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An exploratory study of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender veterans of recent U.S. conflicts

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Kimberly J. Garland
An Exploratory Study of
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and
Transgender Veterans of
Recent U.S. Conflicts

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study was undertaken for the purpose of expanding the understanding of the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender veterans who have served under the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue. Twenty Lesbian, Gay and Transgender veterans completed an anonymous, online survey. Diversity within the sample was particularly pronounced in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity, and the roles that these veterans served in the military.

The findings of this study indicate that LGBT service members and veterans face much adversity both within and out of the military and that Transgender service members and veterans face similar discrimination to their Lesbian and Gay cohorts. Findings also indicate the possibility of a LGBT Military Identity. Furthermore, the findings of this study confirm prior research indicating that changes in military policy are much needed. Additional findings denote the need for specialized clinical training to assist clinicians treating this population.

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND
TRANSGENDER VETERANS OF RECENT U.S. CONFLICTS

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2007

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is dedicated to the brave LGBT service people past and present.
Thank you for your service.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to gain a general understanding of the experiences of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) service members and veterans. More specifically, the study looks at the experiences of service members who have served under the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue with the aim of investigating how this policy has affected the lives of these service members. To understand this population and the impact of the policy it is first important to understand the historical context of the service of LGBT people in the U.S Military. This paper will give a brief outline of this history as well as the history of U.S. policies surrounding this population in the military. An understanding of the political and historical context of LGBT people in the military provides a basis of for understanding their current experiences. Current research is also used to support the study, however, given that this research is extremely limited (and non-existent in the case of transgender service members), other research on LGBT people is used to give focus to the research.

With respect to the heterogeneity within this larger group, this study looks at LGBT service members as one group. The reasoning for this is that the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell categorizes Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people together. Therefore, for the sake of this study, it is assumed that LGBT service members will likely face the same challenges from within the system of the military. In addition, although transgender veterans are not mentioned in the policy, they were included in this study. The primary reason for this is that given the stigma that transgender individuals face outside of the military, it seems that they would also face challenges within. In addition, this researcher

was unable to find any research on transgender service members, although there is evidence of these veterans and their need for support via the group Transgender American Veterans Associations (TAVA). Therefore, there appears to be a great need to research the experiences of transgender service members specifically.

This study will assist social workers, military personnel and policy makers in gaining an understanding of the experiences of LGBT service members and veterans under the current policy. The review of literature that follows gives some historical context concerning LGBT people in the U.S. military, changing policies regarding these service members and their experiences in U.S. civilian society. The literature review as well as the study that follows provides support for the assertion that LGBT service members and veterans are an oppressed group who continue to serve their country despite a system which blatantly discriminates against them via the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of U.S. Military Policy on Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals

Although the topic is not often discussed in mainstream America, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) veterans have a long history of U.S. military service. Due to the United States military's current policy on LGB service people, this population continues to go largely unstudied. As a result, very little is known about these veterans in terms of the effects of war, combat experience, coping, stress and mental health outcomes specific to them as an oppressed group. In truth, even basic knowledge of the experiences of this population, both while they are serving and as veterans, is virtually nonexistent.

The experiences of these veterans can be discerned, somewhat by looking at the development of the military policies regarding this population, the impact of these policies and by investigating the research on how these policies have affected the experiences of these service members.

In truth, Lesbians and Gay men have served in various branches of the armed services throughout U.S. military history (Evans, 2001; Estes, 2005). For example, Estes (2005) explored the personal narratives of Lesbian and Gay veterans, using data collected by the Library of Congress Veteran's History Project. These narratives show first-hand accounts of Lesbian and Gay veterans of varying ranks, who served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm. These veterans report facing many types of intolerance related to their sexual orientation during their military service. From an historical point of view, it seems the experiences of these veterans were shaped at least in

part by the evolving U.S. policies regarding sexual minorities in the military (see Figure1).

The development of U.S. policy regarding homosexuality in the military seems to have occurred in accordance with both military need and changing cultural values in the U.S. For instance, prior to World War I, there were no policies in existence in the U.S. with regard to homosexuality in the military. However, as psychiatry came to see homosexuality as “degenerate,” in the first half of the twentieth century, the U.S. military followed suit and began attempting to screen-out homosexuals during World War I and continuing into World War II (Evans, 2000; Shilts, 1993; Herek, 1993).

Figure 1
Timeline of U.S. Policy on Homosexuals in Military

Prior to WWI: There were no specific laws addressing homosexuality. Sodomy was usually considered a criminal offense. Discharges based on homosexuality

- occurred and depended on individual units and commanders (Herek, 1993; Evans, 2001).
- 1916: Articles of War of 1916: Prohibited “assault with intent to commit sodomy” (Evans, 2001, p.6).
- 1918-1939 (Between WWI and WWII): Sodomy is listed as an offense worthy of court martial for which service members could be discharged on less-than-honorable terms or imprisoned (Evans, 2001).
- 1920: Revision of Articles of War of 1916: Made consensual sodomy a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment (Evans, 2001).
- 1921: Army issues first standards to screen out “degenerates,” including men with a “female” physique and those with “sexual perversion” (Evans, 2001).
- 1940-42: Psychological screenings became part of military’s induction process as the military adopted psychiatric view of homosexual behavior as indicator of psychopathology (Herek, 1993).
- 1944: WAC (Women’s Air Corps) establishes recruitment standards for women, including homosexuality as reason for disqualification (Evans, 2001).
- WWII: Increased need for personnel with increased war effort lead to looser screening procedures, however screenings became more vigilant at war’s end (Herek, 1993).
- 1949: Department of Defense Memo orders military services to unify regulations concerning homosexuality. States specifically that those found to be gay or lesbian were to be dismissed, investigations of suspected homosexuals were encouraged; there was to be no “rehabilitation” of gay and lesbian personnel (Evans, 2001).
- 1950: Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibits sodomy for both homosexuals and heterosexuals with penalties that could include five years hard labor, forfeiture of pay, and/or dishonorable discharge (Evans, 2001).
- 1950: At height of Korean War: Navy only discharges 483 gay men and lesbians, half of its annual average (Blacker & Korb, 2000).
- 1953: President Eisenhower signs Executive Order that makes “sexual perversion” grounds for dismissal from federal employment (Evans, 2001).
- 1965: Procedure for discharge under less-than-honorable circumstances allows service members to challenge discharge with legal representation in front of an administrative board.
- 1970: During Vietnam War: Navy discharges 461 gay men and lesbians, half of its annual average (Blacker & Korb, 2000).
- 1981: President Carter and Department of Defense issue directive: discharge mandatory for any service member who “engaged in or attempted to engage in or solicited another to engage in a homosexual act” (Evans, 2001, p.10). This directive also stated that in the absence of other aggravating circumstances, discharge should be honorable.
- 1982: DOD Directive states that homosexuality is incompatible with military service, impairs the mission of the military, disrupts “good order and morale,” and labels homosexuals a security risk. (Herek, 1993).

- 1980-1990: Military discharges 16,919 men and women under separation category of homosexuality (Herek, 1993).
- 1990-1992 (Persian Gulf War): Pentagon issues a “Stop Loss” order preventing discharge on basis of gay orientation until fighting was over (Blacker & Korb, 2000).
- 1992: Clinton states plan to make good on campaign promise to reverse ban, orders immediate halt to practice of asking recruits about their sexual orientation and suspends all discharge proceedings based on sexual orientation (Evans, 2001).
- 1993: Final policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue,” is made as compromise. Military is prevented from asking about orientation, but could discharge on credible information or if service member voluntarily admitted sexual orientation (Evans, 2001).
- 1994 to Present: Department of Defense issues a directive, stating that a new policy officially recognizes that homosexuals have served with distinction in armed forces, however homosexuality is still considered incompatible with military service. The directive states that homosexuality interferes with combat effectiveness and undermines unit cohesion, unit moral and individual privacy. States discharge to be based on one “engaging in or attempting to engage in homosexual acts, stating that one is homosexual or bisexual; or marrying or attempting to marry a member of the same sex,” (Evans, 2001, p.12). It specifies that this is regardless of whether the service member is on or off duty.

By the 1970's, the military recognized three different categories of "homosexuality," (including "pedophiles"). Those suspected of homosexuality could face a variety of negative consequences (Williams & Weinberg, 1970). For instance, an investigation into a "suspected homosexual," could include intense questioning and intimidation meant to lead to a confession as well as questioning of friends and family, with the likely result of "outing" the service member. Though the penalties varied, dishonorable discharge was common, and cases of court martial were not unheard of (Williams & Weinberg, 1970). Policy changes in the 1970's to 1980's did not seem to reflect the burgeoning Gay Rights movement. For instance, in 1981 Directive 1332.14 was issued by the Department of Defense stating specifically that, once confirmed, suspected homosexual service members were not allowed to remain in service. Nevertheless, this same directive also stated that dismissed service personnel were to receive an honorable discharge "in absence of aggravating circumstances," (Evans, 2001, p.10). By the 1990's the Gay Rights movement began to have some influence on policy, as was evident by President Clinton's promise to lift the ban. Nonetheless, in 1993 he brought into law the highly controversial policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, a compromise to his initial promise.

Compared to previous policies, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," distinguishes between homosexual orientation, which in and of itself is not reason for discharge and engagement in homosexual acts, which is (Harvard Law Review, 1998). The policy also prevents the military from asking about orientation, however Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual service members can be discharged if found to be, "engaging in or attempting to engage in homosexual acts, stating that one is homosexual or bisexual; or marrying or attempting to

marry a member of the same sex” Evans, 2001, p.12). The policy also states that this is regardless of whether the service member is on or off duty. The military is allowed to discharge based on “credible” information or if the service member voluntarily admits to homosexuality. Ironically, in the official directive from the Department of Defense, homosexuals are recognized as having served in the past with distinction. Ultimately however, the stated reasoning for the ban is that homosexuals are assumed to interfere with combat effectiveness and undermine unit cohesion, unit moral and individual privacy (Evans, 2001).

While the original intent of the policy, under President Clinton, was to protect Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual service members, it has since been the source of much debate and criticism. Research indicates that this policy has actually worked to make the environment of the military even more stigmatizing for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual service members (Beneck, Corbett, Dixon Osburn, 1999; Bowling, Firestone & Harris, 2005). Beneck, Corbett & Dixon Osburn explain that part of the problem is that the policy itself creates a culture that is antithetical to the military’s stated values (e.g. trust, honesty, mutual respect and professionalism) and that this culture then becomes dangerous for LGB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) identified service people. Similarly, in a civilian study which analyzed data collected by the Department of Defense, from active-duty service members in 2000, findings indicated that harassment based on perceived homosexual orientation was pervasive throughout various branches of the military (Bowling, Firestone & Harris, 2005). More specifically, these researchers found that of the 71,455 active-duty military respondents thirty-nine percent reported awareness of incidents of harassment, within the previous year. Defining awareness was based on

perceived homosexual orientation, although this awareness varied depending on the branch (for instance, forty-six percent of respondents in the Army and forty-four point two percent of respondents in the Marines reported awareness). While these findings lack some validity due to self-report, given the current culture of the military along with heterosexist policies in place, it seems likely that these reports of harassment are indeed true and may be underreported.

Implementation of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue

In light of these findings, it is important to consider the reasons that the current policy is in place and why LGB service members are not legally allowed to serve openly in the military. As stated above, the Department of Defense has come to recognize that Lesbian and Gay service members have historically served proudly in the U.S. military, and have discarded past beliefs that Lesbians and Gay men are a threat to national security, yet they continue to argue that serving openly would lead to lower morale, problems with unit cohesion and military effectiveness. Not only does the existing research refute these claims, in fact, the policy itself has not prevented Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual service members from serving openly (Evans, 2001; Frank 2004).

Indeed, there appears to be a vast discrepancy in terms of the implementation of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. For instance, Estes (2001) points out that the rates of discharge from the military for homosexuality varies depending on military need. Examples of this can be seen in all of the major wars of the 20th century (see Figure 1), including the Persian Gulf War when the Pentagon issued a "Stop Loss," preventing discharge on basis of homosexual orientation until the fighting was over (Blacker & Korb, 2000). In truth,

even during times of peace, the policy does not prevent LGBT service members from serving openly.

Findings indicate that service members tend to be out to varying degrees, and their level of outness is often related to how accepting their commanding officers and units are (Estes, 2001; Frank, 2004). Indeed, Evans' 2001 case studies of Lesbian and Gay service members who served openly pending legal cases regarding their sexual orientation support this claim. In fact, these cases show four service members who served in leadership roles with distinction. In all of these cases, Evans (2001) reports that the service members found that in general, they experienced increased unit cohesion and acceptance when serving while out. There are other additional arguments against the efficacy of this policy.

For instance, U.S. soldiers serve alongside out British soldiers who are part of the Allied forces, which frequently train and serve together, without any notable discord or difficulty (Frank, 2003). Indeed, Britain is only one of twenty-four nations that allow homosexual service members to serve openly, including Israel, Australia and Canada (Frank, 2003). In addition, Army research has shown that racial integration enhanced combat effectiveness (Canaday, 2002). Canaday (2002) argues that the U.S. military has been able to successfully integrate different racial, ethnic, religious and national groups effectively, even integrating different racial groups prior to most civilian institutions. In truth, there is no research concluding that out LGB service members disrupt unit cohesion, or decrease combat effectiveness. Instead, as mentioned above, with the integration of racial groups, it seems likely that allowing LGB service members to serve openly would contribute to a more efficient and productive armed services.

It appears that the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell does not prevent LGB people from serving in the military, nor does it decrease unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. It actually seems to have a detrimental effect not only on the military but on LGB service members as well. Indeed, research indicates that the policy affects the types of experiences that these soldiers have while in the military, and that much of their experiences seem to be distinct from their heterosexual-identified cohorts.

Experiences of Modern Lesbian and Gay Soldiers

Research on the experiences of Lesbian and Gay soldiers currently serving in the military is extremely limited. Of course, the current policy restricts research possibilities, in that potential participants may risk being dismissed from the military, and the repercussions may include shortening their careers, being outed to friends and loved ones, and possible loss of veteran benefits. As such, insight into the experiences of both current Lesbian and Gay soldiers as well as recent Lesbian and Gay veterans is only partially known and based on little information. Furthermore, the experiences of Transgender and Bisexual military service members and veterans can only be assumed to be similar to that of the Lesbian and Gay male's who have been researched, as these specific groups are largely unstudied in terms of their historical role and their current service in the military.

The most informative study to date on current Lesbian, Gay male and Bisexual military service members came from the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, a research center at the University of California dedicated exclusively to this pursuit. A seminal study published by this group looked at the qualitative experiences of Gay men, Lesbians and Bisexual service members serving in Operation Enduring

Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom between October 2001 and September 2004 (Frank, 2004).¹ In-depth interviews of thirty service members in combat and combat-supportive roles in the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines were used in conjunction with field observations made stateside. This study looked specifically at the effects of Don't Ask, Don't Tell on these service members. Results from this study indicate that the policy seems to have a deleterious effect on the well being of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual service members.

For instance, some soldiers reported that Don't Ask, Don't Tell negatively affected unit cohesion in that it made bonding between soldiers more difficult. That is, Gay and Lesbian soldiers who felt they were unable to share personal information with their fellow soldiers were viewed as cold, and reported that their silence impeded the development of trust with their fellow soldiers (Frank, 2004). Ironically, the study surmises that when Lesbian and Gay soldiers were out, they experienced a greater degree of unit cohesion. Being out also seemed to increase morale, professional advancement, commitment, retention and access to support services (Frank, 2004). Furthermore, the experiences of these soldiers appear to vary widely in that the enforcement of Don't Ask, Don't Tell is highly inconsistent. Enforcement often depends on the discretion of individual commanders and seems to show a generational gap, wherein older military personnel were less accepting and younger personnel more open to Gay and Lesbian soldiers coming out.

¹ Although Franks' (2004) study includes Bisexual participants, it does not offer information on them as a specific and unique group. Of course, bisexual and transgender populations are often difficult to access both inside and outside of the military.

In addition, Lesbian and Gay service members seem to suffer extra amounts of stress in that they are unable to share the same level of access to services for themselves and their families as their heterosexual counterparts. For instance, participants reported that they are unable to get the support from their loved one's at home, since the phone calls and emails of all service members are often monitored, and the information therein could be used against a Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual service member. Similarly, soldiers reported that due to lack of confidentiality, support services from chaplains, therapists and physicians are often limited, since they are unsure if confiding their sexual orientation will put them at risk for being investigated and possibly being dismissed from the military (Frank, 2004). While Frank's study gives some insight into the current experiences of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual service members, the depth of the experiences of these soldiers is still primarily left unknown.

One article that offers further insight into the needs of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual service members also confirms some of the themes seen above. Johnson and Buhrke (2006) provide guidelines for the ethical care of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Military personnel based on Johnson's experience as a practicing military psychologist, and supervisor to other military psychologists. Similar to Frank (2004), Johnson and Buhrke (2006) discuss the difficulty of accessing psychological services for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual soldiers due to the conflict between confidentiality and federal regulations which grant commanding officers access to information relevant to deployment. In addition, the guidelines seem to indicate a need for military psychologists to have a greater depth of knowledge with regard to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual issues. For instance, Johnson and Buhrke (2006) suggest that psychologists need a better

understanding of Lesbian and Gay identity development as well as the specific difficulties of negotiating a military career as a sexual minority, given the current policies in place. The authors also call attention to the situation where a change in duty station can bring stress to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual soldiers, as they may not know whether or not it will be a safe environment (Johnson & Buhrke, 2006). This last point is of particular interest, as it coincides with Frank's (2004) finding that Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual soldiers are able to be out to their units depending on that particular unit's attitude, and especially the level of acceptance of the commanding officer.

While the above findings help to give some idea of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual soldier's current experiences in the military, much is still unknown, especially in terms of how these soldiers are adjusting to life as veterans. Given that current research is lacking, an exploration of related research on both sexual minorities and veterans may provide a deeper understanding of their experiences.

Adjustment of War Veterans

Since the Vietnam War, there has been much concern about the trauma endured by active service people, especially those engaged in combat. As veterans returned from Vietnam, the mental health profession began to see a surge in war-related stress, trauma and psychiatric illness, culminating in the introduction of the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the DSM-III in 1980 (Kaylor et al., 1987). Kaylor et al.'s (1987) meta-analysis of sixty-seven separate studies, conducted between 1972 to 1985, found not only that Vietnam veterans manifested poorer "sociopsychological" health than nonveterans, but also that the Vietnam War in general seemed to have a uniquely adverse effect on

veterans complicated by diminished social or community support for returning veterans as well as the type of warfare trauma that these veterans experienced.

Similarly, there is evidence that the more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have also had deleterious effects on the mental health and well being of veterans, specific to the particular types of warfare (Wild, 2003; Hoge et al., 2004; Orcutt, Darin & Wolfe, 2004; Gieger & Benedek, 2006; Hutchinson & Banks, 2006). For instance, Gieger et al. (2006) explain that due to the specifics of the warfare in Iraq, troops are often in a constant state of hyperarousal and vigilance, which may be linked to greater levels of PTSD and other mental health issues. Hoge et al. (2004) also argue that there should be greater concern within the mental health field for the well being of veterans of the current war in Iraq, since this is the first sustained ground combat since Vietnam.

There seem to be many factors that affect a particular soldier/veteran's ability to cope with war. For instance, whether or not a veteran has served in combat. For instance, Gieger et al. (2006) conclude that based on prior findings, one's previous life experiences may have an effect on an individual's ability to cope. In addition, Wild (2003) looks at the nature of stress during war across the literature, concluding that "positive group cohesion," (p. 21) can be helpful to a soldier's coping. In terms of Lesbian and Gay soldiers, this is an interesting finding given that Frank (2004) found that the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell led to poorer group cohesion. Isolation from the group led respondents to feel that they were unable to bond with the other soldier's in their unit, because they had to withhold the type of intimate personal information (i.e. details pertaining to their relationships and sexual orientation) that often leads to greater cohesion with their fellow soldiers.

Research on the experiences of other socially oppressed groups may also help to give insight into the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) soldiers/veterans. That is, these soldiers have also likely faced previous instances of oppression based on their race/gender/sexual orientation/gender identity. As such, they may have different coping skills due to their previous stressful (and even traumatic) experiences.

Hutchinson and Banks (2006) give the example of African American and Hispanic Vietnam veterans who experienced an increased difficulty adjusting to life after the war compared to their White counterparts. Similarly, in terms of the more recent Gulf War, Vogt et al. (2005) found that woman soldiers experienced more incidents of sexual harassment and reported receiving less social support than male soldiers and that this lack of social support was related to poorer mental health outcomes for these women. Other findings indicate a link between belonging to a specific demographic (such as gender or race) and how traumatic symptoms might manifest themselves. For instance, Orcutt, Darin & Wolfe (2004) found that PTSD followed two different trajectories for veterans of the Gulf War, where veterans with a low level of initial symptoms experienced little increase over time while those with a high level of initial symptoms experienced a significant increase of symptoms over time. Of particular interest, however, was the finding that gender, race, education and age may predict membership into one of these two groups, where being a woman and/or a racial minority was found to be related to the latter group. Therefore, it could be surmised from these findings that being in an oppressed social group and serving in active duty puts one at risk for higher rates of trauma and distress.

While these findings may deepen the understanding of LGBT soldiers, as soldiers and as minorities in general, their unique experiences as sexual minorities needs further exploration. Therefore, inquiry into the research on how LGBT people in general experience oppression and adversity outside of the military may be helpful.

Experiences of LGBT People Outside of the Military

The experiences of LGBT people outside of the military frequently include many challenges unique to their status as sexual minorities. For example, because of the homophobia and heterosexism faced by many Lesbian and Gay adolescents, they may have a more challenging time completing some of the adaptive tasks of adolescence, and may also have a higher rate of depression and suicide (Kulkin, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000; Mallon, 1998). Research on minority stress helps to elucidate the ways that living in a heterosexist society may affect LGBT people.

For instance, Meyer (1995) applied the theory of minority stress to Gay men living in New York City. For Meyer (1995), minority stress is defined as the stress that members of oppressed minority groups experience as a result of the conflict that occurs between their minority status and the dominant messages in their social environment. While this particular study was based on a very specific subset of the LGBT population and is therefore not generalizable, the findings indicate a negative relationship between minority stress and mental health for these men (Meyer, 1995). These findings do suggest that, in general, the oppressive experiences that Gay men endure are negatively related to their wellbeing. We can therefore wonder if this is true for others who live with similar societal oppressions?

In fact, Lewis et al. (2003) sampled 204 Gay men and Lesbian civilians and found that Gay-Related Stress (that is, the minority stress experienced specifically by Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual identified people) contributes, independently of life stress to increased depressive symptoms. Meyer (2003) found, in a review of related literature, that oppressive social environments could lead to mental health problems in LGB identified populations. Therefore, it seems that, at least in the United States, it can be concluded that LGB identified people, in general, experience distress related to their belonging to an oppressed group and that this distress can have deleterious effects on their mental health and wellbeing.

Indeed, a more specific environment, such as the workplace, has been shown to have similar effects on LGB people. Waldo's (1999) study of 287 lesbian, gay and bisexual people demonstrated that those who believed that their organization was tolerant of heterosexism (which Waldo defines as the, "normalizing and privileging of heterosexuality") were likely to experience considerably more heterosexism than those who believed their organization was more intolerant (p. 218). Waldo (1999) concludes from these results that if the management gives the impression that heterosexism is not tolerated at work, it is less likely to occur. In addition, those employees who experienced heterosexism exhibit more psychological distress, health-related problems and decreased satisfaction with their work (Waldo, 1999). Since the military is also a work environment, albeit a unique one, Waldo's (1999) findings can be generalized to the experiences of LGB service members as well. Indeed, in the military work environment under the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, many sexual minorities are likely to find

themselves in a heterosexist if not homophobic work space, where work life is likely very challenging.

However, while the effects of living in a heterosexist environment are important to note and explore, such challenges may also lead to the development of different sets of coping and resilience skills. For instance, Russell & Richards' (2003) study of three hundred sixteen self-identified lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals examined how participants exhibited stress as well as resilience factors in the face of anti-gay politics. Reported stress factors included encountering homophobia, community divisions, challenged beliefs in a just and fair world, failed witnessing by family members and internalized homophobia. Resiliency factors were also present and included: movement perspective (understanding the antigay action in a political context, organizing and being proactive), confronting internalized homophobia, expression of affect, successful witnessing by close friends and family and building community (Russell & Richards, 2003).

Viewing protective factors from a developmental perspective, LGBT people may develop specific resources and may have certain environmental strengths, which help to protect them from the dangers of living in a heterosexist environment. In an exploration of relevant literature, Morrow (2005) lists common protective factors for LGBT youth. These factors included, "stable intellectual functioning, self-confidence, high self-esteem, a socially appealing disposition, a supportive and validating faith, special talent (e.g. athletic or musical skills), sustainable hope and supportive school relationships" (p. 96). Similarly, Linné (2003) explored the use of literature in the development of LGB identities, finding that early reading of literature that gave alternative textualities for

sexual identity from mainstream culture may have helped participants in developing positive LGB identity formation. While resiliency and protective factors are often ignored in studies of sexual minorities these aspects of LGBT experiences may be most helpful in terms of informing treatment, policy changes, and research. Therefore, while it seems likely that LGBT veterans face many challenges both within their military career and in adjusting to civilian life, they may also have developed specific types of strengths, which help them to cope with these challenges.

Bisexual and Transgender Veterans

As mentioned above, very little is known about Bisexual and Transgender (BT) veterans specifically. Although there is much research on the medical aspect of transexualism, little research exists on these populations in general. BT's deserve to be understood in terms of their specific experiences as well. Mallon (1999) points out the need for further investigation into transgender individuals specifically in social work, explaining that those who identify as transgender may experience transphobia, discrimination based specifically on their challenging of traditional gender binaries, and may often live with the threat and fear of violence, possibly more so than other sexual minorities. Similarly, Rust (2000) explains the complexities involved in bisexual identity, pointing out that bisexuals are a separate and specific identity from Lesbians and Gay men, who face their own forms of oppression in the form of biphobia. In terms of military service it can be assumed that like Lesbian and Gay male service members, Bisexual and Transgender people have a long history of military service as well. Inferences can be made from the literature. First, when initial screening standards were being made by the Army to recognize homosexuals, "feminine physique," and other supposedly non-

traditionally masculine physical characteristics were used (Evans, 2001). It therefore appears that persons who appeared to be transgender were likely being targeted and screened out as well.

Although like transgender people, bisexuals were not specifically mentioned in any policy until recently, it seems likely that they too were considered inappropriate for military service and considered homosexual by default. Of course, the current policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue includes bisexuals in the policy explicitly. With the understanding of these differences in terms of LGBT identities, as well as possible similarities both in terms of their history with the military and their current lives as veterans, this study hoped to explore the multiple facets of individual LGBT veterans' experiences.

Throughout history, LGBT people have served in the armed forces. This service has continued despite many changing policies meant to discourage their service. Nonetheless, these policies have certainly affected the experiences of LGBT service members and veterans, as can be seen with the current policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue. Yet, since this policy is intended to prevent them from speaking about their identity and experiences as LGBT service members and veterans, the policy consequently hinders research of this population. While both the research that has been conducted since this policy came into effect and research investigations into LGBT civilians are able to give some estimation of the experiences of this population, much is left unknown. The following study was conducted in hope of increasing insight into the experiences of these veterans, specifically as they are related to the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Given the lack of existing research on LGBT veterans of recent conflicts, much remains unknown about this population. The available research provides some insight into their experiences. For instance, it appears that the environment of the military under the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue causes some specific challenges for these veterans, and can be used to predict some broad themes that were expected to be found in this study. The following themes are based on previous research on active LGBT service members, veterans, and studies of LGBT people who have not served in the military. It was expected that veterans would report: isolation from those with whom they served (while active), lack of social support, lack of access to resources (e.g. veterans groups and/or other mental health resources) for the veteran as well as the veteran's family/partner, and strife surrounding discharge, military career possibilities and recognition as a veteran. It was also expected that some veterans might endorse themes surrounding coming out to other veterans and veterans' support networks.

Furthermore, it was anticipated that these veterans would report themes regarding identity, since many veterans may be out in their private life, although not in the military. It was also expected that many unanticipated themes would arise since the expected themes were based primarily on conjecture from related research and not on research of LGBT veterans per se. It should also be noted that it was difficult to anticipate themes from bisexual and transgender/transsexual veterans due to the lack of research on these

populations, therefore it was anticipated that BT veterans may or may not share common themes with lesbian and gay veterans. Based on this information, this study was an exploratory mixed-methods research design seeking to elicit information in a flexible format.

Sample

The sample for this project was limited to LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender/Transsexual) veterans of recent military conflicts (i.e. The Gulf Wars, the War in Afghanistan and/or the current war in Iraq). Veterans of wars who served exclusively prior to the Gulf War were excluded. The reasoning for this was to measure the state of LGBT veterans under the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue specifically, which was passed during the Gulf War. In addition, veterans who are currently actively serving might not feel comfortable "coming out," in any form, and might be limited in their ability to access services under the current military policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Therefore, veterans who were actively serving were also excluded.

This study aimed to collect 15-20 responses from LGBT identified veterans. The reasoning behind this number is that it is the minimal amount for reasonable analyses.

Data Collection

Data was collected after obtaining permission from the Human Subjects Review Board at the Smith College School for Social Work (please see Appendix A). The process of recruitment included sending recruitment emails to a list of groups and personal connections requesting they forward a link of the survey to any LGBT veterans

who qualified and might be willing to take it. The website “surveymonkey,” was the sole data collection tool (www.surveymonkey.com).

The sample was collected using a convenience sampling technique, wherein I used connections via fellow students and professors at the Smith College School for Social Work who knew LGBT veterans, as well as undergraduate level LGBT student groups/resource centers at the University of Connecticut and the University of Massachusetts. In addition, LGBT veteran organizations were also used for recruitment. These organizations include: the Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA); The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM); New England Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Veterans Inc.; American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER); The Rainbow Center at the University of Connecticut and The Stonewall Center at The University of Massachusetts, Amherst. A recruitment letter was sent to these connections, requesting that they forward the letter to possible participants (see Appendix B). These connections were asked to then email a link of the survey to the veterans, or list it in their online newsletter. The veterans then had the option of completing the survey anonymously online.

Initially, this recruitment technique did not produce the desired minimal sample, therefore recruitment efforts were expanded to include a wide array of organizations including LGBT community centers, veteran and research organizations, online newsletters, human rights organizations and online LGBT and LGBT veteran discussion groups (see Appendix C for full recruitment list).

Once participants followed the link to the website they were first asked as if they were currently actively serving. If they responded “yes,” an explanation was given that

their participation was not needed since this study was specifically for veterans who were no longer actively serving. If they answered “no” they were directed to the survey.

Participants were then prompted to read the consent for participation agreement (see Appendix D). This agreement indicated that the survey is anonymous and that once they submitted the survey they would not be able to withdraw. It explained that their information would not be attached to them in any way and therefore would be impossible to trace to them, and that they could withdraw at any time during the time they were actually taking the survey. Participants were also given a list of resources, including LGBT support and mental health resources, which they were encouraged to print for future reference (see Appendix E). They then had to click the “Yes,” button in order to give their consent and then the “next” button in order to proceed to the next page.

Participants were then asked demographic questions (see Appendix F), the purpose of which was to identify what their role in the military was specifically, how they identify in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity, race and disability. These questions were used to distinguish the diversity of the sample. Most of the demographic questions were left open-ended so that participants could indicate their identities as they define them (i.e. race, disability) or in order to allow for the full array possibilities (i.e. military rank/role). The categories of sexual orientation, gender identity, and military conflicts they might have served in included a list of the most likely options along with a possibility of using “other” and specifying a response. These categories were used because it was thought that this would allow for greater ease in analysis. Once the demographic questions were complete, participants were to click to “next” button to proceed.

Participants were then prompted to the primary survey itself (see Appendix G). This survey consisted of seven open-ended questions regarding the veteran's experiences both as an active service member and a veteran, with specific concentration on how Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue impacted their experiences and how they coped. They were also asked what changes they would make regarding LGBT service members. Two additional questions asked participants whom they were out to both while serving and as a veteran. Participants were then to click the button labeled "done" to submit their answers, and were taken to a page that indicated that the survey was complete and thanked for their participation.

Data Analysis

Data was collected from the surveymonkey website. Each participant's responses along with the corresponding questions were saved as PDF files, printed, and analyzed manually (e.g. cut and pasted into categories). Responses were separated from questions and demographic information. Each response was given one number to match it with demographic information, and another number to indicate which question was being answered. Categories were made with regard to this researcher's original prediction of expected themes. In addition, sub-themes emerged and two additional categories were added as they emerged. Demographic information and the original questions asked were then re-attached to responses and analyzed for commonalities.

Expected themes which were supported by the data included: isolation, lack of social support, lack of access to resources, strife surrounding discharge and military career possibilities, recognition as a veteran, support networks and identity. These major themes were then subcategorized as smaller themes emerged. For instance, within the

category of identity issues the sub-themes of: military identity, sexual orientation/gender identity and the interplay of the two were seen. Similarly, subgroups of the category of access to resources were made in terms of resources commented on either when the veteran was actively serving or as a veteran. In addition, the major theme of isolation had three subcategories that emerged: lying and hiding, withdraw and oppression/suppression. Finally, three categories that were not originally expected also emerged during the analysis. Many participants commented on their coming out experiences, therefore two subcategories were made of veterans experiences coming out while in the military and as veterans. The category of mental health issues related to the policy was created as a result of many comments made by participants on this topic. Finally, the category of the veteran's role in the military was created in response to participants who commented on the connection between their experiences serving and the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

The categories of combat effectiveness and unit cohesion were only commented on by two participants therefore there was not sufficient data in these categories for analysis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of LGBT service members who have served under the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue. Little previous research exists on the population, although research does suggest a long history of military service by LGBT people. Prior research also suggests that the experiences of these service members are affected by the current policy. In this study, participants shared their experiences as LGBT service members and veterans via an anonymous online survey. These responses were grouped by common themes, which were compared with the results expected based on prior research. Demographic data on these participants display much internal diversity both in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity as well as branch and role in service. Therefore, in this chapter, tables will be used to clarify demographic information. In general, participants will be referred to in terms of their sexual orientation, gender identity and the conflict in which they served as well as whether or not they served in combat. This chapter is an attempt to gain greater understanding of the experiences of LGBT service members who have proudly served in military service. It is an attempt to understand this population as an oppressed group, and gain some understanding of how the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell helps to create an environment of oppression for this population.

Demographics

Twenty veterans participated in this study. 55% (n=11) of participants identified their gender identity as male, 15% (n=3) as female, 20% (n=4) identified as male-to-female transsexual and 5% (n=1) as female-to-male transsexual. 5% (n=1) of participants identified as transgender in answer to the demographic question, but later talked about cross-dressing as female throughout hir military career (Please note that since this person did not specify gender identity beyond “transgender,” gender-neutral pronouns will be used. The pronoun “hir” will be used in place of her/him, and the word “zie,” will be used as she/he). Similarly, participants reported a variety of sexual orientations. The highest percentage (50%) identified as gay men (n=10), followed by lesbians (25%, n=5), same-gender-loving (10%, n=2), opposite-gender-loving (5%, n=1) and pansexual (5%, n=1). 5% of participants self-identified as other: male-to-female transsexual in the category of sexual orientation (n=1). Since transsexual is traditionally considered a gender identity and not a sexual orientation, this participant’s sexual orientation is unclear (please see Table 1 for demographics of sexual orientation versus gender identity). The goal was to obtain a diverse sample for sexual orientation and gender identity. While there is diversity, it should be noted that no participants identified their orientation as bisexual or asexual. In addition, no participants identified their gender identity as genderqueer or intersex (please see Appendix H for a glossary of terms used for sexual orientation and gender identity).

There was some diversity in terms of racial identity. 65% (n=13) of participants identified as White or Caucasian. Each of the rest of the participants identified

themselves separately in terms of race, categorizing themselves as follows: mostly Caucasian (no other race specified) (5%, n=1), Asian-American (5%, n=1), Hawaiian-Pacific Islander (5%, n=1), Native American/African American (5%, n=1), Cherokee/Scottish (5%, n=1), Irish/Choctow (5%, n=1). Finally one participant (5%, n=1) simply identified as “human.”

Participants reported having served in various branches of the U.S. military (please see Table 2). It should be noted that 10% (n=2) of participants reported serving in two different branches throughout their careers. 35% (n=7) of participants reported having served in the Army and Air Force, respectively; 30% (n=6) reported serving in the Navy, 10% (n=2) in the Marines and 10% (n=2) in the Army National Guard.

Table 1. Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

	Female	Male	MTF	FTM	Transgender
Lesbian	15% (n=3)		10% (n=2)		
Gay		55% (n=11)			
Same-Gender-Loving			5% (n=1)		
Opposite-Gender-Loving					5% (n=1)
Pansexual				5% (n=1)	
Transgender (per self-report)		5% (n=1)			

Table 2: *Branch*

Branch	
Navy	30% (n=6)
Army	35% (n=7)
Marines	10% (n=2)
Air Force	35% (n=7)
Army National Guard	10% (n=2)

Since self-reports of role/rank were used, not all of the reports were clear. For example, two participants used abbreviations that were not discernable (SMS, HMI), and two simply stated their “echelon,” or rank level, but did not specify their specific role (please see Table 3). 15% (n=3) of participants identified as Sergeants, while the rest identified serving in diverse, though distinct, roles. These roles were described as follows: Captain (5%, n=1), Law Enforcement (5%, n=1), Specialist (5%, n=1), Supply Specialist (5%, n=1), Intelligence/Special Operations Support (5%, n=1), Communications Operations (5%, n=1), First Lieutenant/Military Police Airborne (5%, n=1), Physician (5%, n=1), Hospital Corpsman Senior Chief (5%, n=1), Combat Photographer (5%, n=1), Technical Sergeant (5%, n=1), Commander/Lieutenant Colonel (5%, n=1) and Intelligence Analyst/Senior Airman (5%, n=1).

In addition, 65% (n=13) reported that they had served in combat, while 35% (n=7) reported they had not. 50% (n=10) of the participants reported having a disability related to their service, while the rest reported none. Disabilities incurred appear to vary vastly, including 15% (n=3) of participants suffering from PTSD, and 5% (n=1) who reported depression, the remaining 35% (n=7) reported varying physical disabilities, ranging from Gulf War Syndrome, to unspecified neck pain to paralysis.

Table 3: *Branch and Role*

Role	Role and Branch				
	Navy	Army	Marines	Air Force	Army National Guard
Sergeant**		5% (n=1)	10% (n=2)		5% (n=1)
Captain	5% (n=1)				
Law Enforcement				5% (n=1)	
Specialist		5% (n=1)			
Supply Specialist		5% (n=1)			
Intelligence/Special Operations Support**		5% (n=1)			5% (n=1)
Communications Operations				5% (n=1)	
First Lieutenant/Military Police Airborne		5% (n=1)			
Physician				5% (n=1)	
Hospital Corpsman Senior Chief	5% (n=1)				
Combat Photographer	5% (n=1)				
Technical Sergeant				5% (n=1)	
Commander/Lieutenant Colonel				5% (n=1)	
Intelligence Analyst/Senior Airman				5% (n=1)	
Echelon Four*		5% (n=1)			
Echelon Six*	5% (n=1)				
Echelon Seven*	5% (n=1)				
SMS*				5% (n=1)	

*Participants did not further identify their role in military.

**Participants served in more than one branch.

Table 4: *Conflict and Combat*

25% of participants (n=5) served in more than one conflict
 65% (n=13) Served in combat
 35% (n=7) Did not served in combat

Conflict

Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)	5% (n=1)
Desert Storm (1990-1991)	70% (n=14)
Bosnia (1992-1995)	5% (n=1)
Kosovo (1996-1999)	5% (n=1)
Desert Fox (December 16 th to 19 th 1998)	5% (n=1)
War on Terror (2001-present)	5% (n=1)
Enduring Freedom (2001-present)	20% (n=4)
Iraqi Freedom (2003-present)	25% (n=5)

Participants also answered questions regarding their experiences as service members and veterans. Common themes were found in their responses, and grouped according to the categories that follow.

Coming Out Experiences

40% (n=8) of participants wrote specifically about their experiences of being in “the closet,” out of the closet and/or coming out while in the military. All reported different experiences with being out and with the levels of acceptance versus discrimination they faced. 20% (n=4) of participants noted the fear of being “outed.” Two of these participants who both identified as gay men, noted never revealing their sexual

orientation to anyone throughout their military careers. In contrast, two other participants noted coming out despite the fear of repercussions. One, a veteran of Operation Desert Fox, who identifies as a gay man, reported, “I was miserable toward the end of my enlistment, and it ultimately led to my self-identifying as gay to my commander.”

Another participant, a veteran of Operation Desert Storm, who identifies as a gay male describes his coming out experience:

For many years, I stayed in the closet and denied to myself that I was gay. The 1st couple of years, I started making friends with other people I thought were gay, and at great risk, we came out to each other. I also came out to several straight friends that I felt close to. I was lucky that none of these people outed me.

This participant was not alone in his fear of being outed. Another participant describes the varying levels of being out that she experienced, and her attempts to control how much information was known about her sexual orientation. A veteran of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom, who identifies as a lesbian and female, she reports:

The medical field is a bit more open than the combat arms areas of the military. I had several coworkers and superiors who “knew” I was gay without me actually telling them. I had some coworkers and superiors that I did tell, and they accepted it. There were others who I never told and with them I played the change the pronoun/make up names game when talking about my private life.

Two veterans who identify as transsexual and transgender, respectively, both described the complexities of being out and identifying as trans in the military. Both participants commented on their level of performance in connection to their being out. A veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Iran-Iraq war, who identifies as transgender and opposite-gender-loving described hir experience of being outed:

I was outed, everyone knows [...] I was outed as a crossdresser to my higher command. My commander at the time stood by me when others wanted to replace me. I was a first sergeant of 100 man infantry unit. My commander told the higher ups. he is the best 1SG in the Army and the only one in the unit with prior combat we need him. and the troops love him. All of my troops knew I crossdressed but did not care.

Similarly, a veteran of Operation Desert Storm, who served as a First Lieutenant in the Army and identifies as Pansexual and Female-to-Male (FTM) transsexual, describes being out to his unit as FTM, stating that he had to “prove” himself “physically and mentally competent to lead” before being accepted.

15% (n=3) of participants commented on being out after they served. Two who identified as gay male veterans both described being out in their personal lives in political and empowerment terms. One respondent stated, “Anyone that knows me knows both of these things about me, I am a gay veteran.” In contrast, one veteran who describes herself as MTF transsexual and same-gender-loving, states greater difficulties being out as a transsexual veteran:

I can not be out at home yet as have one child still in high school. [I] am out to boyfriend/partner in a city in the northwest as I must go there for extended business trips. Live there almost 24/7 as a female.

Discrimination

35% (n=7) of participants reported themes of discrimination in the military, while 20% (n=4) of participants reported that they felt the policy did not affect them. Of those who reported experiencing discrimination, three respondents reported having been discharged because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. One reported being “forced out” at the threat of being discharged, two participants reported narrowly

avoiding discharge related to their sexual orientation and gender identity and one reported deciding to leave because of the environment under DADT.

Two participants who reported being discharged because of their gender identity stated that this was despite proving themselves as soldiers. A combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Iran-Iraq War, who identifies as transgender and same-gender-loving, describes hir experience as follows:

All of my troops knew I crossdressed but did not care. Once I returned from Iraq. The higher ups refused to put me forward for a promotion to Sergeant Major because of my crossdressing. They said that if I did not crossdress for a year they would reevaluate and may send me forward. I plan to retire soon, and told them that I am a CD and have been my entire career. I was awarded [sic] the Bronze Star in Iraq, inducted into the order of St. Barbara by the artillery, and awarded the golden combat spurs by the Calvary.

Another participant, a veteran of Operation Desert Storm, who identifies as Pansexual and Female-to-Male (FTM) transsexual, reports on his experience of discharge. He notes that although the official policy of the DOD (Department of Defense) does not specifically state that trans people are banned from the military, they are directly affected by the policy nonetheless:

My unit knew I was FTM, after proving myself physically and mentally competent to lead I was accepted. Due to my masculine neutral name, and my acceptance, I was SNAFU's [Situation Normal: All Fouled Up] into a combat role in Desert Storm. After coming home and being assigned as an instructor at Fort Irwin, I was forced out on charges of being a lesbian (since TG is not specified in UCMJ) when my biological gender was apparent.

Two participants specifically reported on the interaction of the military mental health system with the threat of discharge. A Combat veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom who identifies as a lesbian and MTF transsexual reports on her experience:

I felt that if told someone that I identified as a female, I would be treated harshly and kicked out of the service. I initially entered the US Navy, before transferring to the Army. When I sought help from Navy “mental-health” personnel (I wanted to commit suicide...), I was nearly discharged, before I lied, and told them that I did not have an issue.

Similarly, a veteran of Operation Desert Storm who served in Communication Operations in the Air Force and identifies as a lesbian and MTF transsexual reports a similar experience that ultimately resulted in her forced resignation:

I wound up speaking in confidence to one of the base psychiatrists. He was very understanding, but he did write it down in his private notes. Unfortunately, since my job was sensitive and required a security clearance, I was made to understand that if I stayed in past the 5-year mark, they would, in the process of renewing my clearance, have access to those letters, and that would be it for me. So I didn’t bother re-upping.

In contrast, 20% (n=4) of participants reported that they felt the policy did not impact them, that is they didn’t feel discriminated against. Both participants who identified as lesbian and female reported that the policy did not affect them because they kept their orientation hidden. One of the two respondents, a veteran of Operation Desert Storm reported, “I really did not have any problems. Only a handful of people knew about my sexual orientation. I kept it hidden.” This participant also reported, “I didn’t even know about this policy when I was in the service.” Similarly, the other participant, a combat veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom reported, “No one knew my sexual orientation, therefore I was never treated any differently.”

The two participants who identified as gay males both reported having been out to others while serving, but that the policy did not affect them. One of these two, a combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who reports having been out to friends, family, his partner, other service members and his DOD supervisor reported, “The policy did not

affect me [...] my sexual orientation did not impact my military experience.” However, this participant also reported that, “the biggest issue is homophobia among [sic] enlisted and officer ranks.” The other participant, a combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom reported, “I really haven’t had any bad experience because I’m gay.” This participant reports having been out to friends, family, his partner, other service members and his commanding officer while serving, and denied any problems stemming from his sexual identity while serving.

Oppression

30% (n=6) of participants commented on their experiences of oppression, discussing the relationship between the military environment and personal strife. Three of respondents discussed oppression as it pertained to their response of how they coped as a service member. Two responded that they believed that they became more depressed; one reporting that he drank a lot. A veteran of Operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom who identifies as a lesbian and female reports, “Not being able to be completely open was very stressful at times and I believe this led in part to my problems with depression.”

Three other participants reported increased anxiety and being more “on guard,” specifically in response to a question regarding how DADT affected their experiences serving. A veteran of conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, who identifies as a gay male reported wondering, “how much more energy, creativity I would have had if did not have to worry about being found out. DADT was always a back of the mind anxiety.”

Similarly, a Combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom who identifies as a gay male states that:

I was constantly [sic] paranoid about what I could say or do on my “off” time. I could never really RELAX when I was away from work if I was in public. My partner would have been in the dark if I had died in combat, and he would never have been notified.

Coping

Participants reported the different ways that they coped with being an LGBT service member. 60% (n=12) of participants reported themes related to using isolation to cope, that is using internal mechanisms. By contrast, 25% (n=5) of participants wrote about their use of social support. Although these categories were not mutually exclusive, and some respondents reported both withdrawing and using social support as it was available. Of those who reported isolating, the themes of lying/hiding, suppression and withdrawal were seen.

Lying/Hiding

25% (n=5) of participants, three identifying as gay males, one identifying as a lesbian female, and one who identifies as transgender, opposite-gender-loving endorsed having to lie about or hide their sexual orientation and/or gender identity while serving. A veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies lesbian and female reports, “I really did not have any problems [...] I kept it hidden.” Two of the other participants, a combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who served in the Army and a non-combat veteran also of Operation Desert Storm who served in the Air force both reported keeping their orientation a secret. The Army veteran reported that he never told anyone in the service,

and “continually lied about a “girlfriend,” back home.” Similarly, the Air Force veteran reported, “I compensated by dating the opposite sex against my instincts.”

The transgender participant, a combat veteran who served in both the Marine Corps and Army National Guard as a First Sergeant, reported having to hide hir cross-dressing behaviors:

I would some times buy some feminine clothes and get a hotel, then throw away the clothes the next day. While in the guard I would be careful were [sic] I went. If I saw someone I knew I would avoid contact.

Suppression

20% (n=4) of participants discussed suppressing their sexual orientation/gender identities while serving. Three of these participants identified as transgender/transsexual (two of these as opposite-gender-loving, one as same-gender-loving and one as pansexual), the fourth identified as a gay male. One veteran who reports serving in Operations Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom as well as the War on Terror and identifies as a same-gender-loving MTF transsexual, reports:

I did what my duties required of me in and out of continental US. I had no problem as I did not pursue my inner feelings while in the service [...] Stayed to my self and lived the male persona I created and perfected through the years.

Similarly, a Combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who served as a First Lieutenant and Military Police officer in the Army, identifying as pansexual and FTM transsexual reports, “I was celibate during my service. No interpersonal relationships at all. It was difficult, but necessary at the time.”

Withdrawing

20% (n=4) of participants reported isolating themselves by withdrawing. Two of these participants both identified as MTF transsexuals and Lesbians, and had very similar responses to the same question about how they coped as an LGBT service member. A combat veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, who served as an Intelligence/Special Operations Support reports:

I retreated into myself a lot. I did not want to associate with anyone, especially any males off-duty. I constantly entered into a “fantasy” world, where I lived as a female.

A veteran of Operation Desert Storm who served in Communications Operations in the Air Forces, reports:

I basically withdrew as much as possible from everyone. During that time, the internet became something of a lifeline, where I could socialize with GLBT folks regularly without fear. Other than that, my life consisted solely [sic] of work and sleep.

Social Support

In contrast to withdrawing and isolation, (25% n=5) of participants reported using social support to cope with being an LGBT service member. Three of these participants reported identifying as gay males and two identified as females and lesbians.

One combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identified as a gay male describes the process by which he found the support of other gay service members:

I and my fellow gay service members were not “married with families,” we were usually the one’s that were picked to work the night and weekend shifts. In many cases I volunteered for these assignments, knowing that I would be around others like myself. Not all of the people working overtimes or night/weekend shifts were gay, but many of us were.

Similarly, a combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who also identified as a gay male reported, “I had a lot of other gay friends in the military which helped with the support.”

Additionally, a veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identified as lesbian and female reported, “The friends who knew were very supportive of me.”

Two participants reported the importance of talking to others specifically. A combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as a gay male stated that he coped by, “Finding at least one person to talk to.” Similarly, a combat veteran of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom who identified as a lesbian and female reported that, “Hanging out with other gay/lesbian service members as well as straight supporters helped me the most. Being able to be open and talk about my true self was a huge relief.”

LGBT/Military Identity

A total of 60% (n=12) of participants discussed a connection between their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and their experience of military service. More specifically common themes were seen around the topics of why participants joined the military, and experiences of having a sense of fragmented identity while serving.

Reason for Joining

30% (n=6) of participants reported themes that were common in terms of why they joined the military and what their service meant to them. Two respondents reported serving because of a sense of duty. A combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom who identifies as a gay male, reports, “I joined to be part of something bigger than myself. I have a strong sense of duty to serve the common good and I had a Grandfather that was also a Marine.”

Similarly, a combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm also mentioned a sense of family obligation in serving. A Pansexual and FTM transsexual he reports that he joined

the military to, “Continu[ed] the family tradition of service. My father only had daughters, I identified [sic] as male so I made myself available to serve.”

Other reasons for joining included those given by a combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as a gay male and reports, “I entered to venture from a blue collar family, see the world, learn a trade, and find myself.” Additionally, another veteran of Bosnia and Kosovo and also identifies as a gay male reported feeling “called to service,” by God.

One respondent reported the effect that military identity played in her sense of self-image. A combat veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom she identifies as a lesbian and MTF transsexual, she states:

I tried so hard (which nearly resulted in my death), to “prove” that I was an unfeeling, “war-machine” machomale. [...] I entered to take advantage of a college savings plan. But I truly joined the service to try to run from “hide” from my Gender issues.

Another respondent, a veteran of Operation Desert Storm, who also identified as lesbian and MTF transsexual also joined because of her gender identity: “Mostly it was done because I had to drop out of college due to trying to deal with my sexual & gender identity, and I had nowhere else to go except home which would have made matters worse.”

Fragmented Identity

30% (n=6) of participants commented on their identities as service members and as LGBT as fragmented. A combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Iran-Iraq War who identifies as opposite-gender-loving and transgender stated, “I keep my private life separate from military life.” Similar responses were seen from two combat veterans

of Operation Desert Storm who both identified as gay males, stating respectively: “Being a veteran and being gay, for me, are two separate things. They never really mixed while I was in the military,” “I knew who I was and lived my life separate from the Navy.”

Another veteran of Operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom who identifies as a female and lesbian reported, “I had to compartmentalize my life. I was generally speaking one person in uniform and a different person out of uniform.”

Two participants commented more specifically on the interaction of the military with their gender identities and sexual orientation. One, a veteran who served in Operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom and identified as same-gender-loving and MTF transsexual, commented on the general difficulties faced for LGBT service members, stating, “The biggest issue is being themselves however there are some mighty heavy issues in just serving and duty status that can make anything near impossible.”

A veteran of conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, who identifies as a gay male, reported a melding of his identity as a gay man and as a service member that helped him in his role in the military:

As a nurturer, a physician is a natural fit. As a gay man, working with men in a masculine environment was fulfilling. As a flight doc, I was an integral part of the unit. The men recognized that I had more compassion and awareness of their needs than other docs they had had. I was liked and respected. These character traits of being gay were an asset, even if not recognized as being gay. [sic]Was able to keep a closeted gay pilot from potential suicide.

Lack of Availability to Resources While Serving

15% (n=3) of participants described their experiences trying to access resources while serving. These participants described the need for more help and support while serving. For instance, a combat veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, who identifies

as lesbian and MTF transsexual in describing how she coped while serving, stated, “What did not help was that there was not help available.” Similarly, a veteran of the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo who identifies as a gay male reports, “But there was no support from the military for the gay man, only antipathy at best.”

Additionally, a combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, who identifies as a gay male, commented on his concerns about his partner back home, “My partner would have been in the dark if I had died in combat, and he would never have been notified.”

Lack of Availability of Resources as Veteran

Either in response to the question specifically about veteran resources or about what they would change, 60% (n=12) of veterans commented on their experiences with resources as LGBT veterans specifically.

Three respondents, two who identified as gay males and one as lesbian and female all veterans of Operation Desert Storm, simply stated that they had never used veteran services.

Three participants commented on their feeling a lack of support at federal veteran facilities. Three of these participants reported that they hesitated to use these organizations out of fear of needing to return to the roles they were forced to play in the military. A combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom who identifies as a lesbian and female reports feeling, “discomfort at military facilities. Even though we’re out of the military now, we still have the instinct to hide our sexual orientation on military facilities.” A veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as a gay male similarly reports, “I try not to hide who I am, however, when around straight vets I tend to play the part again. I do not feel that organizations like VA or VFW would be supportive in a time

of need.” Another veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as lesbian and female also states discomfort in military facilities reporting, “I retired in 2002 and I can probably count on two hands the number of times I have been on base for any reason.”

Two participants described the discrimination these facilities have specifically towards trans veterans. A veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as lesbian and MTF transsexual explains:

I don't really avail myself of veterans' resources, at least not within the VA system [...] Most veteran assistance orgs quite simply don't know how to deal with us. This is particularly the case with transgender vets, where the amount of service you receive (if any) is more or less at the whim of the staff at any given facility.

A combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as pansexual and FTM transsexual describes his experience of being refused treatment because of his gender identity:

The only effect I have experienced as a veteran is denial of treatment by VA. Had medical issues requiring hysterectomy, it was refused as a “transgender surgery.” Had on going back problems from combat injury, VA refused suggested breast reduction because it was “Trangender surgery.”

This respondent also reported that he was able to take action against these events, stating, “I now am a representative of Transgender American Veterans Association, and fighting to change that.”

Four other respondents also commented on the use of non-federal LGBT and LGBT veteran groups for support. A veteran of the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo who identifies as a gay male reports, “Finished AF Sept '05, marched in Seattle Gay Pride parade in full uniform carrying US flag with AVER [American Veterans for Equal Right]. Joined Seattle Mens Chorus. Joined a gay accepting church.”

Another gay male identified veteran of Operation Desert Storm reported, “There are no federal or military resources to help GLBT veterans. I contribute time and money to HRC, SLDN, AVER and EQTX to advocate equal rights and meet fellow GLBT friends and veterans.”

Two trans veterans also reported on their use of alternative supports. A combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as lesbian and MTF transgender reported, “As a veteran I am state director of trans veteran group and can talk with other trans who can relate to my experiences.” Similarly, a veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as lesbian and MTF transsexual stated, “My association with TAVA has helped.”

Lack of Recognition of Service and Sacrifice

20% (n=4) of participants commented on the need that they see for greater recognition of LGBT veterans, in response to the question of what they felt was the most important issue affecting LGBT veterans. A combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as pansexual and FTM transsexual stated:

Gender or sexually [sic] is NOT a reason to deny a citizen’s patriotism or judge their ability. Neither does it make a veteran any less a hero for serving their country. VA may refuse me medical treatment, DOD may refuse my combat pay, but the ribbons on my chest were earned with the same red blood as ever other GI on the field.

A veteran of the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo who identifies as a gay male reported a need for, “Greater public awareness, esp [sic] of the greater personal sacrifice the GLB veteran has given.”

Another participant commented on the effect he believes this lack of recognition has on gay veterans. A combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm who identifies as a gay

male stated, “I think it is the burden of shame many gay veterans continue to carry. Many have a sense that their service did not count the same as it did for their straight brothers.”

A combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom who identifies as a gay male described his feelings as a gay veteran:

Quit treating me like I'm not worthy die [sic] for my country, FOR STRANGERS WHO HATE ME...let us have EQUAL servitude. We are professional servicemembers and I challenge anyone to tell me I am not capable of being a United States Marine.

Given the above findings, such an impassioned call for recognition is not surprising. This study set out to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of LGBT service members and veterans under the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. The findings of this study indicate that the experiences of these service members are indeed shaped by this policy, which creates an oppressive environment. These conclusions will be mapped out in the following chapter, in light of the above findings and their implications for policy change as well as social work practice.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to gain further insight into the experiences of LGBT service members under the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue. The study sought to gain a deeper understanding of their lives both in and out of the service, with a particular focus on the influence of the policy on their experiences. The participants of this study indicated many possible areas where the policy affected their lives. They shared their unique experiences as LGBT service members, and specifically commented on facing discrimination and oppression both during and after their service, the ways in which they cope(d) with adversity, and the ways in which both their identities as service members and their LGBT identities interacted. When considered in light of prior knowledge and research of this population these findings have implications for policy changes, for understanding the identities of these veterans, for future research and for clinical application.

Policy Implications

The policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell was proclaimed by former President Clinton as a way to protect LGB service members. Truly the policy was a compromise between President Clinton (who had promised to remove the ban during his campaign), his Joint Chiefs of Staff, and conservative opposition. Prior research suggests that the policy is

flawed in its design and has not served as a tool to aid LGBT service members but, rather, these service members have suffered under the policy (Beneck, Corbett, Dixon Osburn, 1999; Bowling, Firestone & Harris, 2005). Previous research indicates that the policy worked to make the environment of the military more stigmatizing for LGB service members (Beneck, Corbett, Dixon Osburn, 1999; Bowling, Firestone & Harris, 2005). Specifically, past research indicates the policy negatively affected unit cohesion and made bonding between soldiers more difficult (Frank, 2004).

Frank's (2004) study found that soldiers' silence impeded their relationships with fellow soldiers, and that soldiers who remained in the closet during service experienced decreases in morale, professional advancement, commitment, retention and access to support services. Similarly, participants in this study reported facing much discrimination and oppression both inside and outside of the military. Participants in this study reported being discharged because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identities and reported feeling oppression in the form of isolation. Findings indicate that LGBT veterans may cope with this policy via lying, hiding and suppressing their sexual orientation/gender identity and withdrawing from other service members. That is, findings indicate a relationship between the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell and the discrimination and oppression that these service members must endure. Findings also indicate that not only are LGBT service members affected by the policy, but that LGBT veterans also have a difficult time gaining access to veteran services and face discrimination and oppression within veterans organizations. These findings validate previous findings and indicate that this policy causes much strife in the lives of these service members. Furthermore, the

findings suggest a need for this policy to be repealed in favor of one that protects this population and better serves the needs of the armed forces.

Identities of LGBT Service Members

As mentioned above, findings indicate that LGBT service members may cope with this policy via lying, hiding and suppressing their sexual orientation/gender identity and withdrawing from other service members. However, findings also suggest that service members may cope with the oppression and discrimination faced under the current policy by the use of social support. Franks (2004) similarly found a difference between soldiers who were in the closet while serving and those out of the closet. His study reported that those in the closet had less social support and faced more adversity than those who did not disclose their sexual orientation.

In addition, findings of this study suggest that some LGBT veterans may cope by forming and participating in social action. Those who discussed this form of coping portrayed it as highly helpful in their identities as LGBT veterans. This finding is similar to Russel & Richards (2003) study of LGB civilians, where participants found resiliency factors in the face of anti-gay politics. Such factors included: movement perspective (understanding the antigay action in a political context, organizing and being proactive), confronting internalized homophobia, expression of affect, successful witnessing by close friends and family and building community. It is possible that participants in this study whose political involvement helped them to cope as LGT veterans were experiencing similar benefits.

In addition, 60% (n=12) of participants indicated how their sexual identity and/or gender identity intersected with their military identity, which may indicate a type of

Military LGBT identity unique to this population. For instance, some participants indicated that their stories of coming out and joining the military as being interconnected. Another group reported having a fragmented identity, where they felt a strict separation between their LGT identity and their military service. More research is needed in this area specifically, especially in terms of the specific identities within this heterogeneous population (that is, do gay males have a different military identity from lesbian females or from transgender service members?). It should be noted, however, that the findings of this study do not suggest any differences between these groups.

Future Research

One of the aims of this study was to look at a diverse group of LGBT service members. This goal was achieved in part. That is, 25% (n=5) of participants identified as transgender. Since prior research has primarily included lesbian and gay service members, it was hoped that this study would offer some preliminary information on the experiences of transgender service members. Also, since very little prior research has included bisexual service members it was hoped that this population would also be explored in more depth. Nonetheless, no participants identified as bisexual, however, one participant identified as pansexual (please see Appendix H for a Glossary of Terms).

Certainly, there is a need for future research to investigate transgender and bisexual service members. The greatest challenge of researching this population, as well as lesbian and gay service members is recruitment. However, the findings of this study indicate the importance of overcoming this challenge. That is, the respondents who identified as transgender reported blatant forms of discrimination during and after their service, based solely on their gender identity. Their reports indicate a lack of

understanding in the military as to what transgender identities are. Since transgender service members are not included in the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell findings of this investigation raise the question of whether or not transgender service members are treated as gay "by default." For instance, one participant specifically stated that he was discharged because of his "sexual orientation," even though it was his gender identity that was discovered and the real reason for his discharge. Further research in this area is needed to discern the effect of the policy on transgender service members, as well as their specific experiences as service members and veterans.

Clinical Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate the need for social workers working with LGBT service members and veterans to understand their experiences as a specific oppressed population. As such, this population is best understood in the context of both the history of LGBT service members in the armed forces, as well as how the current policy effects their experiences, that is their Military LGBT identities.

In addition, it is important for social workers to have an understanding of the particular types of discrimination that these service members face. For military social workers, in particular, this study confirms the need to understand the system of the military and the current policies regarding client-therapist confidentiality. Indeed, an article by Johnson and Buhrke (2006) offers suggestions for clinicians working with LGB soldiers and include the need for clinicians to understand confidentiality and federal regulations granting commanding officers access to information relevant to deployment. They also suggest that military clinicians need a more thorough understanding of LGB development and culture, which the findings in this study confirm. Finally, Johnson and

Buhrke (2006) as well as Frank (2004) suggest that the experiences of LGB soldiers are currently dependent upon the environment of their individual commanders and units. The findings of this study confirm this as well, and also suggest that clinicians working with active duty LGBT service members understand how great the change and risk can be when soldiers change units and commanders.

Understanding of the systems of oppression that this population faces may help social workers to support and guide these service members and veterans through the system. That is, the culture of the military and the system itself is designed for heterosexual, non-transgender individuals, and social workers may assist clients by helping them to understand their experiences in the context of an oppressive system.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate a need for social workers to understand the immense hurdles that this population faces in terms of accessing resources in and out of the military. Social workers who are educated on the effects of this policy on the experiences of LGBT service members will likely have more resources to help their clients negotiate this difficult system.

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Appendix A

Approval Letter from Human Subjects Review Board

January 29, 2007

Kimberly Garland
122 Williams Street
First Floor
Meriden, CT 06450

Dear Kimberly,

Your revised materials have been reviewed and all of the changes we suggested have been made. We are now able to give final approval to your study.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

I hope you find veterans willing to participate in the study, as it should produce some very interesting information from a population that has long been silenced. I'm sure that the anonymity available on an "on-line" survey will help.

Sincerely,
Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Nora Padykula, Research Advisor

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter:

Hello,

I am a master's student at the Smith College School for Social Work. I am currently conducting research for my thesis on U.S. LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual) veterans of recent conflicts (specifically those who served in the first Gulf War or since). I am contacting you to respectfully ask for your assistance in finding participants for my study. If you could please forward the following link to any LGBT recent U.S. war veterans that you think might be interested in helping with this study: [www.-----](#) The survey itself is anonymous. Your help would be greatly appreciated and would help to further both clinical knowledge as well as implications for policy changes, which is greatly lacking in this area.

Thank you for your help! Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions:

Kimberly Garland:

kgarland@email.smith.edu

or

Kimberly Garland c/o
Smith College School for Social Work
Lilly Hall,
Northampton Ma 01063

Appendix C

Original Recruitment List:

1. Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA)
2. Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military
3. New England Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Veterans Inc.
4. AVER (American Veterans for Equal Rights); New York and Chicago chapters.
5. The Stonewall Center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA.
6. The Rainbow Center at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT.

Expanded Recruitment List:

LGBT Community Centers Used in Recruitment (list acquired via website:
www.lgbtcenters.org):

1. Bay Area Inclusion (BAI) Mobile, AL.
2. Indentity, Inc. G & L community center of anchorage.
3. Mat-Su Valley G & L communitycenter, palmer, AK.
4. Prescott Pride Center, prescott, AZ.
5. Wingspan, tucson, AZ.
6. Northwest AR GLBT Community Center, bentonville, AR.
7. Pacific Center for Human Growth, Berkeley, CA.
8. Stonewall Alliance Center of Chico, CA.
9. Rainbow Community Center of Contra Costa County, concord, ca.
10. Gay & Gender Research: Davis, CA.
11. Solano Pride Center, Fairfield, CA.
12. The Center Orange County, Garden Grove, CA.
13. Lighthouse Community Center, Hayward, CA.
14. The G&L Center of Greater Long Beach, CA.
15. Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center, CA.
16. Stanislaus Pride Center, Modesto CA.
17. Desert Pride Center, palmsprings, CA.
18. The South Bay LGBT Community Org, Torrance, CA.
19. Lambda Community Center, Sacramento, CA.
20. San Francisco LGBT Community Center, San Francisco, CA.
21. Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center.
22. Ventura County Rainbow Alliance, CA.
23. Aspen GL Community Fund, Aspen, CO.
24. Pikes Peak GL Community Center, Colorado Springs, CO.
25. GLBT Community Center of Colorado, Denver, CO.
26. The Lambda Community Center, Fort Collins CO.
27. Triangle Community Center, Norwalk, CT.
28. CT Pride Center: Hartford, CT.

29. New Haven GL Community Center, New Haven.
30. The Center Home for LGBT in Metro DC.
31. GL Community Center of South Florida, Inc.
32. Pride Community Center of N. Central Florida.
33. The GL Community Center, Key West, FL.
34. Center on Halsted, Chicago, IL.
35. Oak Park Area LG Association, IL.
36. Diversity of Rockford, Inc, Rockford, IL.
37. LGBT Community Center of Central Iowa, Des Moines, IA.
38. GL Service Organization Pride Center of the Bluegrass, Lexington, KY.
39. LG Community Center of New Orleans, LA.
40. LGBT Community Center of Baltimore & Central Maryland.
41. Community Triangle of Washington County, Hagerstown, MD.
42. Affirmations LG Community Center, Inc. Ferndale, MI.
43. The LG Community Network of West Michigan, Inc, Grand Rapids, MI.
44. Kalamazoo GL Resource Center, Kalamazoo, MI.
45. Aurora: a Northland Lesbian Center.
46. Northland Gay Men's Center, Deluth, MN.
47. Pride Collective and Community Center, Moorhead, MN.
48. LG Community Center of Greater Kansas City, MO.
49. GL Community Center of the Ozarks, Springfield, MO.
50. The LGBT Community Center of Metropolitan, St.Louis, MO.
51. Western Montana GL Community Center, Missoula, MT.
52. GL Community Center of S. Nevada, Las Vegas, NV.
53. A Rainbow Place, Reno, NV.
54. Hudson Pride Connections, Jersey City, NJ.
55. The Pride Center of NJ, North Brunswick, NJ.
56. New Mexico GLBT Centers, Mesilla, NM.
57. Capital District GL Community Council, NY, NY.
58. The Audre Lorde Project, Brooklyn, NY.
59. Pride Center of Western NY, Buffalo, NY.
60. Queens Rainbow Community Center, Inc., Queens, NY.
61. LGBT Community Center, NY, NY.
62. Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, Rochester, NY.
63. The LG Community Center of Charlotte: NC.
64. GL Community Center of Greater Cincinnati.
65. Stonewall Columbus Community Center, OH.
66. The Dayton LG Center: OH.
67. Abdill-Ellis Lambda Community Center Assoc, Ashland, OR.
68. Lesbian Community Project, Portland, OR.
69. William Way LGBT Community Center, Philadelphia, PA.
70. G&L Community Center of Pittsburgh, PA.
71. Outstanding Amarillo, TX.
72. Equality Texas, Austin, TX.
73. Johnthomas GL Community Center, Division of Resource Center of Dallas, Inc.

74. Lambda GLBT Community Services, El Paso, TX.
75. Houston LGBT Community Center, Houston, TX.
76. Utah Pride Center, Salt Lake City, UT.
77. RU12? Queer Community Center, Burlington, VT.
78. Richmond Queer Space Project, Richmond, VA.
79. Outkitsap, Bremerton, WA.
80. The Rainbow Center-Olympa, WA.
81. Seattle LGBT Community Center, WA.
82. Rainbow Regional Community Center, Spokane, WA.
83. Rainbow Center, Tacoma, WA.
84. Rainbow Community Center, Inc, Clarksburg, WV.
85. LGBT Community Center of the Chippewa Valley, Eau Claire, WI.
86. The Milwaukee LGBT Community Center, Milwaukee, WI.
87. Wyoming Equality, Cheyenne, WY.

LGBT Veteran Organizations:

1. Military Equality Alliance
2. American Veterans for Equal Rights (formerly called Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America, Inc. (GLBVA)
3. Service members Legal Defense Network
4. Gay and Lesbian Service Members for Equality (GLSME) (www.glsme.org)
5. Military Community Services Network (MCSN) (www.mcsnfamilies.org)
6. Post 448, American Legion (Gay chapter of American Legion) (www.post448.org)
7. Service Academy Gay and Lesbian Alumni (SAGALA) (www.academygala.org)
8. United States Navel Academy "OUT" (www.usnaout.com)
9. Veterans History Project (Library of Congress) (www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/sights.html)

Online LGBT Veteran Groups:

1. gay-veterans@yahoo.com
2. AVERvetsbenefits@yahoo.com
3. citadelgala@yahoo.com

On MySpace.com:

1. Gay Veterans (group)
2. Gay US Veterans (group)
3. Gay Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (group)
4. Lesbian Veterans (group)

On Friendster.com:

1. Gay Veterans (group)

On Facebook.com:

1. Contacted personal contacts via LGBT groups at the University of Connecticut.

Gay veterans with their own websites, who have had public court cases involving DADT:

1. navyviolation@aol.com (Tim McVeigh)
2. keith@navyboy.com (Keith Meinhold)

Online LGBT websites:

1. GLBTQ Encyclopedia of GLBTQ Culture (listed survey under survey section).

Appendix D

Consent Form for Participation

Dear Participant:

I am a Masters Student at the Smith College School for Social Work. The purpose of this study is to collect information to be used for the purpose of research. The focus of this research is LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/ Transgender, Queer and Questioning) military veterans. This data will be used for my Masters of Social Work thesis.

You are invited to participate in this research by filling out an anonymous online survey. Participation in this study requires that you are a veteran of the U.S. military. The survey will include two sections. This should take about forty-five minutes.

The survey will ask you to answer questions related to your experience serving in the military. Some of the questions may cause some distress and/or discomfort. A list of resources will be made available to you, at the end of the survey, if you would like to talk to a mental health practitioner.

Your help is greatly appreciated, the information you provide will be used to further understanding in the mental health field of how military service effects different populations of veterans. The completion of this survey is entirely voluntary.

The information that you provide will be kept completely confidential. Only this researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. If published or presented in public, the data collected in this survey including any identifying or distinguishing information you may provide will be carefully disguised. In addition, by Federal guidelines, all data will be kept locked for a period of three years. After which time, all data will be destroyed when it is no longer needed.

Again, participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time while you are taking the survey and may refuse to answer any question. However, since the survey itself is anonymous, it will not be possible to withdraw after the completion of the survey, since it will not be connected to you.

Thank you again for your help. If you have further questions please contact me:

Kimberly Garland:

kgarland@email.smith.edu

or

Kimberly Garland

Smith College School for Social Work

Lilly Hall,

Northampton Ma

CLICKING ON THE "CONTINUE" BUTTON BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

EXIT SURVEY

CONTINUE

Appendix E

Referrals:

The following is a list of services that you may find helpful:

- **National Association of LGBT Community Centers:**

<http://www.lgbtcenters.org/>

This site connects to LGBT centers across the U.S., most of these centers can refer you to mental health clinicians who are educated about LGBT culture and issues. Also these centers often offer group support surrounding any diverse issues in LGBT communities.

- **GLBT Disabled Veterans:** <http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/1151/enter.html>

This site offers a lot of important information, specifically negotiating the Veterans' Administration for LGBT veterans.

- **Veterans Administration:** <http://www.va.gov/>

Help accessing resources for all veterans, for both physical and mental health issues. Also, please see the National Center for PTSD, which offers great information on the specific issues facing recent veterans: <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>.

- **The Pride Institute:** <http://www.pride-institute.com>

Mental Health programs specific to LGBT people dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues.

- **Gay Lesbian Medical Association:** <http://www.glma.org>

This site offers resources on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual health issues as well as a referral source for finding LGBT focused physical and mental health clinicians.

- **GLBT National Help Center:** <http://www.glnh.org/> **and The GLBT National Hotline: 1-888-THE-GLNH**

The Hotline offers peer counseling for all ages as well as referrals and resources in your area, it is available: Monday thru Friday from 1pm to 9pm, Pacific Time; Saturday from 9am to 2pm, Pacific Time; (Monday thru Friday from 4pm to midnight, Eastern Time; Saturday from Noon to 5pm, Eastern Time).

Appendix F

Demographic Questions:

- 1.) Are you a military veteran, who has served in a recent war conflict (i.e. The Gulf Wars, the War in Afghanistan and/or the current war in Iraq) and is *no longer* serving in the military?

(If “No” participant will be directed to a web page indicating that they regretfully can’t be helpful in this study as it is only for military veterans, if “Yes” they will proceed to demographics.)

- 2.) Please indicate which recent conflict you served in and the approximate dates of your service (Operation Desert Storm or Operation Enduring Freedom, the War in Afghanistan or other: please specify):
- 3.) What branch of the military did you serve in?
- 4.) What was your role? rank?
- 5.) Did you serve in combat? If no, was there an event that you view as traumatic during your time in the service?
- 6.) Please indicate your sexual orientation (gay man, lesbian, same-gender-loving, opposite-gender-loving, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, or if other please specify):
- 7.) Please indicate your gender identity (female, male, male-to-female transsexual, female-to-male transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, intersex, or if other please specify):
- 8.) Please indicate how you identify in terms of race:
- 9.) Did you suffer any disability from your time serving? If so, what was it?

Appendix G

Qualitative Questionnaire:

- 1.) Why did you enter the military? Did your sexual orientation and/or gender identity impact your decision?
- 2.) Do you feel that the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue affected your overall experience as an active service member? If yes, please explain.
- 3.) Do you feel that your sexual orientation and/or gender identity impacted your experience in the military, in general? If yes, please explain.
- 4.) What was the primary way that you coped as an LGBT service member while serving? Was there anything you did that helped you? Was there anything you did that did not help?
- 5.) Who were you out to while serving (check all that apply): Friend, Family, Partner, Other service members, Commanding officer, other—please explain.
- 6.) Who are you out to now (check all that apply): Friends, Family, Partner, Other service members, Other veterans, other—please explain.
- 7.) Do you feel that your sexual orientation and/or gender identity has impacted your life as a veteran? If yes, please explain.
- 8.) How do you cope now as a veteran? Are there any resources, specifically, that help? Are there any resources you have accessed that did not help?
- 9.) What in your opinion is the most important issue effecting sexual minority/gender minority military veterans? Is there anything you would change? Keep the same?

Appendix H

Glossary of Terms

Sexual Orientation

Asexual: Generally, someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Some people who identify as asexual may also identify as any of the above orientations, to indicate those with whom they form romantic, non-sexual attractions (Asexual Visibility and Education Network, 2005).

Bisexual: Generally, a person who is any gender and is attracted to both females and males, either romantically, sexually, or both.

Gay Man: A person who identifies as male and is attracted, either romantically, sexually or both to other males.

Lesbian: A person who identifies as female and is attracted, either romantically, sexually or both to other females.

Opposite-Gender-Loving: Someone who is attracted to people of the opposite gender. This term is sometimes used by racial minorities, to differentiate their identity from LGBT movements, but also is used by transgender people.

Pansexual: Generally used by those who feel that the term “bisexual,” is too limiting in its implication that attraction is only directed towards females and males. This term is used by those who wish to express their attraction (romantic, sexual or both) to people who are not necessarily either female or male (for example, a person who is attracted to transgender people may identify as pansexual).

Same-Gender-Loving: Someone who is attracted to people of the same gender. This term is sometimes used by racial minorities, to differentiate their identity from LGBT movements, but also is used by transgender people (Garland, 2007).

Gender Identity

Cross-Dresser: One who wears the clothes generally thought by society to be those meant for the opposite sex.

Female: A gender identity whereby the person feels most comfortable expressing herself via actions and appearance thought of as “female,” by larger society and being viewed as such.

Female-to-Male Transsexual: Someone born female who identifies as male.

Transgender: Can be a general term for anyone in the transsexual community but can also be used by someone who identifies as the opposite sex than that to which they were born but has not physically made changes to appear this way (e.g. surgery).

Genderqueer: A label used by people who do not necessarily identify as male or female or transgender, but who do not feel that their gender identity fits into dichotomous male or female terms (Garland, 2007).

Intersex: People born with sexual anatomy that does not appear to fit the typical definitions of male or female. Some people born intersex are medically assigned a “sex” and gender role at birth. Intersex activists speak out against these assignments as discriminatory and traumatizing. Some people born intersex decide not to “choose,” to identify as female or male and identify as intersex (Intersex Society of North America, 2006).

Male: A gender identity whereby the person feels most comfortable expressing himself with attributes thought of as “male,” by larger society and being viewed as such (Garland, 2007).

Male-to-Female Transsexual: Someone born male who identifies as female. Most of the time, the term transsexual refers to someone who has made physical changes towards the end of appearing their true gender identity (Garland, 2007).