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Political Bias in Hiring

People Consider Political Opponents as
Less Hireable Than Others Without
Weighting Criteria to Justify why

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Författare

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Titel

Politisk bias vid anställning: Politiska motståndare ses som mindre anställningsbara än andra utan att kriterier viktas för att rättfärdiga varför

Engelsk titel

Political bias in hiring: People consider political opponents as less hireable than others without weighting criteria to justify why

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Sammanfattning

Tidigare studier har visat att egenskaper som kön och etnicitet kan påverka möjligheten att bli anställd. Beslut inom rekrytering kan dessutom rättfärdigas genom att vikta betydelsen av olika anställningskriterier och kan därmed verka opartiska. Inom andra områden har bias på grund av politisk åskådning visat sig vara ännu mer uttalad än bias på grund av etnicitet. Effekter av kandidaters politiska åskådning vid anställning är däremot inte lika väl undersökta. Denna studie syftade till att fylla detta tomrum. Deltagare ($N = 283$) randomiserades till en mellanindividsdesign; En tredjedel läste en ansökan från en kandidat med kopplingar till Vänsterpartiet, en tredjedel läste en ansökan från en kandidat med kopplingar till Sverigedemokraterna, ett parti i högra änden av den politiska skalan, och en tredjedel läste en ansökan från en kandidat utan politisk koppling. Efter att ha läst ansökningarna utvärderade deltagarna anställningsbarheten hos sin kandidat. De angav även vilket anställningskriterie, erfarenhet eller utbildning, som var viktigast vid denna utvärdering. Resultaten visade att deltagarna bedömde kandidater med avvikande politisk åskådning från den egna som mindre anställningsbara än kandidater med okänd politisk åskådning, eller politisk åskådning mer lik den egna. Signaler om politisk åskådning kan alltså vara en nackdel för en kandidat som söker jobb. Däremot rättfärdigades inte en partisk utvärdering genom att vikta kriterier och på så sätt verka opartisk. Det föreslås att sociala normer inte förhindrar yttrande av politisk bias till samma grad som bias avseende till exempel kön eller etnicitet.

Ämnesord

Sociala kategorier, Värderingar, Politisk bias, Anställningskriterier, Elasticitetshypotes, Dissonansreduktion

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Abstract

Previous studies have shown that characteristics like gender and ethnicity can affect the possibility to be hired. Decisions in hiring may also be justified by weighting the importance of hiring criteria and can thus seem unbiased. In other areas, bias due to political affiliation have been noted to be even more pronounced than bias due to ethnicity. However, effects of candidates' political affiliation in hiring are not equally researched. This study aimed to fill this blank. Participants ($N = 283$) were randomized to a between-subjects design; A third read a resumé from a candidate affiliating with the The Left Party, a third read a resumé from a candidate affiliating with The Sweden Democrats, a party at the right end of the spectrum, and a third read a resumé from a candidate with no political affiliation. After reading the resúmes, participants evaluated the hireability of their candidate. They also stated which hiring criteria, experience or education, was considered most important in this evaluation. Results showed that participants evaluated candidates with divergent political affiliation from the own as less hireable than candidates with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own. Cues of political affiliation may thus be a disadvantage for an individual, applying for a job. However, biased evaluations were not justified to seem unbiased by weighting criteria. It is suggested that social norms do not imply hiding political bias to the same degree as bias due to for example gender or ethnicity.

Keywords

Social categories, Values, Political bias, Hiring criteria, Elasticity hypothesis, Dissonance reduction

Political Bias in Hiring: People Consider Political Opponents as Less Hireable Than Others Without Weighting Criteria to Justify why

After the Swedish election in 2018 none of the traditional political blocks received own majority and hence, some new constellation had to take form if a government was to be approved. The negotiation process was lengthy; Not until four months later, two parties from each block finally agreed to cooperate. Cooperation between people with different ideological values may thus not be obvious and easy to achieve. However, the consequences of people's ideological values, for their cooperation opportunities outside the political arena, are not equally discussed. In another setting, like an ordinary workplace, it could be argued that the behavior of cooperating with some and some not, due to political affiliation, would be inappropriate. Nevertheless, studies have shown that other supposed irrelevant characteristics, like gender and ethnicity can affect the possibility to be hired (e.g. Norton, Vandello & Darley, 2004; Carlsson & Rooth, 2007). This means that opportunities in daily life may not be equal for all. It is thus important to explore if this kind of bias in hiring also applies to political affiliation. In this study, political bias in hiring will be studied.

Also, when taking a decision to cooperate or not, decision criteria may be adjusted to fit the preferred decision. This tendency to adjust criteria have been apparent in experimental studies regarding hiring; The importance of hiring criteria have been weighted to fit the qualifications of the employee with, for example, the desired gender (e.g. Norton et al., 2004). The decision can thus seem objective and a bias may go unnoticed. In this study it will be argued that this kind of specious behavior may also be used to justify political bias in hiring. The aim of this study is thus both to find out if political affiliation affects the possibility to be hired and if criteria is weighted to make the decision seem unbiased. To this end, fictitious candidates affiliating with either of two Swedish parties, The Left Party (Vänsterpartiet) or The Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna), will be used. They have often been called "outer edge parties" (ytterkantspartier; e.g. Bergström, 2018), taking the positions on the left respectively the right end of the political spectrum.

Social Categories and Intergroup Behavior

Social cognition is about how people perceive and interpret their social environment, which in turn guides social behavior (Bodenhausen & Todd, 2010). In this process, social categories, for example gender, ethnicity or age are used when evaluating other persons (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). This automatic and simplifying process of categorization makes daily living easier, not needing to attend to every bit of information, but it can also entail negative consequences. When categorizing a person, processes like identification with this category, stereotypes and prejudice are activated (Kawakami, Amodio & Hugenberg, 2017). The identification process leads to some being seen as members of the own category (ingroup) and some being seen as members of another category (outgroup). When separated into "we" and "them", members of the own group tend to be positively evaluated, while members of other groups tend to be negatively evaluated, based on stereotypic beliefs (Fiske & Tablante, 2015). This phenomenon of favoring the own group has been argued to have evolutionary causes (Brewer, 1999; Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2007; Balliet, Wu & De Dreu, 2014), since belonging to a cooperative group meant advantages in survival skills (Neuberg & Schaller, 2015). The phenomenon of ingroup bias can however still be apparent in modern life. One area where the own group may be favored is in hiring. In experimental studies men have shown a preference for hiring male candidates rather than female candidates (Norton et al., 2004; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005) and women have shown a preference for hiring female candidates rather than male candidates (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). In other experimental studies, white individuals have shown a preference for hiring white candidates rather than black candidates (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000) and

a preference for admitting white candidates to college rather than black candidates (Hodson, Dovidio & Gaertner, 2002). In a Swedish context, candidates perceived as having a Swedish background have been noted to be considered more hireable than candidates perceived as having a Middle Eastern background (Carlsson & Rooth, 2007). In their study, Carlsson and Rooth (2007) sent fictitious applications applying for real advertised jobs, in different occupations, with different skill requirements. The candidates were presented as having equal competence, but the name of the candidate was varied. Either the name was Swedish, or it was Middle Eastern. The results showed that the callback rate was fifty percent higher for candidates with Swedish names than for candidates with Middle Eastern names (Carlsson & Rooth, 2007). Hence, the use of social categories in evaluating people can lead to not all having the same opportunities and possibilities in daily life.

Personal Values as Social Categories

Whereas categories like gender and ethnicity are some of the most researched outgroups (Fiske & Tablante, 2015), the issue of political categories are not equally researched or discussed. However, Allport (1954) actually argued that the most important categories people have are their own personal values. Indeed, political values seem to represent an important category. In an American study, not related to hiring, liberal participants evaluated groups considered to have liberal values more positively than conservative participants did, while conservative participants evaluated groups considered to have conservative values more positively than liberal participants did (Chambers, Schlenker & Collisson, 2013). This bias due to value-conflict have been even more pronounced than effects due to ethnicity (Chambers et al., 2013; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). When including ethnicity in analyzing evaluations of different groups, it did not affect evaluations; it was still the perceived political values that was crucial for how groups were evaluated (Chambers et al., 2013). In an American context, effects of political bias have also been apparent regardless of grouping participants due to liberal or conservative ideology, Democratic or Republican affiliation or attitudes in political issues, for example gun control (Ditto et al., 2019), with the largest effects for participants identifying strongly with their political affiliation (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). In sum, political categories seem to be particularly strong, and imply bias at least as apparent as bias due to other categories. This means that political categories should also imply bias when evaluating job candidates. Indeed, this seems to be the case.

In an experimental study it was investigated whether political affiliation in employers and candidates affected the possibility to be hired (Gift & Gift, 2015). Just as Carlsson and Rooth (2007) when studying ethnicity in hiring, fictitious applications were sent, to apply for real advertised jobs. Applications were sent to employers positioned in two different US counties; one considered liberal, based on election votes, and one considered conservative, based on election votes. Candidates were presented as having equal competence, but candidates' political affiliation was varied. Either there were cues of liberal affiliation, conservative affiliation or no political affiliation. The results showed that candidates with political affiliation consistent with the majority votes in the county were more likely to receive callbacks than candidates with political affiliation inconsistent with the majority votes (Gift & Gift, 2015). Hence, bias in hiring, due to political affiliation, seem to be apparent. The phenomenon has however not been equally investigated outside the American political context. This study will partly fill this blank by studying political bias in hiring in a Swedish context.

Also, though categories in terms of political values apparently implies bias, just as for example gender or ethnicity, there may be some important differences. First, expressions of bias usually tend to differ due to group status, with higher status groups showing more bias (e.g. Fischer & Derham, 2016). Bias due to political affiliation, however, seem to be symmetric. Both sides of the political spectrum tend to show the same amount of bias (Chambers et al.,

2013; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Ditto et al., 2019). Second, discrimination of outgroups has been argued to primarily be the by-effect of favoring the ingroup (Allport, 1954; Brewer, 1999; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014; Balliet et al., 2014). Bias due to political categories, however, have been argued to also be an effect of actually derogating the outgroup, as opposed to just favoring the ingroup (Brewer, 1999). As some studies in political bias have not included a control group (Chambers et al., 2013; Ditto et al., 2019) it is unclear whether there were only ingroup favoritism, outgroup derogation or both. In studying hiring however, Gift and Gift (2015) noted both candidates with political affiliation consistent with the majority votes in the county and candidates with no political affiliation to receive more callbacks than candidates with political affiliation inconsistent with the majority votes. There was also no significant difference in callbacks between candidates with affiliation consistent with the majority votes and candidates with no affiliation (Gift & Gift, 2015). This means that candidates were deselected rather than selected, due to political affiliation. Thus, regarding political bias in hiring, it can be relevant to consider derogation rather than favoritism. To allow for this separation, this study will, just as Gift and Gift (2015), include a control group with no affiliation. As a new perspective of political bias in hiring, it will also be investigated how a biased evaluation is justified.

Justification of Biased Behavior

Rationality means that people act in coherence with logic and that their judgments and decisions should not be affected by immaterial factors (Shafir & LeBoeuf, 2002), like for example social categories. As have been seen in the previous section, this is not always the case. However, people use strategies to justify their preferred conclusions (Kunda, 1990) and thus make them seem rational. There are also indications of bias only being manifested when there actually is a possibility for this kind of justification and thus rationalization (Kunda, 1990; Hsee, 1996; Saucier, Miller & Doucet, 2005). In an experimental study, participants acting real estate appraisers did not make biased evaluations of an apartment, when this apartment was identical to an already appraised comparison apartment (Hsee, 1996). However, more biased evaluations were made when the focal apartment was described as better than the comparison apartment in some features and worse in other features. In particular, when a fictitious fiancé was an interested buyer, participants appraised the focal apartment as worth less than the comparison apartment, compared to when the fiancé was a control or seller. When the fictitious fiancé was a seller, on the other hand, participants appraised the focal apartment as worth more than the comparison apartment, compared to when the fiancé was a control or interested buyer (Hsee, 1996). Hence, when the apartments differed in some features, bias in favor of the fiancé was shown and justified by weighting the importance of these different features. This pattern of bias and justification also applies to social categories. A meta-analysis, studying helping behavior, has shown that when characteristics in the situation did not allow for justification, help was given equally to black and white individuals (Saucier et al., 2005). However, when characteristics in the situation allowed for justification of biased behavior, bias against black individuals was expressed. In particular, when helping was considered lengthier, riskier, more difficult, more effortful, or when targets were further away, less help was given to black individuals than to white individuals (Saucier et al., 2005). Hence, when it is possible to justify bias with factors not related to the source of bias, biased behavior may be expressed and justified, and can thus seem unbiased.

In common for these different situations is that they comprised some sort of ambiguity. In the first case (Hsee, 1996), that there was uncertainty as to which apartment feature was to be considered most important. In the second case (Saucier et al., 2005), that there was ambiguity as to what amount of time, risk, difficulty, effort or distance that implies help should be given. It can be argued it is exactly this ambiguity, or elasticity, that makes it possible to act

biased and to justify this behavior. In this line, Hsee (1996) have put forward an elasticity hypothesis. The hypothesis states that unjustifiable factors affect judgment more if there is elasticity in justifiable factors, than if there is not; with unjustifiable factors being characteristics a person tends to take in consideration but should not and justifiable factors being characteristics a person should take in consideration (Hsee, 1996). For the apartment study (Hsee, 1996), the fiancé would be an unjustifiable factor while the apartment features would be justifiable factors. For the helping study (Saucier et al., 2005), ethnicity would be an unjustifiable factor while the distance to the target, and so on, would be justifiable factors. In hiring employees, social category could be considered an unjustifiable factor while hiring criteria could be considered justifiable factors. Thus, when there is elasticity in the relative importance of hiring criteria, this should give room for bias in hiring and justification of this bias. Indeed, this have been shown to be the case.

In an experimental study, male participants were to rank candidates, where the two top candidates were one male and one female (Norton et al., 2004). Overall, participants considered education to be the most important hiring criteria. However, this opinion differed depending on the gender of the candidate. Participants chose male candidates rather than female candidates in the top position, even if the male was less educated than the female. This decision was justified by weighting experience as more important than education when the candidate was female, and thus allow for hiring male candidates without seeming biased (Norton et al., 2004). In another experimental study male participants judged education to be more important for a stereotypical male job (police chief), when male candidates were educated, as opposed to when they were not (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). Also, female participants judged experience to be more important for a stereotypical female job (women's studies professor), when female candidates were experienced, as opposed to when they were not. By adjusting criteria like this, it was always possible for participants to hire the preferred candidate; that is, male participants preferred male candidates for a stereotypical male job, while female participants preferred female candidates for a stereotypical female job (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). Also, very few participants have overtly stated gender as a motive for hiring (Norton et al., 2004), although it apparently did matter. This further shows how biased behavior can be expressed but go unnoticed, when justified with factors not related to, in this case, gender. The pattern also applies to ethnicity. In an experimental study in a similar area, admission to college, white individuals high in aversive racism did not discriminate against black candidates when white and black candidates had similar combinations of consequently high or consequently low high school achievements and college board scores (Hodson et al., 2002). However, when there were combinations of low high school achievements and high college board scores, or vice versa, participants recommended black candidates for admission to college to a lesser degree than they recommended white candidates (Hodson et al., 2002). This was justified by ranking the importance of admission criteria differently when the candidate was black as opposed to white. Hence, weighting the importance of criteria, justifiable factors, can be used to license bias in hiring due to social category, an unjustifiable factor. It has not yet been studied if this also applies to justifying bias in hiring due to political categories. This study will thus be the first to fill this blank. To this end, elasticity in justifiable factors will be catered for.

The Present Study

The tendency to justify biased decisions and behavior have been presented under different labels, for example casuistry (Norton et al., 2004; Lurie & Albin, 2007), aversive racism theory (Saucier et al., 2005; Hodson et al., 2002) or motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990). However, it could be argued that a common mechanism behind justification is the need for consonant cognitions. Dissonance theory, as formulated by Festinger (1957), stated that when a person holds two conflicting cognitions, he or she will experience cognitive dissonance which he or she will

try to reduce. A means to reduce cognitive dissonance is to add consonant cognitions (Festinger, 1957; McGrath, 2017). In the case of not helping black individuals, the consonant cognition would thus be that the distance to the target was too far (Saucier et al., 2005). When not hiring an educated woman, the consonant cognition would be that experience was a more important criteria than education (Norton et al., 2004). Dissonance has also been argued to be strongest when it involves a behavior that violates the self-concept, which implies feeling guilty or stupid (Aronson, 1992). Hence, if acting biased, and the behavior does not correspond to the self-concept of being fair, cognitive dissonance will be experienced. In Sweden, equal rights and possibilities for all individuals are protected in the law of discrimination (diskrimineringslagen; Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2018a). This law states that nobody is to be disadvantaged due to categories like for example gender, ethnicity, age or religion. Political affiliation is not included in this law. However, it could be argued that political affiliation is not a legitimate reason for decisions in hiring. Also, in a real-life recruitment, candidates not being hired have the right to take part of information regarding education and experience in those who are called for interview or hired (Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2018b). Thus, a bias in hiring due to political affiliation should imply guilt and dissonance and hence, justification of this biased decision.

With this assumption, the aim of this study is both to a) examine if political affiliation affects evaluations of hireability in candidates, and b) if hiring criteria is weighted to justify evaluations of hireability in candidates. This study will thus extend previous research regarding political bias in hiring (Gift & Gift, 2015), both by studying this phenomenon outside the US and by including justification of bias. It will also extend previous research regarding bias and justification of bias in hiring (Norton et al., 2004; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005; Hodson et al., 2002) by considering political affiliation instead of gender or ethnicity. Candidates will be presented as to affiliate with either of two Swedish parties; The Left Party or The Sweden Democrats, a party at the right end of the spectrum, or to have no political affiliation. When it comes to participants' political affiliation, there is a major difference in the political system in Sweden compared to the US, where most research on political bias are done (Gift & Gift, 2015; Chambers et al., 2013; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Ditto et al., 2019). Whereas there are two major parties in the US, there are eight parties in the Swedish Parliament. Thus, since The Left Party and The Sweden Democrats are only two of the eight parties in the Swedish Parliament, participants' affiliations will be grouped due to their position on a political spectrum left to right, where, consequently, some can be considered closer to The Left Party, some can be considered closer to The Sweden Democrats, and some can be considered in between. Participants will be asked to evaluate a candidate with some experience, but no education, for the job as deputy high school teacher. They will also be asked to state which criteria, experience or education, was most important when evaluating the candidate. Based on the research reviewed, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. Participants will evaluate a candidate with divergent political affiliation from the own as less hireable than a candidate with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own.
2. Participants evaluating a candidate with divergent political affiliation from the own will weigh education as more important relative to experience, compared to participants evaluating a candidate with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own.
3. Participants from both sides of the political spectrum will show similar degree of bias against candidates with divergent political affiliation from the own.

Method

Participants

The study was completed by in total 283 participants (215 women, 65 men, 3 unspecified or not stated), within ages 18-75 years ($M = 42.74$, $SD = 12.68$). Of these, 68.6 % stated university (högskola/universitet) as their highest completed education level, 29.3 % stated high school (gymnasium) as their highest completed education level and 2.1 % did not state any education past elementary school (grundskola). Also, 23.3 % claimed to have some form of education in recruitment and 54.1 % claimed to have experience of working with recruitments. About a quarter (27.6 %) claimed to have experience from the occupation of teaching. Due to not stating the own political affiliation on a left-right scale, 9 participants were excluded in main analyses, leaving a final sample of 274 participants. Of these, 72 were considered to have political affiliations to the left, 93 were considered to have political affiliations in the middle and 109 were considered to have political affiliations to the right (see the Results section for grouping principles).

Participants were recruited by sharing a link to an online questionnaire in social media. The aim was to recruit participants with diverse political affiliations and hence the link was shared in diverse Facebook groups; groups targeting students and research interested, groups targeting employers and job seekers, and groups for inhabitants in different living areas. Groups targeting students and research interested were groups particularly aimed for psychology students- and interested from all parts of Sweden. Groups targeting employers and job seekers were both aimed for people in the Stockholm area as well as the region of Scania (Skåne). Groups for inhabitants in different living areas were groups aimed for inhabitants in the south municipalities of the Stockholm area. All participants were also encouraged to share the link to the questionnaire. Data was collected during the first two weeks of March 2019. A reminder was put in some of the Facebook groups after the questionnaire had been public for about a week; primarily the groups for inhabitants in different areas, since the experience was that they were the most positive to the request and generated many answers. No compensation was offered for participating.

Materials and Procedure

The questionnaire was designed in Qualtrics, a professional tool for research questionnaires. Participants were informed that they would be presented with a description of a fictitious employment along with a resumé from an interested candidate, followed by some questions for evaluating this candidate. After choosing to join the study, participants were presented with a short description of the employment as a deputy high school teacher in history and religion, at a school in the Swedish city of Västerås. The occupation as high school teacher was chosen since it was supposed to possibly be an occupation where political affiliation could be considered important, due to the extensive contact with- and thus impact the teacher could entail on youths. The description stated that the employment required a genuine interest in students learning and development, as well as an ability to create good relationships. A focus on engagement, cooperation and knowledge were stated. Education was a merit, but not demanded. The employment description was inspired by real advertised employments as high school teachers, on the website of the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen).

After reading about the employment, participants were presented with the resumé from an interested candidate. The questionnaire was designed such that participants were randomized to a between-subjects design; A third were randomized to read a resumé from a candidate affiliating with the The Left Party, a third were randomized to read a resumé from a candidate affiliating with The Sweden Democrats and a third were randomized to read a resumé from a candidate with no political affiliation stated (control condition). Of the final sample, this

resulted in 90 participants evaluating a candidate affiliating with the The Left Party, 86 evaluating a candidate affiliating with The Sweden Democrats and 98 evaluating a candidate with no political affiliation stated. All information in the resumés were held equal, except the political affiliation in the manipulated conditions. The candidate was male, had experience of working as a teacher at junior high (högstadiet) as well as experience from working at a youth recreation center (fritidshem). In the spare time he was engaged as a soccer coach for kids and adolescents. He did not have any formal education as high school teacher but stated that as his future goal. He described himself as social and with a great interest in societal issues. Information about political involvement were added in the manipulated conditions. As the last information in the resumé, the candidate stated to be involved politically through “administrative work for The Left Party/The Sweden Democrats and involved in the campaign for the election in 2014 and 2018”, in his hometown of Eskilstuna.

Elasticity in hiring criteria was achieved by two means. First, the employment description did not state which criteria, experience or education, should be prioritized. It should thus be possible to hire a candidate with experience but no education, and vice versa. Second, the resumé was designed such that the candidate was to be perceived as more experienced than educated. He should thus indeed be hireable, since education was not a demand. In the case of evaluating the candidate as less hireable though, it was possible to weigh education as the most important criteria. Before the final questionnaire was distributed, a pilot with 16 participants was performed to ensure that information was perceived as intended. With no political affiliation presented, the candidate was indeed perceived as more experienced ($M = 6.00$) than educated ($M = 3.25$; 1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very*). The candidate was also evaluated above the mean on the scale of hireability ($M = 5.65$; 1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very*), and thus as hireable. In the pilot though, education was weighted almost as important as experience as hiring criteria, ($M = 6.69$ and $M = 7.19$ respectively; 1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very*). To impose a clearer ranking between criteria these continuous variables were changed to a dichotomous variable in the final questionnaire, that is, participants had to choose between the two criteria (see the questions further on).

After reading the employment description and resumé from an interested candidate, participants were to answer some questions as follows.

Hiring. Three items corresponding to the ones used by Uhlmann and Cohen (2005) were used to assess hireability. Participants indicated to what degree they found the candidate to be “successful” in the employment, how “suitable” they felt the candidate was for the employment and how likely they were to “hire” the candidate (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very*). These items were combined to an index with Cronbach’s alpha .93, which indicates very high internal consistency.

Hiring criteria. Participants chose which criteria they found most important for the evaluation they just made of the candidate, *level of education* or *experience*. Ranking of criteria have been used for example in studying criteria for college admission (Hodson et al., 2002; Norton, Sommers, Vandello & Darley, 2006), although they also included filler criteria beyond the ones in question for the hypotheses. Education and experience were the only two criteria of interest here. It could also be argued those are the ones commonly considered in hiring, and hence, no fillers were used.

Political engagement. Three items targeting participants’ political engagement were included; Participants indicated how “interested” they were in Swedish politics, to what degree they “followed the debate” preceding the election in 2018 and how “important” they considered their political view to be to them (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very*). These items remind of scales measuring identification, for example national identification (Verkuyten, 2001), except that items

in identification scales are formulated such that the group to identify with is stated (e.g. Dutch; Verkuyten, 2001). Thus, identification scales were used as inspiration, but items were reformulated and customized to instead measure a general political engagement. The three items were combined to an index with Cronbach's alpha .86, which indicates high internal consistency.

Political affiliation. Participants indicated their political affiliation by three different means. First, they indicated their feelings towards each of the eight parties in the Swedish Parliament on a feeling thermometer (0 = *cold*, 10 = *warm*). The feeling thermometer is commonly used in attitude research, for example in measuring attitudes towards homosexuals (Haddock, Zanna & Esses, 1993), in measuring attitudes towards different teams in organizational settings (Zhu, 2016), but also in measuring political bias (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Second, participants indicated their position on a left-right scale (0 = *far left*, 10 = *far right*), a scale commonly used for measuring political ideology (e.g. Anderson & Singer, 2008). Third, participants indicated which political party they would vote for, if it was to be election today. A list was presented, including all parties in the Swedish Parliament as well as the alternative *none of the Parliament parties*. The feeling thermometers for the different parties and the parties to vote for were presented in a randomized order, to not signal any internal ranking.

Control questions. Two control questions were added, as a means to control that resumé and manipulations were successfully perceived. Participants were asked to indicate how they perceived the gender of the candidate (*woman/male/unclear*). They also indicated which political party they perceived the candidate to affiliate with, on a list including all parties in the Swedish Parliament as well as the alternatives *it was not apparent* and *unclear*.

Also, two questions were added, to measure participants' overt opinions of the importance of gender and political affiliation in hiring. First, participants indicated to what degree they considered a candidate's gender to be of importance in hiring in Sweden today (1 = *never*, 7 = *often*). Second, they indicated to what degree they considered a candidate's political affiliation to be of importance in hiring in Sweden today (1 = *never*, 7 = *often*). As previous research has shown, participants have rarely overtly mentioned using gender as criteria, when they actually did (Norton et al., 2004). It is not clear if this would also be the case for political affiliation. These questions were thus to see if participants' overt opinions in these issues would differ.

Demography and background. At the end of the questionnaire, participants stated their gender, age and education level, along with answering some questions about their knowledge and experience in recruiting and teaching. They indicated if they had any education in recruiting, if they had any experience in working with recruitments and if they had any experience of the teaching occupation (*yes/no* in all three questions).

Finally, participants were thanked for their participation and were asked to submit their answers.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study were not considered to have any negative consequences for the participants. In an introductory page, participants were told the study was about evaluation of job candidates, as well as general societal interest. They were also told that answers were anonymous and were to be treated confidential, only presented at a group level, and that results were only to be used for research purpose. They were told that participation was totally voluntary and that they at any time could choose to disrupt participation, without stating any reason why.

Contact information to the author was available, in case of any questions about the study. After reading this introductory information participants consented to participation by clicking a button at the bottom of the introductory page.

Results

Grouping and Screening Data

Participants' political affiliation were grouped using the left-right scale, where 0-3 were considered Left, 4-6 were considered Middle and 7-10 were considered Right. Candidates' political affiliation were the three conditions used in the candidates' resumés; The Left Party, The Sweden Democrats and no political affiliation. Analyses were performed both for the total sample and a filtered sample, due to passing the control questions of candidate's gender and political affiliation. The reason for also analyzing the total sample is that there may be a possibility that participants not passing the control indeed did perceive the information in the résumé, but for some reason did not want to state it; for example, as a means to not seem biased when evaluating a candidate negatively. Analyses for the total sample are also more Powered, due to the sample being larger. Analysis for the total sample included 274 participants and analysis on the filtered sample included 178 participants. This means that 96 participants did not pass the control, that is, they did not correctly answer questions about the candidate's gender and/or political affiliation. Grouping of participants for the total sample and the filtered sample resulted in distribution of participants, in the between-subjects design, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of participants to different conditions, n total sample (n filtered sample).

PPA	CPA			Total
	The Left Party	No affiliation	The Sweden Dem.	
Left	26 (22)	23 (12)	23 (16)	72 (50)
Middle	27 (17)	36 (21)	30 (23)	93 (61)
Right	37 (24)	39 (21)	33 (22)	109 (67)
Total	90 (63)	98 (54)	86 (61)	274 (178)

Note. PPA = Participants' political affiliation, CPA = Candidates' political affiliation.

After grouping, hireability data were screened for outliers and normality using boxplots, histograms and P-P Plots. Screening indicated some mild outliers and some mild to medium skewness and kurtosis, depending on the group to be screened. However, with the relatively large samples, rely was put on the central limit theorem and no adjustments were considered needed. Homogeneity was tested using Levene's test. For the total sample Levene's indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances had been violated, $F(8, 265) = 2.12, p = .034$. Then again, the assumption of homogeneity mostly matters in small samples and unequal group sizes. Here, group sizes were quite similar. Also, for the smaller filtered sample, Levene's indicated homogeneity, $F(8, 169) = 1.94, p = .057$. Hence, no corrections were considered needed before analyzing. All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 24.

Hiring

Hiring was defined as how hireable the candidate was evaluated to be. Descriptive statistics regarding hireability are presented for the total sample in Table 2 and for the filtered sample in Table 3.

Table 2

Means (and standard deviations) for hireability. Total sample, $N = 274$.

PPA	CPA			
	The Left Party	No affiliation	The Sweden Dem.	Total
Left	6.29 (1.59)	6.71 (1.37)	4.87 (1.97)	5.97 (1.81)
Middle	6.40 (2.11)	6.63 (1.76)	5.24 (1.87)	6.11 (1.98)
Right	5.52 (2.27)	6.39 (1.86)	6.07 (2.23)	6.00 (2.13)
Total	6.01 (2.07)	6.55 (1.71)	5.46 (2.08)	6.03 (1.99)

Note. Hireability was measured on a 9-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very*). PPA = Participants' political affiliation, CPA = Candidates' political affiliation.

Table 3

Means (and standard deviations) for hireability. Filtered sample, $N = 178$.

PPA	CPA			
	The Left Party	No affiliation	The Sweden Dem.	Total
Left	6.17 (1.66)	6.61 (1.20)	4.52 (2.05)	5.75 (1.88)
Middle	6.61 (1.82)	6.43 (1.92)	4.91 (1.91)	5.91 (2.02)
Right	5.11 (2.24)	7.03 (1.65)	6.00 (2.45)	6.01 (2.26)
Total	5.88 (2.02)	6.70 (1.67)	5.20 (2.21)	5.90 (2.07)

Note. Hireability was measured on a 9-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very*). PPA = Participants' political affiliation, CPA = Candidates' political affiliation.

There were two hypotheses regarding hireability. H1 stated that participants will evaluate a candidate with divergent political affiliation from the own as less hireable than a candidate with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own. H3 stated that participant from both sides of the political spectrum will show similar degree of bias against candidates with divergent political affiliation from the own. To test these hypotheses, two 3 (participants' political affiliation) \times 3 (candidates' political affiliation) ANOVAs were performed; one for the total sample and one for the filtered sample.

For the total sample, there was no significant main effect of participants' political affiliation, $F(2, 265) = 0.10, p = .901, \eta^2_p = .001$, but there was a significant main effect of candidates' political affiliation, $F(2, 265) = 8.26, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .059$. Descriptives (Table 2) show that there was a tendency to evaluate candidates with no political affiliation as most hireable, followed by candidates affiliating with The Left Party and candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats. Of main interest however, there was a significant interaction between participants' and candidates' political affiliation, $F(4, 265) = 2.51, p = .042, \eta^2_p = .037$. This effect indicates that candidates were evaluated differently depending on their political affiliation and participants' political affiliation. Simple effects analysis revealed that participants with affiliations to the left considered candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats as less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation, and candidates affiliating with The Left Party, $F(2, 265) = 5.76, p = .004$. Participants with affiliations in the middle also considered candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats as less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation, and candidates affiliating with The Left Party, $F(2, 265) = 4.59, p = .011$. For participants with affiliations to the right, there was no overall significant effect, $F(2, 265) = 1.95, p = .144$. However, the pairwise comparisons showed that they actually considered candidates

affiliating with The Left Party as virtually less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation, $p = .051$, but not significantly less hireable than candidates affiliating with the Sweden Democrats, $p = .238$.

The analysis was repeated with the filtered sample, that is, with only participants passing the control questions of candidate's gender and political affiliation. There was no significant main effect of participants' political affiliation, $F(2, 169) = 0.30$, $p = .739$, $\eta^2_p = .004$, but there was a significant main effect of candidates' political affiliation, $F(2, 169) = 8.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .093$. Descriptives (Table 3) again show that there was a tendency to evaluate candidates with no political affiliation as most hireable, followed by candidates affiliating with The Left Party and candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats. Of main interest, there was a significant interaction between participants' and candidates' political affiliation, $F(4, 169) = 3.37$, $p = .011$, $\eta^2_p = .074$. This effect again indicates that candidates were evaluated differently depending on their political affiliation and participants' political affiliation. Simple effects analysis revealed that participants with affiliations to the left considered candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats as less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation, and candidates affiliating with The Left Party, $F(2, 169) = 4.87$, $p = .009$. Participants with affiliations in the middle also considered candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats as less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation, and candidates affiliating with The Left Party, $F(2, 169) = 4.85$, $p = .009$. For participants with affiliations to the right there was also an overall significant effect, $F(2, 169) = 5.45$, $p = .005$. However, the pairwise comparisons showed that they indeed considered candidates affiliating with The Left Party as less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation, $p = .001$, but not less hireable than candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats, $p = .124$. It should also be noted that the pairwise comparisons showed a marginally significant difference in hireability between candidates with unknown political affiliation and candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats, $p = .084$, that is, participants with affiliations to the right also tended to consider candidates affiliating with the Sweden Democrats as less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation. In sum, results indicated that participants with affiliations to the left and in the middle showed bias against candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats, whereas participants with affiliations to the right showed bias against candidates affiliating with the Left Party, but also tended to show bias against candidates affiliating with the Sweden Democrats, see Figure 1.

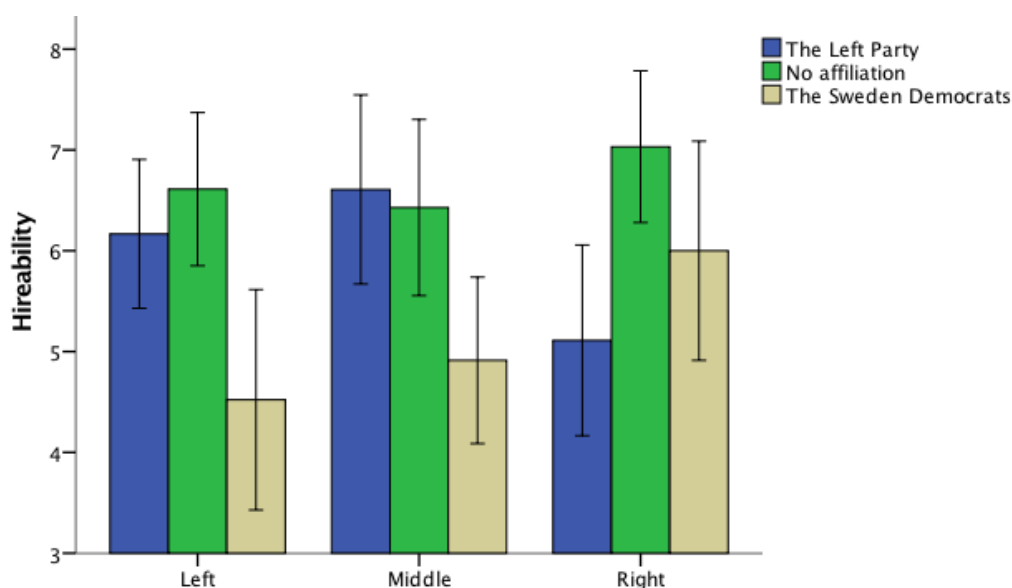


Figure 1. Hireability as a function of participants' and candidates' political affiliation, filtered sample. Error bars represent 95% confidence interval.

Hiring Criteria

Hiring criteria was defined as which criteria, education or experience, was chosen as most important when evaluating the candidate. A contingency table, showing the criteria chosen as most important, is presented for the total sample in Table 4 and for the filtered sample in Table 5. Due to one participant not choosing a hiring criteria, the total sample included 273 participants and the filtered sample included 177 participants.

Table 4

Contingency table showing the criteria chosen as most important when evaluating the candidate, participant counts (and percentage) of total. Total sample, N = 273.

PPA	CPA	Criteria		
		Level of education	Experience	Total
Left	The Left Party	4 (16.0)	21 (84.0)	25
	No affiliation	5 (21.7)	18 (78.3)	23
	The Sweden Dem.	5 (21.7)	18 (78.3)	23
Middle	The Left Party	8 (29.6)	19 (70.4)	27
	No affiliation	8 (22.2)	28 (77.8)	36
	The Sweden Dem.	8 (26.7)	22 (73.3)	30
Right	The Left Party	11 (29.7)	26 (70.3)	37
	No affiliation	6 (15.4)	33 (84.6)	39
	The Sweden Dem.	8 (24.2)	25 (75.8)	33
Total		63 (23.1)	210 (76.9)	273

Note. PPA = Participants' political affiliation, CPA = Candidates' political affiliation.

Table 5

Contingency table showing the criteria chosen as most important when evaluating the candidate, participant counts (and percentage) of total. Filtered sample, N = 177.

PPA	CPA	Criteria		
		Level of education	Experience	Total
Left	The Left Party	4 (19.0)	17 (81.0)	21
	No affiliation	3 (25.0)	9 (75.0)	12
	The Sweden Dem.	4 (25.0)	12 (75.0)	16
Middle	The Left Party	3 (17.6)	14 (82.4)	17
	No affiliation	5 (23.8)	16 (76.2)	21
	The Sweden Dem.	5 (21.7)	18 (78.3)	23
Right	The Left Party	7 (29.2)	17 (70.8)	24
	No affiliation	2 (9.5)	19 (90.5)	21
	The Sweden Dem.	5 (22.7)	17 (77.3)	22
Total		38 (21.5)	139 (78.5)	177

Note. PPA = Participants' political affiliation, CPA = Candidates' political affiliation.

There were two hypotheses regarding hiring criteria. H2 stated that participants evaluating a candidate with divergent political affiliation from the own will weigh education as more important relative to experience, compared to participants evaluating a candidate with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own. H3 stated that participants from both sides of the political spectrum will show similar degree of bias against candidates with divergent political affiliation from the own. To test these hypotheses, loglinear analysis was performed. The assumption of no more than 20% expected counts less than 5 was not fulfilled for the filtered sample and hence, the analysis regarding hiring criteria was only performed for the total sample.

The three-way loglinear analysis produced a final model with a likelihood ratio $\chi^2(14) = 5.94, p = .968$, which indicates a good fit of the data. There was a main effect of criteria, $\chi^2(1) = 83.51, p < .001$. This means that there was a difference in likelihood of choosing education or experience as most important criteria. As the contingency table (Table 4) shows, participants were more likely to choose experience as the most important hiring criteria, exactly as was anticipated. However, the three-way interaction of interest was not significant, $\chi^2(4) = 1.76, p = .780$. This means that there was no significant difference in the weighting of education relative to experience, when participants evaluated a candidate with divergent political affiliation from the own, compared to participants evaluating a candidate with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own.

Overt Opinion of the Importance of Political Affiliation in Hiring

To see if participants' overt opinion of the importance of political affiliation in hiring would differ from the overt opinion of the importance of gender in hiring, means were calculated from participants' answers on these questions. Based on answers from all 283 participants, gender was not overtly considered important in hiring ($M = 1.96, SD = 1.34$; scale 1-7), confirming earlier findings (Norton et al., 2004). However, political affiliation was neither considered as particularly important in hiring ($M = 2.33, SD = 1.37$), slightly more important than gender but still at the lower end of the scale.

Auxiliary Analyses

To further explore the stability of results regarding hiring, four follow up analyses were performed; including only participants with experience from recruiting, only participants being the most politically engaged, only participants with negative feeling towards either party and only participants with intentions to vote for either party. These analyses are explorative and less Powered than the main analyses. However, overall, results followed the pattern of main analysis. Results from these explorative analyses are presented in Appendix and will not be discussed in further detail.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine if political affiliation affects evaluations of hireability in job candidates, and also if hiring criteria is weighted to justify biased evaluations. It was thus the first study investigating political bias in hiring by also including justification of bias. In a between-subjects design, candidates were manipulated to affiliate with either of two Swedish parties; The Left Party or The Sweden Democrats, a party at the right end of the spectrum, or to have no political affiliation. Participants' affiliations were grouped due to their position on a political spectrum left to right, where, consequently, some could be considered closer to The Left Party, some could be considered closer to The Sweden Democrats, and some could be considered in between. Participants were asked to evaluate a candidate with some experience, but no education, for the job as deputy high school teacher. They were also to state which

criteria, experience or education, was most important when evaluating the candidate. The results from this study will first be summarized and then discussed in further detail.

Regarding hiring, participants evaluated a candidate with divergent political affiliation from the own as less hireable than a candidate with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own. Hence, the first hypothesis was confirmed. However, bias was not symmetric. When using The Left Party and The Sweden Democrats as political affiliation in candidates, bias was more apparent for participants with affiliations to the left and the middle. They both showed bias against candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats. For participants with affiliations to the right, bias was not as clear. They did indeed show bias against candidates affiliating with The Left Party, but candidates affiliating with The Left Party were not considered significantly less hireable than candidates affiliating with the Sweden Democrats. Hence, the third hypothesis was not confirmed; Participants from both sides of the political spectrum did not show similar degree of bias against candidates with divergent political affiliation from the own. Regarding hiring criteria, participants evaluating a candidate with divergent political affiliation from the own did not weigh education as more important relative to experience, compared to participants evaluating a candidate with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own. Hence, the second, and consequently the third, hypothesis was not confirmed regarding hiring criteria; Participants did not weigh hiring criteria to justify evaluations.

In sum, the results from this study indicated that political affiliation did matter in hiring. However, evaluations were not justified to seem unbiased by weighting criteria. Results are discussed in further detail below.

Hiring

Participants evaluated a candidate with divergent political affiliation from the own as less hireable than a candidate with unknown political affiliation, or a political affiliation more similar to the own. The tendency was also to, overall, evaluate candidates with no political affiliation as most hireable. Hence, candidates were deselected, rather than selected, due to political affiliation. This confirms earlier findings (Gift & Gift, 2015) and arguments (Brewer, 1999) of effects in political bias; Bias due to political affiliation tend to be more a matter of derogation than favoritism. This means that political affiliation can be a disadvantage for an individual, when applying for a job. However, it may not be a disadvantage to a similar degree for all. In this study, bias was not symmetric, and thus differed from earlier findings in political bias (Chambers et al., 2013; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Ditto et al., 2019). Participants with affiliations to the left showed bias against candidates affiliating with the Sweden Democrats. They considered candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats as less hireable than both candidates with no political affiliation and candidates affiliating with The Left Party. Candidates with affiliations in the middle also showed bias against candidates affiliating with the Sweden Democrats. Just as participants with affiliations to the left, they considered candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats as less hireable than both candidates with no political affiliation and candidates affiliating with The Left Party. In a symmetrical bias, participants with affiliations in the middle would have shown either no bias or similar bias against candidates affiliating with The Left Party and The Sweden Democrats. Also, participants with affiliations to the right did show bias, but the pattern was not as clear as for participants with affiliations to the left. Participants with affiliations to the right considered candidates affiliating with The Left Party as less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation, but not significantly less hireable than candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats. In sum, this means that political affiliation may be a greater disadvantage in hiring for candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats than for candidates affiliating with The Left Party, exactly as the main effect of candidates' political affiliation indeed did indicate.

A possible explanation for the unsymmetrical bias is the particular ideological position of The Sweden Democrats. The fact that there are eight parties in the Swedish Parliament, compared to only two parties in the US, where most political research is done (Chambers et al., 2013; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Ditto et al., 2019), means that all parties in Sweden may not fit neatly on a scale left to right. The Sweden Democrats are usually described as a right radical party (Jylhä, Rydgren & Strimling, 2018). They have however also been argued to not be easily placed on a political spectrum, since they advocate issues traditionally associated with both sides of the scale. Nevertheless, their focus is on immigration issues (Jylhä et al., 2018), and their history as a party hostile towards immigrants may imply people dissociating with them, regardless of their own position on the political spectrum. Indeed, in this study, not only participants with affiliations to the left, but also participants with affiliations in the middle did show bias against candidates affiliating with The Sweden Democrats. There actually was a tendency for also participants with affiliations to the right to not only be biased against candidates affiliating with The Left Party, but also to consider candidates affiliating with the Sweden Democrats as less hireable than candidates with no political affiliation. Following these indications, the unsymmetrical bias in this study may be a result of the characteristics of the Swedish political system and the parties chosen to be included in this study. A larger study including fictitious candidates affiliating with also other parties in the Swedish Parliament could have given clearer support for the bias being symmetrical or not.

Hiring Criteria

Criteria was not weighted to justify evaluating candidates as less hireable, due to political affiliation. This means that biased evaluations in hiring were present but not justified to seem objective. Thus, this result differs from earlier studies investigating justification of bias in hiring (Hodson et al., 2002; Norton et al., 2004; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). A possible explanation is that it may be more socially accepted to show bias due to political affiliation than due to, for example, gender. As previous research has indicated, bias is shown and justified when there is ambiguity/elasticity in justifiable factors (Kunda, 1990; Hsee, 1996; Saucier et al., 2005). Earlier findings confirming this phenomenon in hiring concerned gender (Norton et al., 2004; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005) or ethnicity (Hodson et al., 2002). When there was elasticity in the relative importance of hiring criteria, and also elasticity in candidates fulfilling these criteria, bias was shown and justified by weighting the importance of different criteria (Hodson et al., 2002; Norton et al., 2004; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). There was elasticity also in this study. First, by not stating which criteria, experience or education, should be prioritized. Second, by presenting the candidate as having experience but no formal education. This should give room for participants showing bias in hiring, and to justify this bias by stating education as the most important criteria when evaluating a candidate as less hireable. Since bias indeed was shown, but not justified, it may thus be that social norms do not prevent showing bias against political opponents in hiring, to the same degree as for gender or ethnicity. Indeed, it has been shown that people's expression of prejudice towards different groups is very closely related to the normative appropriateness of expressing prejudice towards those groups (Crandall, Eshleman & O'Brien, 2002). When letting one group of participants rate social acceptability of showing prejudice against over one hundred different groups, and one group of participants rate their own personal attitudes towards the same groups, the ratings correlated almost perfectly. Also, acceptability of discrimination towards different groups was closely related to social acceptability of prejudice towards these groups, both in a fictitious hiring scenario and other daily life scenarios (dating and housing; Crandall et al., 2002). The authors argued that social norms are internalized to become personal attitudes and that violation of internalized norms would lead to guilt and self-criticism. As mentioned in the introduction, Aronson (1992) argued that the experience of cognitive dissonance is strongest when it involves a behavior that violates the

self-concept, which implies feeling guilty or stupid. Putting these arguments together; If social norms do not proscribe discrimination due to political affiliation, personal norms would not proscribe discrimination due to political affiliation (Crandall et al., 2002). Participants would thus not feel guilty or stupid when showing bias due to political affiliation, would not experience cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Aronson, 1992), and hence, would not feel the need to justify the evaluation made.

Not assenting totally to this social norm explanation is that, when asked, participants did not overtly state political affiliation as being particularly important in hiring; indeed, more important than gender, but still at the lower end of the scale. If social norms do not proscribe discrimination due to political affiliation, it could be argued they would openly state political affiliation as more important than they actually did. This was however the first study including justification when studying political bias in hiring. Thus, although there was a tendency for not hiding political bias in this first study, knowledge of political bias in hiring could benefit from further clarifying research, as discussed in the following section.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

This study included both strengths and limitations, that may have consequences for the interpretation of results. Some important issues will be discussed, along with future directions.

Starting with strengths; First, a pilot was performed to see that information was perceived as intended. The pilot ensured that the candidate was perceived as more experienced than educated and that he was evaluated as hireable, with room for evaluating him both as more and less hireable. This means that there were room for also favoring candidates, if that were to be the case. This fact strengthens evidence that candidates actually were derogated, rather than favored, due to political affiliation. Second, participants were randomized to a between-subjects design. This means that all participants were to evaluate a candidate based on the exact same information, with the exception of the political manipulation. In a within-subjects design all information need to be varied to mirror different candidates. A within-subjects design can however also be more sensitive, due to the reduced error variance. Nevertheless, in this case, if reading applications from several candidates with different political affiliations, it would probably have been obvious to participants what the study was really about. This might not be the case to the same degree when varying gender (Norton et al., 2004) or ethnicity (Hodson et al., 2002) in within- or mixed designs. The consequence of the between-subjects design in this case is thus clearer evidence that an effect really was due to the political manipulation, and not due to other irrelevant information or errors due to suspicions of the aim of the study. Third, control questions were included, controlling that resumés and hence manipulations actually were perceived. It can be supposed that participants do not always read information carefully, and hence would not perceive the intended manipulation. In that case, analyses would be made based partly on participants not perceiving the information intended to be studied. Thus, effects would not be as strong, or maybe not present at all. Indeed, in this study effects were clearer and stronger when only including participants who actually passed the control questions. This also strengthens evidence that effects really were due to the political manipulation.

Turning to some methodological limitations. First, though the study included a relatively large sample, when using a between-subjects design, the hypotheses could be tested with an even larger sample. The distribution of participants due to randomized condition and their own political affiliation resulted in some groups being on the edge of too small, especially for the filtered sample. Indeed, hiring criteria could not be analyzed for the filtered sample, due to not fulfilling assumptions of a minimum amount of expected counts in each group. This could have been avoided with an even larger sample. Second, it should be noted that there were only two criteria to choose between, education and experience. It could thus be argued that participants would justify evaluations by stating some other criteria as more important. In the study

by Norton et al. (2004), for example, participants were to describe in free words why they chose the candidate they chose. In the study by Uhlmann and Cohen (2005) participants rated the importance of a series of characteristics to succeed as a police chief/women's studies professor. However, in Norton et al. (2004) only the ranking order of experience and education were of interest. Also, in Uhlmann and Cohen (2005) characteristics were combined into two indexes, one mirroring educational characteristics and one mirroring characteristics of more experienced nature (streetwise/activist characteristics). That is, even if other criteria were stated and rated, only two, experience and education were used to explore differences in weighting. Also, in another study investigating bias in hiring due to gender (Phelan, Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2008), only two criteria were explored and a difference in weighting were noted. Hence, if justification of bias due to political affiliation would have been present, it should be noted by using only these two criteria. It could also be argued that these criteria are the ones commonly considered in hiring, and it should thus mirror a real-life recruitment.

Some limitations that may affect generalizability of results should be noted. First, participants were not held accountable for their evaluations. That is, they were not to declare to others why they considered the candidate as more or less hireable. It could be argued that the presence of such a more real-life aspect should have either decreased the presence of bias or increased justification by weighting criteria. In an additional study (Norton et al., 2004, study 5), participants still made biased decisions when asked to overtly explain to the experimenter how decisions were made. However, these decisions were justified by weighting criteria to an even greater degree, compared to when not asked to explain (Norton et al., 2004). This opens up for the lack of justification in this study being due to participants not needing to declare their evaluations, and that justification would have been present in a more real-life situation. However, if social norms do not proscribe discrimination due to political affiliation, this aspect would not make a difference. The same result, that is, no justification, with the accountability aspect included, could thus confirm the social norm explanation. Accountability should thus be included in future studies. Second, it could be argued that the results from this study do not show if real recruiters show bias. Fully half of the participants stated to have experience of working with recruitments. When including only these participants in auxiliary analyses, bias due to political affiliation indeed followed the same pattern as in main analyses. Nevertheless, it was not clear how experienced these participants actually were. It may be that people working with recruitments on a daily basis are trained to be aware of and suppress these kinds of biases. On the other hand, research has shown that experts may be just as prone as lay people to make irrational decisions (Shafir & LeBoeuf, 2002). Indeed, real employers have been noted to discriminate both due to ethnicity (Carlsson & Rooth, 2007) and due to political affiliation (Gift & Gift, 2015). To get a clearer picture of political bias in hiring outside the US (Gift & Gift, 2015) however, studies like this should be performed with only professional recruiters. Third, it should be noted that results from this study is limited to indicating bias when hiring teachers, in a Swedish context. It may be that the nature of the occupation awakens negative feelings towards candidates of the opposite political affiliation, due to the extensive contact with- and thus impact the teacher could entail on youths. It may thus be that other occupations would not imply the same kind of political bias. As noted previously, it may also be that the unsymmetrical bias in this study is a result of The Sweden Democrats not fitting on a political scale, left to right. Hence, research should be performed for other occupations, with other parties and in countries with other political systems.

Implications

The results from this study indicated that political affiliation may be a disadvantage for an individual, when applying for a job. Even if it may not be usual for candidates to state political affiliation in their resumé, as in this study, political affiliation can come to the knowledge of

recruiters in other ways. It has for example become more usual to search internet for information about candidates, and with almost everyone being present in social media, information like this can be easily found. In a recent Swedish investigation of recruitments, over a third of employers stated to do background checks on internet before hiring (Stockholms Handelskammare, 2018). About as many also stated to sort out candidates based on these checks. It is thus important for the individual applying for a job to be aware of the information available out there, about oneself. However, political bias in hiring may not only have consequences for the particular individual, not being hired, but also for the organization, missing out on competent employees. Research has actually shown a tendency for diversity in terms of underlying differences, such as different backgrounds or values, to contribute to more creativity and better problem solving (Mannix & Neale, 2005). In a recent study, for example, politically polarized teams were shown to engage in more constructive and diverse discussions, and produce higher quality results, than more politically homogeneous teams (Shi, Teplitsky, Duede & Evans, 2019). It has also been argued that political bias in hiring, in the long run, will lead to a politically less diverse organization, which consequently will continue to discriminate against political opponents (Johnson & Roberto, 2018). This would thus contribute to even less creativity and quality over time.

On the other hand, results from this study indicated that bias in hiring due to political affiliation is not justified by weighting criteria. This means that a bias should be more obvious and hence, easier to detect. However, political affiliation is not included in the law of discrimination (Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2018a). Hence, if neither social norms or the law proscribes discrimination due to political affiliation, it becomes the task of the particular employer to decide if a bias is acceptable or not, and to implement policies for this. Though outside the scope of this study, it should thus in a larger context be discussed if there in some occupations actually are more acceptable to discriminate due to political affiliation, than in others. If not, results from studies like this could be used as a basis to implement new- or edit existing laws.

Conclusion

This was the first study investigating political bias and justification of this bias, in hiring. It has thus brought valuable knowledge to the issue of discrimination in hiring. The results indicated that cues of political affiliation may be a disadvantage for an individual, applying for a job. The results also indicated that bias in hiring due to political affiliation is not justified by weighting criteria, to seem unbiased. It is suggested that social norms do not prevent showing bias against political opponents in hiring, to the same degree as for example gender or ethnicity. This means that a bias in hiring, due to political affiliation, should be more obvious and easier to detect. However, the lack of laws and supposed lack of norms, proscribing this kind of discrimination, makes it up to the particular employer to decide if a bias is acceptable or not. The presence and acceptance of political bias in hiring is thus important to further discuss and investigate.

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Appendix A. Results from auxiliary analyses

Table A1
Means (and standard deviations) for hireability. Filters and groups as explained in notes below.

	CPA			
	The Left Party	No affiliation	The Sweden Dem.	Total
Experienced ^a				
Left PPA	6.57 (1.34)	6.97 (1.28)	4.53 (2.30)	6.08 (1.94)
Middle PPA	6.50 (2.51)	6.67 (1.90)	5.00 (2.10)	6.07 (2.25)
Right PPA	5.02 (2.23)	6.44 (1.62)	5.81 (2.56)	5.82 (2.16)
Total	5.90 (2.20)	6.63 (1.63)	5.20 (2.36)	5.96 (2.12)
Politically engaged ^b				
Left PPA	6.36 (1.92)	6.94 (1.43)	4.72 (1.86)	6.12 (1.92)
Middle PPA	5.54 (2.25)	6.42 (2.50)	4.19 (2.15)	5.46 (2.41)
Right PPA	5.25 (2.35)	5.29 (2.19)	5.95 (2.42)	5.51 (2.31)
Total	5.62 (2.21)	6.21 (2.11)	5.18 (2.28)	5.69 (2.22)
Negative feelings ^c				
Neg. TLP	5.80 (2.11)	6.93 (2.16)	6.74 (2.02)	6.52 (2.08)
Neg. TSD	6.93 (1.20)	6.73 (2.04)	4.03 (2.36)	6.22 (2.12)
Total	6.56 (1.62)	6.81 (2.04)	5.61 (2.52)	6.35 (2.09)
Party vote ^d				
TLP	5.85 (2.40)	6.95 (1.94)	4.51 (2.09)	5.56 (2.32)
TSD	5.97 (2.21)	6.92 (1.54)	5.88 (1.58)	6.27 (1.82)
Total	5.91 (2.26)	6.93 (1.64)	5.14 (1.96)	5.92 (2.09)

Note. Hireability was measured on a 9-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very*). CPA = Candidates' political affiliation. PPA = Participants' political affiliation, grouped using the left-right scale, as in main analyses. TLP = The Left Party, TSD = The Sweden Democrats.

^a Sample filtered due to having experience of working with recruitments.

^b Sample filtered due to being the most politically engaged (6-7, on a political engagement index, scale 1-7), following for example Iyengar and Westwood (2015) who separated participants due to strength in political affiliation.

^c Sample grouped due to having negative feelings towards either The Left Party or The Sweden Democrats (0-3, on a feeling thermometer, scale 0-10), following Ditto et al. (2019) who used different means to group participants' political affiliation.

^d Sample grouped due to indicating party vote for either The Left Party or The Sweden Democrats, following Ditto et al. (2019) who used different means to group participants' political affiliation.

Filtering and grouping are based on the total sample, that is, not only participants passing the control questions of candidate's gender and political affiliation.

Table A2
 Results from auxiliary ANOVAs, regarding hireability. Descriptives in Table A1.

Analysis	$F(df)$	p	η^2_p
Experienced			
Main effect PPA	0.36 (2, 140)	.699	.005
Main effect CPA	7.21 (2, 140)	.001	.093
Interaction	2.35 (4, 140)	.057	.063
Politically engaged			
Main effect PPA	0.92 (2, 118)	.401	.015
Main effect CPA	3.43 (2, 118)	.036	.055
Interaction	2.49 (4, 118)	.047	.078
Negative feelings			
Main effect feelings	1.74 (1, 73)	.192	.023
Main effect CPA	3.49 (1, 73)	.036	.087
Interaction	6.30 (2, 73)	.003	.147
Party vote			
Main effect party vote	0.95 (1, 62)	.332	.015
Main effect CPA	3.83 (1, 62)	.027	.110
Interaction	0.82 (2, 62)	.444	.026

Note. Significant or marginally significant results presented in bold.