



Religious stereotypes

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Definition of stereotype: An undifferentiated, simplistic attribution that involves a judgment of habits, traits, abilities, or expectations and is assigned as a characteristic to all members of a group regardless of individual variation and with no attention to the relation between the attributions and the social contexts in which they have arisen.

Looking at current events and our history, we can see that many genocides and acts of violence are towards religious groups, we also see that many extreme religious groups are the ones that cause these genocides and acts of violence. Religion, according to many anthropologists, can be described as the relation we have between humanity and the order of existence. Religion is viewed in a positive way on a personal level, helping people in many ways, and giving them a sense of purpose. However, society views certain religions negatively, especially religions that differ from our own views. Majority of religions have stood on both sides of violence.

Many would immediately think of the oppression and violence associated with religious groups in the Middle East like the Sunni and Shia. This is a very common situation that many can see, specifically because you can physically tell when someone belongs to an Islamic religion. This stereotype is one of the most dangerous stereotypes there is. We are shown images of Muslims so often in a negative sense that we have now only put violent associations to this religious group. . This has to do with our media in Westernized countries, our world-wide perspective, our own diverse or non-diverse communities, and our lack of knowledge on what is not familiar to us.

Although Christianity and Islam are both universal religions, we tend to view Islam as a more ethnic religion, which is not the case. Even though some

Muslims do identify ethnically with their religion. I believe, we view this strongly due to the fact that someone who believes in an Islamic religion can be determined immediately by their physical appearance, if wearing their traditional attire. Physical appearance is the key

factor in stereotyping someone of any form, because it can be done on the spot, which also makes it the most dangerous type of stereotyping.

People stereotype on many things including, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disabilities, these stereotypes are the prime factor in genocides around the world. The oppression that happens to specific groups due to stereotypes can be seen before hand in many of the genocides, like the oppression of ethnic Jews in the Holocaust, the oppression of the native Tutsi people and then Hutu people in Rwanda, or the oppression of religious Muslims in Bosnia. These are all examples of oppression leading to massive deaths.

Majority of these people being targeted by their physical appearance, this especially specific to the Holocaust, where some Jews tried to hide their Jewish heritage by changing their name or not wearing their Kippah, because they knew that those things would immediately categorize them. Those with other physical qualities that differed from the 'stereotypical' German were also targeted. This was a terrible attempt at ethnic cleansing that was based on stereotypes.

Many religions have stereotypes, both good and bad. Many negative stereotypes deriving from the various extreme groups that claim to be part of a specific religious or ethnic group. There are many political, economic, and social factors that play into these extremists however the stereotypes that appear on all Muslims and those from the Middle East is much more extreme than the stereotypes we see on other religions.

Over the past few years, we have seen governments around the world implementing discriminative laws from developing countries like Sri Lanka to Westernized societies like France. These stereotypes are much more extreme for Muslims than others, for example, within the Buddhist religion there are extremist groups that have acted out violence on others, however, many still view Buddhists as peaceful, in harmony with the world, and harmless. We don't

view all Buddhists as 'terrorists' because a very small percent practice extreme values that are not found in that religion. Buddhism specifically is a religion that has a core belief in abstaining from suffering and causing harm to other living beings. Our stereotypical Buddhists isn't the Buddhist attacking Hindus in India or causing oppression in Sri Lanka. These things are very interesting because the issues that Buddhists and Hindus face is a mirror of the issues that Shia and Sunni Muslims face.

Many of those who were involved in the killings of millions during the Holocaust, were scared for their own life and that's why they killed others. There was extremists in the Nazi regime too, however, many of the people were scared and feared for their own lives. The fear of those people lead to millions of deaths. Hitler initially implemented the fear of what was going to happen to Germany's economy, which was in a crucial state. Fear is an emotion that authoritarians run off, causing Hitler to gain many followers, the fear over the years turned into not what is going to happen to Germany, but what is going to happen to yourself. This fear can be seen in other examples as well, such as with the Buddhist violence in Sri Lanka, a Buddhist Power Force attacking Muslims, due to fear that they will take over primarily Buddhist and Hindu areas. This to some extreme Buddhist is justified, while other extreme Buddhist do not agree because it goes against their core beliefs.

Overall, there are a lot of factors that play into religious violence. Political parties,

religious parties, and our perception of the world all play important roles in how we view a specific group of people. There are tons of other factors, and our own personal self-awareness that contribute to these stereotypes and acts of violence. The truth being though that unless we can educate ourselves on the real issues behind extreme groups, wrongly affiliated members of religions, and the understanding of others beliefs and views, we will not be able to end all the violence and discrimination. Jarni Blakkarly said by not looking at the complexity to these situations "we take the cheap option of blaming religion instead of making the effort to understand". This is true and ideally avoidable, if more were educated on how many pieces play a part in the discrimination, violence, and genocide people face every day all around the world.