Unit Social Cohesion in the Israeli Military as a Case Study of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

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U.S. military policy "Don't Ask Don't Tell" (DADT) restricted integration of gays in the U.S. military based on the premise that knowledge of gay peers would decrease interpersonal bonds among unit members. Despite the heated debate over DADT, this social cohesion thesis, reflecting the tensions of homosocial desire, has not been tested empirically. The Israeli military provides an operative case-study for this thesis, given its nonexclusionary policy and intensive combat experience. Measures of perceived social cohesion and knowledge of gay peers were obtained from a sample of 417 combat and noncombat male soldiers using an inventory of interpersonal emotions towards unit members. A MANOVA of social cohesion by knowledge of gay peers and combat/noncombat unit yielded the hypothesized increase in cohesion in combat versus noncombat units. Yet contrary to the DADT premise, knowledge of gay peers did not yield decreased social cohesion. Comparisons with the U.S. military are presented, suggesting in both cases a loose coupling between stated policies and soldiers' experience on the ground. Implications of these findings for the reassessment of DADT and its repeal are discussed.

KEY WORDS: gay, military, cohesion, masculinity, combat, homosocial

"Experiments within the Army in the solution of social problems are fraught with danger to efficiency, discipline, and morale" (General Omar Bradley, 1948; cited in Prakash, 2009, p. 88). This statement by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff after World War II addressed President's Truman's executive order to integrate blacks into the U.S. military. Interestingly, the recent American debate on the integration of gays in the military often relies on similar pleas (Prakash, 2009). Much as it was in that historical racial desegregation debate, the key rationale underlying the U.S. military policy of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT), repealed only recently, in 2011, is that allowing gay soldiers to serve openly in their units would disrupt unit cohesion and affect combat readiness and effectiveness (U.S. Code, 1993).[1] The rationale rests on two predictions: (1) soldiers who know of gay peers in their unit would experience lowered emotions of closeness and affection toward unit members as a whole; (2) such reduction in close interpersonal emotions among unit members would

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[1] We hereafter use the generic term "gay" to refer to both male and female homosexual individuals, except when quoting survey items that specifically address gay men and lesbian women. It should be noted that the cohesion rationale focuses primarily on the presumed tensions between gay and straight men (Frank, 2009, p. 263).

inevitably impair the unit's operational readiness and combat effectiveness. The aim of this study is to provide an evidence-based assessment of the first assumption of this "unit cohesion thesis," based on data derived from a sample of combat and noncombat soldiers in active duty in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The case of the IDF may be instructive for exploring the DADT rationale as it is constantly deployed in harsh conditions of combat which entail high levels of cohesion and at the same time poses no formal limitations on gay visibility. Accordingly, we tested whether knowledge of gay peers among combat and noncombat Israeli soldiers is related to their experience of unit social cohesion.

The greatest opposition to the recruitment of openly gay individuals was voiced by U.S. military personnel and leadership. Historically, three main arguments were raised in support of the gay ban: homosexuality is a mental disorder which renders a person unfit to serve; gay personnel pose security risks; and their presence poses a threat to discipline, morale, unit cohesion, and combat effectiveness (Jones & Koshes, 1995). Over the years, the first two arguments have been largely dismissed, whereas the latter has become the cornerstone of DADT (Frank, 2009; Herek, 1996a; Moskos, 1994).

Opposition to gay integration has declined steadily among American troops over the last two decades, particularly among junior enlisted personnel (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2004; Bicknell, 2000; Moradi & Miller, 2010). Regardless, the unit cohesion thesis remains the most salient claim raised by military personnel in support of DADT (Moradi & Miller, 2010).

Concerns for unit cohesion were also dominant in other countries where integration of gay soldiers became a debated issue (e.g., Fleckenstein, 1993; Heinecken, 1998). A noteworthy example is the Dutch case, where official military policy supported integration since 1974. Despite this, scholars found that military personnel, particularly men, raised concerns over personal, face-to-face interactions with gay peers in their unit (Anderson-Boers & Van Der Meulen, 1994). Likewise, an internal survey of service members in the British military concluded that presence of homosexuals would inhibit smooth social interactions and would thus undermine morale and fighting power (HPAT, 1996).

Despite the growing debate in Western societies, and particularly in American politics, on the impact of gay personnel on cohesion and effectiveness, much of the scholarly literature on the topic has been discursive and polemical in nature, falling short of a systematic empirical approach (Harries-Jenkins & Dandeker, 1994, p. 202; Kier, 1998; Palm Center, 2010). The most substantial report on the implications of gay service in the military across five countries with nondiscriminatory policies—Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and Israel—concluded that openly gay soldiers do not disrupt unit cohesion and effectiveness (Frank, 2010). In the Israeli case, the report reviewed a series of observations gathered from generals, ministry officials, military scholars, NGO observers, and past research reports, all of which lead to the conclusion that the presence of gay service members has not eroded cohesion, morale, or military readiness. However, these findings are based on qualitative analyses and do not provide a systematic study of the unit cohesion thesis based on quantitative sampling of military personnel. Conversely, most past surveys of military personnel merely asked respondents for their personal opinion on the effect openly gay personnel may have on cohesion or readiness (e.g., Bicknell, 2000; HPAT, 1996; Miller, 1994) rather than examine the actual relationship between knowledge of gay peers and unit cohesion (Palm Center, 2010).

To further this investigation into the unit cohesion thesis, we first turn to review the psychological studies of cohesion in the military, discuss the homosocial basis of military culture underlying the rationale of DADT, and translate it into an empirical test of unit social cohesion. We then present the policy and organizational practices of the Israeli military regarding the service of gays as well as the IDF's pronounced emphasis on social cohesion in combat. We conclude this section by explicating our research hypotheses.

Social Cohesion and Task Cohesion in Military Studies

Psychological studies of cohesion in the military informed the debate over DADT. Following Shils and Janowitz's (1948) seminal work on the fighting spirit of the German Wehrmact in World War II, scholarly attention shifted to small-unit cohesion as a key determinant of military readiness and effectiveness. In particular, cohesion was perceived to be facilitated by intimate interpersonal relationships between fellow soldiers. In a similar vein, scholars studied concepts such as primary groups, friendship, interpersonal attraction, and buddy relations in order to explain and assess soldiers' willingness to belong to the group and to contribute to its success (Cooley, 1962; Hogg, 1992; Little, 1964). Common to most of these formulations is the understanding that cohesion reinforces small-group solidarity, provides long-term emotional support, and becomes a source of social control in service of group goals (Manning, 1991; Rempel & Fisher, 1997; Siebold, 1999).

The emphasis on small-unit cohesion as a key to combat readiness has become a widely shared belief beyond the scientific community. A recent field study by Wong, Kolditz, Millen, and Potter (2003) with U.S. combat soldiers in active duty in Iraq exemplifies how soldiers reiterate the importance of small-unit cohesion for combat motivation. Similarly, fraternal friendship, understood as male group bonding, emerges as the constitutive ideal of the Israeli military both within the ranks and in Israeli public culture (Kaplan, 2006).

Over the years, organizational studies of cohesion (both in military and civic settings) have offered alternative approaches to the measurement of social cohesion and its consequences, shifting the focus from the definition of cohesiveness as interpersonal attraction to definitions associated with actual performance (e.g., shared goals, teamwork, and coordination; Carron, 1982). Broader measures of cohesion were introduced, distinguishing affective (e.g., peer bonding) from instrumental (e.g., teamwork) aspects of small-unit cohesion, while also taking into consideration identification with leadership and with the wider organization (Siebold, 1999). Following a review of the literature, MacCoun (1996) provided such a distinction between two aspects of cohesion, "social cohesion" and "task cohesion." Social cohesion is the extent that group members "like each other, prefer to spend their social time together, enjoy each other's company, and feel emotionally close to one another." In contrast, task cohesion is defined as "shared commitment among members to achieving a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group" and their ability "to coordinate their efforts as a team to achieve that goal" (MacCoun, 1996, p. 159). Similar distinctions between affective or interpersonal versus instrumental aspects of cohesion emerged in various studies of organizational and military psychology (e.g., Griffith, 1988; Mullen & Copper, 1994; Zaccaro & McCoy, 1988).

Various scholars have argued that if presence of gay individuals indeed has an adverse affect on military life, this affect is most likely to be observed in terms of reduced social cohesion, which unlike task cohesion, appears to be largely unrelated to a unit's combat effectiveness (Kier, 1998; MacCoun, 1996). Moradi and Miller (2010) have offered some support to this claim in their study, which is the first study to date to provide a quantitative analysis of the impact openly gay personnel have on unit cohesion and military readiness. Based on a Zogby International poll of 545 U.S. service members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan (Zogby, Bruce, Wittman, & Rodgers, 2006) they found no correlation between knowledge of gay peers among the respondents and their self-reported unit cohesion and military readiness. As they demonstrate, knowledge of gay personnel does not account for lowered scores of unit cohesion (in terms of cooperative teamwork) nor readiness (each measured with a single item). However, because this study effectively measured task cohesion rather than social cohesion, it is not an adequate test for the concerns raised by proponents of DADT, as elaborated below.

Moreover, the meaning of social cohesion as studied within the aforementioned organizational framework could be expanded by a growing body of ethnographic scholarship focusing on male interactions in exclusively male social enclaves (Gutmann, 1997; Val de Almeida, 1996). Pleck and

Pleck (1980) argued that traditional male settings such as pubs, fraternities, and militaries create a differentiated male subculture that encourages men to forge intimate ties, based on love and affection between equals. We refer to the relationships within these male enclaves as "homosocial relations." As we suggest below, integrating the homosocial perspective into studies of social cohesion in the military can shed light on the DADT debate.

Homosocial Desire and the Unit Social-Cohesion Thesis of DADT

The DADT policy stated that presence of gays in the military "would create an unacceptable risk to the high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability." Furthermore, "unit cohesion" was defined as "the bonds of trust among individual service members." This phrasing indicates that DADT assumes gay presence is a threat not only to task cohesion and combat effectiveness but also to aspects of male bonding and social cohesion: unit morale, motivation, and the interpersonal bonds of trust (Hogg, 1992; Little, 1964; Manning, 1991). In other words, irrespective of its possible effect on combat effectiveness, the policy considers the mere presence of gays an "unacceptable risk" to social cohesion, which was viewed as "the essence of military capability" in and of itself.

Such an interpretation of DADT was clearly voiced by U.S. military leadership. Recently, General Kroesen, former U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff, emotionally appealed the Legislative to uphold DADT, claiming that the presence of known gay individuals in the setting of the small combat group would cause the dissolution of their cohesive "band of brothers" nature (Kroesen, 2010). In the Congressional hearings that led to DADT's instatement, General Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his vice chairman Admiral Jeremiah provided further explanation why openly gay service will hinder social cohesion: "Those who engage in conduct that is inconsistent with those of the group are not trusted or respected. In an atmosphere of distrust, orders may not be carried out and commonplace friendly gestures that promote camaraderie—everyday youthful horseplay and rough-housing, a pat on the back or an arm around the shoulder—become suspect, arouse fear or aversion, and destroy group cohesion" (U.S. Senate, 1995, p. 710; cited in Kier, 1998).

This candid account brings to light the deep apprehensions underlying what Sedgwick (1985) has termed "homosocial desire": the erotic potential in male-to-male social ties, which accounts for "correspondences and similarities between the most sanctioned forms of male bonding and the most reprobate expressions of homosexuality" (p. 22). On the one hand, military environment fosters deep bonds between men as an occasion for "homosocial enactment," a performance of manhood in front of other men, constantly seeking their approval in order to validate one's male status (Kimmel, 1994, pp. 128–29). On the other hand, this homosocial enactment endorses homophobia as a means to draw a clear line between the homosocial and the homosexual (Gross, 2000; Kaplan, 2003).

The growing debate over enlistment of gays into the military forced the military establishment to confront these paradoxes of homosocial desire. The testimony given by the generals in Congress reveals deep-rooted fears that homosocial gestures—from "youthful horseplay" to putting "an arm around the shoulder"—can appear "with only a slight shift of optic, quite startlingly 'homosexual'" (to paraphrase Sedgwick, 1985, p. 89). The actual presence of gays has nothing to do with these practices. However, acknowledging and having others acknowledge their presence would "arouse fear or aversion, and destroy group cohesion" (U.S. Senate, 1995, p. 710), simply because it provides a constant reminder that homosocial military culture in and of itself entails gestures that could be interpreted as homoerotic. The military leadership seemed content with this unspoken reality of military life, as long as it does not become spoken policy (Kaplan, 2003).

This, we argue, is the main motivation behind DADT. It is a compromise that envisioned how gay personnel could keep on serving as long as they did so quietly. If, however, their presence should

become visible, these boundaries between the homosocial and the homoerotic would be threatened and pose an "unacceptable risk" to social cohesion. Thus, demonstrating that openly gay service does not affect teamwork and task cohesion (Moradi & Miller, 2010) is an important yet insufficient step in tackling these deep-rooted concerns raised by DADT. Rather, the issue becomes one of whether gay presence affects service members' perceptions of homosocial bonding, intimacy, and other interpersonal aspects of social cohesion. These interpersonal aspects are left unaccounted for in current studies of gays in the military and require a measure of cohesion that focuses more directly on the questions of male bonding. Accordingly, we redefine the DADT concern with interpersonal bonds and homosocial desire as the "unit social-cohesion thesis" and test it by examining the relations between knowledge of gay peers in a unit and a measure of social cohesion that is based on a set of emotions addressing closeness and intimacy between unit members.

Gays in the Israeli Military: Between Policy, Organizational Practices, and Culture

The IDF is the only military to date with a policy of universal, mandatory conscription for both men and women, although in practice it systematically maintains a gendered regime (Izraeli, 1997).[2] Whereas most societies form a sharp distinction between military and civilian structures (Moskos, 1994), in Israel, the military is both a central institution and a dominant cultural force (Horowitz, 1982; Kimmerling, 1993). Particularly for men, military service is often considered a prerequisite for entering adult life and an initiation rite into Israeli-Zionist culture (Kaplan, 2000). Although in recent years these norms have less influence among upper middle-class men, they still hold true for some disadvantaged groups, where some view military service as an opportunity for career advancement and social mobility (Levy, 2007a). As an army constantly in the thick of combat, the IDF could provide a useful test case for the effect of gay presence on unit social cohesion. The IDF has fought seven major wars against neighboring Arab countries. In addition, it has launched innumerable smaller-scale operations and excursions behind enemy lines and has been engaged in an ongoing combination of military occupation, civil policing, and guerilla warfare in the Palestinian Territories. As such it has nearly unparalleled combat experience, in which the relationship between participation of gay soldiers and unit social cohesion could be fruitfully examined.

The IDF permits gays to serve openly in its ranks, similarly to all NATO countries except for the United States, Greece, and Turkey. Conscripts are not specifically questioned about their sexual orientation unless the topic is brought up during initial screening. Individuals who are openly gay are not exempted from service. There are no official statistics of the percentage of gay individuals among those who enlist. One nonrandom sample of gay men found that 84% completed their full term of military service (Mintzer, 1997, p. 58). This has not always been the case. In 1983, the IDF introduced for the first time explicit regulations pertaining to gay personnel, which authorized their potential discharge on the grounds that homosexual tendencies may constitute a security risk or decreased mental health (IDF Manpower Division, 1986). Unofficially, "homosexual tendencies" were also part of the standard screening procedures carried out prior to conscription in order to assess the prospective adjustment of new recruits, especially in combat units. The intention was to exclude gay soldiers from highly consolidated units performing under extreme stress and in conditions of closed and secluded living accommodations (Gal, 1994). In 1993, a new, nondiscriminatory policy was formulated, stating that no restrictions should be made on the recruitment, assignment, and promotion of gay individuals in the IDF (IDF Manpower Division, 1993). Further discussion of the 1993 policy change and its implications can be found in Belkin and Levitt (2001), Gross (2000), and Walzer (2000).

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[2] Conscripted women enlist for two years, whereas men are conscripted for three years. Men are also called for annual reserve duty throughout much of their adult lives. Although women are gradually allowed into combat units, they are still channeled to designated units and positions (Sasson-Levy, 2001).

In many Western countries with relatively liberal views toward homosexuality, most notably the United States, United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, France, and Sweden, "policies regarding homosexuals in the military seem to reflect, but lag behind the policies in their host societies" (Segal, Gade, & Johnson, 1993, p. 37). Moreover, after nonexclusionary policies were introduced in some of these militaries, studies often found a disparity between the new policy and actual military practices. Gay integration lagged behind policy changes, and soldiers were reluctant to openly admit their sexual orientation even after the ban was lifted (GAO, 1993; Segal et al., 1993). In some countries this disparity could be partly explained by a political culture where military service is not a civic obligation and a nonconscript model was adopted (e.g., the United States). As a result, recruits are often drawn from the more conservative elements in society and may shape cultural norms within military units accordingly (Levy, 2007b). In such cases military culture may lag behind liberal shifts in wider society.

In Israel there are similar disparities between the IDF's nonexclusionary policy and actual military practices, but these are more directly influenced by cultural norms in society at large. Because of mandatory conscription, recruits come from wider segments of society than in other Western militaries. Moreover, soldiers serve in relative proximity to their families and are not cut off from the civilian sphere as is common in most militaries. However, these civilian surrounding are often intolerant of homosexuality (Lieblich & Friedman, 1985). Indeed, during the IDF policy change in 1993, Israeli society lagged behind most Western countries, including the United States, in its openness to gay public visibility and activism (Kama, 2000). Indeed, only in 1988, five years prior to the IDF policy change, consensual sexual contact between male adults was decriminalized (Yonay & Spivak, 1999). Unlike most NATO countries, the IDF's policy thus *preceded*, rather than followed, changes in societal attitudes toward gay rights (Levy, 2007b).

Although in recent decades a gay subculture has emerged in Tel Aviv, now an international hotspot for gay tourism (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012), gay presence still meets with staunch opposition from broad segments of Israeli society (Kama, 2000; Kupper & Kaplan, 2010; Shokeid, 2003). Because of the limited separation between the military and the civilian sphere, these societal attitudes greatly shape cultural norms within military units. Perhaps for this reason, IDF military authorities did little to disseminate the change in official policy among the ranks, or make it publicly known. In the years immediately following the policy change, it was mentioned only briefly in the IDF's official magazines and discussed at length only in one report (Zigdon, 1999). The nonexclusionary policy was never translated into any strategy at the organizational level. The military did not designate any legal, mental, or social resources to assist gay soldiers. At best, it has allowed LGBT outreach organizations to meet with selected military professionals and drill instructors in order to raise tolerance for gay individuals (Kupper & Kaplan, 2010). IDF authorities increasingly convey the message that they simply do not deal with sexual orientation anymore. This is perhaps one reason why, in response to a query by human rights jurist, an IDF spokesperson announced that since 1998, the previous 1993 official orders pertaining to gays in the military have been abolished as well (Gross, 2000, p. 163).

Various studies demonstrate the loose coupling between IDF policies and the actual practices of military life. Kaplan's (2003) study of gay veterans who served under both exclusionary and nonexclusionary policies found that the 1993 policy shift had little bearing on soldiers' personal experiences. Even under the new policy, some still believed that revealing one's sexual orientation would lead to discrimination and negative reactions or even to removal, on psychological grounds, from certain positions. In fact, some even considered using their gay identity as means to force the system to reassign them away from combat service, although officially this was no longer an option. More than a decade after the 1993 policy shift, a survey among 329 gay soldiers found that only 29% of respondents knew for certain that the IDF allows gays to serve freely (Shilo, Pizmoni-Levi, Kama, Lavee, & Pinhasi, 2006). The survey also found that whereas 83% of respondents came out to their friends at home, mostly prior to their enlistment, only 35% came out to soldiers in their military

units. Since these respondents were recruited primarily through gay community networks, disclosure rates among the general population of gay soldiers are likely to be much lower, indicating that acts of disclosure are not simply a result of permissible regulations. Taken together, these various examples suggest that, as in other Western militaries, there is a disparity between the IDF's official policy pertaining to sexual orientation and its (absent) organizational practices regarding the needs of gay individuals and the cultural norms within military units, which are often shaped by broader intolerant societal attitudes.

The Case of Combat Units

In most contemporary industrialized societies, the military is a central cultural site for the construction of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987). Within the military organization, combat roles, specifically, are considered a male preserve. Men alone participate in war, and the ultimate test of manhood is the test of battle (Badinter, 1995, p. 68). Accordingly, the combat role is the core archetype of the military organization: It claims the highest status and defines the meaning of military service at a personal, organizational, and public level (Devilbiss, 1994). Because in Israel three years of active duty is an obligatory and self-evident stage for most Jewish-Israeli male youths, it is the much smaller group of soldiers in combat units who become associated with the values of hegemonic masculinity. In combat, training values of soldiering are conflated with hegemonic male values such as risk taking, aggressiveness, technical ability, emotional self-control, and heterosexuality (Kaplan, 2003).

In addition, combat service places strong emphasis on small-unit cohesion, promoting mutual affection between unit members. This is especially evident in the Israeli case. The IDF stresses interpersonal responsibility and mutual support among unit members as part of its tactical doctrine in combat (Kellet, 1982). To further this goal, combat soldiers are assigned to organic units throughout their term of service (Ben-Ari, 1998). Henderson (1985) notes that for Israeli soldiers the unit is "a primary social affiliation and promotes a very strong sense of mutual affection and attraction among unit members" (p. 38).

Thus, on the one hand, homosocial combat culture endorses strong emotional bonds between soldiers and encourages intimate feelings that might otherwise be avoided among men. On the other hand, combat roles subscribe to values of hegemonic masculinity, which often avoid emotional expressivity between men and exclude homosexuality. As argued by Kimmel (1994), settings which provide tangible markers of manhood, such as combat service, not only foster deep bonds between men but also promote homophobia. It is therefore instrumental to examine whether soldiers in combat units differ from noncombat soldiers both in their acknowledgment of gay peers in their units as well as in their experiences of unit social cohesion.

The Present Study

Given these theoretical questions and caveats in existing research, the present study was designed to explore several issues that directly pertain to the DADT policy debate, using the IDF as a limited test case. Because of the greater emphasis on hegemonic masculinity in combat units relative to other units, our first hypothesis predicts that in combat units, fewer soldiers would have knowledge of gay peers, compared with soldiers serving in noncombat units. Secondly, and most crucially for the DADT debate, we examine the relationship between knowledge of a gay peer and unit social cohesion in combat versus noncombat units. The unit social-cohesion thesis underlying DADT policy would find support if such knowledge is associated with decreased levels of unit social cohesion, especially in combat units, where emotions of mutual affection and attraction are

purportedly of vital importance (Henderson, 1985; Kellet, 1982). While recent studies (most notably, Moradi & Miller, 2010) have offered some important insights regarding these issues, the current investigation is unique in several ways, which make it a more controlled and stringent test of the unit social-cohesion thesis.

First, in order to test unit social cohesion as it directly pertains to the underlying thesis of DADT policy, we measure unit social cohesion with a list of intimacy-related interpersonal emotions (see questionnaire design below) rather than on a two-item measure of task cohesion as in the study of Moradi and Miller (2010). Furthermore, most published surveys on gay integration have probed respondents' attitudes and predicted reactions to hypothetical scenarios involving contact with gays (e.g., Bicknell, 2000; HPAT, 1996; Miller, 1994). By measuring actual associations between knowledge of gay peers and a separate measure of unit social cohesion, the current study does not rest on respondents' predictions and thus improves the ecological validity of this inquiry.

The validity of the current inquiry is further strengthened by its framing as a survey of social aspects of military life. This contrasts with previous surveys of gay integration in the military, which explicitly state the issue under inquiry from the outset and focus on it extensively in their questioning (e.g., Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2004; Bicknell, 2000; HPAT, 1996; Moradi & Miller, 2010). Such explicit focus could deter many respondents and potentially lead to serious self-selection biases. In addition, extensive and explicit questioning on such a socially sensitive topic could create a significant social desirability bias, encouraging respondents to answer in accordance with the perceived norms of the surrounding culture (Uziel, 2010). In order to avoid both kinds of biases, the present questionnaire included only one concrete question on knowledge of a gay peer, embedded in a series of items probing general social and emotional aspects of military service.

Lastly, we only sampled male soldiers. Although DADT makes no direct distinction between male and female soldiers, the unit social-cohesion thesis centers on the homosocial relationship between men in combat settings. In addition, other surveys have found that female soldiers are less likely to oppose gay integration, relative to male soldiers (Bicknell, 2000; Moradi & Miller, 2010). Narrowing the sample to include only men, while distinguishing between combat and noncombat positions, provides a more stringent test of the unit social-cohesion thesis.

Method

Procedure and Sample

During four months in 2000, the first author and five research assistants distributed questionnaires to male soldiers on active duty at the entrance to 22 military installations. Military units were chosen to include the different branches of the IDF and to cover a roughly equal number of combat and noncombat positions. This represents an intentional oversampling of combat positions, designed to ensure subsamples are sufficiently large for hypotheses testing. Respondents were guaranteed complete anonymity, and no compensation was offered. Out of a total of 520 questionnaires distributed in this way, responses of 417 soldiers (80.2%) were collected: 202 from combat soldiers and 211 from noncombat soldiers (four respondents did not provide pertinent information). Roughly 95% of respondents were in regular conscript service, aged 18–22; 93.5% had graduated from high school. Of those who self-labeled their religious orientation (90.2% of the sample), 66% identifies as secular while 34% identified as religious or traditional.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was presented as a study of "social attitudes and emotions in military units." Unit social cohesion was measured in terms of intimate interpersonal emotional bonds. This measure

was developed as part of a larger study which mapped emotions associated with male friendship in homosocial settings based on 30 narrative interviews with male combat and noncombat IDF veterans (Kaplan, 2006). Respondents recounted stories of male friendship across their life course and were then asked to provide explicit definitions of emotions related to these friendship. In their stories, friendship during military service played a pivotal role. Typically, individuals join the military while transitioning from late adolescence to early adulthood, when intimacy between same-sex peers is at its developmental peek, before being supplanted by intimacy with a heterosexual partner (Eshel, Sharabany, & Friedman, 1998).

Narrative methodology is particularly suited to the study of emotions, since emotions and narratives are grounded in personal experience as well as cultural context (Lutz, 1986; Mishler, 1986). Recurrent themes were extracted from narratives following Giorgi's (1975) proposal for phenomenological analysis, taking into consideration internal coherence within each narrative and thematic coherence with shared cultural values across narratives (Agar & Hobbs, 1982).

An inventory of male homosocial emotions was derived from this analysis, while being informed by two generalized models of interpersonal relations with demonstrated relevance to the Israeli contexts: (1) Josselson's (1992) eight dimensions of relatedness adopted to a questionnaire format in Hebrew (Mintzer, 1997); (2) Sharabany's (1994) eight dimensions of the Intimate Friendship Scale tested among male and female samples. Dimensions most relevant to homosocial settings were incorporated in the final inventory of social cohesion, which included 13 items: (1) enjoying doing things together; (2) desire to be with them (with group members); (3) admiration; (4) intimacy; (5) envy; (6) chemistry and shared language; (7) competitiveness; (8) love; (9) wish to disclose personal issues; (10) wish for validation; (11) warmth and physical closeness; (12) brotherhood; and (13) sense of social belonging.

Respondents were asked "To what extent do you feel the following feelings toward fellow members of your unit?" Responses were solicited on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) scale.

The questionnaire consisted of additional sections which probed personal background, military background, and a section on social identification. This section included a question on knowledge of gay peers: "Do you know, or have known in the past, of a homosexual or lesbian soldier in your unit?" Responses included: "yes," "no," and "possibly." The question was adopted from a questionnaire on attitudes toward homosexuals in the military conducted at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School (Bicknell, 2000).

Results and Discussion

Knowledge of Gay Peers

Categories of knowledge of gay peers ("yes" / "possibly" / "no") were cross-tabulated with unit type ("combat" / "noncombat"). Results are presented in Table 1. The overall percentage of IDF personnel who reported knowledge of a gay soldier was 18%; contrary to our first hypothesis, this percentage did not differ significantly according to unit type, $\chi^2(2) = 1.94$, ns.

Table 1. Frequency (and Percentages) of Reported Knowledge of Gay Peers by Combat and Noncombat Units

	Knowledge of gay peers in unit			Total
	Yes	Possibly	No	
Soldiers in combat units	41 (20%)	53 (26.5%)	106 (53%)	200 (100%)
Soldiers in noncombat units	33 (16.2%)	51 (24.7%)	122 (59.2%)	206 (100%)
Total	74 (18%)	104 (26%)	228 (56%)	406 (100%)

Associations of Unit Type and Knowledge of Gay Peers with Unit Social Cohesion

In order to test the second hypothesis, we conducted a two-way MANOVA to probe associations of unit type and effect of knowledge of gay peers with unit social cohesion (see Table 2 for corresponding descriptive statistics). A MANOVA analysis was used because the inventory of social cohesion emotions includes discrete, yet theoretically bound items; this is supported by the fact that all item intercorrelations were significant, $p < 0.01$, with a median correlation coefficient of $r = 0.56$ ($0.17 < r_s < 0.79$).

This MANOVA yielded a significant main effect for unit type, $F(13,362) = 3.46$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.11$. Soldiers in combat units score higher on the multivariate measure of unit social cohesion compared with soldiers in noncombat units. The knowledge of gay peers factor was not significant, $F(26,724) = 1.04$, n.s., nor was the interaction between the two factors, $F(26,724) = 1.15$, n.s.[3] In other words, participants who acknowledged the presence of gay peers, or this possibility, were not found to differ from those who have no such knowledge in terms of their sense of unit social cohesion. Furthermore, there is no differential association of knowledge of a gay peer with unit social cohesion in combat versus noncombat units.

In light of the multivariate main effect of unit type on unit social cohesion, we further examined univariate analyses of unit type on the specific items of the social cohesion inventory (see Table 3). These analyses yielded significant results for all inventory items except 3: "Desire to be with them," "envy," and "competitiveness." All significant differences were in the predicted direction, with combat soldiers scoring higher than noncombat soldiers. These results indicate overall that combat soldiers experience stronger interpersonal emotions of closeness and affection toward unit members on most aspects of unit social cohesion compared with noncombat soldiers.

Although the multivariate analysis of the association of knowledge of gay peers with social cohesion was nonsignificant, we ran an ad hoc univariate analyses of this factor on each item of the unit social cohesion inventory separately. This was done in order to further explore the potential links between these two variables, which are central to our study. Of the 13 items thus probed, a significant difference emerged only for "admiration," with those reporting no knowledge of a gay peer scoring higher than those who report such knowledge; those acknowledging the possibility of such a peer scored nonsignificantly different than the two other groups, $F(2,374) = 4.58$, $p < 0.05$ (see Table 2 for group means and standard deviations). In a similar ad hoc analysis of the interaction factor, no significant univariate findings emerged.

Conclusion and Implications

Following a survey of Israeli military personnel, this study explored the central argument of DADT; namely, that soldiers who know of gay peers in their unit would experience lowered emotions of closeness and affection toward unit members as a whole, particularly in combat settings. Furthermore, in combat units, knowledge of gay peers was expected to be less frequent than in noncombat settings.

According to our first hypothesis, greater emphasis on hegemonic masculinity in combat units would result in less frequent knowledge of gay peers compared with noncombat units. This hypothesis was not confirmed. The combination of two opposing vectors may account for this unforeseen result. On the one hand, and as stated before, a survey of self-identified gay soldiers in the IDF found that soldiers in combat units reported systematically lower rates of disclosure compared with

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[3] While the conceptual and statistical problems underlying a posteriori power analyses are well known, it seems worthwhile presenting such analyses in the context of these potentially controversial nonsignificant effects: The small estimated effect sizes (partial $\eta s^2 = 0.036$, 0.04, for the knowledge and interaction factors, respectively) and the large sample employed are reassuring in this sense, and a posteriori power analyses were indeed well above the 0.8 benchmark (0.86, 0.9, given $\alpha = 0.05$, for the knowledge and interaction factors, respectively).

Table 2. Means (and Standard Deviations) of Individual Unit Social Cohesion Items by Unit Type and Knowledge of a Gay Peer

Unit Social Cohesion Items	Unit type											
	Combat unit						Noncombat unit					
	Knowledge of a gay peer in unit						Knowledge of a gay peer in unit					
	No		Possibly		Yes		No		Possibly		Yes	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
Enjoying doing things together	3.58	(1.06)	3.26	(1.16)	3.42	(1.06)	3.87	(1.09)	3.88	(1.13)	3.65	(1.21)
Desire to be with them	3.19	(1.08)	3.07	(1.18)	3.00	(1.12)	3.44	(1.09)	3.47	(1.08)	3.10	(1.15)
Admiration	3.20	(1.07)	2.91	(1.05)	2.94	(1.09)	3.30	(1.14)	3.22	(1.01)	2.65	(1.35)
Intimacy	2.27	(1.16)	2.33	(1.27)	2.00	(1.09)	2.80	(1.29)	2.65	(1.33)	2.28	(1.18)
Envy	2.02	(1.06)	2.04	(1.07)	2.18	(1.29)	2.35	(1.24)	2.04	(1.1)	2.15	(1.03)
Chemistry and shared language	3.38	(1.02)	3.15	(1.09)	2.97	(0.98)	3.66	(1.15)	3.63	(1.01)	3.70	(1.09)
Competitiveness	2.47	(1.07)	2.39	(1.11)	2.79	(1.29)	2.81	(1.27)	2.61	(1.15)	2.78	(1.33)
Love	2.73	(1.24)	2.59	(1.33)	2.48	(1.12)	3.15	(1.39)	3.02	(1.18)	2.85	(1.19)
Wish to disclose personal issues	2.50	(1.04)	2.15	(1.19)	2.33	(0.96)	2.93	(1.26)	2.92	(1.13)	2.65	(1.12)
Wish for validation	2.96	(1.12)	2.67	(1.21)	2.97	(1.24)	3.29	(1.29)	3.59	(1.17)	3.18	(1.11)
Warmth and physical closeness	2.23	(1.18)	2.22	(1.40)	2.27	(1.13)	2.93	(1.33)	2.71	(1.35)	2.48	(1.26)
Brotherhood	3.39	(1.39)	3.24	(1.27)	3.06	(1.03)	3.92	(1.13)	3.98	(1.15)	3.80	(1.38)
Sense of social belonging	3.58	(1.23)	3.33	(1.27)	3.18	(1.18)	3.91	(1.15)	3.80	(1.19)	3.80	(1.24)

Table 3. Univariate Analyses of Unit Social Cohesion Items by Unit Type

Unit Social Cohesion Items	Noncombat Unit Mean (Sd)	Combat Unit Mean (Sd)	F Value (df = 1, 374)
Enjoying doing things together	3.48 (1.09)	3.83 (1.12)	2.71*
Desire to be with them	3.13 (1.11)	3.38 (1.11)	1.79
Admiration	3.08 (1.07)	3.14 (1.18)	2.63*
Intimacy	2.24 (1.18)	2.65 (1.29)	3.52*
Envy	2.05 (1.10)	2.23 (1.17)	1.10
Chemistry and shared language	3.25 (1.04)	3.66 (1.10)	3.65*
Competitiveness	2.51 (1.12)	2.75 (1.25)	1.46
Love	2.65 (1.24)	3.05 (1.30)	2.43*
Wish to disclose personal issues	2.39 (1.07)	2.87 (1.20)	4.42*
Wish for validation	2.89 (1.16)	3.34 (1.23)	3.77*
Warmth and physical closeness	2.24 (1.22)	2.78 (1.33)	4.21*
Brotherhood	3.30 (1.31)	3.91 (1.19)	5.02*
Sense of social belonging	3.45 (1.24)	3.86 (1.17)	2.92*

* = $p < 0.05$.

noncombat gay soldiers (Shilo et al., 2006). This suggests that stronger norms of hegemonic masculinity in combat units may in fact deter gay soldiers from disclosing their identity in such settings. At the same time, the higher levels of emotional closeness and intimacy reported among combat soldiers (see below) could actually promote self-disclosure by unit members, including disclosure of one's sexuality. Communication of personal information is associated with and facilitated by the experience of high levels of emotions (Herek, 1996b) and intimacy (Sharabany, 1994). It is thus possible that these two conflicting vectors cancel each other out in combat units and account for the similar frequencies in knowledge of gay peers compared to noncombat units. Further research is needed to disentangle these factors and test their independent influences.

One should bear in mind, however, that asking unit members to make inferences about the presence of gay peers is not a direct measure of active disclosure by gay soldiers. Even when only one soldier discloses his or her sexual orientation, this knowledge is likely to spread throughout the unit. This is corroborated by a survey of U.S. military personnel, which found that over half (55%) of respondents who knew a gay or lesbian peer stated that his or her sexual orientation was widely known to others (Zogby et al., 2006).

More crucial for the debate is our second hypothesis, which tested the social cohesion thesis underlying DADT, namely, that knowledge of gay peers would be associated with decreased levels of unit social cohesion. Contrary to this prediction, we found that acknowledging the presence (or possibility of such presence) of gay peers had no reliable association with unit social cohesion. This held true for both combat and noncombat soldiers, as is evident from the nonsignificant interaction factor.

Conversely, unit social cohesion was higher in combat compared with noncombat units. This may demonstrate the emphasis on cohesion in IDF combat units, where strong emotional bonds between unit members, and the sense of mutual responsibility that stem from them, are considered an indispensible part of the combat doctrine (Henderson, 1985; Kellet, 1982).

This overall difference between combat and noncombat units held true for 10 out of the 13 probed items. The two negative emotions in the inventory, envy and competitiveness, did not differentiate between unit types. It is possible that respondents were less willing to report such undesirable emotions towards their close peers, rendering these items a less sensitive measurement of unit social cohesion. The additional nonsignificant item, "desire to be with them," may be undesirable for a more specific reason, as it taps the very paradox of homosocial desire. The Hebrew word used in the survey for desire ("hishtokekut") connotes a stronger, more pressing emotion falling

between "desire," "yearning," and "passion." It is possible that because this wording carried for some respondents explicitly erotic overtones, it also proved to be a less sensitive item.

Contrary to these differences between combat and noncombat units on social cohesion, knowledge of gay peers was insubstantially related to social cohesion. Diverging from statistical common practice, we conducted ad hoc analyses of the univariate effects of this factor on individual items of the social cohesion inventory and found that in 12 out of the 13 items univariate differences were insignificant. Only "admiration" showed a significant difference by knowledge groups. However, given the nonsignificant multivariate effect, and a $\alpha = 0.05$ level, the chance for a single Type I error is 65%, this cannot be considered as a reliable finding and requires further exploration.

While a conclusion that H_0 is supported is a statistical impossibility, given the inability to rule out methodological faults, various indicators in the current study argue against this likelihood. Among these are the considerable sample size employed and the sensitivity of the social cohesion measure, which was sufficient to detect predictable differences by unit type. Moreover, by focusing on the interpersonal sphere rather than on more instrumental aspects of unit cohesion, this measure is particularly well-suited for testing the predictions stemming from DADT. As presented in the introduction, objections of military officials to gay visibility embody the apprehensions of homosocial desire: the revelation that combat male bonding in and of itself entails gestures that could be interpreted as homoerotic (Gross, 2000; Kaplan, 2003). By incorporating homosocial emotions such as intimacy and desire into the measure of unit social cohesion, the present research design directly addresses the arguments raised by proponents of DADT.

Taken together, these various considerations strengthen the validity of our findings and call into question the assumption that openly gay service reduces social cohesion and creates an "unacceptable risk" (U.S. Code, 1993). At a broader theoretical level, these considerations underscore the need to integrate the homosocial perspective into studies of social cohesion in the military as well as into studies of male relations more generally. Despite the growing attention to male homosocial emotions from an ethnographic perspective (Gutmann, 1997), there has been little study of these emotions from a systematic empirical approach, as introduced in the present research strategy.

These issues notwithstanding, the current study has several important limitations. First, a single item was used to probe respondents' knowledge of a gay peer. By avoiding elaborated probing of gay issues, we evaded the potential biases that plagued previous studies. The high return rate of close to 80% demonstrates the utility of this approach, but at a cost of collecting relatively unsophisticated data on a key research variable.

Second, the study employed a convenience sample of male IDF soldiers and was designed specifically to oversample soldiers from combat units. Additionally, our sample differed on self-labeled religiosity from the Israeli norm, with relatively small number of self-labeled religious and traditional respondents. Unfortunately, as the IDF does not supply comparable demographic information on soldiers' religiosity, there is no way of ascertaining the extent that our sample is representative of military personnel in this respect. These factors limit the generalizability of our findings, as is the case in most surveys of military personnel, which by and large employ convenience samples. Regardless, future studies on gay integration should include more detailed queries into this and related sociodemographic variables.

Finally, the reported connection between combat soldiers and higher levels of social cohesion compared to noncombat soldiers should not be interpreted as implying a clear-cut causal relationship. Although a reasonable inference is that service in combat units reinforces bonds between unit peers, it is also conceivable, for instance, that soldiers who feel stronger bonds toward their peers in the first place are more likely to endure the hardships of combat and remain in frontline units over time.

Having examined our main findings and their theoretical implications, we turn to discuss how this case study of the Israeli military may inform the recent debate over DADT in the U.S. context.

First, following Levy (2007b), it is important to note structural differences in the status of Israeli and American militaries within their host societies. In Israel, the political tradition endorses an inclusionary recruitment policy and the military consequently adopted a nonexclusionary, liberal policy toward gay personnel. Moreover, the IDF's high social standing within Israeli society enabled this change to be carried out with little opposition from conservative segments in society. In contrast, because American political culture emphasizes individual freedom, attitudes towards military service are more ambivalent, and the U.S. military holds lower status in society. In turn, it enjoys greater autonomy in shaping its policies according to conservative masculine values and lags behind the civilian sphere in addressing gay rights (Levy, 2007b).

However, despite these structural differences in the social position of both militaries and their respective stated policies on gay integration, ground-level social realities hold some telling similarities. As discussed in the introduction, the IDF's liberal policy change in 1993 was scarcely disseminated by military authorities, and most gay and straight IDF personnel are not even aware of the new guidelines (Kaplan, 2003; Shilo et al. 2006). Moreover, because of limited separation between the military and the civilian sphere, negative attitudes toward gays in wider Israeli society greatly affect cultural norms within military units. Thus, the actual experience of gay and straight soldiers on the ground in the Israeli military may prove to be closer to the American case than one would expect given the difference in policies and structure.

Indeed, the overall percentage of IDF personnel who reported knowing a gay or lesbian soldier in their unit was 18%, and similar rates have been found under the exclusionary policy of DADT, with 20% of respondents in Bicknell's (2000) survey of naval personnel and 23% of respondents in the Zogby survey (Zogby et al., 2006) of service members returning from active deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan reporting they knew a gay or lesbian peer. Although these findings are not directly comparable, several potential implications may be entertained. First, despite DADT, some gay soldiers in the U.S. military consistently came out to their peers and remained in service. Second, despite the difference in military policies, in both militaries soldiers are not asked about their sexual orientation and apparently for the most part do not disclose it. Rather, both in the U.S. and Israeli military, gay soldiers reveal their sexual orientation only when and where they feel safe doing so. Self-disclosure has much more to do with soldiers' personal considerations, their social position in the unit, and its particular cultural atmosphere than with official policy statements (Belkin & Levitt, 2001; Frank, 2009; Kaplan, 2003). Ultimately, what emerges from this comparison is the possibility that implementation of military policies is often only loosely coupled with organizational practices.

It should be further noted that the whole framing of sexual orientation by DADT as a dichotomous situation, differentiating between "telling" and "not telling," has only limited relevance to the realities of military life. A closer look at the Zogby survey, conducted under the restrictions of DADT, reveals that respondents who reported knowing for certain of gay or lesbian individuals in their unit often acquired this information not directly by being "told" but instead deduced it from the behavior of supposedly gay soldiers, such as their manner of speech, appearance, or social activities (Zogby et al., 2006). Although we did not include such detailed probing (in order to avoid the biases found in previous studies), the fact that 26% of our respondents answered "possibly" to knowledge of gay peers may point to a similar phenomenon in this case and break down the problematic dichotomy of "telling" and "not telling." However, because the social cohesion thesis underlying DADT is ultimately concerned only with the impact that gay visibility may have on other unit members, actual methods of disclosure by gay soldiers are less pertinent to this question.

Finally, another difference between the two militaries may reinforce the relevance of our findings to the debate surrounding DADT and its repeal. In the Israeli military combat soldiers are assigned to organic units throughout their term of service with an explicit intention and demonstrated outcome of promoting strong interpersonal ties and mutual affection between unit members (Ben-Ari, 1998; Henderson, 1985). In the U.S. military, in contrast, because of the prevailing practice of

individual personnel replacement, the combat unit as a social group does not constitute such a strong source of identification for its members (Henderson, 1985; Kier, 1998). Therefore, if knowledge of gay peers is not reliably related to decreased social cohesion in Israeli close-knit combat units, as the present findings suggest, there is even less reason to assume that under the possibly less cohesive ties in U.S. combat units such interference to social cohesion would occur.

Although hypotheses can never be conclusively rejected (resulting in the often lamented "file-drawer" bias of unpublished null results), we believe that in light of the theoretical and methodological considerations presented above, our findings inform the ongoing debate around DADT and its repeal and call into question the concern for unit social cohesion once gay soldiers are allowed to serve openly. In addition, our analysis underscores the utility of incorporating a homosocial perspective into studies of male relations.

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