
Stereotypes In Computer Science: Geeks And Nerds

My current desired career is to be a Customer Success Manager, they work for AP companies and onboard people who buy aps for use. Most people who work in this field hold degrees in science, technology, engineering, or math. There is a stereotype associated with people who major in these fields. The stereotype is that they are geeks and/or nerds. Geeks and Nerds are often thought of as being gifted academic focused but socially awkward people. It is interesting to me that there is a misconception that the only people who study science, engineering, technology, and math are students who are gifted or advance educationally in some way than the average student. Another misconception. Why do these stereotypes exist?

If we look at the word 'geek' as an example, it's etymology online comes from the word 'geck' which means fool, dupe, or simpleton. North Sea German and Scandinavian 'geck' means "to croak, crackle or mock. Sometime in the 19th century the word changed to "fool" and was a term being used to describe a certain carnival performer, which may have been where the word became synonymous with freaks, or 'different'. This word then became associated with people outside what was considered the norm. Like anything else our society capitalizes on differences and what is considered socially acceptable and unacceptable. By the 1960's with computers becoming accessible for personal use, the meaning of the word changed to include socially awkward people. It became a term extended to computer users who were obsessed with the technology.

I do not personally know anyone now that fits the stereotype, but I have in the past. The stereotype is either a male of Indian decent, and Asian or a white male who may or may not wear glasses with oddly matched clothing and pocket protectors. I have recently worked with the Geek Squad, which is known for aiding with computer issues, and most of the people who work do not fit any stereotype. I did not see anyone with a pocket protector and the staff was ethnically diverse. It must be noted that I did not see any females, which I believe is a negative consequence of this long-standing stereotype. Women do not work in the field of computer science because of many associated it with having to be anti-social.

The best way the overcome the stigma associated with geeks and nerds, through exposure and positive media. Media has been a defining influence in many ways. There is tremendous difference between the viewed geek from the 1950's and today. There has been a positive change in the views about geeks and the stigma associated with being called one. If we continue to change how geeks and nerds are viewed in movies and television. For example, the recent movie "Black Panther" the nerd was a precocious young black youth who made technology look cool unlike the usual thought of male white nerd seen in "Revenge of the Nerds" in 1984.

I have and think I will continue to struggle with one stereotype which follows black women in every career. It is the "angry black woman". It makes having simple discussions difficult because if you disagree in any way. You are labeled as either argumentative or angry. I have made a simple statement in my past like "I do not agree" which was followed by a response from the other party "you don't have to get so angry". The only way I have found to taper that is to constantly be overly positive. That does not work overall. I do not have any ideas on how to

overcome this. As long as media portrays black women as angry, it will continue to give the professional world the opportunity to dismiss black woman professionally and view us as unreasonable.

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