

Gender segmentation in hospitals: personal observations

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



The purpose of this research was to see if, while observing the things around me during my stay in the hospital, and would appear as if there was clear segmentation by gender there. Unfortunately, being a patient in a hospital isn't the best place to conduct this type of research, however, it is what I had to work with. The individuals I was able to observe were rather diverse. Some were male some were female. Their ages ranged from their 20's to their 50's. There were short people, some very short people and one rather tall individual. Their bedside manner was where the major difference was apparent. It was also the most shocking.

All of the interactions took place in a rather small hospital room. In the room there was a single patient bed where I was located. This bed was in the center of the room. Between the bed and the wall was a recliner. My husband sat in this chair the majority of the time. There were also anywhere from 2 to 3 metal folding chairs depending on the amount of visitors I had in my room at any one time. So, with just myself and my husband, it felt rather crowded. Add a doctor or nurse and even they seemed focused to stand in one small area. There just wasn't enough room to move around. I was surprised the doctors and nurses weren't used to this though since they work in this condition daily.

The first group of individuals I observed was the lab techs. There were three different lab techs that entered my room during my stay. Two were white females in their 50's. Both were average height and a little overweight. They both wore green scrubs and had stickers on their ID's to show that they had received their flu shot. When these ladies entered my room, they were

always very quiet. There would be a light tap on the door and then they would slowly enter the room. In a soft voice they would say they were there to draw labs and that they would get it done and be on their way quickly. When they entered the room, I was not doing anything other than watching television. I was actually looking forward to their visits as they would usually show up early in the morning before my family arrived or they would be there late at night after my family had gone home for the evening. Even without having any other visitors in my room, the lab techs were quiet people. They didn't want to disturb me. I think part of it may be that they have so much work to do, they are constantly running from room to room and it is easier to just be quiet than to strike up a conversation with someone. After all, the conversation could cause them to fall behind in their work.

There was also one male lab tech. He didn't give a soft tap on the door. He knocked. Nothing loud or obnoxious but there wasn't any questions that there was someone about to enter the room. When this individual entered the room, the first thing I noticed was that he didn't have the flu sticker. Next I noticed his green scrubs, the same type the two females were wearing, however his appeared to be a much darker green. There were also creases still in the uniform. This made me think he was new or he had just purchased new scrubs. He wasn't near as quiet as the female techs. He struck up a conversation, told me a joke he had just heard on the radio, and even asked me if I had ordered my dinner yet. He made small talk and when

he was finished drawing my blood, he told me to have a good night and he hoped I felt better soon.

All three lab techs had to draw three vials of blood. The two females, again were all soft spoken and referred to their patient as “ Hun” or “ Honey”. This was the first time I realized that I was the one causing the gender influenced actions. I allowed the two females to address me as “ Hon” and “ Honey”. The male lab tech did not use those terms when talking to me. If he had, I would have corrected him. The Hispanic male lab tech was very full of energy. Enough so that I was finding him to be a bit annoying. He was also rather flirty, which I find to be disrespectful. Being kind and happy and bubbly is one thing. That is acceptable. Being flirty is totally not acceptable.

The time the lab techs spent in my room was limited however I was surprised to learn about how I acted towards the different sexes. I always smile when the females enter the room. I think they reminded me of my mom. Although they didn’t have the time to talk to me, I felt comfortable with them. With the chatty male lab tech, I didn’t think he should be quite so chatty and flirty. It made me feel uncomfortable and there really wasn’t any reason for me to be. He didn’t do anything inappropriate or out of line. After all, he isn’t the one who called me “ Hon” or “ Honey”.

The second group of individuals I observed were the doctors. There was one male and one female. The male was rather young. He was easily 6’ tall and very thin, thin as a rail. He was the hospitalist. So he was the floor doctor. The second doctor was a very vertically challenged female from India. I

believe she told my daughter that she was just under 4'11". She was a specialty doctor.

Dr. Giant was a very fast talker. He spent most of his time directing the conversation to my husband who was sitting between my bed and the wall. Not once did the doctor look toward me and talk directly to me. Instead, he would talk directly to my husband as if he was my caregiver. I think for this reason alone I had shut down towards him and didn't pay much attention to him. The young male doctor also seemed to be rather busy and in a hurry. I always wondered if he had a date that night and was trying to get out of there quickly. He typically stood with his arms folded, wearing his white coat, ready to turn and take off running in his bright tennis shoes. Another thing I noticed with the young male doctor is that he liked to use scientific terms and explanations that were very long winded. My husband even interrupted him a couple of times and asked him to speak English because he didn't understand a word he said. This seemed to irritate the doctor. My husband and I also asked several questions. The young male doctor didn't seem to appreciate that either. Before he left the room, in an attempt to avoid further questions I feel, the doctor made a final rude comment to us. He said, " I will try to get the information you want about your tests, however I have my own patients that I must take care of. I am just checking in with everyone on the floor to see how things are going. This infuriated both me and my husband.

The female doctor was wearing her white coat and under that coat she wore a dress and dress shoes, wedges to be exact. When she entered the room, she introduced herself. She shook my hand and my husband's hand. She

then went over my chart and gave us the results of the latest blood tests that had been conducted. When my husband or I would ask a question, she would answer it and then look at me and ask if I had any questions. She would then look at my husband and ask, “ Do you have any questions, sir?” She included my husband and me in the conversation the entire time. We asked several questions when she was in the room as well. She took the time to answer all of our questions and the two tests that were not back yet, she even wrote on the board in my room so we would remember to ask about them the next day.

The structural functional theory says that society is made up of different parts and that these parts work together to provide a stable pattern of behavior. In my observation, I applied this theory to show how the female professional still has the calming and nurturing role in the hospital. Both male and female lab tech and male and female doctors did the same jobs. However, the way they handled themselves couldn't have been more different.

Females have historically been excluded from the workforce. They typically took on the role of the family caregiver, as opposed to the provider. This has been societally imposed on women. Although the male and female lab techs had the same job to do in the hospital, the females were soft spoken, comforting and more focused on making sure I was comfortable and not wanting to disturb me. The male lab tech, although he did his job, was bold and much less emotionally oriented. Being familiar with the female as being the nurturing one, I was ok with having the female tech calling me by names

other than my own. Yet if the male would have done the same thing, I would have been more easily offended by it.

The doctors were the same way. The female was making sure my husband and I both understood what she was saying. It was as if she was taking care of both of us, not just me as the patient in the bed. The male doctor was more about his business. He needed to get going so he could get the rest of his patients seen. He was on a clock and we were upsetting his schedule. Since we didn't expect the nurturing behavior from him, we found his behavior to be acceptable and we didn't complain.