

## **Women Soldiers and Male Nurses – Adjustment of Gender Identity**

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**Abstract:** It is said that gender identity can be seen as either unidimensional or multidimensional depending on its realization within society. The question is how gender identity is connected to social groups.

Membership in a social group profoundly influences human behavior, with both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, positive social identity is promoted by the feeling of belonging to a group, which enhances individuals' self-esteem and a sense of connectedness to others.

On the other hand, membership in a social group can promote negative bias toward out-group members, in-group members who violate group norms can be derogated, and the whole group can be negatively stereotyped in certain areas (for example, women in the military).

In our research we will try to prove that such positioning within social groups, in a way, enforces the adjustment of gender identities, breaking the stereotyped frames of gender, which is especially evident in 'male' or 'female' occupations.

We will also show how continuous construction of a range of masculine and feminine identities is reflected in discourse.

The examples will be taken from 'male' or 'female' occupations, e.g. military opposed to nursing, to illustrate that specific shift from typical construction of identity into a new sphere of genderness.

**Key words:** gender, identity, social group, stereotypes, adjustment.

### **Introduction**

A rather broad and open-ended definition of identity would be that identity is the social positioning of self and other (Buholtz, Hall, 2005).

Buholtz and Hall also suggest that "identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures." (Buholtz, Hall, 2005:2) Even a superficial view of this definition shows that identity, especially gender identity research, is multidimensional and interdisciplinary.

One of the dimensions important for understanding identity construction is a sociological dimension, to the point in which we speak about a person's positioning within a social group and how a social group influences someone's self-gendering.

Another dimension is a psychological one, "where the divergence in perspectives can be characterized in terms whether sex typing is considered adaptive or maladaptive, described as an individual or normative difference, and whether gender identity is regarded as a unidimensional or multidimensional construct." (Ruble, Lurye, Zosuls, 2008)

The third dimension, which is of particular interest to us, is a discursive dimension of gender identity, i.e. how gender identity is constructed through the construction of discourse or particular discursive events.

Naturally, none of these can be taken separately. They are rather intertwined, helping create an overall picture of identity construction.

In their social life, people are positioned within varied structures of institutions and society, and they are assigned specific social roles; they all take on different gender identities in different communities or cultures. Also, they are actively involved in the construction and performance of their own gender identities.

Belonging to a social group profoundly influences human behavior, the implications of which can be both positive and negative. Membership in a social group can promote a positive social identity from which individuals enhance their self-esteem and a sense of belongingness or connectedness to others. On the other hand, membership in a social group can promote "negative bias toward out-group members, derogation of in-group members who violate group norms, and disengagement from certain areas in which one group has been negatively stereotyped." (Ruble, Lurye, Zosuls, 2008:2)

Being multidimensional, gender identity is reflected through the relationship between social identity, which shows the awareness of group membership, and personal adjustment.

Gender identity may be conceptualized as categorical knowledge - you confirm that you are a member of a certain group; a feeling of importance - being a part of that group is really important to you; and evaluation - you like to be a part of that group.

The degree of your masculinity or femininity was earlier considered by developmental psychologists as a direct and optimal result of sex typing – you are either a man or a woman.

On the other hand, cross-sex typing was seen as deviant and potentially harmful. Bem (1981) argues that the extent to which people were sex typed was indicative of the extent to which they were gender schematic or had internalized culturally prescribed gender norms.

This could result in negative adjustment, which means that people will not be able to react appropriately in different situations, especially when gender norms are violated.

Higgins (2000) suggests that people can be either prevention focused, being concerned with avoiding negative outcomes, or promotion focused, in obtaining positive outcomes.<sup>274</sup>

In feminist theory a metaphor which is frequently used is ‘creation of different faces’ for constructing one’s own identity. This refers to particular situations through which we, while performing gender, create different gender identities.

As Eckert and McConnell (2003) emphasize “in a world where simply being can count as being bad, identities are often constructed in opposition to dominant cultural ideologies. Identity construction is not an exclusively individual act, social selves are produced in interaction, through processes of contestation and collaboration.”

In the 1990s a diversity of research on people’s identities emerged, investigating how identity was constructed, displayed and performed in the language used by particular gender groups (e.g. McElhinny (1993) on women police officers in Pittsburgh or Bergvall (1996) on women engineering students).

That was the period when a shift occurred in feminist theory and gender studies in thinking about gender. Gender identity is no longer conceptualized as something people just *have* but also as involving what they *do*, how they *react* in particular situations. Gender is undergoing a constant process of production, reproduction and change through people’s performance of gendered acts in which they project their own gendered identities.

## **2. Construction of Identity**

Identity construction, as we have suggested, is multifold. It may occur as the creation of individual identity, the simultaneous creation and challenging of other people’s identity, their relationships within group identity, etc. In the reality we experience around us, a specific group identity rarely exists or operates in isolation from other identities.

People’s own identities are largely determined by the identity of the social groups they belong to. People often identify with, and are influenced by, group memberships, which does not mean that this identification is directly relevant to their present circumstances. This would mean that the social identity network of an individual has significant implications for the person’s perceptions, emotions, and behaviors. As an individual you have created a network of different identities which is not connected only to one group or to the last group you are a member of.

The two key concepts that offer complementary perspectives on identity are whether you are ‘the same’ as your group or ‘differ’ from it. If you are ‘the same’, you are allowed to see yourself as belonging to a group, while if you are ‘different’ it produces social distance between those who perceive themselves as unlike.

Apart from the individual and in-group identities, there are also differences between in-group members and those outside the group. This is a well known concept of in-group and out-group relationships, which are, in most cases, ideologically conditioned.

Buholtz and Hall (2003) suggest that such ideological ranking enables the most powerful group to constitute itself as a norm from which all others diverge. However, that norm is not usually recognizable as a separate identity.

Within this complex relational network of different identities, it is possible that some in-group members are identified as closer to the members of the out-group. This is especially significant in social groups in which complex gendered identities are at work.

Getting closer to the members of the other group leads to identity change, which is also challenging because individuals start categorizing themselves as members of any new group that they have joined.

The process of taking on a new group membership involves an adjustment of one’s own identity or, to be more precise, the present identity, in order to accommodate the identity of the new group. It may take some time before people get accustomed to the new group membership, or before they start perceiving that group’s identity as a part of their self-identity.

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<sup>274</sup> Higgins gives an example of a woman wearing a feminine outfit to avoid being criticized for being unfeminine or looking unattractive or, as a contrast, wearing a feminine outfit because of a desire to be admired for being feminine and perceived as attractive.

In contrast, this integration to the new group is not always successful. People may experience rejection and hostility from the members of the group, which is a very difficult position, especially if you really want to prove that you are worthy of being a member of that group and you highly identify with it (Jetten et al, 2004). Iyer, Jetten and Tsavrikos (2006) suggest that old and new group memberships may be reconciled. One possibility is that both identities independently co-exist without any impact on each other. That is, the idea of network of identities that we all create does not, in fact, depend on the group we belong to but on the situation in which we find ourselves.

Another question that we earlier tackled is the one of power relations within the group or between the groups.

Previous research on identity was mostly based on the assumption that identities were attributes of individuals or groups rather than of situations. The power of a group is dynamically constructed and exercised in different aspects of a specific interaction; group members manifest power in a variety of ways as they construct their own identities and roles in response to the behavior of others.

When we speak of gendered power, especially in mix-gender groups with a majority of men, it is significant how women try to construct their identity. Women who attempt to adjust to more masculine styles of behavior are considered more credible but less feminine, the situation which is typical for the military, police forces etc.

Howes and Stevenson (1993) emphasize that “women in groups are less prone to self-assertion and more prone to compromise...If women follow the trend shown by the sociological data and become a large minority of military personnel, their presence can be expected to change the organizational structure in which they participate.”

If we speak of the military as a traditionally male group, with specific and rather rigid identity, it is true that allowing the access of a larger number of women into the group will require a new strategic vision and leadership and challenge the existing one.

Nevertheless, being a minority, women rarely achieve high-level positions and if they do, the reason they are selected is for their rather counter-stereotypical characteristics, i.e. less feminine and more masculine. Similarly, Howes and Stevenson (2000) describe this situation as women's attempt to protect themselves by adopting the attitudes of their male colleagues. They 'go native in order to survive'.

Most research on women in contemporary male-dominated organizations suggests that women develop two major patterns of adaptation: cooption and segregation. The first applies to those structures and occupations where women accept male definitions of the situation and try to blend into the male organizational culture. The second pattern manifests itself in groups of women who become effectively isolated from the organizational mainstream and cultivate female friendship, support, and cooperation in order to cope with the rejection or obstacles put before them by the opposite gender.

The situation with the military can become more complex. An article in *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military* (1996:12) regarding the captivity of Rhonda Cornum during the Gulf War states: “Women in wartime and in military culture provide a ready test for male dominance and a ready target of anger: women become the object of male violence just for being there. They violate the male terrain of war and fraternity of power. Tailhook is an excellent example of male terrain, where the women “had” to have it happen. Similarly, the female captivity can't be over until there is a rape.”

Victoria Bergvall (1996) gives a similar example of female engineering students: on the one hand there is a social need to behave in stereotypically ‘feminine’ ways, if they wish to take part in heterosexual social and sexual relationships. On the other hand, if they are going to succeed in their studies, they must assert themselves and their views, which is liable to put them in competition with fellow students. This involves assertive, competitive behavior perceived as ‘masculine’.

What is important is the way women try to adjust their identities if they want to become members of a male-dominated group. Obviously, it is a very hard job; they have to give up a great deal of their femininity in order to become a part of the male group. Women who find themselves in new groups, like the military, can partly segregate to cope with other girls and preserve their identity, but consequently, they can become ‘targets of male anger’. Their positions and their identities are challenged both ways.

There is also an opposite example of the identity adjustment that we want to discuss here - the men who want to become members of a female-dominated group. Do the ‘male nurses’ have to co-opt or segregate, is their male identity challenged? These are some of the questions we will try to answer in the following chapters.

### **3. Gender Identity in Language and Discourse**

The third dimension of identity research that we noted earlier is its discursive dimension. The question of identity construction is primarily expressed through language and it is extremely significant to define how gender identities are reflected in discourse.

Buholtz and Hall (2005:585) argue that “identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural

phenomenon.” As such, identity is an intersection between culturally imposed and personal meanings which may be chosen and imposed through language use.

In particular discursive situations identity is formed and constructed through different language forms. When constructed in ongoing discourse, identity is not a final product or creation; it is constantly challenged, reproduced, adjusted and changed. Their dynamic perspective is in contrast with the traditional view of identities as unitary and constant psychological states or social categories. As each community has its identity, the linguistic reflection of that identity is the language specific for that particular community. Therefore, we say that language is an authentic expression of group identity.

Some sociolinguistic approaches to language and identity associate rates of use of particular linguistic forms with particular kinds of speakers. Of course, speakers are not always aware of all the language features they are using in particular situations and the nuances of linguistic behaviors which signify their identity. But they are definitely sure of certain aspects of language which they use in certain situations to confirm their identity, e.g. radicals who use some linguistic expressions pejoratively, ascribing completely new meanings to them, or, the language expressions used pejoratively by male soldiers to identify themselves as a group opposed to female soldiers.

Due to gender subordination, according to Eckert (1989), women in many cultures do not have the same access to possible accomplishments as men, which they tend to compensate through more symbolic resources, primarily language, personality and physical appearance in order to present themselves as acceptable or equal members of society.

We claim that the relationship between speakers’ gender and their use of linguistic forms is a direct one. However, some linguists (Ochs and Taylor, 1995) claim that this relationship is indirect; “linguistic features are associated with gender via their association with something else that itself can be associated with gender, e.g. a professional woman who uses a direct, forceful style of speaking and is described by her colleagues as ‘talking like a man’”

Does it mean that this woman is using language to signal that she is aware of her masculine behavior and wants others to accept her as such or is she using it for professional reasons to index her self-confidence and authority, which is also connected to masculinity?

It is especially important how we perceive this situation in male-dominated groups or female-dominated groups in regard to the power she wants to exert. What she regards as appropriate to her professional status can be interpreted by others as inappropriate for her behavior as a woman, which does not mean that it is inappropriate for her new identity.

As we can see, the same way of speaking can signify both professional identity and gendered identity, which is in practice difficult to separate and the usage of language for one or the other identity is to be negotiated for each particular situation or context. For a female soldier, it is not always necessary to index her masculine nature or behavior; it depends on the situational context and discursive practice.

Another important feature in constructing gender identity in male-dominated groups is hegemonic masculinity which is frequently connected to violence. M. Talbot (1998:191) suggests that “masculinity is not an individual property or attribute; it is formed within institutions and is historically constituted.”

When women perform ‘masculine’ job, they have to perform it through the power of the institution. That is expressed symbolically, through the way they are dressed, i.e. special uniforms, to the language they use, the way they behave – physical ability and exertion of power.

On the other hand, the presence of women in typically masculine jobs can lead to a certain shift of identity of a whole group, sometimes through the language forms they use, sometimes through cool and emotionless efficacy, which is something we will try to argue in the following chapter.

#### **4. Adjustment of Identity in Discourse – Discussion**

In her paper on women police officers in Pittsburgh (1995), Bonnie McElhinny claims that investigations on gender should not focus exclusively on differences between men and women but also on how hegemonic femininities and masculinities produce subordinate and subversive femininities and masculinities. That way the existence of competition between male and female identities is also investigated in different contexts.

Similarly, we tried to investigate the positioning of female identity in the male-dominated jobs, but also the positioning of male identity in typically female occupations. For that purpose we investigated gender performances of female soldiers and male nurses based on interviews with groups of female and male soldiers (30 of them); as well as female and male nurses (10 of them), and on the analysis of their blogs and forums, i.e. their cyber-communication.

What we claim is that both examined groups, female soldiers and male nurses, must adjust, at least to a certain extent, their feminine or masculine identities by positioning in one-gender dominated groups.

Just like the female police officers, whose job is considered masculine, and who can be perceived as women, men or simply as police officers, women soldiers are also in the same position. Their female identity is challenged by the identity of the group whose members they want to be, which is predominantly a masculine identity.

The initial perception and stereotype of women as mothers, housewives, secretaries etc. is transformed into an image of rational and efficient professionals. However, that is not the image of a male soldier embodying his strength, aggressiveness and excessive use of force.

For example, the stereotypical attitudes of male soldiers, like “this is not for women; what is a woman doing here?”; “women should cook and take care of children” are gradually changed into the attitudes of more recognition of women’s efforts, such as “women find the solutions to problems that no man can even think of” or “women contribute to the humaneness of the modern military”.

What we have is the situation that both identities are challenged: the female one is getting closer to the male identity form, whereas the typically male is slightly changed into a more rational and professional direction. Some of the examined male soldiers agreed that “the character of the military is changing due to the fact that there are more and more women soldiers”. They also readily confirm that “women are better at administrative work, they are more efficient and organized and also better at writing reports”<sup>275</sup>, although it is not quite clear if they perceive certain tasks within the military as male only or female only.

What is more acceptable to the male soldiers than we assumed is the idea of women’s participation in direct combat. Most of them agree that “a soldier is a soldier, and should therefore perform all the duties equally”. However, some of them think that “it should be voluntary for women”.

Generally, the stereotypes that those from the outside world seem to have about women in the military are being changed from the very heart of that typically male organization – male soldiers think that “the significance of women in the military should be promoted”.

On the other hand, female soldiers themselves, especially the younger ones, show their more ‘masculine’ nature, e.g. “we have passed all the training and should take part in combat, if necessary”; “we want to be more equal to men”; “we are used to military order and discipline”; “there should be more women in commander positions.” Some of them even perceive themselves as “future generals”.

None of the informants, neither men nor women, mentioned the physical appearance of tough and strong soldiers as a prerequisite, which we, again, look at stereotypically. Obviously it is not the appearance of female soldiers that define them as masculine but their actions and attitudes expressed in different situations. However, they can be labeled as more masculine if they use too much profanity, which is again something that their male colleagues as insiders do not perceive as such. Some female soldiers report increased usage of profane language (“holy shit” and similar expressions) than they used before joining the military, with the tendency to use it in their outside environment, i.e. when surrounded by their families or friends. Usage of profanity can be conscious, getting women closer to the male world, or unconscious, because of the majority’s influence. Regardless of the reason, the use of profane language is the result of feminine identity adjustment to the identity of the other group, the masculine group.

It is also significant that they are aware of certain changes in their language use, at least on the lexical level. However, they are not completely aware of their style when answering the questions. Some of them are rather ‘gruff’, their sentences are short and cut, they just give precise answers to the questions, in other words their style is more masculine than feminine. We would expect of a woman to give answers with lots of detailed descriptions, which we did not get. For example, to the question on how they joined the army, they just offered the answers like “it is secure job”; “the pay is regular”; “the job is competitive and dynamic”; “the job is challenging”.

To the question on female soldiers participating in direct combat, we received answers such as “we had the same training as men and we should take part in direct combat”; “we accepted this job and we should take part in direct combat”. Interestingly, we got similar answers from the men, in sentences of similar style. The fact is that women are getting closer to the masculine way of speaking in the military, without descriptive details or more elaborate sentences, which are typical for women.<sup>276</sup>

The question is whether women see this kind of language use as the influence of masculine identity in the military or the identity of the institution itself, which, in this case, is not clear cut.

Despite the fact that a military job is associated with masculinity, female soldiers do not perceive themselves as such. In other words, the reasons for their joining the army are not their tough personality or behavior, or their masculine appearance. In most of their answers the reasons were “job security in these insecure times when many people are jobless or unwaged”, and “regular pay”. The older ones, however followed

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<sup>275</sup> This was also reported for women police officers in McElhinny's paper (1995)

<sup>276</sup> This trait of their new identity can be shortly described with a sentence from McElhinny's paper (1995), when a woman police officer said “I don't smile as much...” They describe it as a sense of reserve or emotional distance as the only way to survive on the job.

the “sequence of events”, namely, they stayed in the military after the 1992 War, when they first joined. Several younger female soldiers mention their “childhood dreams to become soldiers” or “I had father or brother in the same job and it was natural for me to follow the family tradition” or “because of competitiveness and physical action”.

What we perceive as adjustment of identity from feminine to more masculine identity of the institution might be explained by what McElhinny (1995) sees as a change in the normative pattern of masculinity – from physical aggressiveness to technical rationality and calculation. “In their interactions, female police officers construct a kind of masculinity that is simultaneously hegemonic, subordinate and subversive.”(McElhinny 1995:238)

However, in any situation men may align against women, some men against some women, some women against other women, or some men and some women against others, because, as Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) state, the processes of gendering can produce difference and inequality.

This is clear from some of the answers of both men and women. Female soldiers are aware that this is a “male world”, that sometimes they are perceived as “hookers or whores” on the one hand or “fags or dykes” on the other. They occasionally experience treatment such as “you are a woman, you should wash the coffee cups” or “women should be at home and raise children”. However, according to women’s reports, such remarks are addressed to them only occasionally and by few male soldiers whose “advances they rejected”. Such comments are more common for their outside environment.

Sometimes, there are negative comments from their female colleagues, such as “you are a whore” (if they are too close to male soldiers) or “you are overly ambitious”, if they are envious of someone who achieves better results. Gossip and envy are considered more frequent from female colleagues than negative comments are from men.

Finally, a few words about the language forms the institution itself uses for gender marking. Although the forms of address used in the military were not a focal point of this research, it is worth mentioning that all of the address forms are marked for the masculine gender. Unlike English, Croatian and other local languages show the distinction for feminine and masculine ranking forms. However, the military in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not accept these forms which show feminine marking except in informal language. On the other hand, these forms are accepted in the Croatian military, so we have examples such as *bojnica*, *narednica*, *brigadirka* etc. (major, sergeant, colonel etc.). Most of the female soldiers included in our research do not see the use of masculine gender forms as a problem; it seems that they have taken them for granted, and what is more significant, they see them as a part of the institutional identity. They do not have a problem with being ranked as *soldiers* (not *female soldiers*) and for them this distinction is unnecessary, which means that they accept these forms as institutionally neutral.<sup>277</sup> This formal mode of address is obviously still most rigid and resistant to changes or adjustment.

The second part of our research refers to a group of male nurses. This is not a quantitative research; it is based on several interviews with male and female nurses, for the purpose of comparing the data with those on female soldiers. However, some findings could be significant as a general overview of the different perceptions about male nurses, and this could be a good start for more detailed research on the topic.

We have stated that female soldiers prefer to be called soldiers. The same situation is with male nurses, they just do not like to be called ‘male nurses’, as one of them suggests “I am no more or less a nurse because of my sex than my female colleagues are because of theirs.” Does insisting on neutral terminology show their efforts to construct their own identity or to adjust it to the identity of the majority of nurses who are women?

First of all, hospitals and other health institutions are not as ‘closed’ and typically feminine institution as the military is masculine. The terminology such as ‘male nurse’ is notable in English, whereas in Croatian there are two gender-marked forms (*bolnicar/bolnicarka* or *medicinska sestra/medicinski tehnicar*)<sup>278</sup>.

We will use here the term ‘male nurse’ for the purpose of better distinction between the genders. Most of the ‘male nurses’ we talked to think that the perception of nursing as a traditionally female occupation is a stereotype. They even think that “it is bad that so many men stay out of this profession at a time when more and more nurses are needed.” Their reasons for joining this profession are mostly “job security”; “love and altruism for the people in need”; “the reward of helping others”.

There are a few nursing specialties that are off limits for men, e.g. labor and delivery<sup>279</sup>, but they can find their position in all other fields. This could be compared to women in the military, where all military fields

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<sup>277</sup> Some female soldiers insist on the use of masculine forms when being addressed, which enhances their sense of belonging to the institution. See the response of a female soldier to Lt.Col. E. Disler (2005): “... Today I am proud to say that I am an American Airman, I am a leader, warrior, and wingman as a combat-focused Wing Commander. I am proud to be in the US Air Force, part of something bigger than myself. I just happen to be a woman.”

<sup>278</sup> Some people like to say ‘medicinski brat’ although it is more informal and not widely accepted.

<sup>279</sup> In the USA, male nurses, in some hospitals, entered these wards as well.

and branches are accessible, except direct combat, as we earlier mentioned. Searching for their position in nursing and establishing their status as a nurse are equally open to both men and women.

Male nurses in fact believe that they are ideally suited to both the pressures and excitement of nursing. They are trying to find their position as men, not through adjusting to the female identity of the job, but doing the jobs that are harder for women, e.g. carrying the patients. "We do the jobs that women can't do" is what they often say.

Both male and female nurses consider that the stereotypical image of nursing as a job not suitable for men comes from the outside. One of these stereotypes is that most male nurses are gay. A few of the male nurses we interviewed reported sentences like "you must be gay, otherwise you wouldn't do this job", or "only gays work as male nurses". However, this is something they get from the male patients mostly. They rarely report such qualifications from their female colleagues, just one of them reported his female colleague's comment on a new male nurse being employed: "is the new one gay too?"<sup>280</sup> Harding (2008) states that in most cases such comments make male nurses 'hide' their sexuality. Comments about their sexuality can be compared to the comments female soldiers get on their sexuality (e.g. *whores*).

Men who enter 'female' occupations do not conform to the idea of hegemonic masculinity, according to traditional, conservative beliefs. Nordberg (2002) argues that "their choice of workplace can be comprehended in society as unmasculine and associated with effeminateness and homosexuality."

As Butler (1990) suggests masculinity is a *process* which depends on *performance and repetitions* in social settings. Their positions as male nurses are under constant change and transformation, one time it is more important to be a man, the other time, it is more important to be a nurse.

The construction of their identity is directly connected to the discourses in which they participate, i.e. their identities are created through discourses. However, men sometimes become aware of their nursing position as more feminine using the style which is more typical for women, e.g. "sweet-talking" when talking to patients or female colleagues, or using too many adjectives when describing things. One of them, for example, mentioned using so many color nuances he had never even heard of, such as "dusty brown, icy blue" etc., or discourse topics which are more typical for women, e.g. "exchanging cooking recipes".

On the other hand, to preserve their 'masculinity', they take part in male jargon with their male colleagues, both nurses and doctors. They consider male jargon to be "talking about women and sports".

We can say that men who work in female-dominated occupations are also exposed to reproduction and negotiation of gender relations, in other words, they try to adjust their identities, but to a lesser extent than women in male-dominated occupations.

We can definitely speak here about new masculinities which emphasize the similarities between men and women.

## 5. Conclusion

As we previously mentioned, this paper is not a quantitative study, it is based on a very limited corpus of interview samples, with small groups of informants. However, the results can be very indicative and can be used for more detailed future research on the topic.

Our initial assumption, which we tried to prove, was that both women in male-dominated occupations and men in female-dominated occupations have to adjust their identity to the identity of the groups they have joined. The findings of the analysis of interviews with women in the military have proved that they try to adjust their identity to the masculine identity of the military. They start doing it through the obvious signs of wearing uniforms, and usage of masculine gender forms of address, which is taken as a part of the institution's identity. However, they adjust to it even more, adapting their identity to the typically 'masculine language', such as profanity, short and cut sentences lacking detailed descriptions. On the other hand, they show their feminine side in the jobs within the military organization which need more organization and efficiency. Consequently, they are sometimes perceived as 'real soldiers' (readiness to take part in direct combat), and sometimes as 'real women' (in the organizational tasks). Furthermore, mostly negative attitudes to women in the military are stereotypical ones and come from their surrounding, rarely from their male colleagues. Their male colleagues admit the necessity of an increase in the female population in the military, which, however, they do not see as 'feminization' of the institution.

As for 'male nurses', their position is more one of searching for the right place within the traditionally feminine organization. The search for their positioning is in performing the tasks which are difficult for women (needing physical effort), which is already a part of their masculine identity. What can be viewed as a change in the identity is a somewhat unconscious adaptation to female talk, when they are with their female colleagues, such as 'sweet talk', detailed descriptions etc.

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<sup>280</sup> Harding (2008) mentions similar comments.

On the other hand, the perception of their environment is that they are more 'feminine' than they really are and they are somehow in the constant negotiation of identity with the outside world. However, the perception of their female colleagues is not a stereotypical one.

What both examples (female soldiers and male nurses) have in common are the stereotyped views of the environment, especially expressed through negative attitudes, such as - all female soldiers are whores or all male nurses are gay.

If we go back to the initial assumption of identity adjustment, we could say that it is an ongoing process.

Based on the results of our research, female soldiers are adjusting their identity to male soldiers more than male nurses are doing so to their female colleagues. The reason is most probably in the fact that the military is a more closed and more masculine institution than hospitals and health institutions are feminine.

Compared to some earlier investigations on the subject, we have to say that we are witnessing a gradual change in the masculine identity of the military. If the change in attitudes is taking over the institution as a whole, the adjustment of its masculine identity is inevitable.

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