Religion at the workplace: Interactions between managers and religiously observant employees

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How to describe the interactions marked by religion that take place between managers and religiously observant employees? How are management and the employee's expression of religion articulated at work? An interactionist analytical grid is used to study these questions. Based on the analysis of interviews conducted with supervisors and religiously observant employees at the workplace, four types of situations are identified; and the managerial problems of each are analyzed.

Religion at the workplace, when defined broadly, refers to the acts, behaviors or events that eventually reflect the individual's relation to religion (BRASSEUR & HONORÉ 2014, HONORÉ *et al*. 2019, VIOLA *et al*. 2019). The literature, especially in French, usually approaches this question from the angles of the religiously observant wage-earners or else of the firm and management (BARTH 2012). From the first angle, the intent is often to measure the impact of religiousness on behaviors and efficiency or even to place various religious acts and behaviors in categories. From the second angle, the intent is to signal the positions adopted by firms in relation to the question of religion and by the managers who deal with it.[1]

In contrast, few studies have shown interest in what actually happens in situations at the workplace when a wage-earner's behavior reflects his religiousness and calls for attention from management. Such situations are complex and singular. The principles serving as reference marks, such as laicism and religious freedom, are frequently defined and used in different ways from one person to the next (BARTHÉLÉMY & MICHELAT 2007). For religiously observant employees and for most of the managers who face this situation, what may or may not be done is poorly defined and blurred (GAILLARD 2019). Furthermore, the actual facts are polysemous; they might express religiosity, a following of tradition or simply a habit (VERBA & GUELAMINE 2018). Finally, the way of seeing such behaviors or events varies from

situation to situation and from one person on staff to the next (SPRIMONT & CINTAS 2018).

This article provides information about what happens in interactions between managers and the managed. Its objective is to describe the interactions between religiously observant wage-earners and supervisors when the situation is weighted with the question of religion. How, in situations at the workplace, are the wage-earner's religiousness and management's response to it articulated? Four types of situations will be identified; and the ensuing problems for management in each type, analyzed.

Religiousness or labor/management interactions?

Factual approaches to religion at the workplace see religious phenomena as a function of their presumably inherent qualities, whereby they may *a priori* be qualified as acceptable, transgressive or even neutral for the organization or as a reproach to it (HONORÉ 2014). Such approaches, usually based on quantitative studies, have taken stock of the place of religion in firms.[2] However they tell us nothing about what happens in these situations — about what comes out of the interactions between religiously observant wage-earners and their supervisors. To make up for this shortcoming and provide a framework for studying such workplace situations, I used a grid of interactionist analysis.

[1] This article, including quotations from French, has been translated by Noal Mellott (Omaha Beach, France). All websites were consulted in September 2021; and a few bibliographical references have, with the editor's approval, been completed.

[2] *E.g.*, the reports by OFRE [Observatoire du Fait Religieux en Entreprise] (2013-2017) on religion, work and firms.

An interactionist approach

Interactionism proposes tackling the question of an individual's behaviors with the concepts of "roles" and "identity conflicts" (GOFFMAN 1961, LEMERT 1967, BECKER 1973). For Goffman, behavior is, above all, related to the role that a person plays in a given situation, a role defined by what is formally and habitually expected from the individual who fills the role and in the situation of interaction in which he is involved. The person keeps the place assigned by the role and responds to other players' expectations. Nevertheless, behavior is not determined just by the role and the expectations associated with it.

An individual is not made of a single block. A person has several identities (related to occupation, family, friends, religion, etc.). In a given situation, each of these identities might be in a state of tension with one or more other identities. The individual's behavior is then pulled by (at least) two rationales, or "logics of action", one of which is explicitly determined by the situation. In the cases under study herein, these rationales are related to the occupation and religion. What is at stake for individuals, as well as for those who interact with them and who expect a given comportment from them, is to be able to stand back from role-related expectations without controverting the logic of action underlying the role. Also at stake is for the person not to have an unexpected behavior that others might deem inappropriate and that would controvert the interactions stemming from the role.

The possibility for standing back, for a distance, depends on how the individual perceives the situation, understands what is expected of him, ranks the various logics of action, etc. It also depends on how others perceive this distance and label it. This is another important concept in interactionist theory, especially when it focuses on deviance. An act or behavior does not have any inherent quality. It is qualified by attribution — by the judgement made by the other interactants or by those who have the authority for setting the criteria to be used for judging and maintaining order. In other words, a behavior might be judged differently from one situation to another. It is, for instance, quite conceivable that one supervisor but not another would consider that praying in an office during a break or wearing a skullcap or veil is deviant. However this judging and labeling of a behavior as being normal or deviant, acceptable or unacceptable, also relies on the norms that govern society and interactions.

This approach enables us to center an analysis on the conflict between the different "logics of action" that come into play in a situation, herein the situation involving a person's religiousness and occupational activities. Furthermore, it does not restrict the analysis of behavior and of its eventual deviance to a set of moral principles or legal rules that transcend the situation. What is to be studied is how a behavior is qualified in a situation through the interactions between various players (the observant wage-earner, his colleagues, members of his religious community, the manager).

By using this framework to focus on the interactions between religiously observant wage-earners and their supervisors, I have analyzed concrete situations by asking the following questions:

- How does an individual's religiousness and occupational role enter into a state of tension, or even conflict?
- How can the individual manage this tension by standing back, establishing a distance?
- How does management perceive and label religiously motivated behaviors?
- How do systems of normalization and prescription affect these interactions?

Methodology

This article uses data gathered during a series of research studies on questions related to the expression of religiousness and religious radicalization at the workplace and to management's reactions. Each of these studies was qualitative and comprehensive. The empirical data (studied or restudied for this research) were gathered between September 2012 and December 2017 during semidirective interviews with wage-earners and white-collars in French firms and during eleven periods of field observations in four firms contacted by the author, these periods ranging from half a day to a week. For this article, 98 interviews were selected, 38 of them with religiously observant wage-earners and 60 with supervisors who managed these situations. The interviews, which ranged in length from forty-five minutes to two and a half hours, were recorded and transcribed. Notes were also taken during the interviews.

The data were analyzed in two phases (primary and then axial coding) with the assistance of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. The following categories were retained: the forms of expression of religiousness; the definitions of religious practices and of the occupational role; the tension or conflict between the two; the distance kept with the occupational role and with religion; and the impact on interactions at the workplace. Guidelines for interviews were adapted to the groups (employees and supervisors) under examination. Several common themes emerged that had been systematically mentioned during the interviews: the forms of religiously motivated behaviors and of the expression of religiousness at the workplace; the tension between work and religiousness; the impact of religion on interactions and relations at the workplace; and the understanding of occupational and religious prescriptions.

Religiousness:
From invisible to transgressive

The four types of situations detected were characterized by tension between the individual's occupational role and his/her sense of religion. These situations involved interactions between religiously observant

wage-earners and supervisors that resulted in the employee's behavior being labeled as normal, deviant or transgressive or, in addition, in the behavior becoming invisible because the employee's erased all signs of religiousness.

First type of situation: Invisibility

In this type of situation, religiously observant wage-earners restricted as much as possible the visibility of their religiosity. They adopted ordinary behavior patterns and forbore from making their practice of religion visible (e.g., by wearing religious symbols or praying) or from asking for accommodations (e.g., tasks, schedules) for reasons related to their religion. When formulating requests (for leaves of absence, etc.), they did not mention the reason if it was religious.

These wage-earners ranked their occupational role first and kept religious norms and prescriptions at a distance. As shown in the excerpts from the first four interviews hereafter, keeping a distance from religious observances might be an imperative but freely consented adaptation made by these employees. As the fifth excerpt shows however, it might also correspond to a "renunciation" and be a source of frustration.

- Excerpt 1: "When I'm at work, I'm at work. That's it. Once I come through that door, I work in logistics, period. I'm no longer a Muslim. I leave my religion on the side when I'm at work. That's normal. That's absolutely not a problem for me."

- Excerpt 2: "At work, it's work. Religion has nothing to do here."

- Excerpt 3: "Here, I'm at work, you mustn't confuse things. As for God, I keep him in my head, for before and after."

- Excerpt 4: "I have no problem. I practice my religion outside. Here at the hospital, I'm a doctor. That's all."

- Excerpt 5: "I'm observant. Prayer is important for me. I know how to adapt my observance of the religion, and I do so. It's somewhat frustrating. I'd like to act differently, to be able to pray like I want, well I mean not during work but at noon for example. But it's important for me… how to say it? It's important that it stays hidden so my colleagues and boss just see me as a colleague. Even if I ask for a day off for it, I say that it's for something else."

Keeping religious practices at a distance amounted to hiding them during work. Two explanations of this attitude were detected that were not necessarily mutually incompatible. According to the first, these persons gave priority to their occupational role and did not feel any need to express their religious feelings at the workplace. The second has to do with the risks perceived by these persons were their religiousness to be disclosed. They had the feeling that their religious practices potentially made them targets of stigmatiza-

tion (GOFFMAN 1961). They expected that interactions with colleagues and supervisors would deteriorate and that their situation would evolve negatively were their religiousness to be disclosed:

- Excerpt 6: "It would be poorly seen if my practice of religion were visible. I think my colleagues' perception of it would not necessarily be positive."

- Excerpt 7: "Religion doesn't always have a good image, so it's better to remain more than cautious."

- Excerpt 8: "I don't know what my boss would say if he saw me praying, but I'd rather not know."

As Lips-Wiersma and Mills (2002) have pointed out, this anticipation of the risks of being stigmatized and of a deterioration of interactions is the major impediment to what has been called a spiritual "coming out" at the workplace.

The recurrent characteristics of situations of this first type are:

- Religiousness is invisible; wage-earners are not associated with their religion.

- Religiously observant employees do not feel that they belong to the same group or category as other religiously observant employees.

- There is no conflict.

- Some of these religiously observant wage-earners have a moderate feeling of frustration.

- Some of them anticipate that disclosing their religious practices would have a negative impact on their situation and interactions.

Second type of situation: Normalization

Two situations of this type were observed during research.

The first occurred in an engineering firm in information technology. As Ramadan drew near, a Muslim wage-earner (27 years old), who occasionally practiced his religion, decided to fast. He had not done so the previous year, because Ramadan had come just a few months after he had been hired; and he did not want to stand out or risk being stigmatized as a Muslim. He had disclosed his religious practices neither to colleagues nor to management. Ten days prior to Ramadan, he asked his supervisor for permission to leave earlier in the evening during the period of fasting and proposed working during lunch break to catch up. He also asked for half-days off Friday afternoon in order to go to the mosque. His supervisor (37 years old), who professed being an atheist, was surprised to learn that his colleague was religious. He talked with him about Islam and his practice of the religion. He then explained that, since the department was on the point of launching a project, he could not accept the request for the first week; but he agreed for the rest of the period. As for Friday afternoons, he would tell him at the start of each week whether it would be possible or not. It turned out

to be possible except for one Friday when an important meeting had been scheduled.

Looking back over this episode during the interview, the wage-earner said, "Finally, apart from the short discussion when I spoke to him the first time, it was very professional […]. I think that if it had been about something other than Ramadan, other than religion, it would've been the same […]. I pay attention to not overdo it, to remain inconspicuous". And the supervisor said, "He's Algerian. So it's not very surprising, but since he had said nothing and had not asked about anything related to the religion earlier, I was a little surprised. […] I'm always surprised to see that people who are educated and have diplomas are religious; but that's his problem, not mine. I have nothing to say to him about it […]. I'll probably bear this in mind to keep from doing or saying something foolish that would annoy him, but otherwise this doesn't change anything […]. What counts is the work. I said 'yes' when it was possible and 'no' when it wasn't."

The second situation occurred in a private establishment in social work and health care. An administrative employee, a Muslim present in the establishment for three years, wanted to start wearing a veil and praying during breaks. Her supervisor took note of her request during an interview and consulted with the staff and the Human Resources Department. He then called her for an interview and told her that the firm refused praying at the workplace but accepted her wearing a veil on condition that it not be too conspicuous. The wage-earner's proposal to wear a turban was accepted.

According to the wage-earner, "At the start, I wore nothing to work; but outside I did, and after a while, that made be more and more uncomfortable […]. Before going to see my boss, I was stressed. I kept running it through my head […]. The discussion went well. When entering his office, my stomach was in knots, and when leaving the office, I felt very light! […] Finally, I did the right thing. I'm a little frustrated about the prayer, but that's not too serious. I can manage. The turban is the right solution for me." The manager stated, "I knew she was wearing a veil outside, so I wasn't surprised. She's someone who does her work perfectly. There's no reason not to try to make her feel okay […]. I'm a practicing Catholic. So, the fact that she's a believer does not at all bother me […]. As for prayer, Human Resources said 'no' because they did not want for others to be upset. It's a more active practice than wearing a veil. I think she clearly understood."

Here, the person's religious practices were already well known. She was labeled as religious, but this did not cause problems in interactions with colleagues or management. The latter sometimes observed this religiousness during interactions not related to work (discussions during breaks) or when organizing work (e.g., setting schedules). In this case, the employee kept a "distance" mainly from her religious practices. She limited the expression of her religiosity to matters that did not affect work, to situations where colleagues and staff considered it to be acceptable and where it would not cause stigmatization.

Awareness of the limits of tolerance was usually obtained through interactions, seldom from a formal rule (charter, etc.) and never from the law (the El Khomri Act or jurisprudence). As in situations of type 1, these individuals felt that their practice of religion potentially made them a target of stigmatization. The excerpts from interviews 9-12 show how distance was set and the risk of stigmatization controlled:

- Excerpt 9: "I pay attention. I don't pray just anywhere or anytime."

- Excerpt 10: "People know I practice my religion. They don't bother me, and for my part, I pay attention, I remain discrete."

- Excerpt 11: "I don't talk nonstop about religion. I'm serious in my work. When I work, I work. People know that. When I pray in my office, that doesn't bother anyone. They know about it, but that doesn't bother them."

- Excerpt 12: "I know what I can do, what's tolerated and what's not. You have to be pragmatic and find a balance. You're here first of all to work."

- In this type of situation, supervisors noticed certain actions and comportments and labeled them as religious. However the latter were tolerated and not labeled as "deviant" insofar as they did not affect work, as evinced in interviews (13-16) with managers:

- Excerpt 13: "Opening a door and seeing someone praying in the office isn't what you expect. During a break, it's discrete. For me, there's no problem."

- Excerpt 14: "As long as it doesn't spill over into work, I don't say anything."

- Excerpt 15: "As long as it's inconspicuous and the work's done, there's nothing to say."

- Excerpt 16: "I'm watchful however. There are limits but till now there have never been any problems."

By establishing a distance, these persons articulated their religious feelings with their work without jeopardizing their role at the workplace or interactions with colleagues and supervisors. As for management, it noticed this behavior and labeled it as religious but not as deviant. It tolerated the behavior insofar as it did not jeopardize the accomplishment of work and the operation of work teams or threaten the organization. It could occasionally lead to accommodations, such as adjustments of the timetable:

- Excerpt 17: "As long as there's no problem and the work's done, we can, for our part, be accommodating. If there's a [religious] celebration and the person wants to take a day off, I'm not going to say no by principle. On the contrary, the person plays the game. There's no reproach to be made. Why not do whatever makes things okay for supervisors when we can?"

The recurrent characteristics of situations of this second type are:

- Management and some colleagues are already aware of the observant employee's religiousness. Employees mainly establish distance with their practice of the religion and, in a minor way, with their occupational role.

- Individuals manage this distance to keep their behavior from being stigmatized and labeled as deviant in relation to their occupational role.

- Some behaviors are allowed, and management gives satisfaction to some requests. The persons in the situation (religiously observant employees and supervisors) know what is or is not acceptable. The rules are usually informal; but they sometimes figure in a charter or set of internal procedures and regulations. These persons referred to "what everyone knows" or to habits to explain how they knew these rules.

- Observant wage-earners have no or very little feeling of belonging to a group or to a single category among employees. Tensions very seldom flare up.

Third type of situation: Deviance

Let us now turn to two examples of situations of a third type that were observed during research.

The first involved a Muslim wage-earner (30 years old) in a consulting firm who had worn a veil since her hiring three years earlier. She had become part of a new work team a few months previously, a role with more contacts with clients. From the start, her new supervisor (52 years old) asked her either to take off the veil or to cover her hair in another way. She accepted and wore a turban.

The supervisor declared, "I'm not an activist but I am a feminist in the 21st century in France, with the difficulties that we have asserting ourselves opposite men. It's incomprehensible why a young independent woman with a diploma would submit to this sort of practice. It literally offends me […]. I know I can't prohibit it. I asked for advice from Human Resources and the legal service, but there was no question of her keeping the head scarf she wore at the start. If she kept it, she would be out, she wouldn't be on my team […]. We're front-office and have direct contacts with clients. I (I'm not alone), I couldn't stand working with her like that day in day out […]. I told her all that, choosing the right words, but I told her." The wage-earner said, "I know what she thinks, she didn't hide it. I'm used to it. In a way, I understand. There's a lot of ignorance about the veil […]. I refused to take it off; but the turban, I think that'll do."

Two months later, at the start of a project, the wage-earner had an interview with the supervisor who asked her to take off her headdress during the project if she wanted to be in on it. She refused and was taken off the project team. The supervisor said, "The client didn't ask, that's true, but I know him and I felt it would

bother him. There's no question of my taking a risk. […] She's competent, effective; but that's not the question." According to the wage-earner, "I accepted the turban and now that wasn't enough? The client didn't ask, she told me so, she's the one who's anticipating […]. I try, but I won't go any farther. I'm going to be true to myself and not give up my religion. Besides, I have rights. There's laicism, OK, but there's also religious freedom […]. Others aren't bothered. No one on the team said anything to me about it […]. Since this interview, I'm looking around. There are firms where it's not a problem, I know a few."

The second situation involved a blue-collar worker (40 years old) in a cleaning firm. When it was time to change partners (employees work in pairs), he outright refused to work alongside a woman. He invoked his religion to justify his position to his supervisor (30 years old). He then went to see the new coworker (28 years old) to explain that his act was not directed against her personally but that his religion did not allow him to form a team with her. After telling him during a first interview that his position was not acceptable, his supervisor asked him to resume work. He refused. He was then summoned to a disciplinary interview by the supervisor along with someone from Human Resources. Following the interview, the wage-earner accepted to return to his work station and work with the woman as planned.

According to the worker, "They forced me. If I continued saying 'no', I was going to have problems and be fired. I can't afford that […]. I don't have anything against her. She's friendly, and we work good, but I'm not comfortable. That's all. It's not right." The supervisor remarked, "Refusing to work with someone, that's 'no' in any case, regardless of the reason […]. I talked to him. He was obstinate. I alerted the plant's director and Human Resources right away. They told me that I was right and sent me someone for the interview. […] I don't have anything against the religion. I let him say his prayers in the changing room. That doesn't bother me. But refusing to work with a woman is out of question." The woman worker said, "Yes, he told me that it wasn't me personally. He tried to explain, but for me, it was any old thing […]. I let the supervisor manage; that's not my job […]. Since we've worked together, it's okay but aloof. We do our job."

In this type of situation, religiously observant persons are pulled between occupational and religious logics of action. They see the behaviors prescribed by each as incompatible. This stalemate is the outcome of the risks they see as being associated with the distance to be established, either from the occupational role or from religion. In both cases, these risks are related to the labeling of their behavior as deviant and the formal sanctions that could ensue.

The distance that these persons eventually keep from their religious comportment, which they deem important, implies partially giving up their convictions. It might also lead to their behavior being labeled as deviant by other employees of the same religion in the firm, or by persons outside (in the religious community). In this case, this distance might lead to psychologi-

cal distress because they feel they have given up on their faith or because of their place in their religious community (reproaches, sarcasm, accusations of not being a "true" believer, etc.). On the other hand, it might be the workplace environment that considers the lack of distance from religious norms and prescriptions to be deviant, whether or not religious practices would have an impact on doing the job (but, of course, even more so if they do). Such persons might then be exposed to sanctions and stigmatization. Their religious comportment might negatively affect interactions with colleagues, and management might consider their comportment to be unwanted at the workplace. In turn, their religious community might label their occupational behavior as faltering in relation to the religion.

As the interviews show, there are two determinants in this type of situation.

The first had to do with managerial actions, their object and form, and with the person's understanding of them. When managerial actions have as objective the accomplishment of work and the operation of the work team or organization, individuals evincing a behavior labeled as deviant are better able to understood this labeling, and they more often said that the tug of war between their occupational role and their religiosity was their own problem, as in these excerpts:

- Excerpt 18: "I understand the boss. If everyone does what he wants depending on his religion or something else, it won't work. I understand why he's doesn't agree. For him, it's the job before anything else; but for me, I also have my religion."

- Excerpt 19: "If I can't pray, if I have to dress like everyone, head uncovered, I don't feel right. The supervisor can't accept that. He has to make the service tick. In his place I'd do like him."

- Excerpt 20: "I can't do what he's asking of me. It's a problem because it's my job; but I have my religion too. It's God against the supervisor. It's my problem, I realize that. The supervisor's doing his job."

- On the other hand, when his religiousness has no impact on the job and the work done, the individual might adopt a position that questions the staff's actions (as in excerpts 21-23):

- Excerpt 21: "*I don't annoy anyone, really not. I do my work, always, thoroughly. Who does my praying bother? Seriously, who's bothered? You have to come see me, look for me!*"

- Excerpt 22: "*I don't understand why. Some have photos of their kids, I have a picture of Jesus. They're the first to tell me that I work good. My assessments are fantastic, except for that.*"

- Excerpt 23: "*They're against religion or islamophobic. That's the only explanation because, honestly, they can't make any reproach about my work.*"

The second determinant was the person's involvement in interactions, whether in the firm or outside, with members of his religion who assess and judge

his behavior and the distance he established with his occupational role and with religious prescriptions (excerpts 24-27):

- Excerpt 24: "I talked about work. My imam was very clear. That was a relief for me. He told me, 'You work at the workplace. If you can pray without problems, you pray; otherwise, you wait to return home in the evening.'"

- Excerpt 25: "There's a group here. There're a lot of us. If you don't come to pray, it's a problem for the others. They might even come to look for me in the workshop. I don't really have a choice."

- Excerpt 26: "You see all the others who are practicing [the religion …]. You're made to understand that you should do more. There are comments, remarks. Little by little, you start practicing."

- Excerpt 27:"Adventists can't work as of Friday evening. I talked with my pastor about it. He told me I couldn't work Saturdays. There's nothing to do about that. He offered to go talk to my boss, but I don't want him to. That would be worse. On the one side, my boss; and on the other side, the congregation."

The recurrent characteristics of situations of this third type are:

- Some of the religiously observant feel frustrated because they cannot express their religiousness as they want or as much as they want.

- The person first stands back (or wants to do so) with his occupational role and then with his religion mainly owing to pressure from management or in order to avoid stigmatization by colleagues. Some people feel pulled between occupational and religious prescriptions.

- The behaviors that are tolerated, or not, vary from case to case. Management's actions tend to be better accepted and understood when they are justified by the job and work to be done. They are more focused on defining what is not allowed than on discussing. Situations of conflict often occur but at intervals that vary from one context to the next.

- These wage-earners regularly refer to belonging to a community or a category along with other religiously observant employees; and they usually specify the religion in question. In excerpt 28 for example: "*In this workshop, we form a group of Muslims, we get together.*"

Fourth type of situation: Violations
In this type of situation, wage-earners stood back from their occupational role but forbore from doing so with regard to their religious identity. They felt the need to stick to religious prescriptions and placed it above work-related norms. They denied management the right to restrain their religious practices.

Excerpts from interviews (29-31) with employees and supervisors illustrate this situation:

- Excerpt 29: "The other day, a very religious wage-earner who wore a skullcap calmly explained that his own boss was God and that, between God and the firm or between God and me, he preferred obeying God."

- Excerpt 30: "I'm a believer, I'm observant. Some aren't. That's their choice, but I am. I accept to work under my boss's orders; but there's a limit, and this limit is God's orders. It's not my boss or the engineer with his necktie who can tell me whether or not I have to pray. It's God, even here, even at work."

- Excerpt 31: "God is my guide. My boss can give me orders, I accept that; but God gives me orders too, and He's much more important. My boss has to understand that; he has to take account of it."

What characterized these situations was that there was no possibility for discussing and reaching an agreement through negotiations. This blockage might come from the wage-earners, who refused to distance themselves from religious prescriptions, or from management, who refused to adapt operations in the organization to the demands of religiously observant employees. For management, as observed during research, its handling of this type of situation broke with the way the preceding situations were handled. The intent is no longer to look for an agreement and clarify what is tolerated and what is not. As illustrated by excerpts from interviews (32-34) with supervisors, the employee's behavior was labeled as "transgressive" and "intolerable" and considered to be a violation worthy of disciplinary action:

- Excerpt 32: "There are things, why not, that don't cause any problem, but that isn't the case here. Refusing to work with someone because he's Jewish, no, that's no longer a matter of religious freedom, it's antisemitism. It's not even for me to handle, it's a matter for higher-ups or Human Resources, I don't know, but in any case, it can be sanctioned."

- Excerpt 33: "There are rules. She refuses to comply with them. I've tried discussing; it's not possible. So, okay, in this case, it's simple, a disciplinary interview and afterwards we'll see."

- Excerpt 34: "He was hired to do a job. He doesn't want to do it. If the reason had to do with safety, at the utmost… but it has to do with religion. There's no use discussing. It's straightaway an interview prior to a sanction."

The recurrent characteristics in situations of this fourth type are:

- These wage-earners place a distance between themselves and their occupation but are unwilling to do so with their religious practices. Through their words or deeds, they regularly take issue with operating procedures (the distribution of tasks, the formation of work teams, the scheduling of breaks, work schedules, etc.). They deny legitimacy to managerial actions that try to restrain their religious practices.

- Tensions frequently flare up. Management does not hesitate to resort to disciplinary procedures for the cases deemed intolerable.

- These situations usually involve several persons who form a group; they very seldom concern an isolated individual. These employees very often refer to their belonging to a community or to a category of religiously observant wage-earners, and usually name the religion concerned.

Discussion

The academic literature makes a distinction among religiously motivated actions: on the one hand, those that, *a priori*, correspond to the desire to articulate work-related practices with religiousness but do not inherently violate the way work is organized (*e.g.*, the wearing of religious symbols, requests for leaves of absence) and, on the other hand, those that find fault with the way work is organized (*e.g.*, the refusal to do certain tasks, to serve on a team with certain persons, or to observe the rules related to work hours) (MITROFF & DENTON 1999, HICKS 2002, GALINDO & ZANNAD 2012, HONORÉ 2014, GHAZZAWI *et al*. 2016). Studies conducted in France and the United States have shown that the most frequent workplace incidents related to religion fall into the first category (HICKS 2002, WEAVER & AGLE 2002, HONORÉ 2019).[3] My field-work has brought to light two important points related to the aforementioned distinction and the types of situation observed.

First of all, religious actions that fall into the second category mostly correspond to situations of type 4 and less often of type 3. Managers have clearly noticed that such actions challenge (in part) operating procedures within the organization, thus leaving little room for negotiating an agreement whenever the individuals in question do not imagine standing back from religious prescriptions.

Secondly, actions in the first category arise in all types of situations. Furthermore, the same action (such as praying in the office during a break or wearing visible religious symbols) will, depending on the context, create a situation of types 2, 3 or even 4. Accordingly, such an action might, from one situation to the next, be tolerated or considered to be normal or deviant, or lead to comments, derision, disciplinary actions or even create blockage and conflict. These differences in reactions, in particular by management, occur when the circumstances are different. For example, wearing religious clothing (such as the hijab, kippah or astar) is perceived differently in the back and front offices or whenever the person enters into direct contact with customers. But even in identical situations (within the same firm or service), differences in reactions might be

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[3] See too the SHRM report, "Leave for religious observances", 2017.

Table 1: An overview of the four types of situations of religiousness at the workplace

	Type 1: Invisibility	Type 2: Normalization (behavior labeled "religious" but not "deviant")	Type 3: Deviancy	Type 4: Violation (transgressive behavior)
Tensions and conflict	Very few or no tensions felt by the individual.	Moderate tensions managed by the individual; no actual conflict.	Strong tensions, conflict.	Opposition between logics of action and between occupational and religious prescriptions.
Distance and its effects	Distance with religious practices (by conviction or to avoid stigmatization or to keep interactions with colleagues or management from deteriorating), eventually a feeling of frustration.	Distance mainly with religious practices and, occasionally, with the job. The individual manages this distance, supervisors oversee the situation.	Distance with the job and/or with religious practices. The objective is to control deviance and manage tensions and risks (stigmatization and a deterioration of interactions at or outside the workplace).	Distance with the occupation, as the norms, occupational practices or the organization of work is disputed.
Labeling	Fear of being labeled and stigmatized; self-discipline.	Determines what may or may not be done, defines the distance that is tolerated, creates risks of stigmatization and of deteriorated interactions at the workplace.	Determines what is abnormal, stigmatizes. Individuals might label themselves or be labeled as deviant in relation to their religion or their occupational role.	The behavior is labeled as a violation that justifies disciplinary action.
Normalization and prescriptions	Serve as the reference mark for individuals.	Formal and informal rules about what is forbidden and what is tolerated.	Centered on prohibitions (work) and on what is not negotiable (religion).	Legitimation of positions of refusal and confrontation (the religiously observant and management), and of disciplinary actions (management).

related to management's position on religion, as illustrated by these excerpts from interviews (35-36) with two supervisors in the same supply chain management firm. The one tolerated certain behaviors, whereas the other did not:

- Excerpt 35: "It's not a problem as such. As long as it doesn't interfere with work, it's okay. There're three of them. They pray together when they have to. We talked about it. We agreed. There's no reason to pester them."

- Excerpt 36: "I might be old-fashioned, but I hold to laicism. I know full well we're not in public, all that; but it doesn't matter. We're here to work. We don't pray. The other foreman [excerpt 35] does what he wants to; but in my team, I don't want that, and the men know it full well."

The variability of the effects resulting from religious behaviors is to be set down to the diversity both of the situations that managers encounter and of the positions adopted by their firms. Variables such as the frequency or diversity of religiously motivated acts or the frequency of conflicts with which managers have to deal determine the reactions to such events and influence the level of tolerance or intolerance when faced with identical events (BOWENS 2014, HONORÉ 2018). In contrast, Galindo and Zannad (2014) have drawn attention to the diversity of the positions adopted by firms and of their reactions by distinguishing between the following positions: denial/refusal, tolerance/laxity and accommodations/adjustments. As they have shown, the reference marks used by managers for their actions and by wage-earners for their behaviors differ widely depending on the firm's position. This variability of the

definitions of what is possible and what is not causes problems. Becker's (1973) work on deviance showed that the ability of individuals to understand controls (and eventually remonstrations or sanctions) determines their capacity for accepting the situation and adopting a position that leads them to look for a settlement.

Using an interactionist analytical framework and focusing on this very question of religious behaviors at the workplace, Weaver and Agle (2002) have shown that the lack of precise, stable rules for taking such behaviors into account has two negative consequences.

The first is the cognitive cost for individuals who do not understand why they are being stigmatized and their behavior rejected. These persons might be pulled between an occupational and a religious logic of action. They are ordered to adapt their behavior by standing back from their religious identity, but they have no possibility for rationally explaining this order. The excerpts from the interviews cited when analyzing situations of type 3 clearly illustrate this contrast between situations in which religiously observant employees perceived, or did not perceive, the reasons for managerial actions. The failure to perceive these reasons has — as Nash and McLennan (2001), Weaver and Agle (2002) and, too, Hicks (2002) have underscored — a negative impact on the individual's commitment to his work. Like Strauss and Sawyerr (2009) or Hayden and Barbuto (2011), these researchers also emphasized that it diminishes the person's capacity for standing back from religious prescriptions and thus tends to limit the possibilities for a pragmatic settlement of conflicts.

The second negative consequence then occurs, namely, more risks of more tensions. These risks become quite real when the individual's difficulty of rationally explaining managerial actions contrasts with his strong rationalization of the religious logic of action, and even more so when this logic is sustained by persons around him at the workplace (colleagues who are religiously observant) or outside work (his community). In this case, the person tends to reverse his initial ranking of his occupational role and religious identity by giving priority to the latter as the main determinant of his behavior (MITROFF 2003). What is happening here is similar to what interactionist studies have explained as the development of a deviant subculture (BECKER 1973, TRICE & BEYER 1993). This subculture has a set of norms for regulating relations and for group membership. It distributes roles and specifies the rights and duties of members as well as the right forms of comportment. By being part of a religious, deviant subculture, these persons come to consider religious prescriptions to be the norm and their occupational role to be adjustable. They can thus rationalize their opposition to job-related prescriptions and managerial actions when the latter run counter to their religiosity.

In this case, the momentum that will determine how the situation evolves (toward one type of situation or another) is related to the distance that the person has with the occupational and religious behaviors expected of him/her — what Becker (1973) has called "normalization", *i.e.*, the way the comportment is judged (by being labeled normal or deviant) and the way others (fellow believers, religious leaders, colleagues, managers, etc.) in the work situation and/or the deviant subculture take it into account.

Conclusion

Religious actions and behaviors are an expression of religiosity, but they also come out of a dynamic of situated interactions. This article has presented four types of situations at the workplace.

The second type of situation (normalization) might be a point of equilibrium: the individual partly stands back from his religious identity and is thus able, without abandoning his religiosity, to have his behavior accepted by others, in particular the staff. "Reasonable accommodations" (BOWENS 2014, KAMINER 2015) implies that each party will adopt positions for discussing and working out adjustments. It is based on the supposition that actions by management, whenever they are restrictive, are also intelligible. These actions must stay focused on criteria related to doing the job and overseeing the operation of the organization. At the same time, they must take account of the diversity of employees and the resulting diversity of the ways that employees become involved in their work.

In the fourth type of situation (violation), religiously motivated actions cause reactions that take the form of opposition, prohibitions and sanctions. The firm runs the risk of blockages, conflicts and even lawsuits. In this situation, case law — in particular the (not well known) decisions of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in March 2017[4] — has dwelled on two determinants: one the one hand (and once again), the criteria related to the job and to the operation of the organization; and, on the other hand, the existence of a formal set of rules and regulations within the firm.

These two determinants lie at the center of the questions that crop up in the third type of situation (deviance), especially when the person is pulled between occupational and religious commitments. As shown in studies that relate religiosity to behavior at the workplace (WEAVER & AGLE 2002, GOTSIS & KORTEZI 2008, GHAZZAWI *et al*. 2016) or even in other contexts (such as the family or between friends, *e.g.*, WELCH *et al*. 2006), individuals, outside religious situations (prayer groups, congregational activities, religious celebrations, etc.), give priority to their religion for determining their comportment only when the situation itself does not provide the (or enough) means for doing so. They then tend to take their bearings from their religion for adopting a behavior at the workplace. They tend to keep at a distance from their occupational role and to give priority to religious prescriptions whenever they see restrictions on the expression of their religiosity as being (from their viewpoint) incoherent and irrational or whenever the situation at work provides few clear pointers for understanding what is expected of them, what their behavior should be, what may or may not be done, and what is the meaning of their work.

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[4]   http://eur-lex.europa.eu/browse/directories/legislation.html

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