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Perceived Sexual-Orientation-Based Harassment in Military and Civilian Contexts

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The Office of the Inspector General's (2000) Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue Survey was the Department of Defense's first assessment of perceived sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. For the study presented here, a parallel survey was developed to collect comparable data from a civilian sample. Responses of 196 civilian participants were compared to that of 200 military participants selected randomly from the Department of Defense sample. In each group, the most commonly reported type of harassment was offensive speech, and most reported incidents involved men as perpetrators and as targets. Both civilian and military groups perceived fairly low levels of all 8 types of sexual-orientation-based harassment, but civilians reported higher levels of offensive speech and hostile gestures than did military respondents. On the other hand, larger percentages of military than civilian respondents reported that a senior person perpetrated and witnessed the harassment. In both groups, approximately one third of participants who indicated that a senior person witnessed the incident also reported that the senior person attempted to stop it. Findings are interpreted in light of contextual differences between military and civilian groups that might shape reports of sexual-orientation-based harassment. Recommendations are made for refining assessment of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military.

Lesbian and gay persons have had a long history of serving in the armed forces (Burrelli, 1994). Military policies and practices, however, have barred these individuals from serving openly, and harassment and violence against lesbian and gay service members has been a source of concern (Burrelli, 1994; Herek, 1993b).

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Prior to World War I, no official policy regarding homosexuality existed, but sodomy, defined as anal or oral sex between men, was viewed as a criminal offense and served as the basis for eliminating from service those suspected of engaging in homosexual behavior (Herek, 1993b). During the 1940s, the medical view of homosexuality as a mental disorder was used as a rationale for screening out lesbian and gay persons from service (Burrelli, 1994; Herek, 1993b). Later, in 1982, the policy that homosexuality is incompatible with military service was adopted across service branches based on the notion that

> the presence of such members adversely affects the ability of the military services to maintain discipline, good order, and morale; to foster mutual trust and confidence among service members; to ensure the integrity of the system of rank and command; to facilitate assignment and worldwide deployment of service members who frequently must live and work under close conditions affording minimal privacy; to recruit and retain members of the Military Services; to maintain the public acceptability of military service; and to prevent breaches of security. (General Accounting Office, 1992, p. 11)

With adoption of this policy, approximately 17,000 women and men were discharged between 1980 and 1990 under the separation category of homosexuality (Herek, 1993b). These discharges were targeted disproportionately toward women. White women constituted 6.4% of the military but 20.2% of those discharged for homosexuality (Herek, 1993b). The policy was not supported universally, however, and protest and pressure against the policy came from a variety of sources. For example, some lesbian and gay military personnel legally challenged their discharges; legislation against the policy was introduced in the House and Senate; some colleges and universities banned military recruiters because of the policy; the American Psychological Association (APA) condemned the policy; and Bill Clinton, when still a presidential candidate, promised a reversal of the policy (Herek, 1993b).

In light of such pressures to discontinue barring persons from military service solely based on homosexual orientation and to curb harassment and violence against lesbian and gay persons in the military, the Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue policy was enacted as law in 1993. The Secretary of Defense (1993) asserted that "sexual orientation is considered a personal and private matter, and homosexual orientation is not a bar to service entry or continued service unless manifested by homosexual conduct" (p. 1). At the same time, the Secretary of Defense reiterated that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service because it interferes with the factors critical to combat effectiveness, including unit morale, unit cohesion and individual privacy" (p. 1).

As a compromise between these two positions, the new law purported to judge an individual's suitability for service based on conduct, and homosexual conduct

was considered grounds for separation from the military. In describing Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, the Secretary of Defense (1993) directed that (a) applicants for military service will not be asked to reveal their sexual orientation, (b) inquiries or investigations solely to determine a member's sexual orientation will not be initiated, but inquiries/investigations can 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" (p. 2).

In addition, Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue included a directive explicitly banning harassment of lesbian and gay military personnel. This directive was highlighted in 1999 with the addition of "Don't Harass" and the Secretary of Defense's proposal of a 13-point Anti-Harassment Action Plan to combat sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military (Terman, 2004). This action plan equated the military's stance on sexual-orientation-based harassment to its strong stance against sexual or racial harassment.

Some scholars have challenged the basis for Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue (e.g., Belkin, 2003; Herek, 1993b; Herek, Jobe, & Carney, 1996; Terman, 2004) and argued that it neither represents a shift from the previous policy nor protects lesbian and gay military personnel from harassment or scrutiny (Herek, 1993b). Furthermore, the APA Task Force on Sexual Orientation and Military Service (which includes representatives from APA's Division 19) characterized Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue as harmful and, in a recent resolution, stated that the task force "recognizes and abhors the many detrimental effects that the law has had on individual service members, the military, and American society" (Taylor, 2004, p. 12). On the other hand, other scholars have asserted that the ban on homosexual conduct is necessary for preserving unit cohesion and heterosexual privacy (Moskos, 1993; Ray, 1993; Wells-Petry, 1993).

In addition to ongoing debate about the necessity and utility of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, the success of its translation into practices that curb sexual-orientation-based harassment has been unclear. Anecdotal reports since the adoption of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue suggest that sexual-orientation-based harassment continues to exist in the military. Such reports range from derogatory terms against lesbian and gay persons used in military training programs to incidents of severe violence, such as the 1999 murder of Barry Winchell, a soldier who was believed to be gay (Servicemembers Legal Defense Network [SLDN], n.d.). These anecdotal reports raise questions about the effectiveness of efforts to curb sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. Until recently, however, the military had not conducted a systematic assessment of such harassment.

In 2000, at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of Defense's (DoD's) Office of the Inspector General (OIG; 2000) initiated the first sur-

vey of the military environment with respect to the homosexual conduct law. This survey included the first DoD assessment of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. More specifically, a series of questions in the survey assessed the extent to which respondents were aware of sexual-orientation-based harassment in their installation or ship and the extent to which they had witnessed or experienced various harassment incidents that they attributed to the perceived homosexuality of the target. Approximately 80% of respondents reported having heard offensive speech, derogatory names, jokes, or remarks about homosexuals during the past 12 months; 37% reported having witnessed or experienced, at least once or twice, a harassment incident that they attributed to the perceived homosexuality of the target (OIG, 2000).

These data begin to provide some empirical evidence of the rates of perceived sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. Comparing these rates to those in the civilian population might provide some context for interpreting the military's success in curbing sexual-orientation-based harassment. More specifically, military sexual-orientation-based harassment rates that are lower than civilian rates support the success of the military in curbing sexual-orientation-based harassment, whereas military rates that are similar to or higher than civilian rates challenge such success. Comparing DoD data to existing data from civilian samples is complicated, however, by the fact that social science studies with civilian samples typically ask potential targets of harassment to report the extent to which they have experienced harassment (e.g., Berrill, 1992; D'Augelli, 1992; Herek, 1993a; Otis & Skinner, 1996) or ask potential perpetrators of harassment to report the extent to which they have engaged in harassment behaviors (e.g., Franklin, 2000; Rey & Reed, 1997). On the other hand, the DoD survey assessed the extent to which military personnel witnessed or experienced harassment directed toward another service member who was perceived to be homosexual. Thus, extant data on rates of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the civilian population are not directly comparable to the rates gathered from the DoD survey, because the DoD survey focuses on observers' perspectives, whereas studies with civilian samples have assessed the perspectives of the targets or perpetrators.

To address this gap and provide some context for interpreting the DoD's data on sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military, a survey parallel to the DoD survey was developed for this study to collect comparable data from a civilian sample. The purposes of this study were to use comparable civilian data to (a) provide descriptive information about reports of perceived sexual-orientation-based harassment in military and civilian samples, (b) compare the rates of such reports across samples, and (c) provide descriptive information about some of the characteristics of harassment incidents across military and civilian samples. Given the lack of empirical data on sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military as compared to that in the civilian population, the aims of this study's comparisons are to provide groundwork needed to forge a path for more sophisticated future investigations and to highlight potential areas for future scholarship.

METHOD

Participants

Military sample. Between January 24 and February 11, 2000, the DoD surveyed active duty service members from 38 randomly selected installations, Navy ships, and submarines worldwide (OIG, 2000). Data were collected from 71,570 respondents (84% male, 16% female; 85% enlisted, 15% officers). The DoD did not collect any demographic information, beyond gender, from the sample. For the purposes of these analyses, 200 participants (100 women and 100 men) from the DoD sample were selected randomly (using SPSS) to create a sample size comparable to that for the civilian sample. Despite the fact that men composed the majority of the DoD's sample, equal numbers of women and men were selected for the study so that potential gender effects could be explored and included in analyses if necessary. To ensure that randomly selected military respondents' data were representative of the complete military sample, scores on the questions of interest for selected military women and men were compared to scores of women and men who were not selected. Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs; one for women and one for men) indicated no statistically significant differences between responses of selected and nonselected military women and men, indicating that data for the randomly selected military participants were representative of data from the larger sample of military women and men.

Civilian sample. Students from required English courses at a north central Florida community college were asked to participate in a 5- to 10-min anonymous survey. Of the 208 students asked to participate in the study, 2 were in the military and so could not participate; 10 chose not to participate; and 196, or 94% (102 men, 83 women, and 11 persons who did not report gender), volunteered to participate. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 44 with an average age of 20.27 years ($SD = 4.92$, $Mdn = 19$). Almost all of the participants had completed (87%) or were in the process of completing (6%) high school. An additional 7% had completed a college degree. Most participants were in their 1st year (77%) or 2nd year (19%) of college and worked part time (58%). The majority of the sample identified as White (73%), with smaller percentages identifying as African American/Black (7%), Hispanic/Latino (10%), Asian American (4%), American Indian/Native American (2%), and multiracial or other (5%). With regard to social class, 49% identified as middle class, 26% as upper middle class, 21% as working class, 3% as lower class, and less than 2% as upper class. Participants indicated their sexual orientation on a 5-point Likert-type scale with ratings of 1 (*exclusively heterosexual*), 2 (*mostly heterosexual*), 3 (*bisexual*), 4 (*mostly homosexual*), and 5 (*exclusively homosexual*); most participants identified as exclusively (88%) or mostly (5%) heterosexual, with smaller percentages identifying as bisexual (4%), mostly homosexual (1%), or exclusively homosexual (2%). Finally, participants were asked

to report how many lesbian or gay persons they had known in their lifetime. On average, participants reported having known between 7 and 8 lesbian or gay persons ($M = 7.46$, $SD = 9.72$, $Mdn = 5.00$).

The demographic characteristics of the civilian sample could not be compared directly to that of the DoD sample because demographic information was not collected in the DoD survey. In lieu of such data, the DoD's (n.d.) description of social representation among active duty personnel (who composed most of the DoD's sample) can provide a context for judging subjectively the comparability of the civilian and DoD samples. The DoD report on social representation in the military (DoD, n.d.) for the 2000 fiscal year (when military data for this study were collected) indicated that almost half of the active duty enlisted force were in their late teens or early twenties; over 90% had a high school degree; most were from the southern region of the United States; and most were White, with smaller percentages of African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, and other racial/ethnic groups. These characteristics were similar to this study's civilian participants: Most were young and White, most had a high school degree, and all resided in the South.

Instruments

DoD survey. The DoD's Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue Survey was developed with technical assistance from the Defense Manpower Data Center to assess "the occurrence of offensive speech and of events or behaviors considered to be harassment based on perceived homosexuality; the tolerance of such speech, events, and behaviors; and knowledge of the Policy" (OIG, 2000, p. 19). The survey was pilot tested with participants from one Army and one Navy installation. Comments of pilot study participants were incorporated into revisions of the survey.

Frequency of perceived sexual-orientation-based harassment was assessed with the question, "How often during the past 12 months have you witnessed or experienced event(s)/behavior(s) involving military personnel, on or off duty, who harassed another military person(s) because of perceived homosexuality?" (from 1 [*never*] to 5 [*very often*]). These instructions were followed by eight items that assessed specific types of harassment: offensive speech, offensive/hostile gestures, threats/intimidation, graffiti, vandalism, physical assault, limitation/denial of training or career opportunities, and unfair disciplinary actions. A series of additional questions asked participants to provide details about a particular incident that they considered "most significant." More specifically, participants responded to questions about the types of harassment that characterized the incident, gender of the target, gender of the perpetrator, and the role and response of senior personnel in the harassment incident.

Civilian survey. Items of interest from the DoD survey were modified to be applicable to a civilian population. For example, the item asking whether partici-

pants had experienced or witnessed harassment of another "military person" was modified to ask about harassment of another "person." Items asking about the role of a senior person, supervisor, or unit commander were modified to ask about the role of "someone in a position of authority," such as a boss, supervisor, or teacher. A demographic questionnaire that assessed personal characteristics such as age, gender, social class, and sexual orientation was also included in the civilian survey. Three undergraduate students reviewed the modified survey for clarity and understandability and raised no concerns about the survey. In addition, two persons, one scholar with expertise on issues of sexual orientation in the military and one who was an advanced graduate student and a major (select) in the Air Force, reviewed the survey and indicated that it was clear and paralleled the DoD survey. One of these reviewers suggested a few wording modifications to the demographic questionnaire for added clarity, and these changes were implemented.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Before comparing the rates of perceived harassment across groups, potential effects of gender (the only demographic variable assessed in the DoD survey) were explored. More specifically, a MANOVA (with the eight types of harassment as the dependent variables) indicated no significant gender main effect or Gender × Group (i.e., military vs. civilian) interaction effects. These results suggested that women's and men's reports of harassment were similar within and across groups. The similarly of women's and men's reports in the study presented here was consistent with Bowling, Firestone, and Harris's (2005) findings that differences between women's and men's reports of harassment incidents were negligible in the entire DoD sample. Thus, data from women and men in this study did not need to be examined separately.

Table 1 summarizes the perceived frequency of the eight types of harassment for military and civilian groups. In both samples, fairly large portions of participants reported never experiencing or witnessing most of the types of harassment assessed. Nevertheless, the most frequently reported types of harassment in both civilian and military samples were offensive speech followed by offensive or hostile gestures.

Analyses of Group Differences

To compare rates of perceived harassment across groups, a one-way MANOVA was conducted with responses to the eight harassment items as dependent variables and group (i.e., military and civilian) as the independent variable. As shown

TABLE 1
Percentage of Military and Civilian Respondents Reporting Specific Types of Harassment

Item Content	*Never* %	*Once/Twice* %	*Sometimes* %	*Often* %	*Very Often* %
1. Offensive speech					
Military	64	18	11	5	3
Civilian	32	26	22	16	5
2. Offensive/hostile gestures					
Military	80	11	8	1	1
Civilian	52	26	17	5	0
3. Threats/intimidation					
Military	88	6	3	2	1
Civilian	75	15	7	3	0.5
4. Graffiti					
Military	89	7	2	2	1
Civilian	76	16	4	4	0.5
5. Vandalism					
Military	94	3	2	0.5	0.5
Civilian	86	11	3	1	0
6. Physical assault					
Military	94	3	2	0.5	1
Civilian	86	11	2	0.5	0.5
7. Limiting/denying training or career opportunities					
Military	94	3	1	1	1
Civilian	87	10	3	0	0.5
8. Unfair disciplinary actions					
Military	93	5	2	1	0.5
Civilian	88	9	2	2	0

Note. For each type of harassment, total percentages for each group may not equal 100 due to rounding.

in Table 2, for both groups average rates of perceived harassment for all types of harassment were fairly low. Nevertheless, a significant but small group effect, $F(8, 374) = 5.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, emerged, indicating that civilian versus military status accounted for approximately 10% of the variability in the set of perceived harassment incidents. Follow-up univariate analyses of variance were conducted to identify on which types of harassment the groups differed. Alpha was adjusted to .006 (i.e., .05/8 analyses) to control for Type I error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Results indicated that civilian participants reported higher levels of perceived offensive speech, $F(1, 381) = 38.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, and offensive or hostile gestures, $F(1, 381) = 21.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, than did military participants. Civilian and military participants' reports of all other types of harassment, however, were not significantly different (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
Military and Civilian Comparisons and Average Ratings of Perceived Reported Harassment

	Military		*Civilian*			
Type of Harassment	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	$F(1, 381)$	*Effect Size* (η_p^2)
Offensive speech	1.63	1.00	2.34	1.23	38.58*	.09
Offensive/hostile gestures	1.33	0.75	1.72	0.89	21.58*	.05
Threats/intimidation	1.20	0.65	1.38	0.76	6.22	.02
Graffiti	1.19	0.66	1.34	0.75	3.96	.01
Vandalism	1.10	0.46	1.17	0.49	2.34	<.01
Physical assault	1.12	0.54	1.17	0.51	0.82	<.01
Limit/deny opportunity	1.11	0.52	1.17	0.51	1.47	<.01
Unfair discipline	1.12	0.50	1.17	0.52	0.87	<.01

Note. Due to missing data, sample sizes for these means were 196 and 187 for military and civilian samples, respectively.
$^*p < .006$.

Characteristics of Perceived Harassment Incidents

Participants who reported perceiving at least one of the eight types of harassment (i.e., did not respond "never" to all harassment incidents) were asked to describe the single harassment incident that they considered "most significant." Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of these incidents for the military and civilian samples. Given that sample sizes for some of these comparisons are very small, percentages and ratios are reported to highlight number of respondents for each comparison. In the military and civilian group, most participants who responded to these items reported that the incident involved offensive speech (80% [57 of 71] of military and 90% [121 of 134] of civilian respondents), and about one third reported that the event involved offensive or hostile gestures (34% [25 of 73] of military and 36% [47 of 131] of civilian respondents). In both groups, a majority of participants reported that the harasser was a man (73% [52 of 71] of military and 78% [103 of 132] of civilian respondents) and the target of the harassment was a man (64% [45 of 70] of military and 78% [103 of 132] of civilian respondents).

With regard to the role of a senior person, larger percentages of military than civilian participants reported that a senior person (a) perpetrated the harassment and (b) witnessed the harassment. More specifically, 7% (9 of 127) of civilian respondents reported that a supervisor, teacher, or other person of authority perpetrated the harassment incident, whereas 15% (11 of 71) of military respondents reported that an immediate supervisor and/or unit commander perpetrated the harassment. Similarly, 9% (11 of 129) of civilian participants compared to 25% (18 of 72) of military respondents reported that a senior person witnessed the harassment inci-

TABLE 3
Characteristics of the Single Incident That Respondents Considered Most Significant

	Military		Civilian	
	%	Ratio	%	Ratio
Type of harassment				
Offensive speech	80	57/71	90	121/134
Offensive/hostile gestures	34	25/73	36	47/131
Threats/intimidation	19	14/72	22	29/131
Graffiti	15	11/72	10	13/131
Vandalism	11	8/71	12	16/131
Physical assault	13	9/70	9	12/131
Limiting/denying training or career opportunities	11	8/72	8	11/131
Unfair disciplinary actions	10	7/72	8	10/130
Role of senior person				
Perpetrated by senior person	15	11/71	7	9/127
Witnessed by senior person				
Yes	25	18/72	9	11/129
No	51	37/72	69	89/129
Don't Know	24	17/72	22	29/129
If witnessed, senior person attempted to stop harassment	35	7/20	31	8/26
Gender of target				
Male	64	45/70	78	103/132
Female	19	13/70	11	15/132
Some male, some female	17	12/70	11	14/132
Gender of harasser				
Male	73	52/71	78	103/132
Female	8	6/71	3	4/132
Some male, some female	18	13/71	19	25/132

Note. With the exception of the question asking whether a senior person had witnessed the event, response options for all items were *yes* or *no,* and percentages in the table reflect *yes* responses.

dent, 69% (89 of 129) of civilian and 51% (37 of 72) of military respondents reported that a senior person did not witness the incident, and 22% (29 of 129) of civilian and 24% (17 of 72) of military respondents reported that they did not know whether a senior person witnessed the incident. On the other hand, among respondents who reported that a senior person witnessed the harassment, similarly low percentages of civilian (31% [8 of 26]) and military (35% [7 of 20]) participants reported that the senior person attempted to stop the harassment.

Exploratory Analyses

A series of exploratory analyses were conducted to examine the extent to which characteristics of the respondents were related to levels of perceived sexual-orien-

tation-based harassment. These analyses could be conducted only with the civilian sample given that no demographic data, other than gender, were collected in the DoD survey. A MANOVA indicated no significant difference between White and non-White civilian participants' reports on the set of eight types of harassment (specific racial/ethnic minority groups were not compared due to small sample sizes). Correlational analyses revealed no significant relations between reports of the eight types of harassment and age, year in college, or social class. On the other hand, participants' level of education, sexual orientation, and level of contact with lesbian or gay persons were correlated significantly with reports of one or more types of harassment. More specifically, participants' level of education was related positively with reports of limitation/denial of training or career opportunities (r = .18, $p < .05$). Furthermore, respondents' sexual orientation (reported on a Kinsey scale from 1 [*exclusively lesbian/gay*] to 5 [*exclusively heterosexual*]) was correlated significantly and negatively to levels of perceived harassment on seven of the eight types of harassment (all but graffiti). The closer that participants identified with the exclusively heterosexual end of the sexual orientation continuum, the less they perceived and reported incidents involving offensive speech ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$), offensive/hostile gestures ($r = -.37$, $p < .001$), threats ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$), vandalism ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$), physical assault ($r = -.21$, $p < .01$), limitation/denial of training or career opportunities ($r = -.27$, $p < .001$), and unfair discipline ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$). Finally, the number of lesbian or gay persons that participants had known was related positively and significantly to perceived level of threats ($r = .23$, $p < .01$), vandalism ($r = .16$, $p < .05$), assault ($r = .16$, $p < .05$), and limitation/denial of training or career opportunities ($r = .44$, $p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

This study provided needed information about military and civilian respondents' reports of perceived sexual-orientation-based harassment. The findings of this study provide some context for interpreting the success of the military in reducing sexual-orientation-based harassment and point to the need for further assessment of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. In the following sections, similarities and differences between military and civilian respondents' reports of sexual-orientation-based harassment are described and followed by a discussion of considerations for future assessment and research.

Similarities and Differences Between Military and Civilian Respondents' Reports

The results of this study highlighted some similarities as well as differences between military and civilian respondents' reports of perceived sexual-orienta-

tion-based harassment. First, in both groups, the most commonly reported type of harassment was offensive speech. Furthermore, when respondents were asked to identify and describe a single incident that they considered most significant, large majorities of each group selected an incident that involved offensive speech. This finding is consistent with results of studies that focus on heterosexual persons who engage in antilesbian/antigay harassment (e.g., Franklin, 2000; Rey & Reed, 1997) or lesbian and gay persons who are targets of such harassment (e.g., Berrill, 1992; D'Augelli, 1992; Herek, 1993a; Otis & Skinner, 1996). In such studies, verbal abuse is consistently the most frequently reported type of harassment that is perpetrated or experienced. Collectively, these findings suggest that verbal harassment may be the most common manifestation of antilesbian/antigay harassment.

In addition, verbal harassment might be reported more frequently than other forms of sexual-orientation-based harassment because verbal harassment may be more closely attributable to sexual orientation. More specifically, offensive speech often involves derogatory names or epithets that signify clearly the motivation behind the speech. For example, calling someone "queer" clearly identifies the harassment as sexual orientation based. Thus, for military and civilian respondents, there is little attributional ambiguity about such offensive speech. Many competing explanations might exist, however, for less frequently reported incidents, such as limitation or denial of training or career opportunity (e.g., perhaps the person did not work hard enough). Thus, attributional clarity about offensive speech might explain, in part, why military and civilian respondents reported this type of harassment most frequently.

Another similarity between military and civilian respondents' reports was that the incident identified as most significant overwhelmingly involved men as perpetrators and as targets. These findings are consistent with the fact that men are the targets of most anecdotal reports of sexual-orientation-based harassment and violence in the military (SLDN, n.d.). Paradoxically, women are disproportionately the targets of homosexuality-related military discharges (Herek, 1993b; 1996; SLDN, n.d.). The overrepresentation of men in the military and the disproportionate discharge of women for perceived homosexuality together contribute to the fact that there are more men to be targeted for sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military than there are women.

In addition, in both military and civilian contexts, attributional ambiguity might play a role in the differential perception of women and men as targets of harassment. For example, targets and observers might interpret some of the harassment incidents directed toward women as sexual harassment. This competing attribution is less likely to be applied, however, when men are the targets of harassment. Indeed, focusing on the military context, Thomas and Thomas (1996) suggested that both women and gay men are likely to be targets of harassment because they "are not *real men* in the way that manhood has traditionally been defined" (p. 71). They argued, however, that lesbian persons are thought of primarily as women and so are

less likely than gay men to be harassed because of their sexual orientation. "The persecution of gay men in the military, on the other hand, has everything to do with their sexual orientation" (p. 71). Thus, it may be that respondents in the study presented here attributed at least some incidents of harassment of women to sexual harassment but most incidents of harassment of men to sexual-orientation-based harassment.

Overall rates of reported sexual-orientation-based harassment also were somewhat similar across military and civilian samples. Significant group differences emerged in only two of the eight types of harassment. Compared to military respondents, civilian respondents reported higher levels of offensive speech and hostile gestures. In each of these cases, however, the differences were fairly small, with group membership accounting for only 9% of the variability in reports of offensive speech and 5% of variability in reports of hostile gestures. The similarity between military and civilian respondents' reported rates of perceived sexual-orientation-based harassment begins to suggest limited success in reducing rates of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military to levels that are below that in civilian contexts. This is not to say, however, that present rates of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military are higher or lower than previous rates in the military. Longitudinal assessment of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military is needed to address whether such harassment is decreasing or increasing over time and whether potentially observed changes are related to changes in military policies and practices. It is important to keep in mind that reducing types of harassment with relatively low perceived base rates might be difficult. Efforts toward reducing such incidents are critical, however, given the severity of some of the types of harassment with low perceived base rates (e.g., physical assault). It is also important to examine the extent to which the perceived base rates reported in this study and the DoD report (OIG, 2000) reflect actual base rates.

Prior research on the role of organizational policies and practices in reducing harassment suggests that curbing sexual-orientation-based harassment requires moving beyond antiharassment policies to successfully translating those policies into practices that create an organizational culture that reduces harassment (e.g., Hunter Williams, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1999; Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995; Waldo, 1999). The military's approach to and success in addressing racial and sexual harassment point to some potentially fruitful areas for improving the success of the military in reducing sexual-orientation-based harassment. For example, in response to recent surveys, far larger proportions of military personnel reported having received training on racial (77%) and sexual (75%) harassment and discrimination than on sexual-orientation-based (43%) harassment (OIG, 2000; Terman, 2004). It is not surprising, then, that only 27% of military participants who *claimed they understood Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue to a large or very large extent* could answer correctly three questions about it (OIG, 2000). This evidence points

to the critical need for more systematic and effective training about Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue and the Don't Harass directive in the military.

Training must also be coupled with strict enforcement of the Don't Harass directive. Recent surveys of military personnel revealed that smaller percentages of respondents reported that action was taken against perpetrators of sexual-orientation-based harassment than against perpetrators of racial and sexual harassment (Terman, 2004). Furthermore, since the adoption of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, violations of Don't Tell, but not violations of Don't Ask, Don't Pursue, and Don't Harass, have been pursued vigorously and resulted in discharges of violators (Terman, 2004). Pursuit and punishment of violations of these other aspects of the law and related policies are likely to send the message that sexual-orientation-based harassment is unacceptable and ultimately might reduce the rates of such harassment in the military.

In addition to the general need for training and enforcement of Don't Harass, the current data point to the role of senior personnel as a potential area for further exploration and intervention. Senior personnel are charged with enforcing all military policies, including the Don't Harass directive. In addition, senior personnel serve a critical function in shaping organizational culture and are important role models of acceptable and unacceptable behavior for other personnel. In this study, however, larger proportions of military than civilian respondents reported that senior personnel perpetrated and witnessed sexual-orientation-based harassment. Furthermore, only one third of military participants who indicated that a senior person witnessed the harassment reported that the senior person attempted to stop the harassment. These data need to be interpreted cautiously due to low overall base rates. Nevertheless, reports of the military sample presented here warrant more comprehensive attention and efforts aimed to assess and eliminate senior personnel's role in perpetrating or being complacent about sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military.

An important caveat to the discussion of efforts to reduce sexual-orientation-based harassment is that the success of such efforts is complicated because they must exist in the context of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue. The context for the ban on sexual-orientation-based harassment is markedly different from that for military bans on gender and racial harassment. The latter bans exist in the context of explicit policies and accompanying procedures and cultures that formally forbid discrimination based on gender or race. On the other hand, efforts to reduce sexual-orientation-based harassment must exist in a context where discharge based on lesbian or gay behavior is formal military policy and law. Indeed, Terman (2004) suggested "Don't Ask, Don't Tell precludes meaningful enforcement of the ban on anti-gay harassment because it is legally incoherent to ban harassment alongside a policy of outright discrimination" (p. 4). Unfortunately, Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue creates a climate in which targets of sexual-orientation-based harassment might fear investigation and discharge if they report such

harassment. Barriers to reporting sexual-orientation-based harassment in turn hinder efforts to enforce antiharassment policies and track potential changes associated with the implementation of those policies.

Future Directions for Assessment of Sexual-Orientation-Based Harassment in the Military

Given the complexities of assessing sexual-orientation-based harassment in the context of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, efforts to improve assessment of such harassment are needed. More specifically, a number of contextual variables might influence military personnel's reports of sexual-orientation-based harassment, but some methodological modifications could enhance the quality of data available on sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. Each of these issues is discussed next.

Considering contextual influences. Interpreting data on the rates of perceived sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military and civilian populations must be informed by a number of differences between military and civilian contexts that might result in differential perceptions and reporting of sexual-orientation-based harassment across these contexts. First, disclosure of sexual orientation is forbidden and can have serious negative consequences under Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue. Thus, many lesbian and gay military personnel actively hide and deny their sexual orientation (Anderson & Smith, 1993). Consequently, military persons observing a harassment incident are far less likely to know the sexual orientation of the target of harassment than are civilian respondents. This difference can reduce the likelihood that military respondents will attribute the observed harassment incident to perceived homosexuality of the target. Indeed, the DoD evaluation report (OIG, 2000) indicated that 80% of respondents reported having heard offensive comments about homosexuals, but only 33% reported incidents involving verbal harassment that they attributed to perceived homosexuality of a target. Thus, greater ambiguity about targets' sexual orientation in military contexts than in civilian contexts might result in military respondents underreporting sexual-orientation-based harassment incidents.

Another important variable that can shape awareness of and sensitivity to detecting sexual-orientation-based harassment is knowledge about antilesbian/antigay prejudice (Barrett & Swim, 1998). Respondents who have personally experienced antilesbian/antigay prejudice or have vicarious experience (through friends, family member, or other sources) with such prejudice are likely to perceive a higher likelihood or base rate for the occurrence of sexual-orientation-based harassment than are respondents with less personal or vicarious experience with antilesbian/antigay prejudice. Those who perceive a high base rate for sexual-orientation-based prejudice in turn are more likely to detect such harassment when it occurs than are respon-

dents who have little experience with and perceive a low base rate for such harassment (Barrett & Swim, 1998). Indeed, in this study's civilian sample, greater identification with the exclusively heterosexual end of the sexual orientation continuum was correlated with lower levels of seven types of harassment (all but graffiti). Furthermore, among civilian respondents, knowing more lesbian and gay persons was correlated with reporting higher levels of harassment incidents involving threats, vandalism, assault, and especially limitation or denial of training or career opportunities.

Again, under Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, targets of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military—to avoid suspicion or accusations of being lesbian or gay—are less likely than those in the civilian population to share their experiences of harassment with military colleagues. In fact, Bicknell (2000) found that only 21% of naval officers and 4% of Marine officers reported that they knew a "homosexual service member," and 39% of Navy-enlisted personnel and 29% of Marine-enlisted personnel reported that they knew a "homosexual service member." By comparison, approximately 86% of civilian participants in this study reported knowing one or more lesbian or gay persons. As a result of such differential exposure to lesbian and gay persons who are targets of harassment, military personnel might perceive lower base rates for sexual-orientation-based harassment and so detect a fewer number of such harassment incidents when they occur. These different perceptions in turn might result in military respondents' underreporting sexual-orientation-based harassment incidents.

Related to the issue of exposure to lesbian and gay targets is the possibility that the prevalence of actual incidents and the detection and reporting of such incidents could be influenced by the proportion of lesbian and gay persons in the military compared to that in the civilian population (MacCoun, as cited in Belkin & Bateman, 2003). Recent estimates suggest, however, that the proportion of lesbian and gay persons in the military might be similar to that in the civilian population (Gates, 2004). If so, differences in base rates for potential targets might not present a problem in comparing the prevalence of actual incidents in military and civilian populations.

In addition to knowledge about sexual orientation of the target and about base rates for sexual-orientation-based harassment, another variable that might shape sensitivity to detecting sexual-orientation-based harassment is the extent to which such behavior is viewed as harassment (i.e., inappropriate and unacceptable). Stockdale, Visio, and Batra (1999) postulated that same gender harassment among men might not be perceived as serious and rather be viewed as a normative part of being socialized into male-dominated cultures. In fact, masculinity theorists have suggested that traditionally defined masculinity often involves asserting one's own power, heterosexuality, and manhood through distancing oneself from and degrading femininity and homosexuality (Eisler & Blalock, 1991; Kilianski, 2003; Levant et al., 1992; O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995). Karst (1991) argued that such

a definition of masculinity has been a part of military culture as well. Indeed, lesbian and gay veterans interviewed by Anderson and Smith (1993) recalled that military personnel referred to basic training recruits as "ladies," "latrine queens," and "punk panties," and drill instructors asked poor performers, "Are you gay or something?" Similarly, SLDN (n.d.) reported that a recent army training presentation included video clips that used derogatory labels to refer to and make fun of lesbian and gay service members. These reports and the fact that some military respondents in the study presented here perceived senior personnel as engaging in or being complacent about sexual-orientation-based harassment suggest that degradation of homosexuality may be normalized in military culture. To the extent that such normalization occurs, many incidents of sexual-orientation-based harassment are likely to go unrecognized as such and therefore may not be reported by military respondents.

Thus, ambiguity about the sexual orientation of targets, limited disclosure of sexual-orientation-based harassment experiences by those who have experienced them, and normalization of sexual-orientation-based harassment can limit military personnel's awareness of and sensitivity to detecting sexual-orientation-based harassment and ultimately contribute to the potential underreporting of sexual-orientation-based harassment by military respondents. Ironically, reducing the effects of these potential biases in reports of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military would require changing Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue and the military climate such that lesbian and gay persons in military contexts are at least as free and comfortable as lesbian and gay persons in civilian contexts to disclose their sexual orientation and their experiences of sexual-orientation-based harassment without fear of investigation, discharge, or further harassment. In lieu of changes in law and policy, the impact of the potential reporting biases described can be reduced or evaluated by implementing some methodological improvements in assessing sexual-orientation-based harassment.

Areas for methodological improvement. A number of methodological limitations inherent in the DoD survey can be addressed to improve the quality of data on sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. The most important limitation of the DoD survey was that it relied heavily on participants' subjective judgments about whether an incident (a) constituted harassment, and (b) was attributable to the perceived homosexuality of the target. The civilian data in the study presented here are also subject to this limitation, given that this study's survey for civilian participants had to parallel the DoD survey to yield comparable data. Thus, the DoD's reports of harassment, as well as data in this study, reflect in part the influence of variables such as the observer's awareness of the target's sexual orientation and the observer's knowledge about and sensitivity to detecting sexual-orientation-based harassment. Developing and using items that are specific and behaviorally descriptive (e.g., making fun of a man because he seems femi-

nine, calling someone a dyke) might reduce the influence of subjective judgment in future assessments of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military.

An established model for developing a psychometrically sound and more objective instrument to assess sexual-orientation-based harassment is the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ–DoD). The SEQ–DoD was developed by Fitzgerald and colleagues (Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999; Stark, Chernyshenko, Lancaster, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 2002) and adopted by the DoD to assess sexual harassment in the military. One strength of this instrument is that it is grounded in theoretical and empirical literature on sexual harassment. In addition, its items assess the occurrence of specific behaviors in order to reduce the impact of attributional ambiguity and respondents' willingness to label events as sexual harassment. For example, instead of asking respondents about their experiences of rape, the SEQ–DoD asks how often has a military person "had sex with you without your consent or against your will." This item substantially reduces the potential confounding effect of attributional ambiguity and subjectivity in making a judgment about whether an event constituted rape. Similar behavioral items could reduce the subjectivity of respondents' judgments about whether an event constituted sexual-orientation-based harassment. Finally, the structure, reliability, and validity of data produced by the SEQ–DoD have been examined systematically. The development of the SEQ–DoD could serve as a guide for developing a measure of sexual-orientation-based harassment that is theoretically grounded, reduces subjectivity of responses as much as possible, is subjected to rigorous psychometric evaluation and appropriate refinement, and is appropriate for use with a military population. Development and use of such an instrument would improve markedly the quality of data available about sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military.

Another limitation that must be considered when interpreting data from the DoD survey and this study is that these data reflect only events that are observable and attributed by the observer to perceived homosexuality of the target. It is important to acknowledge that the impact of the military climate may reach beyond observable harassment incidents. Although observable incidents are important to assess, many forms of harassment are not readily apparent to those who are not the targets of harassment. For example, Swim, Pearson, and Johnston (in press) found that a large proportion of antilesbian/antigay incidents reported by their lesbian and gay participants consisted of events that are difficult or impossible for others to observe. More specifically, 17% of the incidents included subtle behaviors such as receiving poor service or being excluded, overlooked, or ignored. Another 16% of incidents included situations in which the target was afraid of experiencing hostility and prejudice or feared being "outed." Persons who are not targets of such subtle behaviors or fears are unlikely to be aware of their occurrence. Thus, assessing subtle manifestations of harassment and exploring directly the experiences of the targets of harassment are needed to complement data gathered from the perspective of observers. To collect valid data from targets of sexual-orientation-based

harassment in the military, however, targets must be assured and believe that the responses they provide will not be used against them or others in any manner.

Finally, military participants' responses might be influenced by the desire to be "good soldiers" and portray a positive image of the military climate. In fact, the DoD information sheet provided to participants stated: "Information collected in this survey will be used to report perceptions of military personnel about the environment on military installations on the implementation of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue' policy" (OIG, 2000, p. 29). This description might subtly motivate participants who want to present their installation in a desirable manner to report that military policies have been effectively implemented and downplay the occurrence of sexual-orientation-based harassment. To address this possible bias, future assessments of sexual-orientation-based harassment could include assessment of socially desirable response patterns. The influence of social desirability could then be examined empirically and controlled in examining rates of reported sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military and in comparing those rates across time or with civilian rates. In addition, large-scale survey results could be coupled with more comprehensive but smaller scale studies in which nonmilitary personnel specifically trained to detect sexual-orientation-based harassment could document the frequency of such incidents in daily or weekly diary formats. Such "participant observers" have documented the frequency of various forms of prejudice-based events in social science research (e.g., Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001; Swim et al., in press) and could provide an important supplement to data gathered from targets of harassment and from military personnel in general.

Summary

The DoD's Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue Survey was an important first step in addressing the gap in empirical data about the rates of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. The study presented here provides some additional context for interpreting these data. Overall, the findings of this study point to the need for further efforts to curb sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. Furthermore, the limitations inherent in the DoD's survey methodology suggest the need for continued, more detailed, and more comprehensive assessments of sexual-orientation-based harassment in the military. Such efforts can provide important information about the impact, effectiveness, costs, and benefits of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue.

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