**TINA SHEARS**

As we have been talking about for many weeks now, oppression is viewed as poverty or dependence and privilege is viewed as power or independence. In contrast, religion can be categorized as a form of power as well. Straight privilege constitutes that “norm” that is talked about and is like sitting on top (Starks, 2013).  For example, some of the other members that could fit in this category are males, Christians, and upper-class citizens. For example, most males are rewarded in society with better pay, protects the family, and in most cases will head the household. So if you look at the dominance a male has in a family, it is fair to say that in some cases, men have the upper-hand.

A situation that I think we are all familiar with is the “911 attack on the United States”, certainly does not place Muslims in a position where the fact that they identify with some recognizable religious system that grants them a bubble of protection. But on this day, the Muslims definitely demonstrated privilege and religion in my opinion.

 Some other things to consider about privilege and religion is, if you are from a group of religious faith, an individual may be rewarded with time off for religious holidays, can worship freely, children could relate to others better, and your religious beliefs cannot be held against you if tried in the court of law (Starks, 2013). Therefore, having no religious beliefs may put an individual in the same category of being marginalized. Stark states almost any religious minority, theistic or not, faces its own unique intolerance that complicates the question of whether the fact that they are “religious” gives them a sort of societal acceptability that nonreligious folks can’t have (2013).

            However, Todd et al argues,  non-traditional religious can still be religious, can still be atheist, can even still be Christian (2015). It seems unclear that that fact alone offers them any considerable upward mobility or protection, especially if, as described above, they identify with a religious tradition that is characterized by other cultural factors at play.

Starks, B. (2013). Exploring religious self-identification among US Catholics: Traditionals, moderates, and liberals. *Sociology of Religion*, srs075.

Todd, N. R., Suffrin, R. L., McConnell, E. A., & Odahl-Ruan, C. A. (2015). Understanding Associations between Religious Beliefs and White Privilege Attitudes. *Sociological Perspectives*, *58*(4), 649-665.

**Gregory Hines**

Lippy (2013) discusses the history surrounding religious thought and practice and how it evolved in the United States, arguing that members of the dominant Protestant Christian background enjoyed a number of privileges at the expense of Jews, Muslims, and other minority groups, members of which were few and far between at the time. Lippy (2013) uses the example of the Sabbath, observation of which was not only expected, but mandated by law in many early colonial settlements. Christians, who observe the Sabbath on Sunday, could assume that social circumstances would allow them to observe the Sabbath in their traditions without interference, while Jews and other who observe the Sabbath on Saturday were not afforded such respect (Lippy, 2013). Still today, businesses are commonly closed or operate on abbreviated hours on Sundays, allowing people to attend church or enjoy a day of rest, while Saturdays are not considered unique in a religious sense. Such social norms, which have taken shape since biblical times, provides a perfect example of members of a dominant religious group enjoying privilege at the expense of smaller, less organized and less influential religious groups. Despite freedom of religion and increased tolerance, the structure of our weeks remains tied to religious observance.

            Schlosser (2013) presents a list of additional privileges enjoyed by the Christian majority. I had not considered the privilege of having history written in terms that suit the needs of the Christian religion, such as the insinuation that Christian historical figures are responsible for our advances as a society, or the confidence that your children will be taught about Christian holidays and traditions (Schlosser, 2013).

            I remember the reaction from staff at my agency after discovering that one of our doctors would not be able to work during Rosh Hashana. Of course, the agency was respectful and accommodating of her beliefs, but it was a topic of conversation and seen (although not spoken) in terms of the disruption it created. We take for granted that we will not be expected to work on important Christian holidays and rarely receive strange looks for expecting the day off.

References:

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Schlosser, L. Z. (2013). Christian Privilege. In Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W. J., Castaneda, C., Hackman, H. W., Peters, M. L., & Zuniga, X. (Eds.). *Readings for diversity and social justice*. (3rd ed., pp. 243-244). New York, NY: Routledge Press.