I

Introduction

Picture in your mind a female drill sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. Do you imagine a muscular, gruff, masculine woman? Now picture a male nurse. Does a gentle, effeminate image come to mind?

The military and the nursing profession are intimately linked to stereotypes about gender. We assume that the Marine Corps demands of its soldiers certain "masculine" traits—strength, aggressiveness, emotional detachment; we assume that nursing requires "feminine" qualities—nurturing, caring, and passivity. Many believe that only men are naturally suited for the Marine Corps and only women for nursing. Exceptions—women in the Marine Corps and men in nursing—are cross-gender "freaks": masculine women and feminine men.

To some extent, these two occupations themselves foster the gender stereotypes. The Marine Corps actively promotes its image as a proving ground for masculinity: Recruiters promise that the military "will make a man out of you" and advertise that "the Marine Corps is looking for a few good men." Likewise, nursing has traditionally been promoted as a career for women—especially single women—as preparation for motherhood. A 1943 advertisement for Cadet Schools of Nursing guaranteed to parents of future nurses that "when she marries, she'll be a better wife and

mother for the training she's getting now, and if she wants to stay in nursing after the war, it's a field in which a girl can go a long way."[1] Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, insisted on the close link between nursing and femininity as part of her effort to raise the status of nursing to a level suitable for ladies. Of all the nursing reforms instituted by Nightingale, this ideology of nursing as women's work has proved to be one of the most enduring.

The images of masculinity in the Marine Corps and femininity in nursing reflect the composition of the two organizations: 95.6 percent of all marines are men, and 97.3 percent of all nurses are women. In this regard, they are not unlike other highly sex-segregated occupations, which take on the "gendered" attributes associated with the sex of their work force. Secretaries (99 percent female), kindergarten and preschool teachers (98 percent female), and domestic workers (95 percent female) are all expected to be emotionally sensitive and nurturing, reflecting the "feminine" qualities of the workers.[2] Exhibiting stereotypically masculine qualities, engineers (96 percent male), airplane pilots (99 percent male), and auto mechanics (99 percent male) are assumed to be emotionally reserved and detached, concerned more with the rational manipulation of things than with the caring and support of people.

Although these cases seem extreme, they are merely exaggerated instances of a general social trend: the sexual segregation of work in American society. In 1980 almost half of all employed women worked in occupations that were at least 80 percent female, and more than two-thirds of all men were employed in occupations that were at least 80 percent male.[3] Most jobs in our economy are thought of as either "men's work" or "women's work." This assumption is so powerful that the few individuals of the "wrong" sex who cross over into highly sex-segregated occupations are commonly viewed as masculine women or feminine men. Think for a moment of the images that "male librarian" and "female truck driver" bring to mind.

But how accurate are these stereotypes? Despite their small numbers and the strong gender connotations of their occupations, female marines and male nurses do not conform to popular expectations. It is not unusual to hear it said that "Women Marines" are first and foremost "ladies"; nor is it unusual to hear male nurses characterized as strong, aggressive, or possessing leadership qualities.[4] Gender is actively constructed in these "nontraditional" occupations. Their very structure, as well as the efforts of their members, ensures that femininity is maintained in female marines and masculinity in male nurses.

Occupations foster gender differences among workers in a variety of ways, one of the most pervasive being "internal stratification." That is, men and women in the same occupation often perform different tasks and functions. A recent study of nearly four hundred firms found that most were either completely or nearly completely segregated by sex.[5] Even in those occupations that appear sexually integrated, the aggregate statistics often mask extreme internal segregation. Although the proportion of female bakers increased from 25 percent in 1970 to 41 percent in 1980, for example, the majority of female bakers are found in highly automated baking industries, while their male counterparts are located in less-automated bakeries. The same phenomenon has been detected among pharmacists, financial managers, and bus drivers—all groups where the influx of women workers suggests a diminution of sex segregation. But studies reveal that men and women usually perform different tasks and functions within these job categories.[6] The fact that the sexes rarely engage in the same activities on the job means that certain specialties can be feminine-identified and others masculine-identified—thus helping to preserve gender differences.

The Marine Corps and nursing are similarly segregated. In the Marine Corps, only 20 percent of the positions are even open to women.[7] Women are officially barred from any position that would directly involve them in combat. Consequently, female marines are overrepresented in traditionally "feminine" specialties—such as

clerical work—that present no challenge to their feminine identity. In nursing, policy toward men is less clearly defined, yet in some parts of the country men are subject to restrictions on their training and choice of specialization. For example, some hospitals deny male nurses assignments to obstetrics and gynecology wards. By thus distinguishing "men's work" from "women's work," these occupations highlight and reproduce gender differences.

Another strategy used to maintain gender differences in supposedly integrated occupations is the use of sumptuary and etiquette rules. When women enter male-dominated occupations, certain rules are often introduced to govern their dress and demeanor. In office settings, for instance, dress codes—either formal or implicit—are not unusual; female employees may be required to wear dresses, nylons, and high-heeled shoes in order to enhance their femininity.[8] So it is for female marines and male nurses, both of whom are required to dress differently from their male and female counterparts. Male nurses never wear the traditional nursing cap; female marines never sport the standard Marine Corps garrison cap. Clothing differences are a constant symbolic reaffirmation of sex differences that accentuate the femininity of female marines and the masculinity of male nurses.

Informal practices also play a role in constituting femininity in female marines and masculinity in male nurses. As members of visible minority groups, they stand out at work and receive far more than their fair share of attention. This phenomenon was first documented by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, who found that women in corporations, simply by virtue of their numerical rarity, were noticed and scrutinized more than their male counterparts.[9] The fact that "numerically rare" men and women stand out this way can put added pressure on them in their jobs. A thirty-six-year-old master sergeant with sixteen and a half years of experience said this about being a woman in the Marine Corps:

> You're always on show. . . . Take myself and a male counterpart—same rank, same M.O.S. [military occupational specialty]—and

> we're going into the same job. He's not going to have to prove himself at all, not one iota. He's going to be completely accepted until he messes up. I will not be accepted until I can prove that I can do the job better than he can.

This added pressure may actually result in different job performances from men and women in nontraditional occupations and exacerbate gender differences. Kanter's corporate women, for example, became more secretive, less independent, and less oppositional in response to their greater visibility—all traits that have traditionally been associated with femininity.[10]

Another informal technique that enhances gender differences is practiced by supervisors who evaluate men and women differently. The very qualities that are highly praised in one sex are sometimes denigrated in the other. Thus, a man is "ambitious," a woman, "pushy"; a woman is "sensitive," a man, "wimpy." Female marines and male nurses occasionally encounter such biased gender stereotypes from the people with whom they work. A nursing supervisor in a burn center reported: "At my last evaluation, my director admonished me not to be critical of my peers since I was 'a man, and have a natural advantage.' My director is female." Performance reports reveal similar "gender-based" biases against women in the air force. The following example illustrates the potentially damning effects of supervisors' assumptions about appropriate gender behavior: "Although she thinks like a man, she is always a lady and never too aggressive."[11] Even if the comment were intended as positive, this woman was probably judged less fit for higher rank than the men with whom she competed. Different expectations of men and women can unfairly advantage one group over another when promotion time rolls around—again enhancing the social differences between the sexes.

In each of these cases, gender differences are maintained through sexual segregation and discriminatory practices. Occupational segregation reinforces the belief that there are fundamental social and psychological differences between the sexes. Further-

more, because men and women in nontraditional occupations are treated differently from their peers of the opposite sex, they often behave differently.

But it would be a mistake to claim that all gender differences are forced on people. In addition to the external pressures I have just described, male nurses and female marines actively construct their own gender by redefining their activities in terms of traditional masculine and feminine traits. For example, women in the Marine Corps insist that their femininity is intact even as they march cadence in camouflage outfits. A twenty-year-old recruit told me, "We're equal with the men, but you can distinguish the difference. The men do it rough, and we do it rough, but we still have the feminine within ourselves. Appearance-wise. We do the same things the men do, but we're still women, 100 percent women." Likewise, male nurses contend that their masculinity is not at all threatened while they care for and nurture their patients. Both groups redefine femininity and masculinity in their daily lives, which also reinforces gender differences in these nontraditional contexts.

This "redefinition" is partly a response to the misgivings they encounter from people outside their occupations. Both male nurses and female marines report that outsiders often stereotype them as homosexual because of the preconception that male nurses are feminine and female marines, masculine. This assumption may drive men and women in these two occupations to conform even more closely to popular standards of the "appropriate" gender. Ironically, expressions of hyperfemininity among female marines and hypermasculinity among male nurses sometimes result.

The efforts of men and women in nontraditional occupations to vindicate and reassert their "true" gender identity, however, are not really different from the efforts of those of us in more "traditional" walks of life. The gendering process is simply more apparent for female marines and male nurses. For most people engaged in "traditional" activities, gender is still socially constructed and maintained, but in more subtle and less self-conscious ways.

Sigmund Freud wrote that "pathology, by making things larger and coarser, can draw our attention to normal conditions which would otherwise have escaped us."[12] In the study of gender, this tradition of exploring the "abnormal" to understand the "normal" has included such notable theorists as Harold Garfinkel and Robert Stoller, both of whom studied transsexuals to understand the social construction of gender in "normal" people.[13] Transsexuals—men and women who wish to be members of the opposite sex—must self-consciously construct their gender; they must learn what it means to be masculine and feminine and conform their behavior to these meanings in order to "pass" as a member of their desired sex. Theorists in this tradition contend that this is precisely what we all do, albeit much less self-consciously. It is easier for us to see what transsexuals do to make themselves thought of as males and females; their attempts at doing this, however, are only exaggerated versions of what all men and women do to maintain their gender identity. Transsexuals therefore constitute a fruitful beginning for a study of the "normal" process of gender construction and maintenance.

Similarly, female marines and male nurses, although they do not try to pass as members of the opposite sex, have their work cut out for them if they want to be considered "appropriately" gendered. The stereotype that male nurses are effeminate must somehow be counteracted during the course of the male nurse's day if he is to remain secure in his masculine identity. What he does to "vindicate" his masculinity is not unlike what men engaged in "masculine" activities do to prove that they are masculine—although the male nurse may be much more aware of what is at stake in his behavior. Female marines face the same task. Thus, by studying these two groups, we may gain some insight into the gendering process in general.

Official policies and informal practices, as well as the redefinition of work by men and women in nontraditional occupations, all function to maintain gender differences even when men and women are ostensibly engaged in the same occupation. This study

explores in detail all these factors that enhance the femininity of women in the Marine Corps and the masculinity of men in nursing.

If we grant that masculinity and femininity persist in spite of men and women entering nontraditional occupations, a question still remains: *Why* is the maintenance of gender so important to people? In this book I not only document and describe *how* gender is reproduced in the occupational setting, but I also seek to explain *why* it is maintained. This would not have been considered a problem in the past, when biological sex differences were considered adequate explanations for all social differences between men and women. That is, if we believed that the female role in reproduction naturally predisposed women to display the nurturant, passive qualities we associate with femininity, the persistence of femininity in women in the Marine Corps wouldn't surprise us. However, most sociologists and psychologists now recognize a basic distinction between biological sex and gender. "Sex" refers to the different primary and secondary reproductive characteristics that men and women are born with (or develop), and "gender" refers to the social, cultural, and psychological meanings, practices, and organizational arrangements associated with those differences. The central premise of the sociology of gender is that biological and anatomical sex differences are meaningless outside of a social context. That is, the various meanings and practices associated with sex differences are socially constituted, not biologically given. Information about chromosomes and reproductive organs will not help us understand why female marines are feminine and male nurses are masculine.

An alternative approach to this question of *why* gender is maintained in nontraditional occupations is to examine the specific interests served by doing so: Who benefits from maintaining femininity in female marines and masculinity in male nurses? In fact, men in both groups—male marines and male nurses—benefit from the perpetuation of gender because our society has traditionally rewarded masculine qualities more highly than feminine quali-

ties. It avails men to monopolize masculine qualities, emphasize them in themselves, and enforce femininity on their female counterparts.[14] Thus, by insisting that women are unsuited for certain military assignments (e.g., combat billets), men in the Marine Corps reserve the highest paying and most prestigious jobs for themselves. Likewise in nursing, because male nurses are assumed to be more career-minded, aggressive, and demanding than their female colleagues, they are often channeled into the more prestigious and better paying administrative and leadership positions. Thus, a fundamental asymmetry in the economic consequences of "gender maintenance" for men and women in these two nontraditional occupations works out to the benefit of men.

Over the past twenty years, radical and socialist feminists have focused sociologists' attention on the coercive nature of gender arrangements. Heidi Hartmann, for example, has argued that men in our society dominate and oppress women out of a power-seeking drive to control resources and to gain important household services that they themselves do not wish to perform: "[Men's] control of women's labor power is the lever that allows men to benefit from women's provision of personal and household services, including relief from childrearing and many unpleasant tasks both within and beyond households."[15] Many feminists point out that it is in the rational self-interest of the dominant group in society (men) to allocate such tasks to women.[16]

Important factor though it is, economic self-interest alone does not adequately account for the maintenance of gender in nursing and the Marine Corps; preserving it serves irrational needs as well. Clues to these largely subterranean forces surface in spirited diatribes against integration:

> War is man's work. Biological convergence on the battlefield would not only be dissatisfying in terms of what women could do, but it would be an enormous psychological distraction for the male who wants to think that he's fighting for that woman somewhere behind, not up there in the same foxhole with him. It tramples the male ego. When you get right down to it, you have to protect the

> manliness of war. [General William Barrows, former Marine Corps commandant][17]

The perpetuation of gender in nontraditional occupations serves both men's emotional and their economic interests.

In fact, I have found that men in both the Marine Corps and the nursing profession do make greater efforts than women to distinguish their roles from those performed by the opposite sex. For example, male nurses contend that although they care for patients, their caring is provided in a characteristically "masculine" sort of way. One male nurse told me:

> I think men demonstrate nurturance and caring to the same degree as a female would, but the demonstration of it is different. I don't think we always touch as frequently, and say soft, kind words. I think my caring is of the same depth and degree, but it's more overt than covert. It's not warm fluffy; it's different. Some might say that's not caring or nurturing.

Likewise, male soldiers distance themselves from their female counterparts, insisting that women are incapable of achieving full-fledged membership in the Marine Corps. But unlike men in nursing, men in the military can deny women full active participation and segregate them into certain specialties because they monopolize positions of authority and set official policy. Thus, in the Marine Corps women are excluded from participating in certain occupational specialties, they are segregated in basic training, and they are subject to all sorts of rules about personal conduct and bearing that are not applied to men.

Women, however, seek to minimize the role differences between themselves and their male colleagues. Female marines underplay the importance of sex differences in job performance, for the most part insisting that they are as capable as men of carrying out their duties. One recruit, lamenting the unequal treatment of men and women in training, told me, "I don't see why the men should get more training than we get. I think it should be straight down the line equal. Women shouldn't be kept out of combat. I

definitely would go! If a woman really wants it, I think it should be open. I think it's the policymakers that keep us from entering combat; not the women themselves." Like most of the recruits I interviewed, this young woman expressed no trepidation about engaging in quintessentially masculine pursuits. Even the possibility of armed combat alongside men posed no essential challenge to her self-identity as a female. Unlike men's masculinity, women's femininity does not seem to be threatened when they engage in nontraditional activities.

In order to understand how these different emotional interests evolved—why men seem to have more at stake emotionally than women in preserving and maintaining gender differences—we must examine the socialization process. From the moment we place male infants in blue blankets and females in pink ones, we create two classes of humans with different emotional needs that stay with them throughout adulthood. For example, studies have found that parents caress and hold infant daughters more frequently than sons, which may create in women a greater desire and need for emotional intimacy.[18] Thus, if we explore the constitution of gender in childhood, we can gain some insight into the different emotional needs and dispositions found among adult men and women—including insight into men's greater need for maintaining gender differences.

There are several theories of gender formation and maintenance, the most popular of which may be sex role theory.[19] Talcott Parsons, perhaps the "founding father" of this theory, maintained that differentiated male and female roles are functional, or stabilizing forces for both the family and the rest of society.[20] He argued that society, not biology, dictates that men and women develop different personality traits and assume different roles. The men produced by sex role socialization are well adapted to the achievement-oriented, instrumental demands of the occupational world. Properly socialized women are able to fulfill the "expressive" needs of society: They learn the care-giving skills that are essential both for child rearing and for comforting fatigued husbands after their ex-

hausting days of instrumental labor. The roles are thus complementary; they are equally necessary to ensure the smooth operation of society.

In general, then, the sex role perspective focuses on how boys and girls learn to conform to society's expectations about sex-specific activities, norms, and attitudes. Parents, teachers, peers, television, and various other socializing agents teach children which roles are feminine and which are masculine. By the time they are adults, they have been exposed to sufficient formal and informal "role training," or conditioning, to make them properly socialized individuals ready, able, and for the most part willing to assume their appropriate—and complementary—roles.

Even though sex role theory emphasizes social rather than biological determinants of gender differences, it suffers from one major drawback: neglect of the myriad variations in the meanings individuals attach to their social activities. The theory focuses on behavioral conformity to static sex roles rather than on the processes whereby individuals actively construct definitions of masculinity and femininity. As a consequence, the theory simply cannot account for masculine male nurses or feminine female marines. From this perspective, individuals entering these occupations would be expected to conform to the gender characteristics associated with these fields. Women in the Marine Corps would be expected to possess the "masculine," aggressive qualities associated with soldiering, and male nurses would be expected to be "feminine" (e.g., caring and passive).

Psychoanalytic theory, with its more "dynamic" approach to gender formation and maintenance, offers an alternative approach to the gender socialization process.[21] It recognizes that socialization is not a one-way street. Individuals bring to every social interaction a particular set of motives, interests, and desires not entirely reducible to contemporary social forces. The forms of social interaction are not standardized and independent of their particular manifestations in real people; they constantly change,

depending upon the actors' dispositions. Individuals do not simply conform to preset "roles"; they bring their own interests and desires to bear upon their social activities, often redefining them in the process.

This does not mean, however, that we cannot generalize about human social behavior. Sociologists writing within the psychoanalytic framework argue that social arrangements—particularly family structure—channel individual desire in certain directions. Nancy Chodorow has been the single most influential theorist on this process in recent years.[22] She argues that boys' and girls' earliest relationships to their mothers result in different unconscious emotional needs in adult men and women. Because in our society women typically are in charge of child care, especially that of infants, the first emotional tie for both sexes is to a woman. This means, in psychoanalytic parlance, that everyone is originally "feminine-identified." This identification makes gender a problematic issue for males: Boys face substantial pressures to deny their early attachment when it comes time for them to assume a masculine gender identity. Chodorow writes: "A boy, in order to feel himself adequately masculine, must distinguish and differentiate himself from others in a way that a girl need not—must categorize himself as someone apart. Moreover, he defines masculinity negatively as that which is not feminine."[23] The assumption of masculinity is predicated on the denial and repression of early feminine attachments. The assumption of a feminine gender continues the woman's earliest identification with her mother.

Robert Stoller, who has studied gender disorders in men and women, describes in detail the conflict males experience over establishing masculinity. He, too, notes that during infancy both boys and girls are "merged" with their mothers; they actually sense themselves as "part" of her. This symbiosis, according to Stoller, establishes a sense of femininity in *all* infants, thus promising an eventual problem for males, who have to renounce this identification later in life. He writes:

> I suspect that the problem boys have with creating their masculinity from the protofemininity leaves behind a "structure," a vigilance, a fear of the pull of the symbiosis—that is, a conflict between the urge to return to the peace of the symbiosis and the opposing urge to separate out as an individual, as a male, as masculine. . . . Much of what we see as masculinity is, I think, the effect of that struggle. For much of masculinity, as is well known, consists of struggling not to be seen by oneself or others as having feminine attributes, physical or psychologic. One must maintain one's distance from women or be irreparably infected with femininity.[24]

Girls fare much better in establishing their adult gender identity. Because they are feminine-identified from the start, they have a developmental advantage over boys. Stoller writes that because the girl's first love object is female, "the development of her femininity no longer seems so risk laden. Those conflict-free aspects of gender identity (for example, those that result from identifying with the gratifying aspects of being a woman) are present from earliest life."[25] Adult men are more concerned than women with establishing and defending their gender identity because of their different early ties to their mothers.

This description of adult men constantly worrying about the viability of their masculinity while women seem relatively unconcerned about maintaining their femininity is precisely what I observed among male nurses and female marines. In fact, the psychic dispositions psychoanalysts describe are practically caricatured in these two groups. Male nurses go to great lengths to carve for themselves a special niche within nursing that they then define as masculine; preserving their masculinity *requires* distancing themselves from women. Women in the Marine Corps feel they could maintain their femininity even in a foxhole alongside the male "grunts." For the women I interviewed, femininity was not "role defined" in the way that masculinity was for the male nurses. It mattered little what activity she was engaged in; a woman in the Marine Corps could be employed in *any* job specialty and still be considered a "lady" by her female peers. This asymmetry in the

meaning of gender for men and women in nontraditional occupations derives from the asymmetry in their early childhood experience. These two groups thus provide remarkably rich illustrations of the adult consequences of our gender socialization process.

Psychoanalysis offers a vivid and compelling explanation of why gender is such a salient issue in these two occupations. It uncovers hidden motives and unconscious desires behind efforts to preserve female marines' femininity and male nurses' masculinity. However, obtaining data on psychological processes is difficult, if not impossible, outside of a clinical setting. I conducted one-time in-depth interviews with male nurses and female marines. This type of data cannot inform questions about infantile identifications, castration anxiety, or penis envy; only psychoanalysis itself can tap into these deep psychological processes. My observations and discussions with male nurses and female marines cannot, therefore, be construed as offering "proof" of psychoanalytic insights. But my interviews do illustrate how the conflicts that psychoanalysts associate with gender identity development may manifest themselves in adult life. The chapters that follow describe in some detail this "match" between the experiences of male nurses and female marines and the psychoanalytic analysis of gender.

At the start of my project, I spoke to the directors of the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Command) department at the University of California, Berkeley. They were extremely enthusiastic about my project and put me in contact with women naval ROTC students (whom I subsequently surveyed), several high-ranking female officers in the Bay Area, and a representative of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), a civilian organization that advises the Department of Defense. From there my contacts reached all the way to the Pentagon. The Washington, D.C., staff of DACOWITS arranged interviews with high-ranking military policymakers on the topic of women's integration into the military.

Meanwhile, I learned of the existence of a veterans' organization for female marines: the Women Marines Association (WMA). I contacted its leaders, who invited me to their 1984 biannual convention in Indiana. I described my research to the two hundred convention attendees and had the opportunity to conduct several in-depth interviews with World War II veterans. I also distributed a short, open-ended questionnaire to the participants.

At the convention I met an active duty Woman Marine who worked in the public relations office of the Marine Corps Training Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina, the only place in the country where women recruits are trained. She encouraged me to write to her supervisor and request to study women recruit training. I did so, and I was immediately invited to visit the Parris Island Depot. During my two weeks there (in April 1985), I spent between eight and ten hours at the depot every day. I was assigned an assistant (a Woman Marine staff sergeant) who became a key informant and helped me set up interviews with recruits, drill instructors, and women working at other locations on the depot. I was given complete freedom in selecting my subjects. While I was there, I was taken on several guided tours of Parris Island and observed physical and field training of men and women recruits. I also participated in one of the most challenging aspects of training: rappelling off a forty-five-foot tower.

In 1985 I also visited an air force base in the southwestern part of the country. I contacted the Equal Opportunity Office of the base and was granted permission to interview female instructor pilots and women in pilot training.

I conducted sixty-eight formal interviews of women in the military, including twenty-one formal interviews with Women Marine recruits, fourteen with Women Marine drill instructors, three with Women Marine officers, and ten with Women Marine veterans of World War II. I also conducted six interviews with military men (enlisted and officer), eight with female officers from branches of the military other than the Marine Corps, and six interviews with Pentagon officials. In addition, I talked informally