

Diversity and individual behaviour

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



Diversity is what the world is made of. Without diversity, the world would be an uninteresting and inhospitable place. Without diversity, there would be no variety of opinions or alternate views. There would be no different views or ways of thinking. Being diverse provides a way for people to express opinions and views to others who may not have pictured a situation the same. Four factors that cause diversity are ethnicity, gender, religion and sexual affinity. These groups have an outcome on the course of daily choices. The author of this paper will look into each of the groups and how the aspects have an impact on individual behavior.

Ethnicity has an influence on behavior that cannot easily be ignored. At work the influences of ones ethnicity is dealt with everyday. African-American stereotypes have led to “ being black as similar to having a felony conviction when regarding the chances of finding a job. The results of a study suggested black men must work at least twice as hard as equally qualified white men to rise above the stigma their skin color provides (Pager, 2009).”

The humiliation is, for the most part, due to labeling. According to Devine and Elliot (1995), in the 1930’s the adjectives used to describe an African-American were superstitious, lazy, and ignorant, and today the adjectives vary from unintelligent, loud, and criminal to musical, athletic and very religious. Discrimination is often difficult to observe, and yet, despite the antidiscrimination laws discrimination still occurs.

The author of this paper is a case manager for individuals with developmental disabilities, and observes the subtle nuance of bigotry almost

on a day to day basis. Being articulate and having a name that belies the true ethnicity frequently surprises people when meeting in person.

The dumbfounded expression is not easily hidden regardless of one's efforts to mask it. Statements such as ' you sounded different over the phone, or you look nothing as I imagined' are uttered frequently during these meetings. After such meetings, those who are truly prejudiced will request to work with someone else; giving superficial explanations to the request. For example, ' we prefer to work with someone with more experience', or with a man, regardless of the fact the author has more than 20 years of experience in the profession.

Being African-American has its hardships. In addition to thatadversity, consider the privation of being an African-American woman. The author's supervisor admitted to being cautious with relaying the information about the requests of those who had recently met the author in person. Why was the supervisor afraid to approach the author? Because, the African-American woman is often portrayed as a defiant, smart-mouthed, sassy, finger-waving and eye-rolling person, it is easy to understand her fear. The African-American woman has to be diligent in the efforts to contradict the assumptions.

Just being female impacts a woman's behavior. Women are portrayed as and believed to be whiners, nags, flakes and shopaholics. Women are thought to be helpless and in need of rescuing; by a man, of course. In the business world certain jobs have traditionally been considered gender specific. A woman who holds a stereotypical masculine position, such as construction '

foreman', is capable to use the equipment just as successfully as the men, but often the men see her as delicate; unable to work too hard, resulting in less productivity and more stress in the workplace. Women want the same respect, opportunities and responsibilities as men. However, chauvinistic attitudes often obstruct a woman's advancement. The author has overheard such comments as: 'she doesn't need a promotion, her husband makes more', presuming a female employee has no right to a full fledged career, or a larger salary comparable to the male employees. Surprisingly, the comment was made by a female.

Sexism is evident in all areas of life. For example, people debate if women should play a sport traditionally played by men. The year 1896 is when women playing football was first documented. The men's reaction to the football game was mentioned more than the game itself: 'the crowd of men looking on, excited by the struggle, closed in with a rush.' It was not until 1970 that a woman was allowed to play on a men's semipro football team and not until 1999 did The Women's Professional Football League begin playing professional women's tackle football games (Women's Professional Football League, n. d).

Sexism exists in religion as well. To the Catholic Church, Mary, the mother of God is the most perfect human being. Yet, a woman cannot be ordained as a priest. The woman's highest role in the Catholic Church is that of a Nun; a servant living under vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In other faiths women have more of a role, for instance in the Episcopalian religion; a woman may be a priest.

In Judaism rabbis have been known to depict women as envious, unproductive, lazy, greedy, and prone to gossip. In Judaism a Jewish woman's role in life is traditionally a wife, mother and keeper of the household. The Jewish woman knows her place and the depictions have discouraged many women from pursuing an education, career advancement and sexual affinity (Marcy Hyatt, personal communication, January 7, 2009).

Marcy Hyatt, a Jewish woman and a homosexual, also reported her experience of being homosexual and being Jewish as parallel. She has fought prejudice and fought for civil rights, and although she no longer has to fear being visible, she continues to work to maintain her self-worth in the face of ignorance and bigotry.

According to the American Psychological Association (2004) while sexual orientation is not a conscious choice that can be voluntarily changed, several homosexual and bisexual people seek to change their sexual orientation through therapy, often coerced by family members or religious groups. In the United States, homosexual and bisexual people often meet widespread violence, discrimination, and prejudice. The discrimination takes many forms from being denied raises, promotions and getting poor performance evaluations to bullying in schools. The fear of being known as a homosexual or bisexual has led to men hiding sexual orientation from loved ones and doctors thereby possibly putting themselves and loved ones at an increased risk for HIV/AIDS.

Regardless of the fact that no one can avoid diversity, people fear differences and seek only what is perceived as safe; remaining ignorant to

what others have to offer. Fearing people different from us is a natural tendency because of how we were raised. When we treat one another as individuals with feelings, then we will experience true multiculturalism.