

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue”: Military Policy and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity

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ABSTRACT. This paper presents a description and analysis of military policy excluding lesbians and gay men. First, we discuss the current policy, review its official rationale, and outline the various criticisms that have been made against it. Next, we suggest an alternative framework for the policy’s persistence. Drawing on work in feminist theory, we argue that the military’s restrictions on the service of lesbians and gay men reflects an institutional and cultural privileging of a heterosexual masculine ideal. We conclude by speculating on the interests that lie behind the perpetuation of this ideal of soldiering.

In 1993, newly elected President Bill Clinton announced his intention to follow through on his promise to lift the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the U.S. military. A firestorm of controversy engulfed the President, who ultimately agreed to what he has described as an “honorable compromise,” his “don’t ask, don’t tell, don’t pursue” policy. Recently, however, the previous Penta-

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The authors would like to thank Suzanne Harper for her helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

gon policy has been struck down by a federal appeals court. While this court was clear that their decision did not apply to the new rules, many believe that the same grounds can be applied in challenging the new policy as well. Thus, while the fate of the military policy is still very much in the air, Clinton's plan took effect in February 1994.

One of the most paradoxical features of the debate which followed Clinton's announcement is that the performance of individual lesbian and gay soldiers was almost never raised as an issue by opponents of lifting the ban. In fact, almost no one disputes that gay men and lesbians have served in the military since its inception, often with distinction. A telling example is provided in a memo written by a Navy Fleet Commander in which he urges the exclusion of lesbians from the service and simultaneously describes them as "hard working, career-oriented, willing to put in long hours on the job and among the command's top performers" (quoted in Gross, 1990, p. 9). Even former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell acknowledges that gay and lesbian soldiers often have distinguished service records, but he continues to maintain that their presence in the military is detrimental to the accomplishment of its overall mission.

It is from this paradox that the work at hand begins. Given that the actual performance of real soldiers who have served in the military has not been an issue, it is important to understand the contours of this debate and identify which groups' interests are served by maintaining restrictions on the service of lesbians and gay men. In this paper, we will review the most common themes in the arguments of those who support restrictions on the participation of gays and lesbians in the military. After reviewing the arguments in support of the policy and the criticisms of them, we offer an alternative analysis. We contend that the military's resistance to the full participation of both women and gay men and lesbians reflects an institutional privileging of a certain type of soldier—the heterosexual male.

POLICIES OF EXCLUSION

The compromise agreed to by the Clinton administration and passed by Congress reads as follows:

Applicants for military service will no longer be asked or required to reveal if they are homosexual or bisexual. . . . Sexual orientation will not be a bar to service unless manifested by homosexual conduct. The military will discharge members who engage in homosexual conduct, which is defined as a homosexual act, a statement that the member is homosexual or bisexual, or a marriage or attempted marriage to someone of the same gender. (draft Department of Defense Policy, 7/19/93)

For the purposes of separation under this policy, the minimum which may be considered a homosexual act is “bodily contact between service members of the same sex that a reasonable person would understand to demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts (e.g., hand-holding or kissing in most circumstances) will be sufficient to initiate separation” (draft Department of Defense Policy, 7/19/93).

The new policy does contain some provisions to discourage “witchhunts” (mass investigations of homosexuality by the military, most commonly used in the discharge of women accused of lesbianism),¹ but does allow investigations of service members if there is any reason to suspect homosexual behavior.² The bill also includes a stipulation that would allow a future Defense Secretary to reinstate the practice of questioning recruits and service members about their sexual orientation, and provides for the discharge of a service member who openly acknowledges that he or she is a “person who engages in, attempts to engage in, has a propensity to engage in, or intends to engage in homosexual acts” (Senate Bill 1337, Section 546, Subsection F).

Though much has been made of the new policy’s focus on behavior, rather than orientation per se, in reality, Clinton’s policy actually represents little change from the rules it supersedes (Department of Defense Directive 1332.14, 1982, Part 1, Section H).³ Like the earlier policy, the Clinton plan would discharge men and women with homosexual “intent” and “desires,” thus implicitly defining the status of homosexuality as a dischargeable offense. Under the new rules, anyone who openly acknowledges their homosexuality

would be discharged, even if they had never engaged in homosexual conduct.

The exclusionary policy which has been in effect has been responsible for hundreds of discharges each year. Between 1980 and 1990, 16,919 servicemembers were discharged for homosexuality, an average of about 1,500 annually (General Accounting Office, 1992a,b; see also Shilts, 1993). A recent report by the General Accounting Office has estimated that the cost of the discharge policy is astronomical: \$28,226 for each enlisted troop and \$120,772 for each officer (recruiting and training costs only). For the year 1990 alone, these costs amount to some \$27 million dollars (GAO, 1992a,b). Despite this high discharge rate, these numbers are far below those which should obtain if *all* men and women who "engage in, desire to engage in, or intend to engage in homosexual acts" were separated from the military. Rarely does anyone proclaim that the policy is efficient in achieving its stated objectives.

Until the recent public furor over the topic, military officials had been reluctant to state their reasons for supporting the exclusion of lesbians and gay men, arguing only that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service." However, since the change in policy was proposed by the Clinton administration, official discourse in support of continuing restrictions on gays in the military has concentrated on two main lines of argument. The first group of objections to repealing the ban center around "prejudice-based" arguments, the second, around concern over sexual privacy.

In the context of what follows, it is important to remember that though arguments in support of the exclusionary policy apply in theory to both gay men and lesbians, most of the debate about the ban has concerned only men. For reasons we discuss more fully later in the paper, lesbians have been almost invisible in both official and popular discourse around this issue.

PREJUDICE-BASED ARGUMENTS

One of the most commonly articulated rationales for maintaining restrictions on the military service of gay men and lesbians concerns bias within the armed forces and in the public at large. The presence of homosexuals is perceived as a threat to effective indi-

vidual and unit performance because gay and lesbian soldiers will be targets for harassment by heterosexual soldiers and, if they are officers, will not command respect. Furthermore, the presence of homosexuals in the military is asserted to impair morale and teamwork, also due to prejudices held by other soldiers (Department of Defense, quoted in General Accounting Office, 1992a, p. 58; Sarbin & Karols, 1988, p. 28; Snyder & Nyberg, 1980; see also McDaniel, 1989). As a Marine Corps officer claimed:

Most people . . . loath (sic) homosexuals. Their contempt is easily recognizable in the form of derision and jokes. Homosexuals would be harassed, and discriminated against (in the military). There are real problems like . . . [the] morale and retention problems that would be caused by people leaving in disgust, and reduced effectiveness of homosexual officers and NCO's [non-commissioned officers] handling contemptuous subordinates. . . . Tolerating homosexuals in the armed forces is contrary to good order and discipline. (letter quoted in Sarbin & Karols, 1988, p. 28)

Prejudice in the larger society is also a rationale for supporting the ban: the military excludes gay men and lesbians because it does not want to offend the public at large, which views homosexuality negatively. Snyder and Nyberg sum up this line of reasoning:

In excluding homosexuals from military service, the armed forces are conforming to the views of a majority of Americans. Military leaders probably believe that permitting homosexuals to serve would result in less favorable public attitudes towards military institutions and military service. (1980, p. 74)

Echoing the official view, Snyder and Nyberg argue that the presence of acknowledged homosexuals could lead to a "perception of the military as a gay organization" (1980, p. 81), which would adversely affect the prestige of the military and hamper recruiting efforts.

In response to the "prejudice" arguments, critics have drawn on evidence demonstrating that gay men and lesbians have always served in the military, without creating significant breaches of

morale, teamwork, and discipline, or provoking widespread public rejection of the military—even when they have been open about their sexual orientation (Williams & Weinberg, 1971; Humphrey, 1990; Bérubé, 1990; Shilts, 1993). The military's statistics on rates of discharge for homosexuality seem to support this assertion: in times of national emergency the military tends to relax enforcement of the exclusionary policy. This occurred most recently during Operation Desert Storm; under a "stop loss" policy, the military delayed discharging homosexual soldiers sent to the Persian Gulf until after the war was over (Shilts, 1991). The case of Perry Watkins (drafted into the Vietnam War even after he admitted his homosexuality and almost discharged for same over 15 years later) also indicates that, during wartime, the military finds a way to assimilate formerly unacceptable homosexual soldiers (Humphrey, 1990, p. 248-257). Clinton's policy continues this practice: it provides that a gay or lesbian service member may be retained if "under the particular circumstances of the case, the member's continued presence in the Armed Forces is consistent with the interests of the Armed Forces in proper discipline, good order, and morale" (Senate Bill 1337, Section 546, Subsection B).

A second, and ultimately much more controversial, argument made by those in support of lifting the ban has likened the exclusion of gays and lesbians from the military to the former exclusion of African-American men (comparisons have also been made to limitations on the exclusion of women; more on this below). Those who support lifting the ban contend that to the extent that the military relies on prejudices held by other soldiers to justify its policy, the situation of lesbians and gay men may be compared to the prejudice which was used by the military to justify the exclusion of African-American men. Indeed, prior to the Korean War, racial segregation was mandated on this basis in order to maintain troop cohesion (Segal, 1989, p. 113). The Secretary of the Navy's advisory board of senior naval officers argued in 1940:

colored men, if enlisted in any other branches than the messman branch and promoted to the position of petty officer, cannot maintain discipline among men of the white race over whom they may be placed by reason of their rating; as a result,

teamwork, harmony and ship efficiency are seriously handicapped. (Nalty & MacGregor, 1981, p. 135)

This analogy has drawn fire, especially from some in the African-American community, as a comparison which is both insensitive and inappropriate, like comparing “apples and oranges” (Waller, quoted in Duke, 1993, p. 1; see also J. S. Butler, 1993). Critics have argued that homosexuality is a behavioral characteristic, which has little in common with skin color. The success of “closeted” homosexuals in serving their country bears this assertion out; gay men and lesbians can “pass” in a way that most African-American men and women cannot. Colin Powell underlined this focus on behavior recently, contending that “Homosexuality is not a benign . . . characteristic such as skin color. . . . It goes to one of the most fundamental aspects of human behavior” (quoted in Duke, 1993, p. 1).

As a political strategy, the kind of reasoning by analogy that has characterized this debate is obviously inappropriate, and to some extent, the controversy has been fueled by the positing of “natural alliances” between gays and lesbians and African-Americans, rather than by an effort to build coalitions. The analytic point, however, at which heterosexism and racism intersect is an important one, and to ignore this interaction is to neglect a crucial way in which the privilege of some groups over others is maintained by military policy.

In terms of historical context, Powell’s objection, that skin color is a “benign” characteristic, while sexual orientation is not, is simply not accurate in terms of the perceptions of white military leaders in 1948 (the year that President Truman integrated the military). At that time, African-American soldiers were argued to have a number of characteristics which made them unable to serve in the Armed Forces on an equal basis with white men. Skin color carried (and continues to carry in the perceptions of some) a host of implications about fundamental aspects of human behavior (Eskridge, 1993). Much as gay men are perceived to be effeminate or sexually uncontrollable, and thus incapable of military service, so too were African-Americans perceived as possessing qualities which made them unfit. Though this does not mean that the historical situation of African-Americans in integrating the U.S. military is “the same as”

the experience of gay men and lesbians, the focus of policy makers on behavioral characteristics which unfit a particular group for the Armed Forces is clearly an important strategy that has been used in restricting the right of military service.

In addition, Powell's objection frames the debate such that the issue is one of sexuality versus skin color. This creates a false dichotomy, whose danger lies in the assumption that racism and heterosexism have little in common. Both are forms of domination which rely to some degree upon specifically *sexual* anxieties (J. P. Butler, 1993; Eskridge, 1993; West, 1993). In this regard, it is instructive to compare the concern about the sexually unrestrained black woman manifested in discourse about "welfare mothers," or in notions about the danger to white women posed by sexually uncontrollable black men (Collins, 1991; Harper, 1993) to the worry that allowing openly gay men on Naval vessels is analogous to "leaving an alcoholic in charge of a liquor store" (Deputy Chaplain of the Marine Corps, quoted in Schmitt, 1992, p. A16). In both cases, notions about the sexuality of subordinated groups is instrumental in perpetuating systems of oppression whose beneficiaries are white, heterosexual men.

Finally, the actual experiences of service members belie any neat separation of the issues of race and sexuality. In the Navy's 1988 investigation of women aboard the U.S.S. *Yellowstone*, every African-American woman on board was accused (Benecke & Dodge, 1990). Though statistics released by the military do not show that African-Americans are more likely than white service members to be discharged for homosexuality (GAO, 1992b), the example of the *Yellowstone* points to the ways in which racism and heterosexism are conflated in the daily lives of women and men serving in the military.

SEXUAL PRIVACY

The second argument in support of the restrictions on gay military service is based on privacy (Moskos, 1992). The revised policy recently passed by Congress specifically cites this condition, noting:

The worldwide deployment of United States Military Forces . . . routinely makes it necessary for members of the Armed Forces involuntarily to accept living conditions and working conditions that are often spartan, primitive, and characterized by forced intimacy with little or no privacy. (Senate Bill 1337, Section A, Subsection 12)

This rationale has achieved considerable prominence of late; no contemporary discussion is complete without the requisite “shower scene” in which gay men (and lesbians, though they are invisible in this context) gaze licentiously at unsuspecting heterosexuals. Rather than relying on the prejudice of heterosexual service members, this argument focuses on “pragmatic” conditions, like those requiring separate living quarters for men and women.

Opponents have been quick to point out that this is a rationale which only applies to openly gay members of the Armed Forces. Undoubtedly, many heterosexuals *have* showered in the presence of gay men or lesbians—but they were unaware of this because most gays and lesbians are closeted. Indeed, this is the condition that the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy explicitly seeks to maintain. Opponents have also noted that the issue is one of conduct; unwanted homosexual as well as heterosexual advances are barred by military policy.

At another level, however, this debate lays bare the problematic of sexual exploitation and desire upon which much homophobia rests. There is a great deal in the current discussion of the policy to suggest that part of the resistance to the presence of openly gay men in the military comes fairly directly from a fear of sexual exploitation. The recurring theme of the “shower scene” is particularly suggestive. One Marine Corps General explained: “We were standing in this shower tent, naked, waiting in line for 35 minutes for a five minute shower. . . . Would I be comfortable knowing gays were standing in line with us? No. It just introduces a tension you don’t need” (quoted in Enloe, 1993, p. 91). While there appears to be room in the military to accommodate the “male gaze” so long as it is directed at women (witness the “Tailhook” scandal) such a gaze directed at men by men is clearly perceived as threatening and objectifying. The fear seems to be that the gaze of the male homo-

sexual will turn heterosexual men from subjects with desire to objects of desire (Bordo, 1993).

Further evidence that this objection manifests a fear of sexual exploitation comes from the particular way in which the “shower room” drama gets played out: heterosexual men are most concerned about that moment when they “drop the soap” and bend down to pick it up, exposing themselves to the possibility of penetration. As Bordo notes: “There is a certain paradox here. For although it is the imagined effeminacy of homosexual men that makes them the objects of heterosexual derision, here it is their imagined *masculinity* . . . that makes them the objects of heterosexual fear” (1993, p. 718, emphasis in original). Reinforcing this fear is the belief, discussed above, that gay men (and presumably lesbians) would be unable to control their sexual drives in the military.

Also at work is a fear of seduction. A recurrent theme in the policy debate has been the need for the protection of young military recruits from seduction by gay service members. Marine Corps Commandant Carl Mundy defended the exclusionary policy last year with the following story: “How would you (or most American families) react if your son called and informed you that his roommates for the next two years were two homosexuals. Would you be at all concerned?” (quoted in Lancaster, 1993a, p. A8). This fear is heightened by the sex-segregation of military units, a context in which homoerotic relationships are both encouraged (in the name of male bonding and unit cohesion) and prohibited (in the name of social control). The possibility that seduction or attraction may occur is even provided for in the current policy, which mandates separation for homosexual conduct unless “such conduct is a departure from the member’s usual and customary behavior” or if “such conduct, under all the circumstances, is unlikely to recur” (Senate Bill 1337, Section 546, Subsection B).

Overall, the arguments of those in support of retaining restrictions on the military participation of gay men and lesbians have relied, in the main, on grounds which highlight either the prejudices of heterosexual soldiers or the need for sexual privacy. We have begun to highlight the ways in which both of these rationales work to support a system in which the main beneficiaries are white, heterosexual soldiers. Below, we will propose a more systematic

framework for understanding the military's resistance to lesbian and gay soldiers.

COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY IN THE MILITARY

Thus far, our discussion of the military's defense of its exclusionary policy has focused on gays and lesbians themselves. We now submit that a better way to understand this policy is to examine its flipside: The military's refusal to admit gay men and lesbians is an implicit sanctioning of heterosexuality. This will shift the question away from asking "Why does the military disdain gay men and lesbians?" to "Why does the military prefer heterosexual soldiers?"

Restrictions on the participation of lesbians and gay men is but one of many ways that the military has institutionalized a preference for heterosexuals. This preference is reflected in the military's support for the traditional family among officers and career enlisted men (Kohen, 1984; Payne, Warner, and Little, 1992; Segal, 1986). Until fairly recently, official policy penalized officers who did not have dependent spouses. It was only in 1988 that the Department of Defense formally announced that wives' participation in volunteer activities would no longer be considered in officer promotions for any branch of the service (Stiehm, 1989, p. 215).⁴

This institutionalization of sexual norms in the military is a form of what Adrienne Rich (1980) has called "compulsory heterosexuality." Rich argues that heterosexuality should be viewed as a political institution, which has a material and an ideological base. Heterosexuality becomes compulsory through the use of force, sanctions, and control of consciousness to ensure its perpetuation. The military's exclusion of homosexual men and lesbians is more understandable in light of an institutionalized sanctioning of heterosexuality. In the remainder of the paper, we will address the social control interests and ideological interests which are served by limiting the participation of lesbians and gay men in the military.

"SOCIAL CONTROL" INTERESTS

Continuing restrictions on the service of gay men and lesbians serve important social control functions for the military. The

recently revised policy still stipulates that homosexual conduct is detrimental to “good order and discipline.” However, it is important to note in this context that the military does not repress all sexuality in the interests of good order—only homosexuality. In many ways, the military condones heterosexuality of a particularly violent and virulent form. Among male enlisted soldiers and junior officers, the expectation of heterosexuality is reflected in the tolerance (some would say encouragement) of prostitution (Enloe, 1983, 1989, 1993) and other forms of objectification and exploitation of women. This attitude towards women is institutionalized in the military through practices such as sexist cadence (“I don’t know but I’ve been told, Eskimo pussy is mighty cold”) and through the use of symbols glorifying a very violent male heterosexuality (Arkin, 1978; Burke, 1992).

The 1991 Tailhook Convention is only the most recent example of the way that these attitudes and practices are articulated in the military. At this annual convention of Naval aviators, 26 women, more than half of them naval officers, reported that they were sexually molested by male service members. Women also described how they had to run a nightly “gauntlet” in a hotel hallway; an ordeal that sometimes involved up to 200 men. A Naval Investigative Service report on the incident disclosed that similar activities have taken place at the annual conventions since 1986, all with the knowledge of senior Navy officials. Though charges were filed against many of the men alleged to be involved, so far, none has been convicted, and several men have had the charges against them dismissed.

If homosexuality is believed to interfere with “good order and discipline,” then it is important to understand how heterosexuality promotes social order. This may be the case in two ways. There is evidence that married soldiers have fewer disciplinary problems than single ones, and married soldiers with dependent wives are more likely to reenlist (Segal, 1986). The military may view heterosexually married soldiers as more docile and tractable than gay and lesbian soldiers for this reason. But there may be other, less tangible ways that the social control function is realized through heterosexuality.

Hearn and Parkin (1987) argue that total institutions, such as the military, have an interest in controlling and directing the release of

sexuality. Hearn writes that “rules on sexuality are . . . characteristic of those organizations that subordinate sexuality yet are explicitly physical and implicitly sexual” (1987, p. 70, see also Theweleit, 1989). From this perspective, excluding homosexuals and lesbians can be seen as an attempt to suppress the homoerotic elements of “buddy bonding” and other highly sexualized elements of military life. Even a cursory examination of war narratives reveals the subjectively felt importance of such bonds between soldiers. These personal accounts are replete with glowing descriptions of camaraderie, brotherhood, and the forging of universal bonds between men under the constant threat of death. This kind of bonding and solidarity is encouraged by military leaders and is seen as essential in forging effective fighting units.

Given an underlying framework of compulsory heterosexuality, however, these bonds are viable only in a highly gendered context. Such ties are defined in opposition to women and may even be cemented through the exchange of women’s bodies (Britton, 1990; Jeffords, 1989; Sedgwick, 1985; Theweleit, 1987; see also Oosterhuis, 1991). The armed forces, with their combat exclusionary policies for women and ban on homosexuality, are one of the last remaining refuges for the affirmation of solidarity between men. As Susan Jeffords argues: “At a time when other arenas for masculine bonding in American culture are being ‘invaded,’ [the military] can be perceived as the last ‘pure’ theater for the masculine bond” (1989, pp. 72-73). The presence of openly gay men in the military contaminates this bond, marring it with implied sexuality.

Achievement of military discipline and efficiency is promoted by the military’s privileging of heterosexuality. Repression of homosexuality obfuscates the homoeroticism already present in the military context, purifying ties between men. Presumably, bonding would become suspect if soldiers knew that there were gay men in the ranks. In a setting in which connections between men are seen as crucial in achieving the military mission and in which masculinity is synonymous with heterosexuality the presence of openly gay men appears intolerable.

IDEOLOGICAL INTERESTS

A second interest served by compulsory heterosexuality in the military is ideological. By institutionalizing heterosexual masculin-

ity, the armed forces bestow status advantages to men as a group over women. The military perpetuates an almost mythological form of masculinity: the soldier is aggressive, macho, bloodthirsty. Recruiters advertise that they are looking for "a few good men"; and popular movies proclaim that "war at its worst" inspires "men at their best" (*Hamburger Hill*, 1987). Though few "real life" soldiers live up to this image, the myth has great cultural vitality and serves as a reward for military service available only to men. As the Persian Gulf War demonstrated, status advantages accrue to the combat soldier even in this age of high-tech, sanitized warfare. Following a Stealth bombing raid into Iraq, the air force commander in charge claimed to newspaper reporters that he "saw a lot of old boys become young men last night. . . . I told them there would be hormones they had never tapped before. I told them they'd know what I meant after they came back" (*Austin American-Statesman*, January 19, 1991, p. A10).

The hegemonic masculine ideal perpetuated by the military conflates soldierliness, masculinity, and heterosexuality. The military is rife with symbols glorifying a powerful male heterosexuality. In World War II, pin-up girls were painted on bomber planes; more recently, Marine Corps recruits in training were photographed marching under signs urging them to "Rape, pillage and burn." In the military context, any sign of weakness, vulnerability, or even sensitivity is interpreted as a sign of homosexuality, which is synonymous with failed masculinity.

This ideal of the aggressive, macho, bloodthirsty soldier provides status to the men who collaborate in its maintenance. It places those men who successfully accomplish military missions among the "select" and heroic in our society, above all other men who shun or shirk military duty. (Witness the damage done to Bill Clinton's image for his questionable draft status during the Vietnam War.) The image also guarantees a privileged status to all men vis-à-vis women, who are technically barred from serving many combat posts (Connell, 1987).

Homosexual men and lesbians challenge this ideological interest, though in different ways. Gay men pose a direct threat to the hegemonic masculine ideal. Their distinguished service exposes the myth that soldiers are hypermasculine "he-men," thus depreciating

the status rewards that all military men reap from their service. Their exclusion from the service preserves the status of military men in a more indirect way as well. By imposing a ban on homosexuality, the military insures that soldiers retain the status inherent in heterosexuality (Britton, 1990). As noted above, the exclusion of (openly) homosexual men obscures the homoeroticism already present in the military context. Conjuring visions of leering homosexual men in the showers elides the prospect of leering (hetero)sexual men in those same showers.

The threat posed by the presence of lesbians is more complicated than that posed by male homosexuality because lesbians are women. The military has always been extremely reluctant to integrate any women into the services—straight or lesbian. Women's roles in the military are still constrained by combat exclusionary policies, which impose limits on their recruitment and their access to top military jobs (Williams, 1989). The debate over the combat exclusionary policies has been as heated as that over the ban on gay men and lesbians, and these restrictions are also based on an extreme dearth of empirical evidence (Holm, 1982; Segal, 1982; Stiehm, 1988, 1989; Williams, 1989).

Policies restricting women's participation in the military are also based on the organization's desire to protect and project its masculine image. Like gay men, all women threaten the viability of this popular image when they successfully accomplish the feats defined as masculine. The organization and its rituals are devalued if "even a girl" can do them (Karst, 1991; Williams, 1989). Consequently, to protect the masculinity of the military, successful military women tend to be stereotyped as "unfeminine" and, quite frequently, lesbian as well. This places women in a complex catch-22 situation: The fact that they are women presumably makes them incapable of meeting the demands of military service; yet if they distinguish themselves through their military service (which is viewed as masculine behavior), they are labelled lesbians, therefore also unsuitable for military service (Benecke & Dodge, 1990; Gay and Lesbian Military Freedom Project, 1989). A woman Marine under investigation for lesbianism summed up this double bind: "I think the big picture is that our femininity is in question because we're

doing the job we were brought down here to do" (*The New York Times*, February 23, 1988, p. A23).

Thus, while a man who succeeds in the military *negates* the stereotype of a homosexual man, a woman who succeeds *confirms* the stereotype of a lesbian. The effects of these stereotypes can be seen in discharge statistics: women are nearly three times more likely to be persecuted and discharged for homosexuality than are men. Lesbians are more frequently court-martialed for their sexuality; they more frequently serve prison sentences for homosexuality; and women in general receive more convictions for sex crimes (including sodomy) than men (Brownworth, 1993). In the Marine Corps, arguably the most "masculine" branch of the service, the percentage of women discharged for homosexuality from 1985 to 1987 was eight times higher than the percentage of men (Sarbin & Karols, 1988). Women are subject to this closer scrutiny because their very presence in the military raises suspicions that they are not "real" (i.e., truly feminine) women (Benecke & Dodge, 1990). The differential enforcement of the ban on homosexuality reserves status positions for men. Even closeted homosexual men accrue status advantages over women.

Furthermore, the more rigid enforcement of a ban on lesbians creates a situation in which male bonding is explicitly encouraged by military policy, but solidarity between women is immediately suspect. Both lesbian and heterosexual women are intimidated by frequent investigations of lesbianism, which often take on the character of a "witchhunt" (Faderman, 1991; Stiehm, 1988). The constant threat of these investigations inhibits military women from forming close social relationships and support networks with each other, which are essential for surviving in a hostile male environment (Gay and Lesbian Military Freedom Project, 1989).

Finally, the simultaneous encouragement of aggressive heterosexuality and limitation of the participation of women has created a situation in the military in which situations like Tailhook and witch-hunts are almost inevitable. A woman recently discharged from the military for homosexuality makes the link between these factors:

The same attitude that made rapes in Saudi Arabia possible during Desert Storm and made it possible for over a hundred

men involved in Tailhook to get off is what makes it possible to terrorize lesbians in the military, purge them and have nobody bat an eye. (Blakely, quoted in Brownworth, 1993)

Given an institutional context intimately tied to the construction and reproduction of this particular kind of hegemonic masculinity, it seems unlikely that this climate will change markedly for women.

In this section, we have suggested that it is instructive to examine the debate over gays and lesbians in the military in terms of what is omitted from public discourse. Though the controversy has focused on the difficulties which could well be posed by the presence of openly gay and lesbian soldiers in the ranks, little attention has thus far been paid to the benefits which accrue to the military through its privileging of heterosexual soldiers. Restrictions on the participation of gays and lesbians serve the interests of the military both in terms of social control and through the construction of a particular ideal of military service.

CONCLUSION

The fight for equal participation by lesbians and gay men in the military has recently been at the heart of political debate in several countries. Policies which had excluded homosexuals from military service have fallen in Australia and Canada. In this country, initial reports that the ban would be lifted were greeted with enthusiasm by some, but military officials continue to express serious reservations about the impact of the presence of openly homosexual service members on "good order, morale, discipline, and teamwork."⁵ Critics even warned of mass resignations in the event that the ban is completely lifted.

While these dire predictions now seem unlikely to materialize, the vehemence with which they are asserted is evidence of the status bestowed upon those in the military by the exclusionary policy. Given that the revised policy represents very little in the way of change from the previous one, the material consequences of the policy change will probably be minimal.

We have argued in this paper that the military's exclusion of gay men and lesbians can be seen as a way of privileging the male, hetero-

sexual soldier. Through its policies restricting the participation of all women and gay men, the military privileges the contributions of these soldiers, and the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy ensures that the accomplishments of actual lesbian and gay service members will never be able to contradict the arguments of the military establishment.

NOTES

1. These provisions are, in part: “Activities such as association with known homosexuals, presence at a gay bar, possessing or reading homosexual publications or marching in a gay rights rally in civilian clothes will not, in and of themselves, constitute credible information that would provide a basis for initiating an investigation or serve as a basis for an administrative discharge under this policy” (draft Department of Defense policy, 7/19/93).

2. These new regulations have, understandably, created some confusion among those responsible for enforcing them. For this reason, the Pentagon has recently issued a handbook to guide field officers in their investigations. For example, while visiting a gay bar is not sufficient cause to initiate an investigation under the new policy, photographs which show service members engaged in homosexual behavior would constitute grounds to investigate.

3. This policy also defined a homosexual as a “person, regardless of sex, who engages in, desires to engage in, or intends to engage in homosexual acts” (Department of Defense Directive 1332.14, 1982, Part 1, Section H).

4. Though the Marine Corps recently attempted to limit recruitment of married individuals, this policy was to be directed only at recruits on their first tour of duty, of which most Marines still serve 50% overseas. Officers and career enlisted Marines would not have been discouraged from marrying. Regardless, the policy was overturned by then Defense Secretary Les Aspin as soon as it was announced (Lancaster, 1993b).

5. Data on this topic are difficult to obtain, but a partial list of countries that continue to completely exclude gay men and lesbians includes: Great Britain, Greece, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, Turkey, and most other Muslim countries (General Accounting Office, 1992a; Harris, 1991; Smith, 1992). Among Western nations, bans have been particularly characteristic of countries which inherited a British legal tradition.

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