

Attitudes of Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Toward Gay and Lesbian Service Members

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Abstract

The primary rationale for the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" exclusionary policy toward open gay and lesbian personnel rests on beliefs about the attitudes of heterosexual service members and the presumed impact of integration on unit cohesion and readiness. Results of this 2006 survey of recent war veterans are consistent with prior surveys of military personnel showing decline in support for the policy. Among demographic and military experience characteristics, comfort level with lesbian and gay people was the strongest correlate of attitudes toward integration. The most frequently endorsed argument in support of integration prioritized job performance; perceived negative impact on unit cohesion was the most frequently endorsed opposing argument. However, the data indicated no associations between knowing a lesbian or gay unit member and ratings of perceived unit cohesion or readiness. Instead, findings pointed to the importance of leadership and instrumental quality in shaping perceptions of unit cohesion and readiness.

Keywords: Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Lesbian/Gay, Military Cohesion, Military Readiness, Sexual Orientation.

Attitudes of Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Toward Gay and Lesbian Service Members

Gay and lesbian personnel have served in the U.S. military throughout its history, although policy regarding their service has changed over time.¹ A national debate over the policy ignited when presidential candidate Bill Clinton made a campaign promise that he would remove the legal ban on the open service of gay and lesbian service members once he was elected. This promise was met with a range of criticisms, including objections based on moral and religious grounds.² Once elected, President Clinton directed the Secretary of Defense to review the policy. Secretary Les Aspin directed a compromise position between the existing policy and the proposed complete lifting of the ban. In 1993, Congress enacted as law that compromise policy, commonly referred to as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT hereafter for brevity).

Under DADT, the stated intention was that (a) applicants for military service would not be asked to reveal their sexual orientation, (b) inquiries or investigations solely to determine a service member’s sexual orientation would not be initiated, but inquiries or investigations could be initiated when credible information indicates a basis for discharge or disciplinary action (e.g., homosexual conduct), and (c) “a statement by a service member that he or she is homosexual or bisexual creates a reputable presumption that the service member is engaging in homosexual acts or has the propensity or intent to do so.”³ As such, those who identify as gay or lesbian are presently barred from serving openly in the U.S. military, and from engaging in “homosexual conduct” (which includes “telling”) while serving as a member of the military. Secretary Aspin provided the following rationale for adopting this new middle-ground policy:

The Department of Defense has long held that, as a general rule, homosexuality is incompatible with military service because it interferes with the factors critical to combat effectiveness, including unit morale, unit cohesion, and individual privacy. Nevertheless, the Department of Defense also recognizes that individuals with a homosexual

orientation have served with distinction in the armed services of the United States.⁴

At that time, no scientific evidence existed to support or challenge the claim that combat effectiveness in any previous conflicts or in any exercises at the Combat Training Centers (the military's training proxy for war), was diminished in any units because of the presence of open gays or lesbians. Yet, this presumption has led to discharges of thousands of military personnel.

At the center of the rationale for DADT, then, are the perceived attitudes of military personnel: their morale, their cohesion to one another, their desire or need for individual privacy, and the perceived impact of those attitudes on combat performance. Either implicitly or explicitly, these arguments tend to rest on the perceived attitudes of *heterosexual men* toward *gay men*, with men comprising about 85 percent of the service overall (from 82 percent in the Air Force up to 94 percent in the Marine Corps in 2008), and 100 percent by policy and/or law in most ground combat units such as armor, infantry and special operations units.⁵ Individual morale and unit cohesion ("bonding") are believed to be key for combat motivation and success, which impact overall military readiness for war, and when put into practice, impact effectiveness as well. Anything that lowers morale significantly or prohibits bonding within units is treated as harmful to military operations and thus viewed as a risk to national security.⁶ DADT aims to keep gay and lesbian service members "in the closet" so that negative peer attitudes toward same-sex sexual orientation do not harm unit cohesion and military effectiveness.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell during the Global War on Terror

Despite the perceived negative impact of openly serving gay and lesbian military personnel on cohesion and effectiveness, historically, discharges for homosexuality have dropped during times of war.⁷ This pattern is repeated during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with discharges dropping from peak rates of 1,241 and 1,273 in 2000 and 2001, respectively, to 612 in 2006.⁸ For the years 2002-2006 combined, available data suggest that 3,715 service

members have been discharged under the exclusionary policy.⁹ Such a pattern of drops in homosexuality-related discharges during times of war seems to contradict a policy whose justification would suggest that wartime is the most critical time for ensuring the dismissal of gay and lesbian service members.

There is a substantial cost, even in peacetime, for discharging personnel who have been recruited, trained, and assigned to posts in which they have performed their jobs at least satisfactorily; but this cost is even more dramatic in times of war, when the demand for military personnel is not met by the supply, and when service members are also lost because of wartime injury or death. The Army, in particular, has faced recruiting challenges since the “Global War on Terror” began, causing them to increase enlistment bonuses and lower quality standards for entrants (e.g., increasing the number of waivers to admit recruits with prior criminal activity).¹⁰ The demand for scarce and critical skills such as Arab language capability raises the question of which has the higher negative impact on military effectiveness when Arab linguists are discharged for being gay: the known impact of the lack of those critical skills, or the projected but never documented impact of retaining open lesbian and gay service members.¹¹ Despite these potential costs, DADT persists without empirical data about the performance of units with known gay and lesbian members relative to units without such members.

Because it prohibits the military from systematically gathering data about the sexual orientation of service members, DADT presents a challenge to comparing the actual performance of units with and without lesbian or gay members. In lieu of such comparisons, research on the attitudes and experiences of military personnel who report having served with gay or lesbian unit members in a theater of war can be informative. To this end, the present study contributes to discussions of the impact of open gay and lesbian unit members on unit cohesion and unit readiness by examining the perceptions of military personnel who served in the wars in

Afghanistan or Iraq. This study builds upon previous studies about service members' attitudes on the issue, which show declining support for the ban; this study also shares with those prior studies the limitation of being unable to distinguish responses by sexual orientation, as asking for sexual orientation disclosure on a survey would pose a substantial risk to participants under DADT.¹² Moving beyond a simplistic framework of whether troops are "for or against" allowing gay and lesbian personnel to serve openly in the military, we explore what general demographic and military experience variables are associated with attitudes toward allowing gay and lesbian persons to serve openly. We also examine whether serving with open lesbian or gay unit members is associated with service members' perceptions of unit cohesion and readiness, beyond the roles of other unit quality indicators.

Specifically, this study examines data from a 2006 Zogby poll that assessed the following variables in a sample of military personnel who served in Iraq and Afghanistan: general demographic characteristics, military experiences variables, attitudes toward gay and lesbian service members, knowledge of the presence of gay or lesbian unit members, and perceptions of unit cohesion, readiness, and leadership and instrumental quality. To provide empirical evidence that can inform military policy and practice, the present study uses the Zogby poll data to examine the following research questions:

1. What are the relations of general demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, political party) and military experience variables (i.e., duty status, service branch, years of service, rank/grade, unit type, shower privacy, prior training on prevention of anti-gay harassment) with attitudes toward gay and lesbian service members?
2. What are the relations of comfort with and knowledge of gay and lesbian persons (e.g., comfort around gay and lesbian persons in general, presence of a lesbian or gay unit

member) with attitudes toward gay and lesbian service members?

3. What is the relative importance of knowing a lesbian or gay unit member for perceived unit cohesion and readiness, when other general unit quality predictors (i.e., quality of officers, NCOs, equipment, training) are accounted for?

Method

Participants

In October of 2006, Zogby International conducted a voluntary online poll of 545 U.S. service members who had served in the Iraq or Afghanistan theaters of operations since 2001. Initial attempts to secure a list of military personnel from the Department of Defense in order to draw a random sample for this survey were unsuccessful. Thus, Zogby obtained the sample from a national survey panel composed of over one million members and developed for general survey purposes. Each panelist is defined by over 400 variables, and the panel is continually maintained to be representative of the U.S. population. For this study, Zogby sent invitations to those panelists whose variables on file identified them as among the military population. After logging in with a single use password, respondents were screened with an initial question to ensure that they either had served in the Iraq or Afghanistan theaters of operations. General demographic and military experiences characteristics of the sample are described next. Percentages may not add to one hundred due to rounding and missing data.

General demographic characteristics of the sample. Approximately, 76 percent of respondents were men, and 22 percent were women. In terms of age, 22 percent of the sample was between 18 and 29, 67 percent was between 30 and 49, and 10 percent was between 50 and 64. About 75 percent of the sample identified as White, 7 percent as Black/African American, 7 percent as Spanish/Hispanic/Latina/o, 3 percent as Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1 percent as American Indian/Native American, and 2 percent as Other/Multiracial. In terms of political

affiliation, 17 percent identified themselves as Democrat, 47 percent as Republican, 21 percent as Independent/Minor Party, and 5 percent were “not sure”. In terms of religious affiliation, 38 percent identified as Protestant, 29 percent as Catholic, 3 percent as atheist/realist/humanist, 2 as percent Latter Day Saints (8 people), 1 percent each as Jewish and Muslim (7 and 4 people, respectively), and 22 percent as “other” or no affiliation.

Military experience characteristics of the sample. Approximately 62 percent of the sample was on active-duty at the time of the survey, 20 percent were military veterans, and 19 percent were reservists (13 percent non-mobilized and 6 percent mobilized). In terms of service branch, 46 percent served in the Army, 30 percent in the Air Force, 18 percent in the Navy, 5 percent in the Marine Corps, and 1 percent in the Coast Guard.¹³ About 11 percent of the sample had served four or fewer years in the military, 27 percent had served from five to ten years, 40 percent had served from eleven years up to the retirement eligibility of twenty years, and 22 percent had served more than 20 years. The unit types were also diverse, with 26 percent identifying their latest unit as “combat” (which includes infantry, armor, artillery, fighter aircraft, aircraft carriers, submarines, and special operations), 32 percent as “combat support” (e.g. engineers, intelligence, communications, military police, civil affairs), 21 percent as “combat service support” (e.g. transportation, personnel, finance, medical, maintenance, food service), and 21 percent selected “other” or “not sure.”¹⁴ In terms of rank for this post-deployment sample, 8 percent of participants were junior enlisted (E1-E4), 29 percent were junior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) (E5-E6), 21 percent were senior enlisted/ NCOs (E7-E9), 3 percent were warrant officers (W1-W5), 26 percent were junior officers (O1-O4), and 13 percent were senior officers (O5-O9). Another characteristic of military life that varies among personnel and is relevant for this inquiry is the level of privacy most commonly afforded to these service members. To get at this military experience characteristic, the survey asked how often

respondents showered privately, in a single stall rather than in an open shower. In response, 50 percent reported almost always and 21 percent reported usually showering privately, 16 percent reported “about half and half”, and 6 percent reported usually and 3 percent reported almost always using group showers. Finally, 56 percent of respondents reported that they had received training on the prevention of anti-gay harassment in the past three years, 34 percent reported that they had not received such training, and 10 percent were not sure.

Results and Discussion

Key justifications for excluding open gay and lesbian service members from the U.S. military have rested on the purported attitudes of heterosexual service members about lesbian and gay personnel and the presumed impact of lesbian and gay personnel on unit cohesion, readiness, and performance. To offer empirical data regarding these assumptions, the following analyses examine Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans’ attitudes about allowing lesbian and gay people to serve openly, investigate potential correlates of such attitudes, and evaluate whether knowing a lesbian or gay unit member is linked with perceived unit cohesion and readiness beyond known unit quality correlates of cohesion and readiness (e.g., training, leadership).

Overview of attitudes toward gay and lesbian service members

The earliest polls of military personnel in 1993 showed approximately 75 percent agreeing with the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces, 8 percent unsure, and 16 percent opposing the ban. When broken out by gender, women were found to be much less in favor of the ban than men (only about half of women favored it).¹⁵ Focus group data from that time showed similarly strong objections from military personnel.¹⁶ But, those numbers declined steadily over the years.¹⁷ For example, by 2004, one Annenberg poll found that service members were “divided 57 to 34 percent against allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly.”¹⁸

Interestingly, even among those 57 percent who opposed integration, only 13 percent said

inclusion would harm morale, only 12 percent said it would disrupt teamwork, and only 5 percent reported “close quarters” as their rationale. Twenty percent thought it would be a distraction and cause problems.¹⁹

Findings of the present analyses of the 2006 Zogby data are in keeping with the more recent studies showing a weakening of support for the ban since 1993. Asked, “Do you agree or disagree with allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military?” about 10 percent of the Zogby survey respondents strongly agreed, 18 percent agreed, 33 percent were neutral or not sure, 17 percent disagreed, and 23 percent strongly disagreed with allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly. In addition to this general attitudinal question, respondents were asked to select what they viewed to be the strongest arguments for and against allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly in the military (up to three arguments for and up to three arguments against). The percentages of respondents who selected each of these items as the strongest arguments for and against allowing open service are reported in Table 1.

Among possible reasons for opposing integration, the argument endorsed most frequently was the publicized rationale for the ban that “gays and lesbians would undermine unit cohesion” (42 percent). It is difficult to know the extent to which endorsement of this argument reflects service members’ backing of the current military position or their personal views and experience; but as we note below, knowledge of a gay or lesbian unit member was not associated with actual ratings of perceived unit cohesion in this sample. The second and third most frequently endorsed arguments against integration reflected concerns about harassment and abuse of openly serving gay and lesbian people (27 percent) and moral or religious objections to homosexuality (26 percent). Among possible reasons for supporting integration, war veterans most frequently selected “sexual orientation has nothing to do with performance” (38 percent), that “it is wrong to discriminate based on sexual orientation” (30 percent), and that every qualified individual is

needed during wartime (24 percent). Thus, the most frequently endorsed arguments in support of integration were those that prioritized performance and qualifications over exclusionary practices.

General demographic and military experience characteristics and attitudes toward gay and lesbian service members

ANOVAs were conducted to examine relations of general demographic and military experience variables captured in the Zogby survey with attitudes toward allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly.²⁰ Some of these variables had significant, but small associations with attitudes toward allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly. Of the general demographic variables, age group and racial/ethnic status (categorized as majority or minority) were not associated significantly with attitudes about allowing lesbian and gay personnel to serve openly in the military. By contrast, significant but small main effects emerged for gender, religious affiliation, and political party affiliation (see Table 2).

Specifically, consistent with previously observed gender differences on attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals,²¹ women reported significantly more agreement with allowing lesbian and gay personnel to serve openly than did men. Also, those who identified as atheist, realist, or humanist reported significantly more agreement with allowing lesbian and gay personnel to serve openly than did those who identified as Protestant or Muslim. These comparisons should be interpreted with caution, however, because there were only 18 and 4 individuals in the atheist/realist/humanist and Muslim groups, respectively. Finally, those who identified as Democrat, Independent/Minor party, or “not sure” reported significantly more agreement with allowing lesbian and gay personnel to serve openly than did those who identified as Republican. Effect sizes²² indicated that the significantly associated demographic variables (i.e., gender, religious affiliation, and political party) explained approximately 4 to 6 percent of

the variance in attitudes about allowing lesbian and gay personnel to serve openly in the military.

Of the military experience variables, duty status (veteran, active duty, reserves), service branch, unit type, and shower privacy level were not associated with attitudes about allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly, whereas years of service, rank, and prior training on the prevention of anti-gay harassment were associated significantly with such attitudes (see Table 3). Specifically, those who served between 1 and 4 years and between 5 and 10 years reported significantly more agreement with allowing lesbian and gay personnel to serve openly than did those who served between 11 and 20 years and between 21 and 30 years. Also, mid-grade enlisted personnel (E5 to E6) agreed with allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly more so than those immediately senior to them (E7 to E9). Differences were not significant among other grades, but the data pointed to a general pattern that high-grade enlisted personnel and officers were more supportive of the ban than low- and mid-grade enlisted personnel. Finally, those who reported not having prior training on the prevention of anti-gay harassment expressed more agreement with allowing lesbian and gay personnel to serve openly than did those who reported having prior training. Effect sizes suggested that the significantly associated military experience variables (i.e., years of service, rank, anti-gay harassment prevention training) explained about 2 to 3 percent of the variance in attitudes toward allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly.

Further study is necessary to investigate possible explanations for some of these patterns. For example, acculturation to military policy and practice in the officer and enlisted ranks, and the impact of responsibility for the behavior of subordinates, which falls most heavily on the senior NCOs may shape the attitudes of higher ranking groups toward the ban. Similarly, additional research is necessary to explain why military personnel who received training on the prevention of anti-lesbian and gay harassment were less likely to support allowing lesbians and

gays to serve openly compared to those who did not receive such training. One possibility worth exploring is whether the content of anti-harassment training reinforces the premise of DADT, that is, the presumption that open lesbian and gay service members are harmful to the military.

The present findings regarding some of the military experiences variables also address questions about whether level of personal privacy in the military is related to support for the ban. Service branch could serve as one possible indicator: ground troops in training exercises or on deployment would be more likely to have to share a “foxhole” or use group latrines or showers than those who do not deploy or who tend to serve in the “rear” or on ships where there are more established facilities. But, service branch was not associated significantly with attitudes toward allowing open service: Army and Marine war veterans in this sample were no more likely to support the ban than were Air Force or Navy veterans. Also non-significant was whether one served in combat, combat support, or combat service support units, a distinction relevant for the ground forces where people in the combat end of the spectrum are more likely to be the first to establish new camps and/or live away from major bases with individually divided facilities. The level of shower privacy was also not associated significantly with attitudes toward open service. Thus, the present findings challenge the notion that privacy concerns engender support for the ban.

Comfort with and knowledge of gay and lesbian persons and attitudes toward gay and lesbian service members

Several items in the Zogby poll assessed level of comfort with gay and lesbian persons in general and knowledge of gay and lesbian unit members in particular. In response to the item “Personally, how comfortable are you in the presence of gays and lesbians?” 30 percent of participants reported feeling very comfortable, 44 percent reported feeling somewhat comfortable, 13 percent reported feeling uncomfortable, 4 percent reported feeling very

uncomfortable, and 8 percent were not sure. In response to the question “Do you know for certain that someone is gay or lesbian in your unit?” 66 percent of respondents said no, 15 percent said they were not sure, and 20 percent said yes. Because the survey did not ask if the respondents themselves were gay or lesbian, those who themselves were the gay or lesbian unit member that they were referencing cannot be distinguished from those who knew of another gay or lesbian unit member. Of the 20 percent of respondents who reported knowing a lesbian or gay person in their unit, 53 percent reported that the presence of the lesbian or gay person was well known by others, 22 percent reported that this presence was not well known by others, and 25 percent were not sure. Also, among those who reported knowing a lesbian or gay person in their unit, about 56 percent indicated that the lesbian or gay individual told them about her or his sexual orientation. Thus, one-fifth of participants reported knowing a lesbian or gay person in their unit, and over half of these individuals reported that the lesbian or gay person was well known to others and had personally disclosed to them.

ANOVAs were conducted to test whether attitudes toward allowing gay and lesbian persons to serve openly differed across these comfort and knowledge variables.²³ Significant main effects emerged for comfort with gay and lesbian persons in general and for personally knowing a gay or lesbian unit member (see Table 4). But, among those who knew a gay or lesbian unit member, no significant difference emerged based on whether the presence of the gay or lesbian unit member was well known by others or based on whether the gay or lesbian unit member personally disclosed to the respondent. Follow-up comparisons indicated that, compared to the group of participants who reported being uncomfortable or very uncomfortable in the presence of lesbian or gay persons, those who indicated being very or somewhat comfortable, and those who were not sure reported significantly greater agreement with allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly. Follow-up comparisons also indicated that those who knew a gay or

lesbian unit member reported greater agreement with allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly than did those who did not know a gay or lesbian unit member (see Table 4). Effect sizes for these significant associations suggested that personal comfort with and knowledge of lesbian and gay service members explained approximately 4 to 8 percent of the variance in attitudes about allowing lesbian and gay persons to serve openly in the military. By contrast, political affiliation and rank, which were the strongest demographic and military experience correlates of attitudes toward open service, accounted for about 6 and 3 percent of the variance, respectively. Thus, among all of the predictors considered, general comfort with lesbian and gay people was most strongly associated with attitudes about allowing lesbian and gay people to serve openly.

Knowing a Lesbian or Gay Unit Member and Cohesion, Readiness, and Unit Quality

In the Zogby poll, participants rated their perceptions of unit cohesion by reporting their level of agreement with “There is a lot of teamwork and cooperation in my unit” (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree), and they rated their perceptions of unit readiness by responding to “How would you rate the readiness of your unit for its wartime mission?” (1 = very high, 5 = very low). Participants also rated their units’ leadership quality (“The officers in my unit are good leaders” and “The NCOs in my unit are good leaders,” 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree), and instrumental quality (“How would you rate your unit’s level of training for its wartime mission?” and “How would you rate the equipment your unit has for its wartime mission?” 1 = very high to 5 = very low). In addition, participants who reported knowing for certain about the presence of gay or lesbian unit members were asked “How does the presence of gays or lesbians in your unit impact your personal morale?” and “... your unit’s overall morale?” (1 = very negative impact, 5 = very positive impact).

To examine whether knowledge of a lesbian or gay unit member was associated with respondents’ perceptions of unit cohesion and readiness, beyond the potential roles of the unit

quality variables measured (i.e., ratings of officers, NCO's, training, equipment), a one-way MANCOVA was conducted with ratings of unit cohesion and readiness as the dependent variables, and knowing a lesbian or gay person (yes, no, unsure) as the independent variable. Ratings of officers, NCO's, training, and equipment were included as covariates. MANCOVA was appropriate for this analysis because ratings of cohesion and readiness, the two criterion variables, were correlated positively ($r = .51, p < .001$). The MANCOVA yielded the expected significant multivariate effects on cohesion and on readiness for each of the unity quality covariates, but not for knowing a lesbian or gay person. Specifically, multivariate effects were significant for ratings of officer quality ($F [2, 524] = 37.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .124$), NCO quality ($F [2, 524] = 24.86, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .087$), training level ($F [2, 524] = 100.48, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .277$), and equipment available ($F [2, 524] = 43.20, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .142$), but not for whether respondents knew that a lesbian or gay person was in the unit ($F [4, 1048] = 0.610, p = 0.656, \eta_p^2 = .002$).

Follow-up univariate results, with alpha adjusted to .025 (.05/2) indicated that ratings of the four unit quality variables were generally associated significantly with ratings of cohesion and readiness, with the exception of NCO ratings which was not related significantly to ratings of readiness (see Table 5). Effect sizes indicated that ratings of leadership quality, that is officers and NCOs, were associated substantially with perceived unit cohesion (accounting for 12 and 9 percent of variance, respectively) and ratings of instrumental quality, that is training and equipment, were associated substantially with perceived readiness (accounting for 28 and 13 percent of variance, respectively). By contrast, beyond these notable effects of leadership and instrument quality, knowing a lesbian or gay person did not have a significant unique multivariate (or univariate) effect, and the effect sizes for its links with cohesion and readiness were near zero percent. Taken together, these findings suggest that a fruitful approach to fostering strong cohesion and readiness would be to direct military resources and efforts toward

optimizing the quality of leadership, training, and equipment. But, beyond the roles of these unit quality indicators, the present data suggest that no reduction in cohesion or readiness is associated with knowing about the presence of lesbian or gay unit members.

Next, we examined whether the extent of knowledge within the unit and personal disclosure of sexual orientation were associated with perceptions of cohesion and readiness. Specifically, with those participants who reported knowing a lesbian or gay unit member, we conducted two auxiliary MANCOVAs to examine whether ratings of cohesion and readiness differed depending on (1) whether the presence of a lesbian or gay unit member was well known by others in the unit (yes, no, unsure), and (2) whether the gay or lesbian unit member personally disclosed to the respondent (yes, no). Again, ratings of officers, NCOs, training, and equipment were included as covariates. As in the previous analysis, multivariate effects were significant for each of the covariates, but not for whether the presence of the lesbian or gay person was well known or whether the lesbian or gay person personally disclosed to the respondent. Follow-up univariate results were similar to the previously described findings with the full sample; that is, ratings of officers and NCOs were associated with perceptions of cohesion, ratings of training were associated with perceptions of readiness, and ratings of equipment were associated with both cohesion and readiness (details available from the first author). By contrast, neither well known presence of a lesbian or gay unit member, nor personal disclosure of the lesbian or gay unit member to the respondent was associated significantly with ratings of cohesion or readiness.

Finally, with those participants who reported knowing a lesbian or gay unit member, we conducted two MANOVAs to examine whether the perceived impact of lesbian or gay unit members on personal morale and unit morale differed depending on (1) whether the presence of a lesbian or gay unit member was well known by others in the unit (yes, no, unsure), and (2) whether the gay or lesbian unit member personally disclosed to the respondent (yes, no).

MANOVA was appropriate because ratings of personal and unit morale, the two criterion variables, were correlated positively ($r = .69, p < .001$). The multivariate effect was not significant for whether presence of a lesbian or gay unit member was well known by others, but was nearly significant for whether the gay or lesbian unit member personally disclosed to the respondent ($F [2, 98] = 3.06, p = .052, \eta_p^2 = .059$). Follow-up univariate analyses, with alpha adjusted to .025 (.05/2) indicated that perceived impact of the presence of the lesbian or gay unit member on personal morale was more positive among participants who reported that they had been personally disclosed to ($M = 2.96, SD = 0.65$) than for those who did not report personal disclosure ($M = 2.64, SD = 0.75$). The pattern of mean difference was the same for perceptions of impact on unit morale, but did not reach statistical significance at the adjusted alpha level. Effect sizes indicated that personal disclosure accounted for approximately 5 percent of variance in both personal and unit morale ratings.

As mentioned previously, the lack of overall association between knowing a lesbian or gay unit member and unit cohesion and readiness suggests that military efforts to screen out and remove lesbian and gay personnel or to shape and enforce sexual orientation concealment may represent inefficient and ineffective uses of effort and resources. The problematic nature of such efforts is further supported by the notable presence of openly serving lesbian and gay persons in the military. Specifically, about 20 percent of those surveyed reported that they knew a lesbian or gay person in their unit, and over half of these individuals reported that the presence of the lesbian or gay person is well known by others in the unit, and that the lesbian or gay person had personally disclosed to them. Importantly, neither well-known presence of lesbian or unit members, nor personal disclosure of the lesbian or gay person to the respondent was associated with ratings of cohesion or readiness, beyond the aforementioned unit quality indicators. The links of well-known presence of lesbian or gay unit members and personal disclosure of the

lesbian or gay person with personal morale and unit morale were also generally non-significant, or reflected trends that gay or lesbian individuals' personal disclosure to the respondent was actually associated with more positive perceptions of impact on personal morale. Taken together, these findings are inconsistent with the assumptions underlying DADT, that the presence of lesbian or gay unit members, their open service, or their personal disclosure would harm unit cohesion, readiness, or morale.

Conclusions and Future Directions

The present study can inform discussions about the impact of lesbian and gay service members within the U.S. military by offering empirical data about the perspectives of military personnel who have served in war under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Specifically, the present data build on other recent evidence showing declining support for the policy since its inception. Also, the most frequently endorsed argument in support of integration prioritized performance over sexual orientation, whereas the most frequently endorsed argument against integration was the publicized view that open gay and lesbian unit members would harm unit cohesion. Within the present sample, about 20 percent of respondents reported knowing a lesbian or gay person in their unit, and over half of these respondents indicated that the presence of the lesbian or gay person was well-known by others in the unit. The data indicated no actual associations between knowing a lesbian or gay unit member and ratings of perceived unit cohesion or readiness.

Thus, the present data challenge the contention that openly serving gay and lesbian service members threaten unit cohesion and readiness. Instead, the data point to the importance of leadership and instrumental quality in shaping perceptions of unit cohesion and readiness. Fortunately, unlike the sexual orientation of service members, which the military cannot control, the military is well equipped to shape the quality of leadership, training, and equipment across its units. Thus, the present data point to modifiable variables, that the military has expertise in

shaping, as critical correlates of military personnel's ratings of cohesion and readiness.

Although the present findings can inform military policy and practice, it is important to consider these findings in light of some limitations. Specifically, as is the case with many survey studies, the present findings may reflect self-report bias. Perceptions and reports of military personnel are important and typical sources of data for informing military policy and practice. But, studies that assess objective, observable indicators of cohesion and readiness, and also assess actual presence of lesbian and gay service members would be useful. Such research would require identifying and linking gay and lesbian service members with the units about which observable indicators are gathered, and DADT is a challenge to such research at the present time. An additional limitation is that the present data are cross-sectional. Thus, interpretations about direction of causality among the variables of interest cannot be made. The current policy precludes gathering of accurate identifying information about gay and lesbian service members or those who have served with them. Thus, tracking participants over time to collect longitudinal data that allow examination of predictive relations among the variables of interest is not possible.

To address the limitations of the present study, efforts within the military to gather, from randomly drawn samples, systematic data about the presence of lesbian and gay personnel and their impact on objective indicators of unit cohesion, readiness, morale, and effectiveness would clearly be useful. Empirical data are critical for informing military policy and practice, and the present study represents a step in addressing the paucity of data about DADT.

Table 1

Percent of Respondents who Selected Items as Strongest Arguments For and Against Allowing

Open Service

Arguments For and Against Allowing Lesbian and Gay Personnel to Serve Openly	Percent Selected
<u>Arguments Against Allowing Open Service</u>	
Open gays and lesbians would undermine unit cohesion	42.4
Open gays and lesbians would get beat up or abused	27.0
Homosexuality violates religious / moral beliefs	26.1
Straights would not respect gay or lesbian leaders	24.4
There are no strong arguments for keeping gays from serving openly	23.3
Straights should not have to share foxholes, showers, etc. with open gays and lesbians	21.1
Not sure	12.5
Other reason	8.8
Open gays and lesbians would be more likely to pursue one another than they do now	7.5
Gays and lesbians would increase the spread of HIV/AIDS	6.1
Open gays and lesbians would be more likely to pursue straights	3.1
More gays and lesbians would join or remain in the military	2.0
Gays and lesbians cannot perform their military jobs as well as heterosexuals	0.6
<u>Arguments For Allowing Open Service</u>	
Sexual orientation has nothing to do with job performance	37.8
It is wrong to discriminate based on sexual orientation	29.5
During wartime, the armed forces need every qualified service member regardless of sexual orientation	23.7
There are no strong arguments for allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly	20.2
Discharging service members for being gay is a waste of recruiting, education and training dollars	19.8
No one should be able to avoid a service obligation by claiming to be gay	18.5
Gays already make valuable contributions to the military	18.3
Not sure	11.9
No one should be forced to lie about who they are as a condition of military service	11.0
The government should not pry into people's private lives	9.9
Discharging service members for being gay undermines military readiness	5.7
Other reason	2.2

Table 2

Comparisons of General Demographic Groups on Agreement with Allowing Lesbian and Gay Personnel to Serve Openly in the Military

Independent Variable	<i>n</i>	Level of Agreement (lower means indicate greater support for open service)		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Effect Size (η_p^2)
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Age group				2, 536	2.53	.009
18-29	119	3.03	1.21			
30-49	364	3.33	1.26			
50-64	56	3.23	1.35			
Gender				1, 529	24.51*	.044
Men	413	3.39 ^a	1.21			
Women	118	2.75 ^a	1.31			
Race/ethnicity				1, 515	6.38	.012
Majority (i.e., White)	408	3.33	1.29			
Minority (i.e., non-White)	109	2.98	1.16			
Religious affiliation				6, 512	3.98*	.045
Atheist/realist/humanist	18	2.39 ^{ab}	1.24			
Catholic	157	3.27	1.22			
Jewish	7	3.00	1.00			
Latter Day Saints	8	3.75	1.58			
Muslim	4	4.75 ^b	0.50			
Protestant	208	3.42 ^a	1.27			
Other/no affiliation	117	3.02	1.25			
Political party				3, 483	10.44*	.061
Democrat	90	2.82 ^a	1.24			
Republican	256	3.54 ^{abc}	1.19			
Independent/minor party	112	3.08 ^c	1.38			
Not sure	29	2.76 ^b	0.91			

Note. * = $p < .005$. Means with same superscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$.

Table 3

Comparisons of Military Experience Groups on Agreement with Allowing Lesbian and Gay Personnel to Serve Openly in the Military

Independent Variable	<i>n</i>	Level of Agreement (lower means indicate greater support for open service)		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Effect Size (η_p^2)
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Duty status				2, 542	0.34	.001
Veteran	108	3.17	1.33			
Active Duty	337	3.28	1.22			
Reserve/Guard	100	3.26	1.32			
Service branch ¹				3, 536	1.44	.008
Air Force	162	3.32	1.27			
Army	250	3.30	1.21			
Marines	29	3.24	1.27			
Navy	99	3.02	1.32			
Years of service				3,541	5.18*	.028
4 or fewer	62	2.94 ^{ab}	1.27			
5 to 10	146	3.01 ^{cd}	1.26			
11 to 20	217	3.40 ^{ac}	1.25			
More than 20	120	3.45 ^{bd}	1.19			
Rank/grade				5, 536	3.75*	.034
E1 to E4	42	2.86	1.35			
E5 to E6	159	2.99 ^a	1.24			
E7 to E9	113	3.45 ^a	1.21			
W1 to W5	18	3.72	0.96			
O1 to O4	142	3.39	1.24			
O5 to O9	68	3.32	1.29			
Unit type				3, 532	2.12	.012
Combat	139	3.47	1.22			
Combat service	173	3.25	1.25			
Combat service support	112	3.07	1.28			
Other	112	3.23	1.29			

Shower privacy level				4, 523	1.89	.014
Almost always privately	271	3.17	1.26			
Usually privately	116	3.35	1.22			
About half and half	89	3.30	1.27			
Usually group shower	34	3.74	1.29			
Always or almost always group	18	3.00	1.53			
Anti-gay harassment prevention training				2, 542	6.32*	.023
Yes	305	3.42 ^a	1.24			
No	184	3.01 ^a	1.28			
Not sure	56	3.20	1.12			

Note. * = $p < .005$. Means with same superscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$. ¹The 5 Coast Guard members were excluded from this analysis due to their small number and because the Coast Guard falls under the Department of Homeland Security (and before that, the Department of Transportation) and not under the Department of Defense.

Table 4

Comparisons of Lesbian and Gay-related Attitude and Experience Groups on Attitudes toward Allowing Lesbian and Gay Personnel to Serve Openly in the Military

Independent Variable	<i>n</i>	Level of Agreement (lower means indicate greater support for open service)		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Effect Size (η_p^2)
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Comfort in presence of gays/lesbians				2, 542	22.94*	.078
Very/somewhat comfortable	405	3.07 ^a	1.25			
Uncomfortable/Very uncomfortable	96	4.00 ^{ab}	1.22			
Not sure	44	3.32 ^b	0.71			
Personally know a lesbian/gay unit member				2, 542	9.95*	.035
Yes	108	2.81 ^a	1.41			
No	358	3.41 ^a	1.21			
Not sure	79	3.15	1.08			
Presence of lesbian/gay person well known by others				2, 105	0.55	.010
Yes	57	2.95	1.44			
No	24	2.63	1.35			
Not sure	27	2.70	1.41			
Lesbian/gay person told you				1, 106	0.07	.001
Yes	60	2.78	1.37			
No	48	2.85	1.47			

Note. * = $p < .02$. Means with same superscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$.

Table 5

Follow-up Univariate ANOVAs for Levels of Readiness and Cohesion by Leadership Quality, Instrumental Quality, and Knowing a Lesbian or Gay Unit Member

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Readiness					
Officer quality	2.30	1	2.30	7.82*	.015
NCO quality	0.40	1	0.40	1.36*	.003
Training quality	59.05	1	59.05	201.02*	.277
Equipment quality	23.38	1	23.38	79.59*	.132
Know a lesbian/gay unit member	0.12	2	0.06	0.20	.001
Cohesion					
Officer quality	25.90	1	25.90	72.50*	.121
NCO quality	17.80	1	17.80	49.82*	.087
Training quality	2.91	1	2.91	8.15*	.015
Equipment quality	5.86	1	5.86	16.40*	.030
Know a lesbian/gay unit member	0.74	2	0.37	1.03	.004

Note. * $p < .025$.

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 2. Eric Schmitt, "Military Cites Wide Range of Reasons for Its Gay Ban," *The New York Times*, January 27, 1993.
 3. Office of the Secretary of Defense, Memorandum on Policy on Homosexual Conduct in the Armed Forces (1993), <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/usa/military/1993/Aspin.Directive.On.Ban> (accessed May 1, 2007).
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 5. Select demographic data on the armed forces are routinely posted by the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute on their website:
<http://www.deomi.org/EOEEOResources/DemographicReports.cfm>
 6. For more in-depth discussions of the literature on the role of cohesion in military operations, see James Griffith, "Multilevel Analysis of Cohesion's Relation to Stress, Well-Being, Identification, Disintegration, and Perceived Combat Readiness," *Military Psychology* 14 (2002): 217-239; James Griffith and Mark Vaitkus, "Relating Cohesion to Stress, Strain, Disintegration, and Performance: An Organizing Framework," *Military Psychology* 11 (1999): 27-55; Robert J. MacCoun, "Sexual Orientation and Military Cohesion: A Critical Review of the

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8. Service Members Legal Defense Network, “Fact Sheets: Total ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Discharges 1994-2006,”
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9. Service Members Legal Defense Network, “Fact Sheets: Total ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Discharges 1994-2006,”
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13. The composition of service members ever deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan for these wars as of 2007 is as follows: 49% Army, 19% Navy, 20% Air Force, and 13% Marine Corps; Compared to this composition, the Zogby sample is roughly representative of Army and Navy personnel, but over-representative of Air Force personnel and under-representative of Marines. As seen in Table 3, however, service branch was not associated with attitudes toward lesbian and gay servicemembers. For the deployed force composition statistics, see Terri L. Tanielian and Lisa Jaycox, *Invisible Wounds of War* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 2008) 22.

14. These set of unit type distinctions are most commonly used in the ground forces.

15. Laura Miller "Fighting for a Just Cause: Soldiers' Attitudes on Gays in the Military," in *Gays and Lesbians in the Military: Issues, Concerns, and Contrasts*, eds. W. J. Scott and S. Carson Stanley (NY: Aldine de Gruyter 1994) pp. 69-85.

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18. *NAES 04, National Annenberg Election Survey (available at http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes/2004_03_2military-data_10-16_pr.pdf).*

19. *NAES 04, National Annenberg Election Survey (available at http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes/2004_03_2military-data_10-16_pr.pdf).*

20. Alpha for these analyses was adjusted to .005 (.05/12) to control for Type I error. Tukey HSD follow-up comparisons were used to evaluate group differences underlying significant main effects. In the case of political party, the Games-Howell (GH) follow-up comparison was used because Levene's test of equality of error variances was significant, indicating unequal error variances across groups for this variable.

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22. Effect sizes throughout this study reflect partial eta-squared (η_p^2) which is an indicator of the unique variance accounted for by a factor, while partialling out other factors included in the equation from the total non-error variance; Charles A. Pierce, Richard A. Block and Herman

Aguinis, "Cautionary note on reporting eta-squared values from multifactor ANOVA designs," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 64 (2004) 916-924.

23. Alpha for these tests was adjusted to .02 (.05/4) to control for Type I error. The Games-Howell (GH) follow-up comparison was used for comfort with gay and lesbian persons and for personal knowledge of gay and lesbian unit members because Levene's test of equality of error variances indicated unequal error variances across groups for these two variables.