
Gender Expectations in The Nursing Community In Uk

Gender expectation refers to a normative conception of appropriate attitudes and activities for a particular racialized and gendered group (Plante and Maurer, 2018). My first experience that highlights gender expectations relates to my childhood, where I engaged in activities considered appropriate for men such as camping, football and hunting. Although, my mother also ensured I took on some household responsibilities like cleaning my room and doing my laundry, which is traditionally associated with feminine roles. Despite engaging in both masculine and feminine activities as a child, I was aspiring to go into various occupations ranging from fire fighters, mechanics and doctors, as those were roles I typically saw appropriate for my gender. However, as I progressed through the years I found myself solely interested in nursing, a job predominantly filled by females which led to me working as a nurse, where I became accustomed to various gender expectations and stereotypes associated with the profession. Butler (1990) views gender as performative and I found the hospital I worked to be a place where individuals including myself, reenacted and sometimes over performed gender due to various stereotypes, a view linked to Holmes (2006). As previous literature suggests that feminine workplaces are characterised by stereotypical features of femininity such as being supportive and caring (Whittock and Leonard, 2003), I was expected to perform these skills in order to fit into the role. However, I felt that it was less of a performance and I was naturally a caring and supportive person, therefore the job role was appropriate for me because I had those feminine characteristics which are drawn upon in the literature.

Although, there were instances where my masculinity came to play such as being put in charge of other nurses. This example of power and management reflects the outlook that sees men as natural leaders and women as subordinate followers (Holmes 2006). where men were expected to fill roles of management, such as doctors and surgeons whilst the nursing aspect was performed mainly by women (Whittock and Leonard, 2003). I found myself using this position of responsibility as an opportunity to prove myself as a man within this 'feminine' role and further reinforce my male identity, emphasising my leadership skills through distributing instructions and giving orders to other nurses. Furthermore, this doing of gender and effort to make my masculinity more pronounced is prevalent in men taking on feminine roles (Williams, 1995). Additionally, as a result of patients preconceived ideas of which gender occupied nursing roles, I was subject to various shocked or confused looks when I was rendering my service. In other instances, a few inappropriate comments were made in regards to whether I was gay. This made me self conscious and always trying to not act overtly feminine. Furthermore, my decision to become a nurse also resulted in some backlash from my parents, as they expected me to choose being a doctor over being a nurse as they believed nursing was not really a man's role. This resonates with the view of men in female roles, failing to measure up to people's perceptions of what a real man's job role is (Padavic and Reskin 2002).

All in all, although there has been an influx of male nurses in the UK, it is still relatively small at 11.6% (Williams, 2017). Gender expectations have been prevalent in my experience as a male nurse, and despite challenges associated with not fitting various individuals conceptions on nurses, I have found pleasure in creating awareness that nursing like many other roles are not solely specific to one gender. In spite of the fact that literature presents nurses to be predominantly female, I found that my skillset as a male perfectly matched the requirements of

the role, which contrasts with the views held within some of the previously discussed literature. Furthermore, upon reflecting on my experience, I am more aware of some of the preconceived notions that I encountered whilst dealing with a few patients at work.

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