

A quantitative cross-cultural perspective on social identity conflict in organizations

*Kelly M. Hannum
Todd Weber*

*International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology
July 2006*

Countries Investigated



Brazil*
France*
Germany*
India
Jordan*
Malaysia
Singapore
South Africa*
Spain*
U.K.
U.S.*

Leadership Across Differences Framework

Leadership
Contexts &
Challenges

Leadership
Processes &
Actions

Leadership
Outcomes

Survey Data

The survey contained four types of hypothetical situations dealing with social identity-based conflict in the workplace.

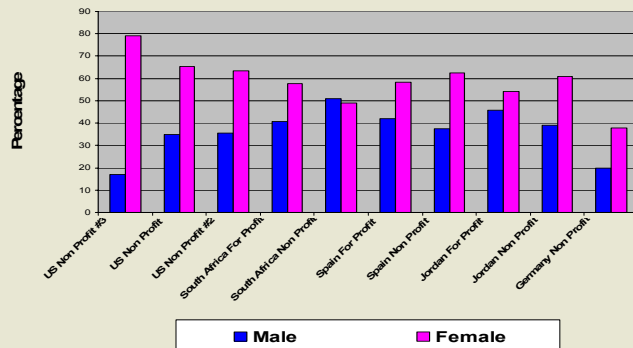
Questions referring to these 4 situations addressed:

- how effective different remedies would be in addressing these situations.
- how serious they perceived each situation to be
- whether or not action was needed
- what individuals or groups they viewed as responsible for addressing the issue.

Our Sample - Gender



Percentage of Males and Females by Organization



Our Sample - Race



	US Non-Profit-#3	US Non-Profit-#1	US Non-Profit-#2	Germany For Profit	Germany Non Profit	South Africa For Profit	South Africa Non profit	Spain For Profit	Spain Non profit	Jordan For Profit	Jordan Non profit	France For Profit
African American/Black	7%	28%	22%			5%	51%					
Arab									2%	69%	94%	
Asian/EuroAsian			1%					2%				
Bengal										3%		
Caucasian/White	80%	37%	53%			58%	33%	22%	18%			17%
Colored							10%					
European		7%		14%	21%			9%	4%			8%
Hispanic	1%	2%	3%									
Indian						3%	4%	2%		25%		
Korean American			1%									
Latin									4%			
Multiracial		2%	1%					2%	2%			
South African						17%						
None/NA		7%	2%	11%	2%				2%			
Other		2%							9%			

Our Sample – Religion

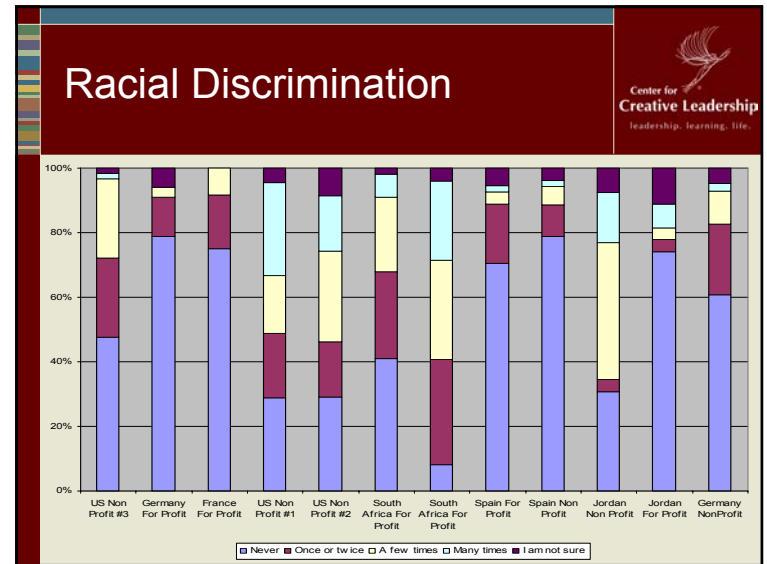
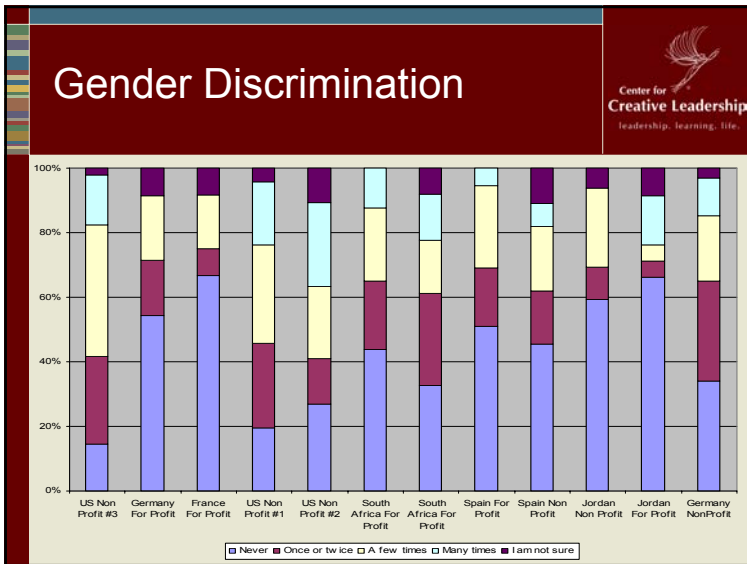
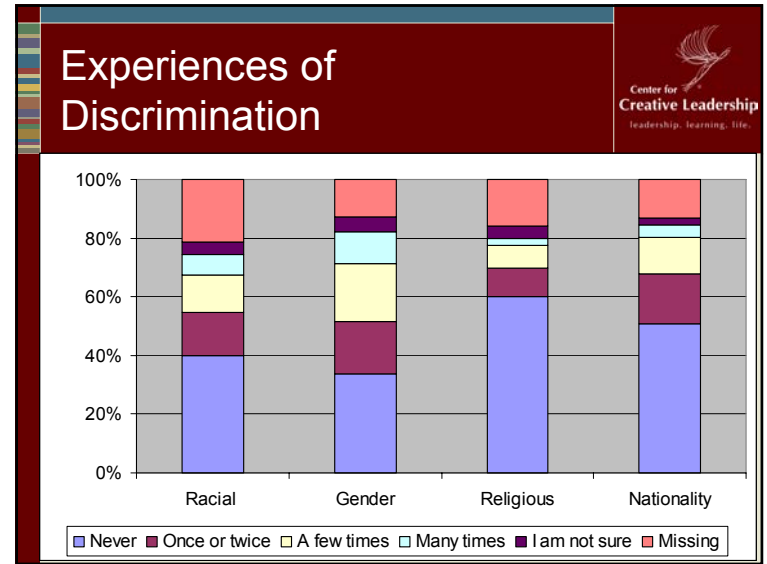
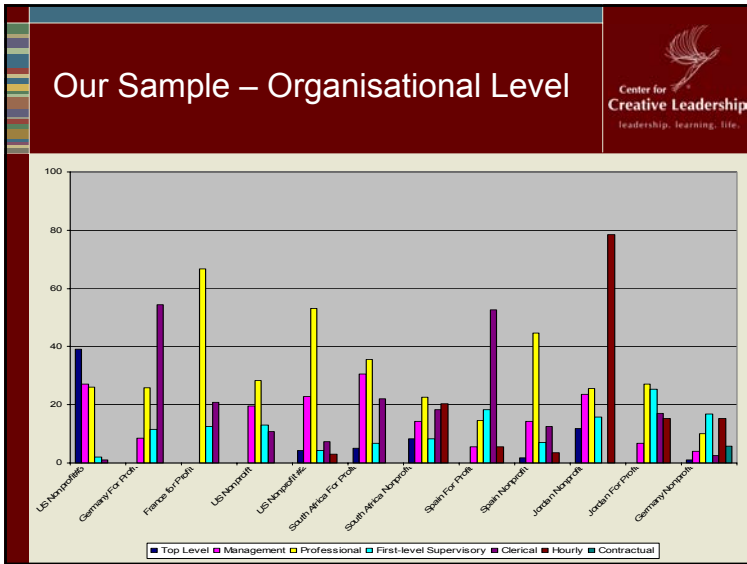


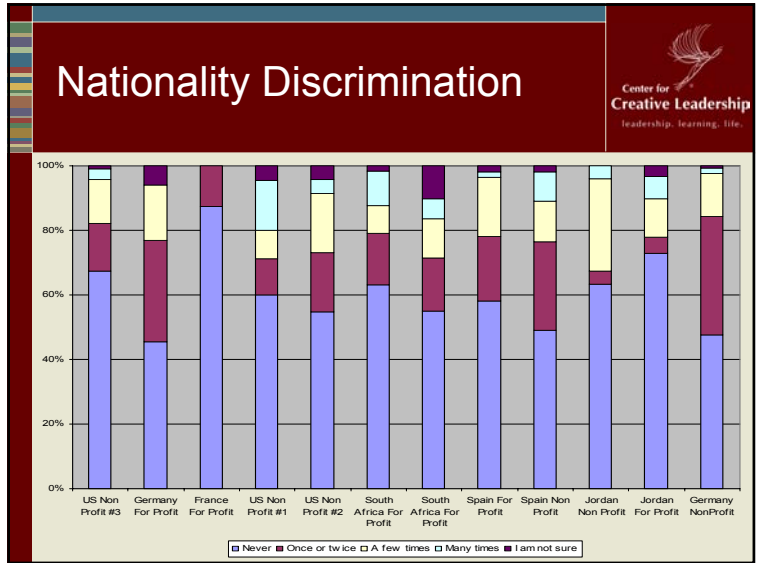
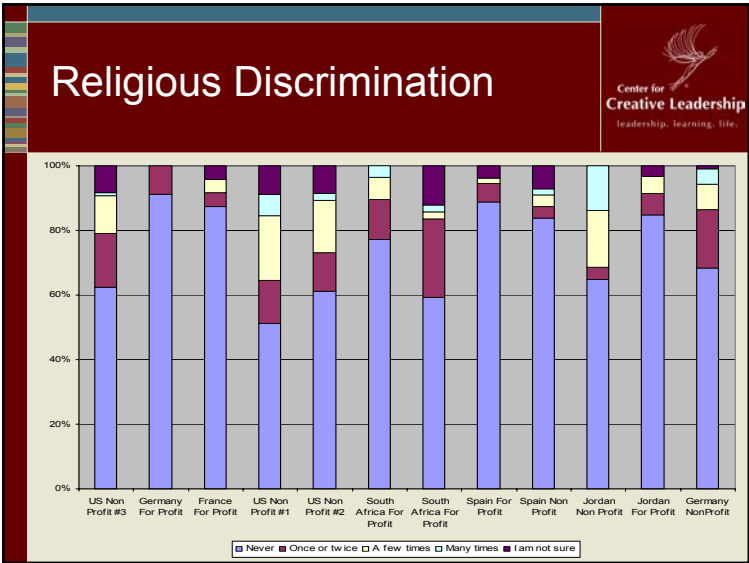
	US Non Profit #3	US Non Profit #1	US Non Profit #2	Germany For Profit	Germany Non Profit	South Africa For Profit	South Africa Non profit	Spain For Profit	Spain Non profit	Jordan For Profit	Jordan Non profit	France For Profit
Buddhism	1%					3%				5%	2%	50%
Christianity	68%	76%	69%	60%	21%	81%	84%	58%	38%	2%	57%	
Confucianism			1%				2%					
Hinduism			1%		4%	7%	2%				4%	
Islam		4%			9%					86%	37%	
Jainism			1%		9%							
Judaism	4%	2%	4%			2%				2%		
Shinto										2%		
Sikhism										3%		
Taoism		2%										
Vondun	1%											
None	12%	7%	13%	31%	17%	7%	2%	40%	32%			21%
Other		9%	7%				2%					4%

Experience of Discrimination



- These items are intended to function as a partial gauge of Intergroup Anxiety and possible Faultlines related to Social Identity.
- We expected there to be a relationship between experiences of discrimination and the seriousness of the scenarios and possibly with the level of responses endorsement.

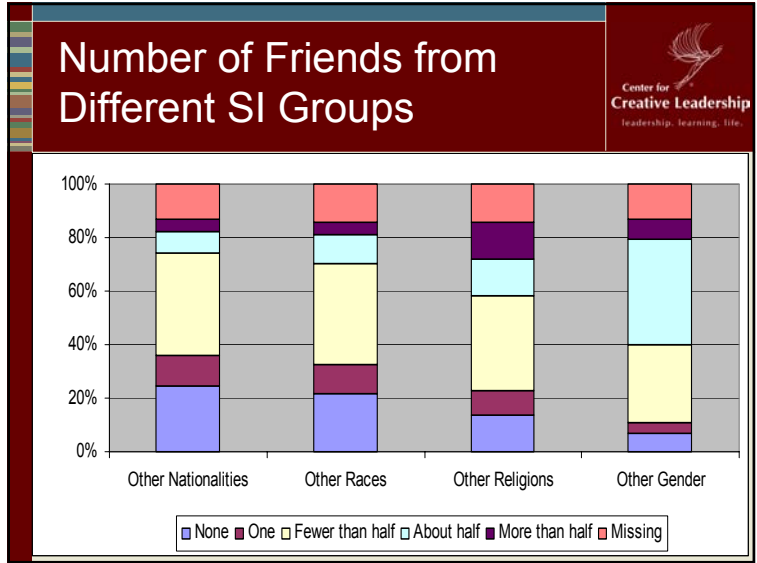


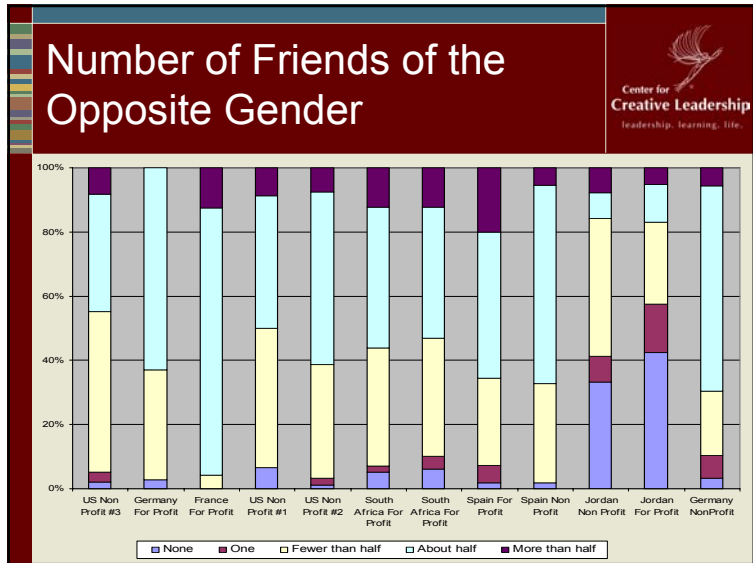
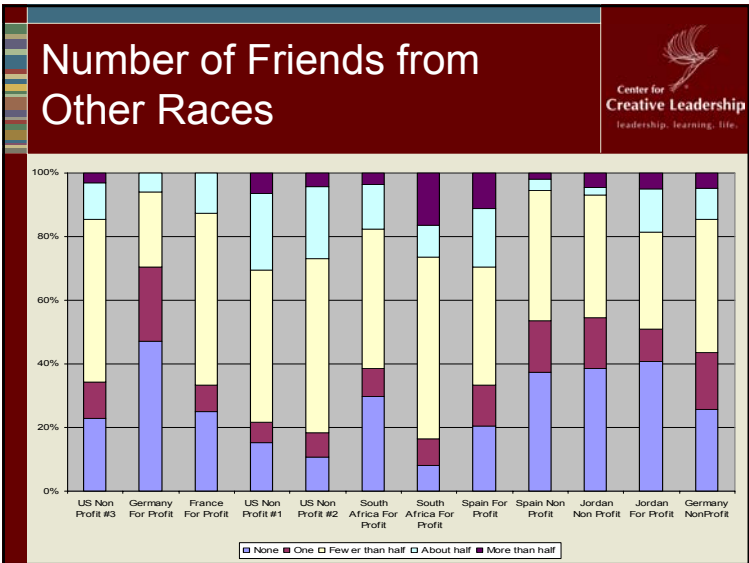
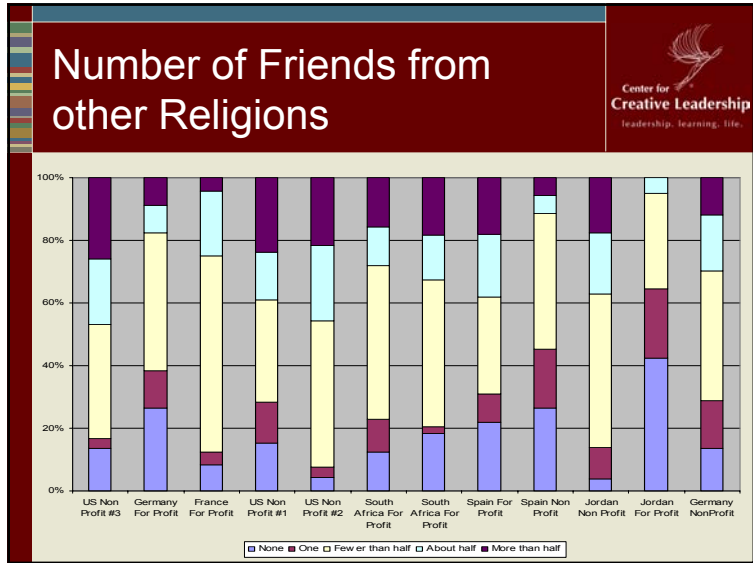
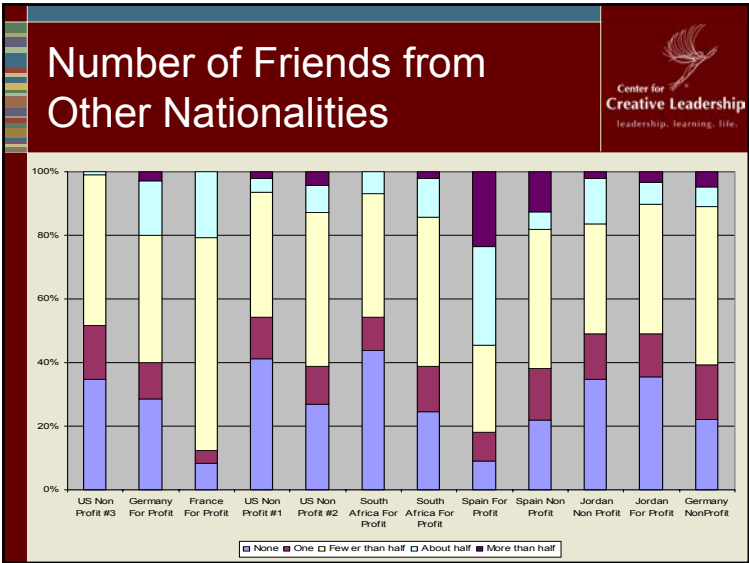


Friendships with Different SI Group Members

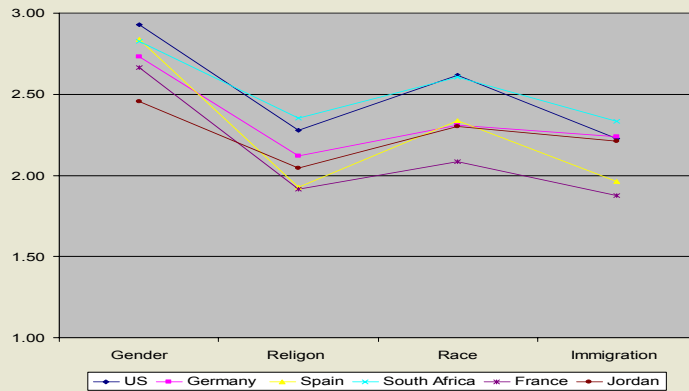
Center for Creative Leadership
leadership. learning. life.

- These items offer a partial measure related to Contact Theory
- We expected there to be a relationship between friendships with different SI groups and the seriousness of the scenarios and possible with the level of response endorsement.





Situation Seriousness Country Perspective



Most Highly Endorsed Responses



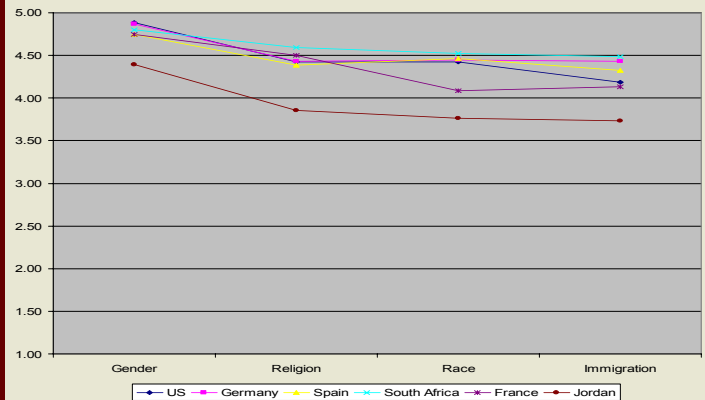
- Make sure that all supervisors and managers are treating people from all racial groups with respect on a daily basis
- Develop policies and procedures to insure that members of different racial groups are treated equally
- Develop a comprehensive program of policies, practices, and training for preventing these types of situations in the organization
- Hold training programs to teach people from different racial groups how to work together without disruption
- Provide individuals with a regular opportunity to learn more about the feelings, history, and customs of those who are different from them

Least Endorsed Responses

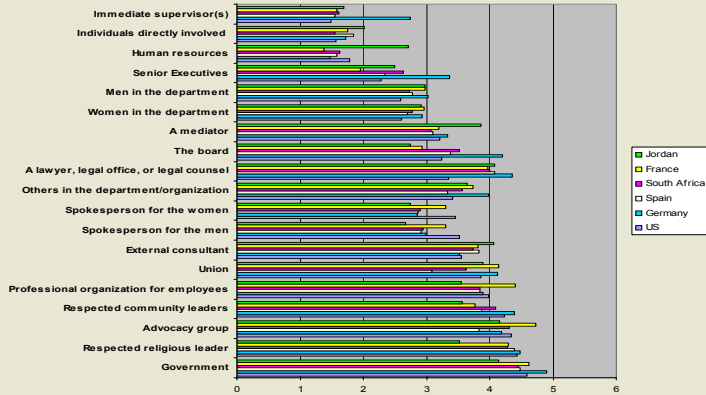


- Inform the media about what is going on
- Encourage anyone who is bothered by the situation to transfer to another part of the organization
- Let the situation play itself out; do nothing
- Redesign the work so that members of different racial groups will no longer have to interact with one another
- Stop hiring so many people from John's racial group

"Do nothing" item Culture Perspective



Who should be involved?



Organisational Level and Seriousness Ratings

Individuals at higher levels in the organisation perceive situations as less serious than those at lower levels.

	serious-gender	serious - religion	serious - race	serious-immigration
Correlation	-0.17	-0.10	-0.11	-0.03
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.43

Organisational Level and Discrimination

Interestingly, there is a weak relationship between organisational level and experiences of discrimination

	gender	religion	race	nationality
Correlation	-0.07	-0.05	-0.04	-0.05
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.06	0.23	0.32	0.15

Discrimination and Seriousness Ratings

There is a weak relationship between the experience of discrimination and seriousness ratings.

		serious-gender	serious - religion	serious - race	serious-immigration
Experienced Racial Discrimination	r	0.02	0.07	0.09	0.08
	p	0.67	0.07	0.03	0.05
Experienced Gender Discrimination	r	0.04	-0.01	0.1	0.06
	p	0.27	0.86	0.01	0.09
Experienced Religious Discrimination	r	-0.05	0.04	0.07	0.04
	p	0.14	0.23	0.07	0.24
Experienced Nationality Discrimination	r	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03	-0.04
	p	0.78	0.83	0.36	0.27

Friendship and Seriousness Ratings



Having Friends from different social identity groups did not have a strong relationship with seriousness ratings.

		# of Friends from Other Nationalities	# of Friends from Other Races	# of Friends from Other Religions	# of Friends of Other Gender
Seriousness - Gender Scenario	r	-0.05	0.08	0.09	0.10
	p	0.19	0.03	0.01	0.01
Seriousness - Religion Scenario	r	-0.03	0.10	0.08	0.04
	p	0.49	0.00	0.03	0.22
Seriousness - Race Scenario	r	-0.03	0.10	0.06	0.07
	p	0.45	0.00	0.08	0.07
Seriousness - Immigration Scenario	r	-0.01	0.02	-0.01	-0.03
	p	0.73	0.52	0.76	0.39

Data Highlights



In general, participants from all countries:

- preferred an approach to SI conflict situations that focused on learning and showing respect rather than a punitive or avoiding approach
- preferred that situations be handled by members of the organization rather than by “outsiders”
- rated “Doing Nothing” as harmful

Data Highlights



- There is a relationship between organisational level and seriousness.
- There is not a significant relationship between organisational level and experiences of discrimination
- There is not a significant relationship between the experience of discrimination and seriousness ratings.

Gender Scenario



At a charitable institution in your city, a number of the male employees in one of the departments seem to always be making sexually suggestive remarks and telling offensive jokes to the women, even touching them when they find the women alone. Most of the women in the department know about these men and routinely warn new female employees about the behavior of these men. Some of the women are upset about the situation as it is rumored that a woman who once complained about this behavior was ostracized and finally quit her job. Many people in the rest of the institution also know about this rumor and what is said to go on in this department. The ability of the men and women to effectively work together increasingly suffers.

Religion Scenario



An administrative employee working for a financial institution sends out a routine e-mail to the entire organization announcing a change in the cafeteria hours for the following week. After her signature, she has inserted an inspirational quotation from a religious text.

Many of the people who receive this e-mail become very upset. People from other religious groups as well as those who are non-religious resent what they interpret as her effort to proselytize. Tensions between different religious groups start to arise and disrupt the work of the organization. These tensions are particularly focused on the religious group of the woman who sent the e-mail.

Race Scenario



Tom, a manager at the ABC power plant, has reached his 20th anniversary with the company. To show its appreciation for his long and distinctive service, the company invites many of Tom's co-workers to a dinner in a fine restaurant. However, John, a co-worker from a different racial group than Tom, is not invited to this celebration. When John hears about the dinner, he grows resentful. He tells his friends at work the following day. They are of the same racial group as John and they feel that this event insulted all of them and the other ABC employees of their racial background. The story starts to spread in the organization.

Immigrant Scenario



A number of immigrants are living in your city. Most of them get along fine but there is always some tension between the immigrants and the local people. Many of the immigrants are employed by a local food processing company, primarily in low wage entry-level jobs. In this company there is a policy that all employees must speak English. Nonetheless, most of the immigrant workers speak their native language anyway. One day, one of the local employees walks past a group of the immigrants who are sitting around talking. Just as he passes them, one of the immigrant workers says something to his friends in his own language and all of them burst out laughing. The local employee becomes very angry. He thinks that they are laughing at him. This is the straw that breaks the camel's back. The local employee tells his friends what happened and one of them complains to the manager.