking the survey, so as to not reveal the purpose of this study. Due to time constraints and a problem of collecting participants fast enough, two waves of participant recruitment were used. The first round of participants who completed the survey were paid 10 cents for their cooperation, and the second were paid 25 cents as to increase the incentive to take the survey. Collection of data was to cease once 500 participants signed up to take the survey. In total, 460 participants were recruited, with 150 signing up in the first wave and 310 in the second. Of those who responded to the demographic questions, the sample included 222 females, 196 males, and 3 who identified as not male or female. The average age of the sample was 37.15. Refer to Table 1 for further demographic details regarding the total sample. After screening out non-Christians, we were left with 254 participants who identified as Christians. Of this sample, there were 130 females, 123 males, and 1 participant who identified as not male or female. The average age of the Christian sample was 38.05 ($SD = 12.22$). Refer to Table 2 for further demographic details regarding the Christian sample. For comparison purposes, excluded, non-Christian participant demographics are shown in Table 3.

Measures

Preface to Applications

Participants were asked to read a short paragraph explaining the procedures to follow (see Appendix A for Preface to Applications). They were told that they would be given an application from someone who is attempting to be hired for a “management role for your corporation and they will be a part of your team.” The job description was kept vague enough to stress the importance of the work, but not enough to specify which type of work the applicant would be performing as to eliminate job status bias (Terpstra, 1980). Following the viewing of the application, they were told they would answer some questions about the application and finally some demographic questions. After reading the preface, participants were given an attention check about the job description (See Appendix B for Attention Check). Participants who failed to answer correctly had their data removed from the analyses.

Applications

The participants were randomly given one of eight different applications (see Appendix C for Applications). The design of the study was a 2 (Religion: Christian vs Muslim) x 2 (GPA: high vs low) x 2 (Experience: Previous Managerial experience vs Previous Marketing experience) factorial design. The religion of the applicant was presented in the photo of the candidate, where the Christian applicant was wearing a cross-necklace while the Muslim applicant was wearing a Hijab. The religion was also displayed in the “Volunteer Activities” section of the application, which stated that the applicant previously worked at either a large church (Christian) or mosque (Muslim). As for previous work experience, the applications with “Managerial Work Experience” stated that the applicant has previously operated as a manager at

a company, while the “Marketing Work Experience” applications expressed the applicant worked as a marketer for a company. The GPA of the applications (2.31 or 3.98) were simply stated under the “Education” section. In addition, the High GPA applications also stated the applicant graduated with honors. All other criteria listed on the applications were controlled throughout each application. After viewing the application, participants were given another attention check on the applicant’s religion, GPA, and previous work experience (See Appendix B for Attention Checks).

Suitability Rating

After reviewing the application given to them, the participants were then asked to rate the applicant on how suitable they are in receiving the managerial position. The participant was given a Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Not very much) to 7 (Very Much) to evaluate the application. This measure was used to gauge the religious bias the participant may or may not hold against the applicant. Participants were also asked to answer some questions about the applicant, for example “Could you see yourself becoming friends with this person” and “Would you be willing to work near this person” (see Appendix D for Suitability Scale). Following these measures, the participant was then asked to check off all criteria from the application that they used in their evaluation of the applicant (See Appendix E for Explicit Judgment Criteria). This gauged how many participants explicitly mentioned using the applicant’s religion in their evaluation. These measures were all on separate screens so participants could not go back and change their suitability scores. Even though the explicit measure relies on the participants’ honesty in their evaluations, we can still compare their explicit evaluations to their suitability scores, which allowed us to see a discrepancy if there was one.

Demographic Questions

Following the application evaluations, the participants were then asked to provide some demographic information (see Appendix F for Demographic Questions). These included gender, age, and ethnicity. Participants were also asked to state their religious affiliation, as it could have impacted their rating (Khattab, 2009). Respondents also answered a series of 15, seven-point Likert Scale questions from Huber & Huber (2012), which measured the participants' average centrality of religiosity.

*Table 1**Total Sample Demographics*

Demographic Categories	Frequency	Valid Percent
GENDER		
Female	222	52.7
Male	196	46.6
Other	3	0.7
AGE		
18-24	43	10.4
25-34	169	40.9
35-44	99	24.0
45-54	55	13.3
55-64	33	8.0
65+	14	3.4
ETHNICITY		
Caucasian	228	68.7
African-American	59	14.1
Latino or Hispanic	15	3.6
Asian	40	9.5
Native American	8	1.9
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0.5
Other	7	1.7

Table 2

Christian Sample Demographics

Demographic Categories	Frequency	Valid Percent
GENDER		
Female	130	51.2
Male	123	48.4
Other	1	0.4
AGE		
18-24	18	7.2
25-34	101	40.6
35-44	62	24.9
45-54	39	15.7
55-64	18	7.2
65+	11	4.4
ETHNICITY		
Caucasian	178	70.6
African-American	46	18.3
Latino or Hispanic	8	3.2
Asian	9	3.6
Native American	6	2.4
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0.8
Other	3	1.2

Table 3

Non-Christian Sample Demographics

Demographic Categories	Frequency	Valid Percent
GENDER		
Female	88	54.7
Male	71	44.1
Other	2	1.2
AGE		
18-24	25	15.8
25-34	66	41.8
35-44	34	37.3
45-54	16	10.1
55-64	15	9.5
65+	2	1.3
ETHNICITY		
Caucasian	105	65.2
African-American	12	7.5
Latino or Hispanic	7	4.3
Asian	31	19.3
Native American	2	1.2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Other	4	2.5

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Attention Checks

The preface and applications attention checks were used to verify participants were taking care in completing the analyses. These resulted in 134 of the Christian participants to be removed, with 82 incorrectly answering the question regarding the preface to the application and 52 incorrectly answering the question regarding the application they received. This resulted in 120 participants who were left in the sample for hypothesis testing. Refer to Table 4 for demographics regarding the Christian sample who passed all attention checks.

Data Analysis

A 2x2x2 factorial ANOVA was used to test the differences between the application groups. The main effect of the applicant's religion did not reveal a significant difference in suitability scores between the Christian and Muslim applications, $F(1, 112) = .225, p = .615$. Christian applications ($M = 5.15, SD = 1.41$) did not receive higher suitability ratings than the Muslim applications ($M = 5.01, SD = 1.46$). However, the main effect for G.P.A. was found to be significant, $F(1, 112) = 19.4, p < .001$. Applicants with the 3.96 G.P.A. ($M = 5.57, SD = 1.31$) received higher ratings than the applicants with a G.P.A. of 2.13 ($M = 4.47, SD = 1.35$). Finally, a significant main effect for work experience was also found $F(1, 112) = 6.98, p = .009$. Applicants with the managerial work experience ($M = 5.43, SD = 1.37$) were rated higher than those with the marketing experience ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.41$). These significant main effects for G.P.A. and work experience validate the impact a more competitive resume can have on how employers view applicants. The results

of this data did not qualify for a significant three-way interaction $F(1, 112) = .876, p = .351$.

Refer to Table 5 for a complete ANOVA summary table. Refer to Table 6 for the average suitability ratings for each applicant group.

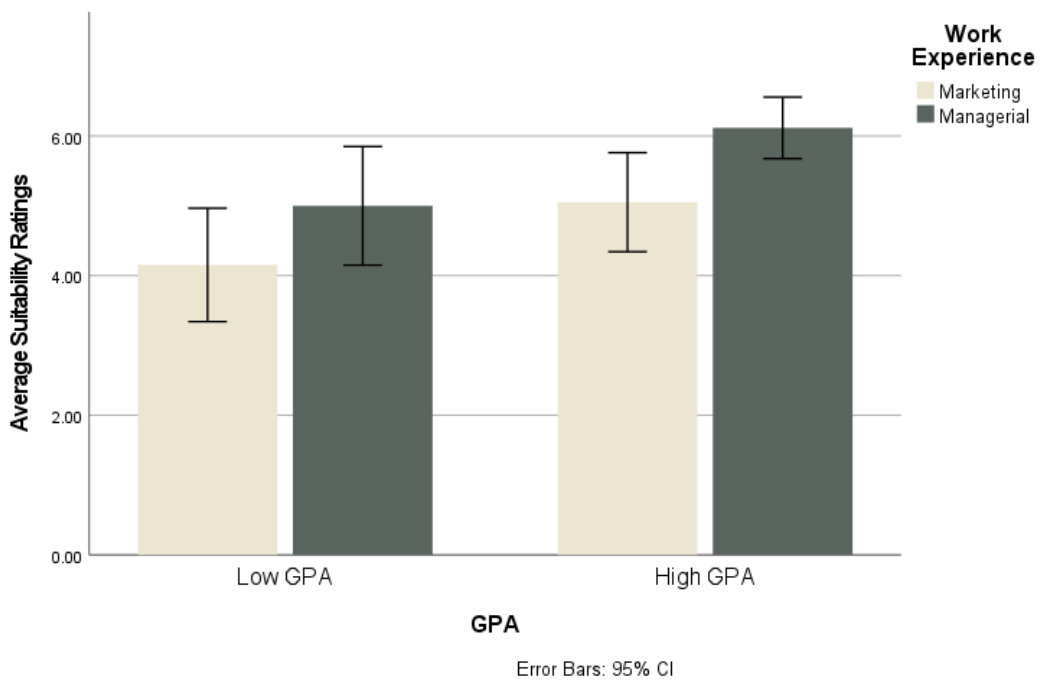


Figure 4. Christian x GPA x Work Experience Average Suitability Ratings

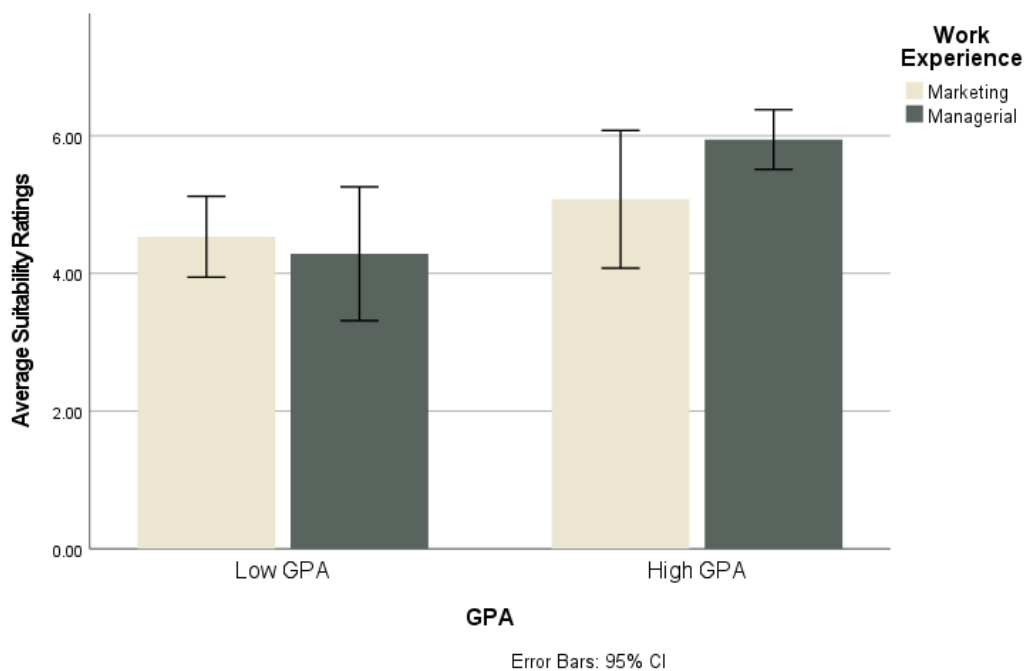


Figure 5. Muslim x GPA x Work Experience Average Suitability Ratings

Centrality of Religiosity

Two separate linear regression tests, one to test the Christian application groups and one for the Muslim application groups, were used to analyze a possible effect of centrality of religiosity on suitability scores for both religion targets. The first analysis of the Christian applications revealed that centrality of religiosity did not predict the suitability score given to the applicant $F(1, 54) = .063, p = .803$. For every 1-point increase in Centrality of Religiosity scores, there was a .033 increase in suitability ratings for the Christian applications. The second analysis of the Muslim applications also did not reveal that Centrality of Religiosity predicted the suitability scores given to the applicants $F(1, 53) = .106, p = .746$. For every 1-point increase in Centrality of Religiosity scores, there was a .047 decrease in suitability ratings. The slopes for these predictions indicate that the centrality of religiosity had no effect on the suitability scores

given to the Christians and Muslim applicants. Refer to Table 7 for the regression summary tables.

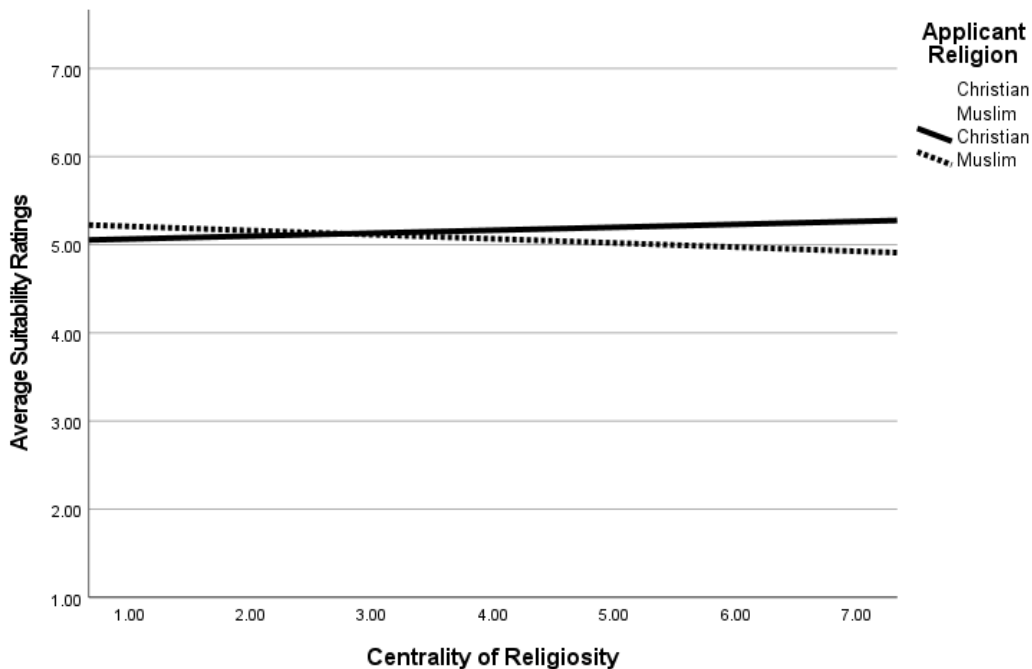


Figure 6. Applicant Religion x Participant Centrality of Religiosity x Average Suitability Ratings

Explicit Judgment Criteria

Frequency analyses were used to determine the differences of the religion groups regarding which criteria the participants explicitly mentioned using in their evaluation of the applications. Refer to Table 8 for frequencies of the criteria explicitly mentioned. Of the 60 participants who reviewed a Muslim applicant, 10 explicitly mentioned using the applicant's ethnicity in their evaluation. However, none of the participants in the Christian application group marked ethnicity in their judgment. A Chi-Square test of independence revealed that the

relationship between the applicant religion assigned to the participant and whether they mentioned using ethnicity in their evaluation was statistically significant,

$X^2(1, N = 120) = 10.91, p = .001$. These results indicate that participants were more likely to state that they used ethnicity in their evaluations if they were reviewing a Muslim applicant.

A comparable analysis using the applicant's name was also used to find a difference in criteria used in review. Five participants in the Muslim group mentioned using the applicant's name in their evaluation, while none of those in the Christian group mentioned using it in their evaluation. A Fisher's Exact Test of Independence revealed that the relationship between the applicant's religion and whether the participant explicitly mentioned using applicant's name in their evaluation was not statistically significant, $p = .057$. All other criteria were relatively similar in frequencies between the two conditions. Refer to Table 9 for Chi-Square and Fischer's Exact Test Analyses.

Table 4

Christian and Passed Attention Checks Sample Demographics

Demographic Categories	Frequency	Valid Percent
GENDER		
Female	65	54.2
Male	54	45.0
Other	1	0.80
AGE		
18-24	9	7.6
25-34	41	34.8
35-44	32	27.1
45-54	16	13.6
55-64	12	10.1
65+	8	6.8
ETHNICITY		
Caucasian	91	75.8
African-American	17	14.2
Latino or Hispanic	4	3.3
Asian	4	3.3
Native American	1	.8
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	.8
Other	2	1.7

Table 5

ANOVA Summary Table

<i>DV</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Applicant Religion	1	.255	.615
Applicant GPA	1	19.4	.000
Applicant Work Experience	1	6.83	.009
Applicant Religion x GPA x Work Experience	1	.876	.351

Table 6

Average Suitability Ratings of Applicants by Religion, GPA, and Work Experience

	<i>GPA</i>	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Christian Applicants		
Managerial	5.00 (SD = 1.26, N = 11)	6.12 (SD = 0.86, N = 17)
Marketing	4.15 (SD = 1.34, N = 13)	5.05 (SD = 1.47, N = 19)
Muslim Applicants		
Mangerial	4.29 (SD = 1.68, N = 14)	5.94 (SD = 0.87, N = 18)
Marketing	4.53 (SD = 1.06, N = 15)	5.08 (SD = 1.66, N = 13)

Table 7

*Regression Summary Tables**Linear Regression Results for Christian Applications*

<i>Model</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. (p)</i>
(Constant)	5.032	.678		7.428	.000
Centrality of Religiosity	.033	.132	.034	.251	.803

Linear Regression Results for Muslim Applications

<i>Model</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. (p)</i>
(Constant)	5.256	.705		7.457	.000
Centrality of Religiosity	-.047	.144	-.045	-.326	.746

Table 8

Explicit Judgment Criteria Table

Judgment Criteria	Christian Applicant (N = 60)	Muslim Applicant (N = 60)
Name	0	5
Gender	2	3
Ethnicity	0	10
How the Applicant was Dressed	3	7
Career Objective	25	26
University	11	13
Graduate GPA	35	36
Work Experience	54	48
Skills	43	42
Volunteer Work	17	16

Table 9

Chi-Square and Fischer's Exact Test Analyses

	<i>Chi-Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig.</i>	<i>(Fischer's Exact Test) Exact Sig.</i>
Applicant Religion x Explicit Mentioning of Ethnicity	10.909	1	.001	
Applicant Religion x Explicit Mentioning of Applicant Name				.057

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

The purpose of this study was to replicate the results of previous research which suggested Muslims are consistently the targets of workplace discrimination and are given fewer opportunities to obtain employment. This was measured in our study by giving Christian participants the opportunity to imagine themselves as an employer to a company, giving them a resume of an applicant who was implied to either be a Christian or a Muslim, and asking them how well suited the applicant is in obtaining employment at their company. Although Camp, Sloan, and Elbassiouny (2016) were able to find that participants displayed a religious bias towards Muslims, we failed to find backing for these claims.

We also wanted to build upon these previous studies by creating a more “real-world” example by altering the hiring criteria used in the evaluation of employment applications, as not every potential employee applies with the same credentials. Despite not finding support for a religious bias, we were able to find that participants did consider the applicants’ GPA and previous work experience as both were found to impact suitability ratings separately. It was important to find support for GPA and work experience because both were previously found to be important in employers’ hiring practices (Sulastri, Handoko, & Janssens, 2015; Won, Bravo, & Lee, 2013).

As a result of not finding a difference in scores based on the applicants’ religion, we were not able to fully test the justification-suppression model created by Crandall and Eshleman (2003) and observe the differences of the application groups.

Another goal of this study was to explore the possibility that highly religious Christians would be more prejudicial towards the Muslim applicants and show favoritism towards other Christians. Based on King, Mckay, and Stewart (2014), we assumed more religiously invested Christians would have stricter beliefs towards others of a different religion, and thus rate the Muslim applicants lower than those who were not as religiously devoted. However, our findings did not demonstrate this assumption as there was no distinguishable difference in how highly and lowly religious Christians evaluated the applications.

Religious Bias

Overall, there was not a significant difference in how the Christian participants rated the applicants based on their implied religion. There could be a multitude of reasons behind the outcome of this study. First, there is the possibility that the participants did not actually hold prejudicial views towards Muslims, hence the suitability ratings not differing between the Christian and Muslim application conditions. It is possible that people are becoming more socially accepting of people who hold different religious beliefs, therefore we would not observe a difference in the ratings.

A second potential explanation to these results is a design flaw in the methods which was overlooked until after data collection had ceased. It is possible that the placement of the order of the first attention check question, which asked the participant to correctly state the applicant's religion, could have revealed to the participant a part of our hypothesis (Hauser, Ellsworth, & Gonzalez, 2018). Since the attention check appeared before the participants gave their suitability ratings, it is possible that asking about the applicant's religion prompted the participants that the survey they were taking was about religion, which could have altered their responses.

Another possible reason we failed to find support for a religious bias is that the participants did realize the nature of the study and overcorrected their responses to appear more tolerant. The participants could have realized they held some form of bias towards Muslims and thus gave better suitability ratings rather than what reflected their true feelings. This overcorrection of responses was found in another applicant hiring study where people who did not have a gay male friend gave better ratings to a gay male applicant than those who did have a gay male friend (Aberson & Dora, 2003). This implies that knowing a minority removes the recognition of their minority status, thus giving a more accurate response. It would be beneficial for a future researcher to ask their participants if they are friends with someone who identifies as a Muslim to observe if this possible overcorrection was based on simply not having a relationship with a minority. If this phenomenon is true, this might be beneficial for Muslims moving forward as people might be starting to realize the biases they hold towards others and are correcting their behavior to become more tolerant.

GPA and Work Experience

Though we were not able to find evidence of a religious bias, and therefore could not predict a significant interaction between religion, GPA, and previous work experience, the significant main effects of GPA and work experience did at least demonstrate that the applications created for this study had an impact on suitability ratings. These findings help validate that the participants had taken the study seriously and used the information on the applications in their judgments of the applicants.

Centrality of Religiosity

Another goal of this study was to explore the possibility that highly religious Christians would be more prejudicial towards the Muslim applicants and show favoritism towards other Christians. We assumed more religiously invested Christians would have stricter beliefs towards others of a different religion, and thus rate the Muslim applicants lower than those who were not as religiously devoted. However, our findings did not demonstrate this assumption as there was no distinguishable difference in how highly and lowly religious Christians evaluated the applications.

Explicit Criteria

Though the main effect for religion was not found to be significant, there were some conflicting information when viewing the judgment criteria the participants marked in their evaluations. Even though there was no difference between the suitability scores for the religion conditions, ten participants in the Muslim applicant group still explicitly mentioned using ethnicity in their evaluations while none in the Christian applicant group mentioned using it. Also, five in the Muslim condition mentioned using the applicant's name in their evaluations while none in the Christian group mentioned using it, even though the name was the same in both conditions and could have been either Christian or Muslim. These results again bring up the question whether the participants overcorrected their suitability ratings to appear more tolerant, as there should not have been a noticeable difference since the main effect for religion was not significant.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study involves using a convenience sample of participants on a survey taking site as opposed to actual employers who have experience hiring applicants. While the sample collected for this study is more diverse than would be a college student sample, using actual employers of real companies could have given a better view of the discriminatory practices which occur in the real-world.

Another issue this study possessed was the sample size collected from MTurk. While we did have a large sample collection size of 500 participants, after screening out non-Christians and those who did not pass the attention checks, we were left with a sample of 120 participants. Having a larger sample would have given our study more power, and thus been able to reveal more subtle relationships.

Another limitation could have been that we utilized only one measure to obtain the participants' attitudes towards the applicants. While we replicated the measure used in Camp, Sloan, and Elbassiouny (2016), placing the entirety of the participants' feelings regarding the applicants to the suitability ratings could have affected results. It is possible that the participants honestly answered the question if the applicant was suitable for the job, but still felt positively or negatively about them. Multiple measures would achieve a better overall understanding about their attitudes.

Future Directions

Future studies should explore new ways to manipulate the applications to observe the differences in various application styles or qualifications. This study only focused on changing the GPA and work experience of the applications, but new changes could alter how participants

view the applicants. For example, what are the suitability ratings of Christian and Muslim applicants when their pictures are shown versus not, or what if the participants are given multiple applications to review as opposed to just one. Another alternative question could ask what if the applicant was going to be the participant's supervisor instead of an employee who works beside or under them. How would this play on power dynamics change someone's views?

As stated before, future studies should also explore the possibility of creating multiple questions to ascertain the attitudes people hold towards Muslims. A single measure that asks about an applicant's qualification to be hired is not the same as asking if the employer would want to be around the applicant, feels safe if working around the applicant, or any combination of other attitude assessment questions.

Another addition that would need to be made is to add a control group where the applicant has no religious affiliation or any identifiers that could imply a religious association. This will allow the opportunity to further analyze the effect having any religious alignment has on applicant screening.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Despite not finding support for a religious bias towards Muslim applicants, we believe this type of research is important to carry on and to continue testing the multitude of ways people might enforce their biases towards others. With a better set of methods, it is possible that one might be able to find support for the well documented collection of examples of bias towards Muslims. With the world constantly changing and with people's views of different others also adapting, keeping a record of these changes are crucial to understanding the mindset of the collective society.

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APPENDIX A

PREFACE TO APPLICATIONS

“Imagine yourself as the boss of a small company. In the following section, you are going to view an applicant’s information. They are applying for a management role for your corporation and they will be a part of your team. Please read all the information thoroughly as you will be answering some questions about the information you receive. Following this, you will answer some demographic questions. This should take about 10 minutes to complete.”

APPENDIX B

ATTENTION CHECKS

After Reading the Preface

- What was the job description stated in the previous section?
 - A computer analyst job for a large corporation
 - A cashier for a local, family-run business
 - A management role for your work team ←
 - A blue-collar job for a small business
 - A marketing position on your work team

After Viewing the Resume

- What GPA did the applicant graduate with?
 - 2.13 ← (Correct answer for Low GPA group)
 - 3.98 ← (Correct answer for High GPA group)
 - 2.25
 - 3.62
- What did the applicant previously work as?
 - Marketer ← (Correct answer for Marketing group)

- Engineer
 - Manager ← (Correct answer for Manager group)
- What was the religion of the applicant?
 - Muslim ← (Correct answer for Muslim group)
 - Jewish
 - Christian ← (Correct answer for Christian group)

APPENDIX C

APPLICATIONS

Christian X High GPA X Managerial Work Experience



Jenna Farman

Email: XXXX • Address: XXXX • Phone number: XXXX
Website: XXXX

Career Objective

To obtain a managerial position at a well-esteemed establishment corporation where I can best utilize my skills and education to help in the growth and success of the company.

Education

Georgia Southern University

Completion date: May 7, 2009

- Graduated with a 3.98 G.P.A.
- Honors: summa cum laude

Experience

[Company name: XXXX | Company address: XXXX]

Manager August 2, 2017 – January 30, 2020

Over the last three years, I have successfully led and managed a team of five employees. As a manager, I was able to develop and direct my team to meet all the goals and objectives assigned to our department. I believe my managerial experience and decision-making skill set will be of benefit to your organization.

Skills

- Hard Skills
 - Web Development
 - Marketing
 - Project Management Software
 - Documentation
- Soft Skills
 - Managerial Leadership
 - Organization
 - Planning
 - Public Speaking

Volunteer Activities

- Christian Community Center of Parksville
 - Directing and coordinating the social and spiritual areas of a 500-600 member church
- Habitat for Humanity
 - Assisted in building homes to benefit local communities and provide low-income housing

Christian X High GPA X Marketing Work Experience



Jenna Farman

Email: XXXX • Address: XXXX • Phone number: XXXX
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- Honors: summa cum laude

Experience

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Over the last three years, I have successfully worked and collaborated with a team of five other employees. As a marketer, I was able to develop and work with my team to meet all the goals and objectives assigned to our department. I believe my marketing experience and skill set will be of benefit to your organization.

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- Hard Skills
 - Web Development
 - Marketing
 - Project Management Software
 - Documentation
- Soft Skills
 - Leadership
 - Organization
 - Planning
 - Public Speaking

Volunteer Activities

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 - Directing and coordinating the social and spiritual areas of a 500-600 member church
- Habitat for Humanity
 - Assisted in building homes to benefit local communities and provide low-income housing

Christian X Low GPA X Managerial Work Experience



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- Hard Skills
 - Web Development
 - Marketing
 - Project Management Software
 - Documentation
- Soft Skills
 - Leadership
 - Organization
 - Planning
 - Public Speaking

Volunteer Activities

- Christian Community Center of Parksville
 - Directing and coordinating the social and spiritual areas of a 500-600 member church
- Habitat for Humanity
 - Assisted in building homes to benefit local communities and provide low-income housing

Muslim X High GPA X Managerial Work Experience



Jenna Farman

Email: XXXX • Address: XXXX • Phone number: XXXX
Website: XXXX

Career Objective

To obtain a managerial position at a well-esteemed establishment corporation where I can best utilize my skills and education to help in the growth and success of the company.

Education

Georgia Southern University

Completion date: May 7, 2009

- Graduated with a 3.98 G.P.A.
- Honors: summa cum laude

Experience

[Company name: XXXX | Company address: XXXX]

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Skills

- Hard Skills
 - Web Development
 - Marketing
 - Project Management Software
 - Documentation
- Soft Skills
 - Managerial Leadership
 - Organization
 - Planning
 - Public Speaking

Volunteer Activities

- Islamic Community Center of Parksville
 - Directing and coordinating the social and spiritual areas of a 500-600 member mosque
- Habitat for Humanity
 - Assisted in building homes to benefit local communities and provide low-income housing

Muslim X High GPA X Marketing Work Experience



Jenna Farman

Email: XXXX • Address: XXXX • Phone number: XXXX
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 - Marketing
 - Project Management Software
 - Documentation
- Soft Skills
 - Leadership
 - Organization
 - Planning
 - Public Speaking

Volunteer Activities

- Islamic Community Center of Parkville
 - Directing and coordinating the social and spiritual areas of a 500-600 member mosque
- Habitat for Humanity
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Muslim X Low GPA X Managerial Work Experience



Jenna Farman

Email: XXXX • Address: XXXX • Phone number: XXXX
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 - Documentation
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 - Organization
 - Planning
 - Public Speaking

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 - Directing and coordinating the social and spiritual areas of a 500-600 member mosque
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 - Public Speaking

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 - Directing and coordinating the social and spiritual areas of a 500-600 member mosque
- Habitat for Humanity
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APPENDIX D

SUITABILITY SCALE

How suitable is this person to be hired for the management position? (1=Not very much; 7=Very Much)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Please Select Rating							

APPENDIX E

EXPLICIT JUDGMENT CRITERIA

Which criteria did you use to make your suitability rating? (Please select all that apply)

- Name
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- How the applicant was dressed
- Career Objective
- University
- Graduate G.P.A.
- Work Experience
- Skills
- Volunteer Work

APPENDIX F

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

- Gender
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other (Please Specify)

- Age

- Ethnicity
 - Caucasian
 - African-American
 - Latino or Hispanic
 - Asian
 - Native American
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - Other (Please Specify)

- Religious Affiliation
 - Christian
 - Jewish

- Muslim
 - Atheist
 - None
 - Other (Please Specify)
-
- Have you ever been in a position of power where you could hire and/or fire someone?
 - Yes
 - Maybe
 - No
-
- Did the applicant on the application remind you of anyone you know? If yes, please specify your relationship with this person.
 - Yes
 - No