Introduction: The Complex Interface of Work and Religion

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Religions and Tensions around the World

Despite extensive scholarship and developments in the field of management over the last century, and plentiful evidence of the worldwide increase in religious diversity (Alesina et al., 2002; Pew Research Center, 2014), not much attention has been paid to religious diversity and its role in the workplace.

Religion has been traditionally seen as a private matter with little or no consideration given to religious diversity in the workplace. Today, given the re-emergence or revival of religious identities and sentiments in the Middle East, Europe, North America, South Asia, and other parts of the world, it is crucial for policymakers and employers to develop better understanding and management of religious diversity. This is particularly important in the global marketplace, given that companies are increasingly interacting with diverse religions, cultures, and stakeholders (Syed & Ozbilgin, 2015).

In the last three decades, there has been a growing number of courses in academia and corporate training, and an exponential increase in publications in the areas of diversity, equality, and social responsibility. These avenues have raised the issue of diversity, but the discussion on religious diversity has been somewhat superficial and limited. Leaders and managers are interested in pre-empting or resolving religious conflicts and tensions while trying to harness diversity for enhanced individual and team performance, productivity, and other organizational benefits. However, it is unclear how to go about doing this. Thus far, the rise of the "faith at work" or "God at work" movement has primarily targeted workers of Christian affiliation (Miller, 2007). There the focus has been on integrating faith and making sense of religious beliefs in the workplace, but the issue of potential conflict from religious diversity has not been adequately addressed (Miller, 2007).

However, in the past two decades, the "spirituality at work" scholarship has attempted to describe, measure, and assess the challenges and opportunities of spirituality and religion in the workplace (Fry, 2013; Karakas, 2010).

Employees from varied ethnic or racial groups usually bring together a variety of ideologies and practices (Gebert et al., 2014), some of which may be useful for evoking alternative approaches to management and innovation. Employees that are exposed to different cultures are more likely to adapt to diverse situations and people (Gebert et al., 2014). The cultural expertise of employees and managers can benefit organizations, especially those that operate globally (SHRM, 2015), for example, by better understanding the religious and ideological preferences and sensitivities of people of diverse backgrounds (Hambler, 2015).

Organizations have begun to appreciate the value of religious and cultural diversity while incorporating equality and diversity into their core values. For example, local and multinational corporations in Brunei are expected to consider the notion of Melayu Islam Beraja (Malay Muslim Monarchy), a national ideology which embraces the Brunei Malay culture, Islamic values, and the history and role of monarchy. The notion of Melayu Islam Beraja promotes the idea that people, both within and outside organizations, should be treated like family members, as is consistent with Islamic religious and local cultural values (Low & Mohd Zain, 2008). Similarly, Alliance Bank Malaysia integrates cultural diversity into its core values and seeks to build a strong workforce while achieving business goals (Alliance Bank, 2014). A similar commitment to religious diversity is evident in Ireland, where Community National Schools with diverse religious, denominational, and cultural ideologies are encouraged. Recently, Education Minister Richard Bruton reiterated his strong support for the growth of Community National Schools as a way of offering parents more choice. It has been stated that these schools offer a multi-denominational approach to religious education, catering for all beliefs in the school day. In practice, they are like a hybrid between the traditional, religion-led schools, and the growing "Educate Together" model that provides for no religious teaching inside the school (Donnelly, 2017).

While religion usually entails adhering to a structured belief system or dogma, spirituality is concerned with growing into and experiencing

the Divine consciousness. Loosely speaking, the traditions of Sufism in Islam (both Sunni and Shia Islam) and Kabbalah in Judaism may be seen as spiritual in their orientation, concerned with explaining the mystical content of the universe and humanity's relationship to God's creation, while seeking the refinement of the soul and intimacy with God (Schwartz, 2011).

Religion places importance on intellectual beliefs (Byrd & Scott, 2014) while spirituality emphasizes a personal connection with the universe and its constituents. Spirituality-oriented workplaces are known to have a more accepting and reconciliatory approach towards demographic and ideological differences (Gröschl, 2016). An egalitarian and inclusive perspective and practice of religion and spirituality may provide a feeling of purpose, a sense of connection, and positive social relations between people, and enhance the ability to work with one another without conflicts (Byrd & Scott, 2014).

Scholars (e.g., Kirton & Greene, 2015; Messarra, 2014) suggest that religious and spiritual diversity has become a catchphrase that is generally acknowledged but rarely instituted until conflicts appear. Although preemptive policies exist particularly in Western countries to eliminate religious discrimination, organizations usually take a less proactive approach to addressing such issues (Kirton & Greene, 2015).

As organizations are becoming more diverse, religion is often an issue in the workplace. Problems usually arise due to conflicts between organizational policies and employees' religious practices (Mathis et al., 2016). For example, some organizations may require their employees to dress in a certain way. However, this may not be acceptable to some men and women for religious reasons, as may be the case with headgear such as the turban for Sikhs and the hijab/headscarf for some Muslim women. Similarly, some employees may struggle to work on particular days and times due to religious obligations such as Sabbath and Ramadan (Hambler, 2015).

Religious discrimination is an issue that continues to fester in Western workplaces, affecting people of diverse beliefs, such as Muslims, Sikhs, and Jews (Moodie, 2016). The problem often stems from lack of understanding of different religious and cultural values, which may lead to misunderstandings and resentment. As a result, employees may experience conflicts not only amongst themselves but also between their religious obligations and employment (Byrd &

Scott, 2014). Some of the discriminatory or non-inclusive practices or behaviors may not be deliberate and malicious, but may reflect a lack of diversity awareness in the workplace (Mor Barak, 2014). Often these issues merely scratch the surface of deeper issues, i.e., behavioral outcomes that may affect organizational performance as well as employee commitment and engagement (Bendl et al., 2015).

Previous research suggests that if it is not appropriately understood and managed, religious diversity can potentially trigger serious conflicts in the workplace (Byrd & Scott, 2014; Gebert et al., 2014). For example, Christians may not be willing to work on their traditional religious or festive holidays, while practicing Muslims may require one to three short breaks per day for obligatory prayers (Chapman et al., 2014; Yasmeen & Markovic, 2014). Thus, it is not only an issue of diversity management but also organizational flexibility in accommodating religious diversity at work.

The resolution of some of the religion-related issues may require an understanding of the laws and religious obligations, and balancing organizational needs and employees' preferences regarding practicing their religion at work (Bendl et al., 2015). In view of anti-discrimination legislation across several countries and jurisdictions, organizations, particularly in Western countries, are interested in devising strategies and management interventions to mitigate negative organizational and personal consequences of religious discrimination in the workplace (Chapman et al., 2014; Messarra, 2014).

Despite such efforts being made, inequalities continue to exist between majorities and minorities (Gröschl, 2016), and at times, there may be a clear religious penalty for people of certain religious backgrounds, such as Muslims in the post-9/11 world. The fatal flaw of many corporate and social policies is that they neglect the extent of religious and ethnic inequalities within and outside the workplace (Chapman et al., 2014). Justice is concerned not only with socio-economic and legal inequalities at the level of the individual, but also with persistent patterns of collective discrimination and disadvantage (Yasmeen & Markovic, 2014).

Often, negative attitudes and behaviors in the workplace include prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, which may also occur when recruiting and hiring staff (Messarra, 2014). Discriminatory and negative behaviors may have significant implications for organizational

culture because these may harm working relationships and damage morale and productivity (Gebert et al., 2014).

Religious tensions and conflicts are commonplace in the world today, not only in the Middle East, but also in parts of South and South East Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Today, reference to religion and religious pluralism, often perceived as a threat by certain segments of the populace, is commonplace in the run up to any election, as witnessed in the recent campaigns for the US and French presidencies, and the German regional elections. Such tensions and conflicts are found not only on an inter-religious level, for example between Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, but are also evident at an intra-religious level, for example between Protestants and Catholics, Sunnis and Shias, Salafis/Wahhabis and Sufis, Reform and Orthodox Jews. Tensions are also found between people of faith and those who do not identify with a religious faith, e.g. atheists. Such tensions are manifested in all aspects of everyday life, such as employment, political and other institutions, media, education, and wider society.

In light of recent high-profile religion-based conflicts (e.g. the Paris and Nice killings in France, the Israel-Palestine conflict, the rise of the so-called "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria, the emergence of radical Salafi and Deobandi Islamism, as well as Islamophobia and anti-Semitism), there is a need to more deeply examine how religion-based tensions impact people, work, employment, and organizations.

There are several examples of how religious diversity may affect individuals in the workplace. In 2016, US food processing company Cargill fired 150 Muslim workers from its beef processing plant in Colorado after a dispute over prayer breaks. After facing protests about the layoffs, the company changed its hiring policy allowing the fired employees to reapply for their jobs (Moodie, 2016). This suggests that some organizations are still unwilling to accommodate employees' religious beliefs. Similarly, the US Supreme Court heard a case in 2015, filed by a Muslim plaintiff, Samantha Elauf, who argued that a clothing retailer, Abercrombie & Fitch, denied her a job because she wore a hijab. After a thorough investigation, it was confirmed that Ms Elauf was not hired because of her religious dress, and as a result she won the case (Kaur, 2015).

Similarly, a well-qualified Sikh applicant tried to obtain a job as a salesperson at a car dealership. During a group interview, the recruiter

allegedly asked the applicant if he would be willing to shave his beard for the job. He explained that this was not possible because of his religious beliefs and as a result he was denied the job. The complainant won his case for being treated unfairly (Kaur, 2015).

In another similar case, a British Airways (BA) employee suffered discrimination for her Christian beliefs. Nadia Eweida took her case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) after BA asked her to stop wearing a white gold cross visibly. The court ruled that BA had not struck a fair balance between Ms Eweida's religious beliefs and the company's corporate image. As a result, the company was ordered to pay Ms Eweida 2,000 euros (£1,600) in damages and 30,000 euros (£25,000) in costs (Pigott, 2013).

Events happening outside of work can have an impact on the treatment of religious minority employees within the workplace. For example, since . . . the terrorist attacks by Deobandi/Salafi Islamists in 2015 in San Bernardino, the Anti-Discrimination Committee has received more than a dozen phone calls from Muslim Americans locally reporting a variety of workplace discrimination and harassment. One of them was from Terry Ali, a 48-year-old medical receptionist, who was suing her employer, Livonia Dermatology, claiming that the clinic fired her two days after the deadly shootings due to her religious beliefs (Baldas, 2015).

There are also organizational examples of how religious diversity may be promoted in the workplace. Accounting giant EY (formerly Ernst & Young) is seeking to build an inclusive environment for its workers. The firm has created quiet rooms at its New York headquarters and in all of its Canadian offices, which are open to all employees either to take quick breaks or to pray, or for meditation purposes. The company also accommodates major religious and cultural holidays for its diverse employees.

Although the initial focus of this book project was on tensions and conflicts, the editors early on acknowledged the need to examine how societies and organizations could develop an inclusive and pluralistic environment in which people of diverse faiths and cultures feel equally valued and are able to be productive members of the society. Beyond this, they have sought out contributions where religious management practices as well as individual spirituality have been shown to lead to improved individual and collective performance, and this is reflected in several chapters of the present volume as will be outlined below.

Aim of the Present Volume: Addressing the Need to Manage Religious Diversity

While religion has recently received some attention in academic scholarship (e.g., McKim, 2001, 2012; Meister, 2010; Miller, 2007; Paloutzian & Park, 2013; Tilley, 2007; Wiggins, 1996), barring very few exceptions (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Gröschl & Bendl, 2013; Neal, 2013), the implications of religious diversity in the workplace remain largely underexplored.

The aim of the present volume is to advance and disseminate the latest and most relevant knowledge in the area of religious diversity at work. It seeks to provide researchers, academics, students, and practitioners with a multidisciplinary view of religious diversity at work from a global perspective, taking into account the sources and arenas of religious tensions in the world today, and also the possibilities for constructive engagement and harmonization of religious differences for individual, social, and organizational good.

This book also takes into account how religious perspectives have contributed to the development of management theory, and how religious ideologies can provide useful lenses by which to interpret and extend management theory, e.g., Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership theory, which can be found in many religious texts, although the philosophy itself transcends any particular religious tradition.

This book offers an intersection of theory and practice on this topic, with a particular focus on the implications of religion for work and employment, but also taking into account wider societal, cultural, and institutional contexts. It is an interdisciplinary book, integrating contributions and insights from management, sociology, economics, politics, law, psychology, and religion. It also integrates the views on managing religion from diverse regional perspectives: North America, but also Africa, Asia, Europe, and the South Pacific. It features forward-looking essays from thought leaders and practitioners in the field.

Increasingly, policymakers and leaders around the globe are realizing the need to attend to the potential threat that religion-based tensions may pose to individuals, communities, and organizations (Syed et al., 2016), even though in some instances the threat may not be apparent or imminent (Reuters, 2016). In many instances, political, religious, and cultural biases may infiltrate organizational boundaries, thus replicating the societal stereotypes and *othering*. Within the domain of work

and employment, individuals may suffer from overt or covert forms of hatred, prejudice, and discrimination, and this may affect their well-being and performance (Chickering et al., 2006). They may be under direct or indirect pressure to refrain from exposing their religious identity for the fear of othering (Crossmann, 2015; Hecht & Faulkner, 2000), which might result in lower well-being, organizational commitment, and individual performance (Yoshino & Smith, 2013, 2014), as well as negative personal outcomes in some contexts (Rosh & Offermann, 2013). Christerson and Emerson (2003) suggest that the same social dynamics that enforce or encourage internal homogeneity also produce high personal costs to belonging to minority ethnic or religious groups.

However, as suggested by Allport (1954) long ago, the workplace can and should provide a forum for inclusion, lowering of prejudice, and the overcoming of identity-based differences, thus improving people's well-being and alleviating tensions by bringing them together in pursuance of common work goals. Thus, there is not only an ethical and social responsibility to manage religious diversity well, but also a performance rationale. Hicks (2002) suggests that the task of effective organizational leadership is to create an inclusive structure and culture in which leaders and followers can respectfully negotiate religious and spiritual diversity alongside other forms of difference such as ethnicity, gender, age, familial obligations, and ability. Bouma et al. (2003), for instance, show that there is no inherent conflict between Islamic doctrine and modern workplaces, and therefore potential areas of friction between religion and contemporary human resource management (HRM) practices can and should be managed effectively. An example of this is provided by the chapter by Itani and Sidani in the present volume.

Indeed, chapters in this book offer up-to-date international scholarship on religious diversity at work addressing issues of conflict, harmony, and performance. They have been gathered by a diverse team of editors, who have paved the way for the diversity of chapters of this book, by contributors from a wide range of geographic regions, ethnicities, nationalities, and religious affiliations.

The Diversity of the Editorial Team

The editors form a diverse team, in terms of ethnicity, gender, and religion. They all experience or have experienced a nexus of contradictory and simultaneous "majority" and "minority" statuses, or "relatively

privileged" and "relatively deprived" positions. We collectively represent life as management academics at the intersections of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and nationality, not to mention the differences in our geospatial locations in France, England, the United States, and Australia.

Alain Klarsfeld is a French secular Jew born and brought up in France by parents who had emigrated from Romania, so that his migrant-descendent status intersects with minority ethnicity status. Frequently being exposed to English-speaking academia gives Alain yet another minority (French) standpoint as opposed to mainstream North-American scholarship. At the same time, Alain experiences being a White male in a country with a White majority, and in a professional context where White males are a majority (full professors in management). He also experiences being an agnostic in a country where this religious affiliation is the majority affiliation.

Jawad Syed was born and grew up in Pakistan in the majority religion (Islam) but in a mixed-sect family, representing the majority Sunni Islam (on his maternal side and part of his paternal side) and minority Shia Islam (part of his paternal side). He thus recognizes the artificial and inflated nature of the Sunni-Shia binary in the mainstream media and academic discourse. He completed his higher studies in Australia, and lived and worked in the United Kingdom. In both countries, he has experienced Islam as a minority religion, in contexts where there is a low level of awareness and knowledge about the distinction between largely peaceful mainstream traditions of Islam (Sunni and Shia) and the patterns of violence and extremism within some hard-line sections of the Salafi (Wahhabi) and Deobandi groups. In both countries, Islam intersects with color of skins as both Australia and the United Kingdom are predominantly White, with a strong historical Christian background. Like Alain, Jawad enjoys a privileged male status when it comes to joining the ranks of full professorship in the UK. Since late 2016, Jawad has relocated to Pakistan where he is a full professor at a local university.

Faith Ngunjiri was born and raised in Kenya in the Christian faith, the majority faith in the country. She moved to the USA where she completed her doctoral education and where she now resides and works. In both Kenya and the USA, she is in the majority in terms of being a Christian; however, in both contexts, gender has been a source of conflict and discrimination. Furthermore, in the USA, she experiences

oppression and microaggressions at the intersections of race/ethnicity and gender, in both the religiously affiliated institutions where she presently works and the secular institutions she has worked or studied in previously. Thus she arrived in the USA with no racial identity, and has needed to develop a racial identity and learn to navigate the racialized context of the USA. Further, in spite of the "majority" status conferred by her Christian faith, her strong social justice ideals as a Quaker make her a minority within that larger context – and often place her at odds with others whose values differ significantly, especially around the question of women and leadership in the church.

Charmine Härtel is a White American who grew up in a predominantly aboriginal community in Alaska, so she represents a minority within a minority. She was brought up in a rather secular immediate family environment but she was exposed to aboriginal spirituality that permeated life in the community where she lived, including that of her own family. She moved to a more mainstream US environment when she was 17, and felt foreign to this mainstream society that she came to know relatively late. She is a woman in the highly competitive, male-dominated profession of academia. At the same time, she also has experienced or experiences being White in two countries where Whites are a majority: Australia and the USA.

As a team then, we form a microcosm of the issues discussed in this book at the intersections of social identities and organizational life; we personify the very diversity that this book aims to explore.

Overview of the Book

The book is organized in a manner that not only covers main regions and religions but also, within many chapters (where possible and appropriate), there is a specific focus on organizational approaches, experiences, challenges, and opportunities with regard to religious diversity.

The chapters in this book offer a combination of theoretical and empirical contributions to interrogate and explore the question of religious diversity in the workplace. Interdisciplinary studies and emergent research designs such as autoethnography (Chang et al., 2013) are included where relevant. Before going into the substance of each chapter, we will try to outline the takeaway from this chapter in relation to transverse questions: religion as a source of tensions at the