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**The Relations Between Race, Differences in Cultural Values, and Experienced
Discrimination of Immigrants in the U.S.**

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ABSTRACT

Study examined relations among skin color, cultural values, and individuals' perceived discrimination. Results revealed that immigrants to the U. S. experienced more unfair discrimination than non-immigrants, and individuals with darker skin color are more likely to experience discrimination than those with lighter skin color. In addition, the data indicated that those individuals' whose cultural values differ from the dominant values (e.g., collectivism and familism) in the U. S. are more likely to experience unfair discrimination than those who share the dominant values. Implications for research and society are discussed.

Keywords: immigrant, immigration, discrimination, skin color, culture, cultural values

JEL: J70, J71, J31, J15

In his famous speech to the Daughters of the American Revolution, President Franklin D. Roosevelt commented that “Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists” (Roosevelt, 1938). The United States has always been a land of immigrants and it continues to maintain its immigrant foundations. Historically, however, early colonial immigrants were primarily of European origin (Dinnerstein & Reimers, 1999). Currently, the U.S. hosts one of the largest and most diverse foreign-born populations in the world with the majority of recent immigrants coming from a variety of Latin American, Caribbean, and Asian regions (International Organization for Migration, 2010). This ethnic and racial diversity is not surprising since in 2010, approximately 42,813,281 immigrants entered the United States (United Nations, 2012), representing approximately 13% of the total U.S. population (Pew Research Center, 2013). In particular, there has been a drastic rise in immigrants of Asian origin, surpassing Hispanics as the fastest growing group of new immigrants in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2012). Immigrants from Mexico have also significantly impacted the changing demographic composition of the U.S. based on the influx of approximately 12,220,881 people in 2010 (United Nations, 2012). Though unauthorized immigration has slowed, the U.S. immigrant population continues to grow (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Despite a rich tradition of immigration, research demonstrates that immigrants in the U.S. have experienced negative biases and unfair discrimination in a variety of social and organizational contexts (Binggeli, Dietz, and Krings, 2013; Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Wagner, Christ, and Heitmeyer, 2010). Immigrants may face wage discrimination (Hersch, 2008, 2011; Reitz & Verma, 2004; Stewart & Dixon, 2010; Swidinsky &

Swidinsky, 2002), perceptions of lower skills (Alboim, Finnie, & Meng, 2005; Esses & Dietz, 2006), employment discrimination (Bell et al., 2010; Binggeli et al., 2013; Dietz, 2010; Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010; Hosoda, Nguyen, & Stone-Romero, 2012), and stereotypical treatment in the media (Healey, 2004). Wage discrimination is even more pronounced for undocumented immigrants (Borjas & Tienda, 1993; Tienda & Singer, 1995).

Research has shown a variety of reasons for unfair discrimination of immigrants. Social psychological explanations for bias against immigrants focus on scarce resources (Allport, 1954; Esses et al., 2001; Sherif, 1966) and the perception of threat (Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999). Scholars also maintain that national identification in the form of nationalism can strongly influence negative attitudes and behaviors toward immigrants (Brewer, 1999; Brown & Zagefka, 2005; De Figueirido & Elkins, 2003; Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009). In terms of empirical research, Esses, Jackson and Armstrong (1998) found that a high social dominance orientation (i.e. preference for social hierarchy) strongly predicted unfavorable attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Stephan et al. (1999) revealed that four factors – realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes – were significantly and positively associated with prejudice toward Cuban and Mexican immigrants accounting for 64% of the variance in attitudes toward Cubans and 68% of the variance in attitudes toward Mexicans.

The study of immigrant discrimination is a limited research area in organizational psychology. According to several scholars, research on immigrants has not kept pace with the increasing rates of diversity in the U.S. and around the world (Binggeli, Dietz, & Krings, 2013; Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998). In fact, reviews of the literature have concluded that immigrants remain one of the least studied outgroups in diversity scholarship (Bell, Kwesiga, &

Berry, 2010). This is disconcerting given the increasing prevalence of immigration across the world and in the U.S. in particular. Moreover, this indicates that society in general and employers in particular are not tapping into the talent that immigration diversity may offer.

To date, there is a paucity of studies examining the correlates or predictors of immigrant discrimination based on both skin color and cultural values. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to assess relations between immigrants' skin color and cultural values not consistent with U.S. values. We consider two factors may affect immigrant discrimination: (a) skin color and (b) cultural values. Those that have looked predictors of immigrant discrimination have focused on either (a) scarce resources, (b) threats, or (c) skin color. Given that immigrants come from a variety of backgrounds, it may be more appropriate to focus on identifying both skin color and cultural factors that increase the risk for immigrant discrimination.

This present study contributes to the immigrant discrimination literature in several significant ways. First, it provides the first empirical testing of the differences in cultural values and immigrant discrimination. Second, the reported study extends previous literature by examining the extent to which skin color influences immigrant discrimination.

Theoretical Explanations for Discrimination based on Race and Cultural Values

Race

Race is generally defined in terms of physical characteristics such as skin color, facial features, and hair type (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). In this paper, we focus on skin color as an indicator of race and the discrimination that may occur based on whether or not one has light or dark skin.

In the U.S., social perceptions of beauty and attractiveness are based on Eurocentric standards that have been instilled in society originating from a legacy of European colonialism and slavery (Arce et al., 1987; Hill, 2002; Hunter, 2007; Kilbourne, 1999). This white aesthetic ideal has been internalized not only by whites but also by racial minorities such as African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans (Hall, 1994, 1995, 1997). Skin color discrimination may occur because light skin color is associated with a range of positive values and attributes such as power (Hill, 2002), social status (Fraizer, 1957), and rationality (Hunter, 2007). Dark skin, on the other hand, is connected to a range of negative attributes such as “savagery, irrationality, ugliness, and inferiority” (Hunter, 2007: 238).

Racial minorities (e.g. African-Americans and Hispanics) experience more unfair discrimination than majority members (Stone, Stone, & Dipboye, 1992). Racial minorities may experience greater discrimination because they often have darker skin color. An empirical relationship between skin color and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors is supported by several studies. One of the most robust findings is in terms of wage discrimination. For example, it has been found that Mexican Americans with darker skin earned significantly less than individuals with lighter skin (Telles and Murguia, 1988). In a study of stratification outcomes, Keith and Herring (1991) demonstrated the significant link between skin color and educational, occupational, and income attainment. Mexicans and Cubans with dark skin color were shown to have lower occupational attainment than those with light skin color (Espino & Franz, 2002). There is a large pay disparity between medium or dark-skinned African Americans and white workers when compared to light-skinned African Americans (Goldsmith, Hamilton, & Darity, 2007). Latino immigrants with dark skin earned less than Latino immigrants with lighter skin (Frank, Akresh, & Lu, 2010). In a study of immigrants, Hersch

(2008) and Hersch (2011) revealed that same finding applied to dark-skinned immigrants who received lower pay than light-skinned immigrants. There is additional evidence that African Americans with light skin color have higher SES attainment than those with dark skin color (Hill, 2000). Moreover, research indicates that light skin color is more likely to influence attractiveness of African American women than men (Hill, 2002). Taken together, these studies suggest that skin color discrimination can be found in a variety of social and organizational contexts. Therefore, we offer the following hypotheses regarding the relation between skin color and discrimination.

Hypothesis 1: Immigrants will experience more unfair discrimination than non-immigrants.

Hypothesis 2: In the U.S., individuals with darker skin color will experience more unfair discrimination than those with lighter skin color.

Hypothesis 3: Immigrants in the U.S. with darker skin color will experience more unfair discrimination than immigrants with lighter skin color.

Next, we consider the role of cultural values by examining how differences in worldviews might influence discriminatory attitudes and behaviors against immigrants.

Terror Management Theory

Immigrants may also experience unfair discrimination because their cultural values differ from the dominant cultural values in the U.S. Some of the central values in the U.S. are individualism, the Protestant work ethic, willingness to sacrifice family for work, competitive achievement, and freedom or equality (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Researchers (Stone-Romero, Stone, & Salas, 2003) have argued that cultural values influence work scripts and role expectations. When work scripts differ between individuals, those from the non-dominant group (a) fail to comply with role expectations, (b) experience role conflict and ambiguity, and (c)

receive low performance ratings, and (d) receive fewer positive outcomes such as raises or promotions.

According to terror management theory (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991; Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997), individuals are instinctively programmed for self-preservation despite the awareness of the inevitability of death. There are two key terror management claims: (1) the mortality salience hypothesis and (2) the anxiety buffer hypothesis. According to the first claim, the fear of death activates proximal (i.e. suppression and rationalization) and distal defenses (i.e. worldview defense and self-esteem enhancement) to protect one's cultural worldview (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999). Cultural worldviews represent "the humanly created and transmitted beliefs about the nature of reality shared by groups of individuals" (Greenberg et al., 1997: 65). Second, individuals are motivated to engage in self-protective responses in order to reduce anxiety about the awareness of death and to maintain belief in a particular cultural worldview.

Self-esteem is derived directly from the sense of meaning, order, and permanence afforded by cultural values and the extent to which those standards are met or exceeded. Ultimately, self-preservation is an act of defending one's cultural values to maintain self-esteem through the positive evaluation of those with similar views and the negative evaluation of those with alternate worldviews (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg, 2003). Symbolic immortality can be achieved through the maintenance and defense of one's cultural worldview.

From a terror management theory perspective, in-group favoritism and out-group prejudice is a function of differences in cultural values that are considered threats to one

another's self-esteem and attempts at self-preservation. The collision of alternate worldviews increases rather than reduces anxiety and makes salient the need to defend one's culture.

A large body of empirical research has investigated the prejudicial outcomes associated with threats to individual's cultural worldviews. In a three-part experiment, Greenberg et al. (1990) demonstrated that as a consequence of thinking about death (mortality salience), Christian held positive evaluations of those with similar worldviews (Christianity) and negative evaluations of out-group members (Jewish targets). In a laboratory experiment on the effects of mortality salience on the assignment of blame, Nelson et al. (1997) extended these findings by showing that mortality salience is not only linked to bias against individuals in out-groups but also nationalistic bias to organizations that are perceived to represent a different culture. When mortality was salient, American participants placed more blame for the automobile accident on a Japanese company versus an American company or American driver. Studies conducted outside of the United States also provide support for in-group/out-group biases among individuals from different cultures. Oschmann and Mathy (1994) provide support for attitudinal and behavioral responses to mortality salience (as reviewed by Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). Given a mortality salience manipulation, German students not only rated Turkish students less favorably than other German students but also preferred to sit next to German students while maintaining physical distance from Turkish students. In their meta-analytic review, Burke, Martens, and Faucher (2010) reviewed 277 experiments (164 articles) examining the proposed link between mortality salience and worldview defense and self-esteem dependent variables. The authors concluded that that mortality salience manipulations across studies have been robust with an effect size of $r=.35$.

Thus, based on substantial empirical support that mortality salience stimulates negative attitudes and physical hostility toward out-group members, we predict the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Immigrants will value (a) collectivism and (b) familism more than non-immigrants.

Hypothesis 5: Individuals who value (a) collectivism and (b) familism will experience greater levels of unfair discrimination than those who do not emphasize these values.

Method

This study assessed relations among (a) immigrant status, (b) skin color, (c) collectivism, (d) familism, and (e) experienced discrimination.

Participants

Participants in the study were 58 employed individuals (22 men & 34 women) enrolled in adult training classes at a Southeastern university. All of the individuals were employed and their mean age was 36.57. Twenty-one were non-immigrants and 34 were immigrants. Seventeen were European-Americans, 4 Africans, 30 Hispanics, 2 Asians, 3 East Indians, and 1 participant was from Middle East. Their countries of origin included China, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, US, India, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Puerto Rico, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela.

Measures

Whenever possible standardized measures of constructs were used. A description of each of the measures is provided below.

Experienced Discrimination. This variable was measured with a 16 item summated scale based on measure developed by Ruggiero and Taylor (1995). It used a 7-point Likert Type Scale with a strongly disagree to strongly agree response format. The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for this measure was .76.

Skin color. In order to assess participants' skin color the authors developed a skin color palette using 5 shades of makeup. Two raters used the palette to judge participants' skin color on 5-point scale (very light to very dark brown). Each rater rated the participant's skin color when they turned in their questionnaires. There was an inter-rater correlation of .95 between the two raters.

Collectivism/Individualism (work). This construct was measured with a 23 item summated scale developed by Triandis (1994). It merits noting that the items in the scale referred to the work context. It used a 7-point response scale with extremely unimportant to extremely important anchors. The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for this scale was .88.

Familism. This construct was assessed with a 24 item summated scale. It used a 7-point never to always response scale. The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for this measure was .89.

Analyses

Correlation/multiple regression were used to analyze the data.

Results

Results of correlation analyses revealed support for four of five hypotheses. The findings for each hypothesis is noted below.

Tests of hypotheses

Results indicated support for hypothesis 1. In particular, immigrants reported they experienced more discrimination than non-immigrants ($r = .423, p < .001$)

In addition, the data from the present study revealed support for hypothesis 2. Specifically, individuals with darker skin color reported that they experienced more discrimination than those with lighter skin color ($r=.242, p < .05$).

However, the results showed no support for hypothesis 3. Immigrants with darker skin did not experience more discrimination than immigrants with lighter skin color ($r = -.065$, $p > .05$).

Hypothesis 4 argued that immigrants would place great value on collectivism and familism than non-immigrants. The results of the present study provide support for this hypothesis in terms of both collectivism ($r = .529$, $p < .001$), and (b) familism ($r = .635$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis 5 predicted that those individual with values that were not consistent with the dominant values in the U. S. (i.e., individualism, low familism values) would experience more discrimination than those whose values were different than those in the U. S. (i.e., collectivism and familism). In support of this hypothesis, individuals' collectivism values ($r = .293$, $p < .05$), and familism values ($r = .424$, $p < .001$) were positively related to their experienced discrimination.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to understand the factors that affect unfair discrimination against immigrants to the U. S. As a result, it examined the relations between individuals' (a) immigrant status, (b) skin color, and (c) differences in cultural values and their experienced discrimination in the employment context. The results suggest that immigrants to the U. S. experience more unfair discrimination than non-immigrants, and individuals with darker skin color are more likely to experience discrimination than those with lighter skin color. In addition, the data revealed that those individuals' whose cultural values differ from the dominant values (e.g., collectivism and familism) in the U. S. are more likely to experience unfair discrimination than those who share the dominant values. These results have important implications for theory, research, practice and society as a whole.

Implications for theory and future research

For example, although the U. S. is a nation of immigrants, few studies have examined the relations between immigrant status and differences in cultural values and experienced discrimination. Thus, future research should extend these findings and assess other factors that may influence the experienced discrimination of immigrants and non-immigrants. For instance, research might examine the educational level, socio-economic status, language, perceived threat to the dominant culture that might be related to experienced discrimination. In addition, future research might assess the degree to which other cultural values are related to experienced discrimination (e.g., power distance, flexible time orientation, differences in religious values).

Previous research has shown that individuals who are bicultural are more successful than those who are mono-cultural (Stone-Romero, Stone, & Salas, 2003). However, additional research is needed to understand the reasons that these individuals are more successful than others. Furthermore, research is needed to examine the extent to which individuals who are bicultural experience less discrimination than those who are mono-cultural.

Implications for practice.

Apart from the implications for future research, the present study also has key implications for practice. For instance, the results suggest that training is needed to clarify the role expectations of newcomers and immigrants so that they will experience higher levels of inclusion in organizations. In addition, supervisors should be trained to understand that immigrants often offer new creative ideas that may be very useful for organizations. As a result, they may need to understand cultural differences so that they can benefit from the many innovative ideas that immigrants bring to the workforce.

Limitations

Although the present study found support for a number of its hypotheses, there are still limitations that are associated with the study. First, the sample used in the study was very small and may not be representative of the sample of immigrants in the broader population. Furthermore, skin color was highly correlated with the participants' immigrant status (.676). As a result, it was difficult to determine the extent to which experienced discrimination was a function of immigrant status or skin color. A larger sample that includes immigrants from European countries as well as other nations would enable researchers to uncouple these variables.

In addition, the cultural values of collectivism and familism were highly correlated so that it is difficult to examine the role that differences in specific cultural values play in the unfair discrimination process. Finally, a very limited number of variables were included in the study and future research should expand on these variables.

Conclusion

The present study examined the factors that may be related to the experienced discrimination of immigrants. It is our hope that these results will help overcome discrimination against immigrants so organizations have the talented employees needed to achieve their goals, and immigrants have the opportunity to experience a fulfilling worklife in their adopted country.

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