



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Communication Studies Faculty Works

Communication Studies

2012

"Don't Drop the Soap": Organizing Sexualities in the Repeal of the US Military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy

Craig Rich

Loyola Marymount University, craig.rich@lmu.edu

Julie Kalil Schutten

Northern Arizona University, Julie.Schutten@nau.edu

Richard A. Rogers

Northern Arizona University, Richard.Rogers@nau.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/comm_fac



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rich, C. O., Schutten, J. K., & Rogers, R. (2012). 'Don't drop the soap': Organizing sexualities in the repeal of the US Military's 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy. *Communication Monographs*, 79, 269-291.

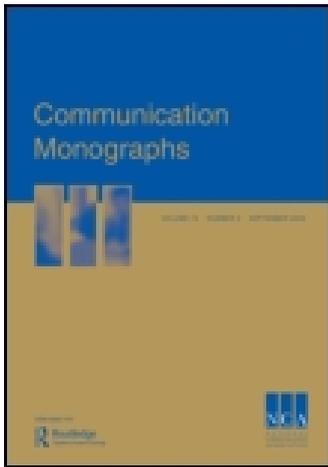
This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Communication Studies at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Communication Studies Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

This article was downloaded by: [Loyola Marymount University]

On: 01 July 2014, At: 15:41

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Communication Monographs

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcmm20>

“Don't Drop the Soap”: Organizing Sexualities in the Repeal of the US Military's “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” Policy

Craig Rich , Julie Kalil Schutten & Richard A. Rogers

Published online: 05 Jul 2012.

To cite this article: Craig Rich , Julie Kalil Schutten & Richard A. Rogers (2012) “Don't Drop the Soap”: Organizing Sexualities in the Repeal of the US Military's “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” Policy, *Communication Monographs*, 79:3, 269-291, DOI: [10.1080/03637751.2012.697633](https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2012.697633)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2012.697633>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

“Don’t Drop the Soap”: Organizing Sexualities in the Repeal of the US Military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Policy

Craig Rich, Julie Kalil Schutten & Richard A. Rogers

Guided by critical, feminist, and queer approaches to organizational communication, this paper critically analyzes the United States military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy and the Department of Defense’s (2010) report recommending DADT’s repeal. Rather than fostering genuine integration, the repeal report reproduces the conditions that marginalize queer soldiers under DADT, relegating gays and lesbians to the hyper-private (closet) while constructing an asexual veneer for the military organization. Such closeting remains necessary due to the threat that “openly” gay men pose to the image of the soldier as an impenetrable predator. Finally, the recommendation to deny sexual orientation the status of a protected difference, as with sex/gender and race, points to the disruption of heteronormative organization evoked by sexual difference.

Keywords: Sexuality; Homosexuality; Masculinity; Heteronormativity; Organization; Military; Hyper-Private

In the debate leading up to the Congressional repeal of the United States military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy in December 2010, Senator John McCain vocally opposed repeal. Before and during the 2008 presidential campaign, McCain said he would consider supporting repeal of DADT when military leaders supported repeal (Dolak, 2010). In February 2010, after the Secretary of Defense and the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated DADT should be repealed, McCain shifted his

Craig Rich (Ph.D., University of Utah, 2009) is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Loyola Marymount University. Julie Kalil Schutten (Ph.D., University of Utah, 2007) is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Northern Arizona University. Richard A. Rogers (Ph.D., University of Utah, 1994) is Professor of Communication Studies at Northern Arizona University. An earlier version of this essay was presented to the Organization for Research on Women and Communication at the annual meeting of the Western States Communication Association, Albuquerque, NM, February 2012. Correspondence to Craig Rich, Department of Communication Studies, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, MS 8231, Los Angeles, CA 90045, USA. E-mail: craig.rich@lmu.edu

criterion to the feelings of service members, consistent with a planned Pentagon study of service members' opinions. In September 2010, prior to release of the study, he criticized its results as failing to research the actual impact on military effectiveness (Mulrine, 2010). In November 2010, the Department of Defense (DOD) released the results of the survey, indicating 70% of service members felt ending the policy would not negatively affect unit readiness (Department of Defense, 2010).

DADT opponents labeled McCain's switch in positions political "flip-flopping," but hegemonic heteromascularity offers another framework for interpreting his shifting rationales. While he used warrants ranging from opinions of military leaders to those of the rank and file, from the will of the electorate to unit cohesion and battleground effectiveness, from methodological issues with the survey to his own military experience (Dolak, 2010; Mulrine, 2010), images of masculinity haunted McCain's discourse. At the Armed Services Committee hearings on December 2, McCain (2010a) criticized the DOD report that recommended repeal for its failure to recognize the nature and significance of the opposition to repealing DADT by *certain* service members. Specifically, while McCain conceded a majority of service members did not feel that the open presence of homosexuals harmed unit effectiveness, he focused on the higher rates of concerns among Army and Marine combat units:

I remain concerned . . . that the closer we get to service members in combat, the more we encounter concerns about whether "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" should be repealed, and what impact that would have on the ability of these units to perform their mission.

Resistance to homosexual service members (specifically, gay men) in combat units is predictable insofar as the military is defined by an ideology of hegemonic masculinity grounded in physical prowess, aggression, domination, and heterosexuality, and combat soldiers are taken to epitomize that ideal (Britton & Williams, 1995; Gibson, 1994; Prividera & Howard, 2006).

Following the pretense that organizations in general and the military specifically are asexual entities, McCain's arguments did not rely on explicit syllogistic appeals to hegemonic heteromascularity, but on apparently "neutral" criteria such as "military effectiveness." In a speech on December 18, McCain (2010b) argued that the decision criterion for DADT's repeal should not be civil rights, equality, or "broader social issues," but what is best for "national security and the military during a time of war":

Mistakes and . . . distractions cost Marines' lives. . . . Marines come back after serving in combat and they say . . . anything that's going to break or potentially break that focus and cause any kind of distraction may have an effect on cohesion. I don't want to permit that . . . to happen and I'll tell you why: If you go up to Bethesda, Marines are up there with no legs, none. We've got Marines at Walter Reed with no limbs. . . . I'm aware that this vote [repealing DADT] will probably pass today. . . . Our military . . . will do what is asked of them, but don't think that it won't be at great cost. . . . An Army Sergeant-Major with five tours in Iraq and Afghanistan . . . said, "Senator McCain, we live together, we sleep together, we eat together—unit cohesion is what makes us succeed." So I hope that when we pass

this legislation, that we will understand that we are doing great damage, and we could possibly and probably . . . harm the battle effectiveness which is so vital to the . . . survival of our young men and women in the military.

“Unit cohesion” was the most frequently invoked reason to maintain the ban on homosexuals serving openly in the military in 2010, as it was in 1993 when DADT was developed (Belkin & Embser-Herbert, 2002; Knapp, 2008). In McCain’s statement, both the presence of out homosexual service members and changes that would be required by repeal are identified as causes of a decline in unit cohesion and, ultimately, injury and death.

Two key elements of McCain’s statement manifest an underlying ideology of masculinity and identify the nature of the threat to the military: feminization. First, the statement quoted above emphasizes the torn and limbless bodies of (presumably male) Marines. These (male) bodies have had their physical capacities and potencies removed—materially mutilated and symbolically castrated. In McCain’s discourse, a clear implication, if not an explicit argument, is that the presence of (male) homosexuals leads to torn, mutilated, and disabled (presumably heterosexual) male bodies—the overt presence of homosexuality leads to violence against (straight, male) soldiers. Second, in the same statement McCain (2010b) described the repeal proponents as located in “the elite schools that bar military recruiters from campus. . . , the salons of Georgetown, and . . . other liberal bastions.” Significantly, the source of mutilation and castration is not identified as an opposing, external hegemonic masculinity (e.g., the Taliban, al-Qaeda) but as feminized forces within the US itself.

While McCain’s discourse on DADT from 2006 to 2010 manifested various irrationalities—inconsistencies, threats, emotional appeals—this is due in part to barriers to articulating the underlying reason for maintaining DADT: not effectiveness, not cohesion, not military or public opinion, but maintenance of the ideological image of the soldier and his heteromascularity. As with our brief review of McCain’s statements, an analysis of military documents regarding DADT and the 2010 DOD report recommending its repeal reveals the overriding concern, the concern that goes to the ideological core of the US military, is not unit cohesion but the threat that homosexuals—especially gay men who are open about their sexual orientation—pose to the image and identity of the soldier as the predator (not prey), as the penetrator (not penetrated), as the dominator (not dominated).

We examine the November 2010 DOD report that recommended repeal of DADT for how it suggests this threat be managed, and thereby demonstrate the underlying ideology of hegemonic heteromascularity remains intact while simultaneously being cloaked in the guise of an asexual military organization. The DOD report’s recommendations reveal that repealing DADT is deemed workable only because what DADT made an organizational mandate—that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/sexual, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals serving in the military closet their queer identities and actions—will continue due to ongoing fears of discrimination. In a total institution such as the military where the organization already colonizes much of the private lives of its members (Goffman, 1961), DADT mandated the creation of

what we call a “hyper-private” realm (the closet) where all nonheterosexual (queer) identifications and behaviors must be hidden. We find that the DOD report’s recommendations for repeal are based precisely on perpetuating this hyper-private realm; however, the report clearly argues that in a post-DADT military the closeting of LGBTQ service members will be accomplished through individual self-regulation in the face of homophobia as opposed to formal policy. Consistent with continued deployment of the hyper-private to contain the threat of homosexuality, the report recommends that sexual orientation *not* be added to gender, race, and other categories as a “protected class” for purposes of discriminatory claims, despite the report’s extensive reliance on analogies between the repeal of DADT and earlier efforts to end racial segregation and widespread gender-based exclusions in the military. The report’s recommendations make clear that sexuality poses unique challenges to the organization that cannot be addressed in the same way as race and sex/gender, resulting in a series of contradictions in the repeal report.

We begin by discussing the intersections of organization, gender, and sexuality, focusing on the insights that flow from recognizing that organizations are both gendered and sexualized. We then review the DADT policy and its repeal, using the DOD’s 2010 report to analyze the nature of the threat posed by openly LGBTQ individuals to the military organizations’ identities and ideologies. We analyze the report’s recommendations for repeal to understand its proposed solution to the “homosexual problem”—the hyper-private—and show this solution perpetuates the conditions under DADT. We argue that the recommendation that sexual orientation not be granted the status of a protected class for purposes of discriminatory claims follows “logically” from the relegation of LGBTQ identities to the hyper-private; that is, little will change in the gendered and sexualized organization of the institution if the DOD report’s recommendations are implemented. We conclude with the broader implications of the hyper-private and the organizational sexualities and pleasures that flow from the centrality and instability of hegemonic heteromale desires.

Organizing Gender, Sexuality, and Control

Organization and communication scholars have argued that organizing and organizational forms are deeply political, shaping identities, relationships, knowledge, and values (Deetz, 1992). Specifically, organizations have proliferated socioculturally contingent binaries (e.g., mind/body, public/private, rationality/emotionality) that structure work places and lives (Clair, 1988). Scholars have critiqued these latent binaries for how they organize differences such as gender and race, and (re)produce the marginalization of women and minorities. In particular, feminist organizational scholars have challenged how organizations project an image of gender neutrality while simultaneously promoting masculinized identities and values over femininity. These studies have illuminated how gender intermingles with organizational forms, work processes, and power relations to advantage masculinities over femininities (Acker, 1990; Ashcraft, 2005; Buzzanell, 2000; Ferguson, 1984; Gherardi, 1995;

Mumby, 1993). This scholarship has challenged hegemonic forms of masculinity and gendered arrangements for how they oppress women, men, and minorities in contemporary organizations.

Similarly, feminist and queer scholars have interrogated normative constructions of sexuality and organization (e.g., Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sheriff, & Burrell, 1989). Gherardi (1995) contends, “sexuality [i]s that dynamic of organizing which is left unsaid” (p. 42), especially in light of organizational efforts and discourses aimed at suppressing sexuality and constructing organizations as asexual (Acker, 1990; Burrell, 1984, 1992; Burrell & Hearn, 1989; Gherardi). Desexualization of organizations often takes the form of efforts to situate sexuality within the private sphere and separate it from the market and workplace. As Acker notes in advancing a theory of organizations as inescapably gendered, “sexuality, procreation, and emotions all intrude upon and disrupt the ideal functioning of the organization, which tries to control such interferences” (p. 152). Large organizations like armies or factories historically controlled sexuality by excluding or segregating women from men as well as stressing heterosexuality or celibacy, especially given the potential for homosexual desire to interfere with disciplinary order in all-male organizations (Acker; Burrell). As a result, organizational efforts to control sexuality subtly normalized certain forms of male heterosexuality in public while privatizing or pathologizing women’s sexuality and homosexuality.

Despite desexualization efforts, scholars have highlighted that “far from being marginal to the workplace, sexuality is everywhere” (Pringle, 1989b, p. 162). One vein of this work has been studies of sexual harassment, or sets of sexualized, discriminatory, and unwelcome communicative interactions that operate as “a discursive political tool of oppression” (Clair, 1994, p. 59). Considering its oppressive functions, Acker (1990) concludes, “symbolically, a certain kind of male heterosexual sexuality plays an important part in legitimating organizational power” (p. 153). Compared to women’s sexuality, Collinson and Collinson (1989) observe that organizations typically ignore, tolerate, or accept traditional forms of male sexuality, affording it an in/visible status. Male sexuality offers men a resource to maintain their masculinity, build homosocial bonds, assert power to cope with their own subordination, and declare their dominance over women and other men (Collinson, 1988; Hearn, 1985; Roper, 1996).

More recently, scholars have addressed the experiences of sexual minorities, or LGBTQ individuals, in organizations. Unlike women and minorities who are federally protected from workplace discrimination, prejudice and inequity against workers who are or are perceived to be queer remains legal in many US workplaces (Badgett, 1995, 2007; Lewis, 2009). Although 15 states and the District of Columbia currently ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (five additional states protect only sexual orientation), a recent study by the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy finds that 27% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees and 78% of transgender workers report experiencing some form of workplace discrimination or harassment, negatively affecting wages, hiring, promotion, retention, health, and job satisfaction (Sears & Mallory, 2011).

For queer workers, heteronormativity is a common, negative feature of organizational life, often colluding with hegemonic gendered arrangements that value heteromascularity. As a result, many LGBTQ workers closet their sexual identities and desires due to fears of job security, discrimination, harassment, and violence, often employing passing strategies to conceal or manage their sexual identities (Hall, 1989; Miller, Forest, & Jurik, 2003; Spradlin, 1998; Woods & Lucas, 1993). Queer workers exist in a socially constructed negative space, a silence around non-normative sexualities that results from a heterosexual majority's refusal to participate in discussions of sexuality (Ward & Winstanley, 2003). Additionally, professional values and images further closet gay and lesbian workers (Miller, Forest, & Jurik; Rich, 2009; Tracy & Scott, 2006; Ward & Winstanley, 2006). Gays and lesbians commonly face not only an informal "don't ask, don't tell" policy, but sets of organizational discourses that normalize heterosexual and "other" LGBTQ identities and desires.

Admittedly, the US military is in many ways not a typical organization, but a total institution colonizing almost all elements of its members' lives (Goffman, 1961). However, despite significant differences in terms of gender and sexuality, the military is not entirely discontinuous with other organizations: a pretense of gender-neutrality is upheld, masculine identities and images constitute the unspoken but ubiquitous norm, and heterosexuality is thoroughly naturalized. Socialization into the gendered and sexual norms of the military is not only provided within the organization, but is present in the culture at large via media representations of the military, soldiers, and war (Gibson, 1994; Prividera & Howard, 2006), raising both internal organizational dynamics and external ideological investments on the part of politicians, media institutions, and the public. News coverage, fiction, and interactive forums such as video games serve to instill norms, values, identities, and ideologies concerning the military that reach beyond military institutions and members (Gibson; Prividera & Howard). The "war hero" image—"independent, disciplined, strong, sexually potent, and above all masculine" (Prividera & Howard, p. 31)—tops the popular military image. Many analyses of the post-World War II "crisis in masculinity" identify dominant workplace norms as one cause of the perceived crisis, feminizing male workers (Ashcraft & Flores, 2000; Faludi, 1999), whereas the image of the military remains a homosocial refuge from feminizing forces (Gibson, 1994).

The military organization offers important insights into gendered organization amid shifting sexual politics. Considering organizations' historical efforts to relegate sexuality to the private sphere, and queer sexualities and desires to the closet, Pringle (1989a) asks, "Which pleasures if any might threaten masculinity or disrupt rationality?" (p. 177). Consistent with this call, we use the recent repeal of the US military's DADT policy as a case study. This critical organizational communication analysis offers scholars an opportunity to explore organizations' dis-ease with queer identities and desires as well as their potential threat to heteromascularity and organizational rationality. Such an examination also offers difference studies scholars a means to critically examine organizational efforts toward sexual integration.

Queers and the Military

The history of the US military's formal management of homosexuality long predates the 1993 Congressional statute known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Beginning in 1917 with the enactment of Article 93 of the Articles of War, the military used sodomy prohibitions to discharge gays and lesbians during World War I and II. In 1949, the DOD standardized military personnel regulations and policies on homosexuality such that "homosexual personnel, irrespective of sex, should not be permitted to serve in any branch of the Armed Services in any capacity and prompt separation of known homosexuals from the Armed Forces be made mandatory" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 20). Revisions of this policy in 1959 and 1975 articulated homosexual acts and sodomy with "sexual perversion" or "other aberrant sexual tendencies" respectively as justification for discharge (Department of Defense, p. 20). By the early 1980s, however, justification for the discharge of gays and lesbians shifted away from rationales based on homosexuality as sexual perversion to homosexuality as incompatible with and a threat to military effectiveness, sowing the seeds for the DADT policy.

The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1993 was the compromise outcome of Clinton's campaign promise to repeal the ban on military service by homosexuals. The DADT law states:

That a member of the armed forces shall be separated from the armed forces if it is found that he or she: 1. Has engaged in, attempted to engage in, or solicited another to engage in a homosexual act or acts. 2. Has stated that he or she is a homosexual or bisexual, or words to that effect. 3. Has married or attempted to marry a person known to be of the same biological sex. (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 19)

Under DADT recruits were not actively screened (*Hot Topics*, 2000). Unless they stated that they were homosexual or were discovered to have participated in "homosexual acts," as defined by the three conditions cited above, homosexuals could serve (*Hot Topics*). More than 13,000 "separations" occurred under DADT (Department of Defense, 2010). In the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama promised to end the ban on "open service" by gays and lesbians, and in December 2010 Congress passed, and President Obama signed into law, the repeal of DADT. Pursuant to the law, the President, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certified the military's readiness to implement the repeal of DADT, and the repeal took effect on September 20, 2011.

Our analysis explores the DADT policy and recommendations for its repeal presented in the November 2010 *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell* by the Department of Defense (DOD), hereafter referred to as the DOD repeal report (Department of Defense, 2010). The 151-page (excluding appendices) report was primarily based on a survey of 115,052 US military members. The report has three functions: (1) to document how repealing DADT would affect military readiness, (2) to outline policy

recommendations for repeal implementation, and (3) to address opponents' concerns.

Based on this third exigency, our analysis focuses on concerns over and opposition to repeal expressed by some military members via the survey, and how these concerns shaped the report's policy recommendations. The report indicates a substantial majority of service members did not feel that repeal will have substantial negative effects; however, we focus on negative responses discussed in the report in order to understand how the concerns of those in the military, as well as outside of it (e.g., Senator McCain), articulate a particular understanding of the military organization and shaped the report's policy recommendations. Our discussion of DADT and the repeal report is divided into three sections: the "problem" posed by the open service of homosexuals, which is an inversion of the predator/prey relationship; the "solution" to this problem, which is the creation of a "hyper-private" closet for LGTBQ identities; and finally the "outcome," or how the logic of both DADT and the repeal report's support of "open service" leads to a rejection of sexual orientation as a protected class akin to race and gender.

The Problem: Predator/Prey Inversion

The discourse generated around the development of DADT in 1993 identified homosexuality in general, and open identification as a gay man in particular, as a threat to the US military's ideological understanding of the (male) soldier's masculinity (Britton & Williams, 1995; Brouwer, 2004). This threat was equally evident in the discourse surrounding consideration of repeal in 2010, including the DOD repeal report, and is based on the image and ideology of the soldier. As illustrated in discourse generated around DADT, its marketing materials, and its internal discursive practices, the military glorifies male masculinity defined in terms of physical strength, dominance over others, invulnerability, and discipline (Gibson, 1994; Michaelowski, 1982; Privera & Howard, 2006). In addition, both mainstream media representations and military discourse make clear that the male soldier is not only hegemonically hypermasculine, but decidedly heterosexual, with heteromascu- line desire linked closely with violence (Britton & Williams; Griffin, 1992). The soldier is predator, not prey; invulnerable, not vulnerable; the penetrator, not the penetrated.

To create the ideal soldier, femininity must be purged to attain a purely hegemonic and heterosexual masculinity; purging the feminine also includes overt rejection of male homosexuality. As Thompson (2001) writes of military masculinity, "when you want to create a group of male killers, you kill the 'woman' in them" (p. 207). Male homosexuality threatens the soldier archetype because gay men are stereotypically feminine and weak. To be feminine is to be the object of the gaze, a vulnerable and penetrable prey. Therefore, "open service" by gay men is inconsistent with the desired image and identity of the soldier. As identified in the DOD repeal report (2010), a common concern among service members is that "gay men will act in a

stereotypically effeminate manner” (p. 122) or they will be “flamboyant” (p. 79), thereby “tarnishing the image of the military” (p. 79).

While gay men embody and perform multiple masculinities (Kendall & Martino, 2006; Nardi, 2000), this variability is obscured in American culture by the dominant image of gay men as excessively feminine: “The effeminate gay male confirms straight society’s representation and normalization of gay men as lacking masculinity” (Martino, 2006, p. 39). In reaction to this feminized representation, some gay men adopt hypermasculinized performances or a straight-acting gay identity, which is “positioned in opposition to cultural stereotypes of gay men that conflate femininity with homosexuality” and conforms to heteromale ideals (Clarkson, 2006, p. 192; see also Clarkson, 2005; Eguchi, 2009; Martino). In these ways, some gay men embody a normative hypermasculinity marked by physical strength and size, discipline, and a rejection of male femininity. Interestingly, the repeal report employs stereotypes of both the feminine and the hypermasculine gay man.

The DOD repeal report (2010) points out that stereotyped perceptions are more widespread among those answering survey questions about an “*imagined* gay Service member who is ‘open’ about his or her sexual orientation” compared to “the perception of the gay Service member that people know and work with” (p. 122). In the context of discussing warfighting units—Senator McCain’s area of concern—the report discusses the “misperception that a gay man does not ‘fit’ the image of a good warfighter—a misperception that is almost completely erased when a gay service member is allowed to prove himself alongside fellow warfighters” (Department of Defense, p. 126). While this promises further progress in attitudes towards LGBTQ service members in a post-DADT military, the anecdote that the report authors chose in support of this argument directly reinforces the hegemonically masculine image of the soldier that undergirds the rejection of homosexuals serving openly: “As one special operations force warfighter told us, ‘We have a gay guy. He’s big, he’s mean, and he kills lots of bad guys. No one cared that he was gay’” (p. 126). In other words, performance is what matters, but the performance standard remains hegemonic hypermasculinity.

Statistical survey results and the aforementioned anecdotes comprise a substantial part of the DOD repeal report’s rejection of the primary argument for maintaining DADT: that open service is a threat to unit cohesion. As the report explains, unit cohesion comprises task and social cohesion. Task cohesion is the ability to accomplish a mission; social cohesion refers to emotional bonds and trust (Department of Defense, 2010). The repeal report rejects this argument based on survey results as well as the lack of a clear link between low social cohesion and low task cohesion. Despite this, concerns of service members surveyed still surround the social aspects of military life. We argue that this concern with social cohesion narrowly and task cohesion more broadly is a socially acceptable cover for the underlying fear: a reversal of the predator/prey relationship.

At the heart of this predator/prey reversal and its symptomatic anxieties regarding unit cohesion is the potential corruption of homosocial networks. A key feature of military ideology, identity, and social interaction—albeit one complicated by

increasing gender-integration in the services—is homosocial bonding and its attendant desires. Homosocial desire thrives within instrumental environments, reproduces male power and exclusionary networks, and is “a distinctive category of intimacy in formally heterosexual settings which presents as nonsexual but which nevertheless involves potentially erotic desires” (Roper, 1996, p. 213; Sedgwick, 1985). In light of the potential slippage between the homosocial and the homoerotic, male homosocial relations are heavily policed to ensure that the intense male intimacy produced within homosocial desire is divorced from the possibility of (homo)eroticism to avoid feminization and homosexualization. The military is a homosocial institution, but any attendant homoeroticism and its threat of homosexual desire must remain ideologically invisible, as evidenced by the DADT policy and opposition to its repeal (Britton & Williams, 1995). While certainly the military manages the presence of homosocial/erotic slippage in a multitude of ways (Britton & Williams; Flood, 2008), the DOD repeal report does not address the presence of homoeroticism among heterosexual soldiers, but only in terms of some service members’ expressed fear of predatory gay men.¹

As reflected in the DOD repeal report (2010) and existing scholarship on DADT (Belkin & Embser-Herbert, 2002; Britton & Williams, 1995; Brouwer, 2004; Knapp, 2008), the “shower scene” is a ubiquitous feature of opposition to open service. Britton and Williams wrote after implementation of DADT, “no contemporary discussion [of allowing homosexuals to serve openly in the military] is complete without the requisite ‘shower scene’ in which gay men . . . gaze licentiously at unsuspecting heterosexuals” (p. 9). While one interpretation is that showering with homosexuals violates the privacy of heterosexual soldiers (Belkin & Embser-Herbert), the more pressing issue, and the one consistent with the threat to military masculinity, is the fear of being objectified and preyed upon. If gay men can perform hypermasculinity—embodying ideals of strength, dominance, and virility—then to what extent can they embody a stereotypically male hypersexuality, taking the male body and its conquest as its object of desire? Based on our review of military masculinity, the soldier is defined by a hypermasculine ideal and seen as a dominating predator. Reversal of the predator/prey relationship (the soldiers’ loss of predator status and transformation into prey) can be understood as a reversal of the objectifying gaze, a fear of seduction, and, most viscerally, a fear of being penetrated. “Heterosexual men are most concerned about that moment when they ‘drop the soap’ and bend down to pick it up, exposing themselves to the possibility of penetration” (Britton & Williams, p. 10).

The DOD repeal report does not recommend separate facilities for showers or housing; however, because this concern was raised by a “very large number of service members,” the authors felt “obliged to address it” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 12):

Most concerns we heard about showers and bathrooms were based on stereotype—that gay men and lesbians will behave as *predators* in these situations, or that permitting homosexual and heterosexual people of the same sex to shower together is tantamount to allowing men and women to shower together. However, common

sense tells us that a situation in which people of different anatomy shower together is different from a situation in which people of the same anatomy but different sexual orientations shower together. The former is uncommon and unacceptable to almost everyone in this country; the latter is a situation most in the military have already experienced. Indeed, the survey results indicate that 50% of Service members recognized they have already had the experience of sharing bathroom facilities with someone they believed to be gay. (Department of Defense, p. 13; emphasis added)

The fear of sexual predation by gay male service members can be understood in two mutually reinforcing ways. The first is the widespread stereotype of gay men as sexual predators (Harding, 2007; Levine, 1992). The second is the projection of hegemonic heteromale desire and its basis in a predator identity onto gay men. As Bordo (1993) notes, “although it is the imaged effeminacy of homosexual men that makes them the objects of heterosexual derision, here it is their imagined *masculinity* . . . that makes them the objects of heterosexual fear” (emphasis in original, p. 718). If homosexuals were allowed in the military, some heterosexual soldiers might be fearful of becoming prey—be it on the level of the licentious gaze or outright nonconsensual penetration (Britton & Williams, 1995). In line with the high frequency of male-female sexual assault in the military (Department of Defense, 2011), the hypermasculine, hypersexual gay soldier would indeed hunt and be on top of his prey. Reversal of the predator/prey roles violates cultural scripts of heteromale, threatening the identity on which the military is ideologically based. The apparent contradiction between concern over “flamboyant,” effeminate gay men violating the image of the military and fear of the gay male predator is not addressed by the report, but both manifest anxiety over losing the appropriate predator identity.

A key point in support of the argument that opposition to open service specifically, and homosexuality in the military more generally, is based on its threat to hegemonic masculinity is the virtual absence of discussions of lesbians in the discourse (aside from generic references to “gays and lesbians”). This is the case not only in the DOD repeal report (2010), but is also noted by others who have analyzed DADT discourses (Britton & Williams, 1995; Brouwer, 2004). Following our argument, lesbians do not constitute as much of an ideological threat because they are not seen as having the ability to penetrate, and the ideological construct of the male soldier is not threatened by their presence with direct feminization. Interestingly, however, military data indicate that lesbians were three times more likely to be involuntarily separated under DADT than men (eight times more likely in the Marines). This dynamic perhaps emerged due to the overall threat that the presence of lesbians pose to the gender-exclusive, heteromale definition of the soldier as well as the attendant homosocial configurations that support male social networks and status (Britton & Williams). The disparity between the discursive absence of lesbians and actual policy implementation supports our argument that the threat of open service is the inversion of the predator/prey relationship and the overall view that military identity is normatively masculine. Women in the military threaten the institutional ideology

by challenging homosociality and male privilege, and lesbians specifically challenge heteronormativity, but neither homosexual nor heterosexual women threaten men with penetration.

What is evident in the DADT discourse is that the primary focus of opposition to repeal is the ideology and identity on which the institution is based, and less so the sexual orientation of the actual bodies involved. The shower scene, especially the “don’t drop the soap” variant, is an imagined threat unsupported by systematic evidence. That the primary threat is ideological (abstract) is further supported by the DOD report’s (2010) statistical evidence that there are fewer perceived problems with actual gay service members in comparison to “imagined” gay service members. At the imagination level, ideology is in full force, unconstrained by concrete interpersonal relationships and the behavior of bodies encountered in organizational contexts. Although the report itself emphasizes empirical evidence regarding the experience of other militaries around the world, statistical survey results, and anecdotes of openly gay service members serving effectively in combat units, the solution and accompanying rationale that the report offer further support our contention that the ideology of hegemonic heteromascularity remains the underlying warrant.

The Solution: Relegation to the Hyper-Private

One solution to the threat posed by “open” homosexuals in the military’s homosocial and heterocentric environment would be eliminating sexuality, a move consistent with dominant understandings of organizations as asexual. This ideology is reflected in the DOD repeal report (2010), which describes the desired military policy as “sexual orientation-neutral” (p. 127). It argues that no new policies on homosexual conduct are needed because existing policies regarding (hetero)sexual relations between soldiers (fraternization) can be enforced in a sexual-orientation neutral manner. In response to concerns over privacy in living quarters and showers, the repeal report specifically recommends that the DOD “expressly prohibit berthing or billeting assignments based on sexual orientation” (p. 13); “separate facilities would . . . stigmatize gay and lesbian Service members reminiscent of ‘separate but equal’ facilities for blacks” (p. 12). Sexual difference should be ignored, and sexual relations should be relegated to contexts and relationships that will not affect organizational practices.

However, any attempt to create a climate of asexuality is flawed because the core definition of soldier is a predatory, penetrative male. Organizations such as the military actively constitute and channel sexuality via linkages between violence and sexual release (Gibson, 1994), pornographic objectification (Griffin, 1992), and gay bashing (Michaelowski, 1982). Therefore, any claim to be asexual merely obscures the institution’s heteromascularity foundation. The impossibility of escaping sexuality is minimally present in the report: As an exception to the recommendation regarding living arrangements, “commanders should retain the authority to alter berthing or billeting assignments on an individualized, case-by-case basis, in the interest of maintaining morale, good order, and discipline” (Department of Defense,

2010, p. 141). There is, therefore, some acknowledgment that, unlike other workplaces, the total nature of the military (Goffman, 1961) presents challenges to its asexual operation. Nevertheless, neutrality remains the proposed solution.

Despite the stated goal of neutrality, we see in both DADT and the DOD repeal report (2010) a different solution, one based on the public/private dichotomy: the hyper-private. The private refers to the arenas of domesticity and home, personal relations and intimacy, and reproduction, and the public describes “the outside world of paid labor, of government, and of those institutions . . . outside of the home” (Ferguson, 1984, p. 8). Private expressions are personal, spontaneous, and emotional, whereas public discursive forms are in public view, controlled, and rational (Clair, 1994). However, in the context of total institutions (Goffman, 1961) like the military, the public and private are largely collapsed, as the institution colonizes and controls aspects of the private that many organizations do not. Therefore, relegation of (homo)sexuality to the private is not viable for creating the illusion of asexual organization.

The DADT policy largely collapses the public/private distinction. Under DADT, “sexual orientation is defined as a personal, private matter; an abstract preference for persons of a particular sex, as distinct from a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts” (*Hot Topics*, 2000, p. 4). DADT allows individual soldiers to retain their private identity as homosexual, but prohibits homosexual acts, which are (in the military context) “public”—legitimate objects of control, even if they occur off-duty or off-base. Further, the organization’s intrusion into its members’ private lives extends into arenas that in the civilian world would be private. For example, the US Army’s DADT publication *Dignity and Respect* (2001) explains, “you should know that with limited exceptions anything you say to an army health professional, including a mental health professional, is not automatically confidential” (p. 16). The result is only a few restricted areas—basically, the soldier’s own thoughts and feelings—where LGBTQ identity can manifest. DADT constructs a hyper-private space that relegates homosexuality to the closet to protect the heteronormative ideology and identity of the soldier. On the surface, repeal of DADT appears to open discussion and allow LGBTQ service members the choice to be “out” without risking separation, indicating the shrinkage or even erasure of the hyper-private.

However, close analysis of recommendations in the repeal report indicates a continuation of the hyper-private, albeit via different mechanisms of control. One factor considered by the DOD repeal report (2010) is the disclosure of sexual orientation. The report concluded that if repeal were to happen,

there will not be a mass “coming out” of gay Service members, as some predict. . . . For the most part and at least in the short term, gay Service members would continue to be selective and discreet about whom they share information about their sexual orientation with, for reasons having nothing to do with the law and everything to do with a sheer desire to fit in, co-exist, and succeed in the military environment. (p. 123)

In the words of service members quoted in the report, gay service members will not “go up to people and say, hi there—I’m gay” or “announce to everyone that I am gay” (p. 124). However,

a frequent response among Service members at information forums, when asked about the widespread recognition that gay men and lesbians are already in the military, is yes, but I don’t *know* they are gay. Put another way, the concern with repeal among many is with “open” service. (p. 122)

The focus on *knowing* whether or not a service member is gay reinforces reliance on the hyper-private. “As one gay former Service member told us, to fit in, co-exist, and conform to social norms, gay men have learned to avoid making heterosexuals feel uncomfortable or threatened in these [bathroom] situations” (Department of Defense, p. 13). Maintenance of the hyper-private was confirmed by a service member stating, “I think if it is lifted not a lot of members will come out. They are your coworkers and things will stay where they are. If we didn’t know you were gay by now, it is unlikely that you will tell us” (Department of Defense, p. 59). Furthermore, the report contends the reluctance of gay members to “out themselves” would be even higher in warfighting units, a site of particular concern for repeal opponents.

Three points follow from the repeated reassurances in the DOD report (2010) that repeal of DADT will not result in service members coming out. First, the concern is not only serving with homosexuals, but more so *knowing* that one is serving with homosexuals, which relates directly to the imagined threat of objectification and penetration. Second, maintaining the hyper-private closet as it existed under DADT is seen as desirable. Third, the DOD report (2010) indicates that homosexual soldiers understand that the military controls their private life in a way not controlled for heterosexuals, and it would not be in their interests to be out due to potential conflicts, discrimination, or outright abuse. In other words, the report’s recommendations are built on the assumption that what was mandated by law under DADT will continue as a result of LGBTQ service members self-policing. In contrast to the view of homosexuals (specifically gay men) as unable to control their sexuality, the report portrays homosexual service members as rational decision-makers who know better than to take unnecessary risks by outing themselves. In short, the homophobia present in military culture will ensure the same outcome as the legal force of involuntary separation under DADT.

The report positions homosexual soldiers as ideal neo-liberal subjects (Sender, 2006): persons not requiring the force of law to maintain both self-discipline and the larger social order, but who make “free” and “rational” choices that support that order. This is exemplified in a service member’s statement that “gay men have learned to avoid making heterosexuals feel uncomfortable or threatened” (p. 13)—in other words, the effect of self-policing is not only self-protection, but protection of the image and identity of the heteromale soldier. LGBTQ soldiers are entrusted with maintaining the military’s heteronormative, homosocial order because the repeal report presumes and/or encourages a kind of homonormativity. As explicated by Duggan (2003), homonormativity is the incorporation of heterocentric practices by

LGBTQ citizens as an outcome of a neoliberal sexual politics. Such homonormativity “does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (p. 50; see also Puar, 2007). In a post-DADT military, self-policing leads queer soldiers to remain closeted in the hyper-private, and thereby leaves uncontested the heteronormative and patriarchal image of the soldier that remains at the military’s core. By “choosing” to remain in the hyper-private, queers in the military are privatized and depoliticized—“domesticated” in that their sexuality remains in the “home” or “bedroom” as well as in the sense of “tamed.” While not necessarily intentional, the report’s recommendations offer a strategy not to sexually integrate the military but to lessen political awareness, motivation, and agency among queer soldiers insofar as the source of their subordination becomes not the official military institution and attendant laws but their own consciousness and personal attitudes of other service members.

This analysis of the recommendations for a post-DADT military reveals how policing the institution’s core ideology will be reconfigured without necessarily reconfiguring the underlying ideology and identity of predatory, penetrative masculinity. Much resistance to repeal comes from the level of the ideological in comparison to lived, bodily interactions, even as the latter are mediated by the former. Neither DADT nor the recommended post-repeal policies remove daily interactions between heterosexual and queer service members—resistance to DADT’s repeal comes not only from a desire to eliminate homosexuals in the military, but to maintain the *idea* that they are not present in order to maintain an image, identity, and mental invulnerability to penetration. Homonormative self-policing functions to protect that idea while retaining the same kind of presence for sexual minorities as existed under DADT.

The Outcome: Organizing Difference and Sexual Hierarchies

DADT and the DOD repeal report are bureaucratic efforts to organize difference and sexual hierarchies. Due to the threat homosexuality poses to the institution, the DADT policy and its repeal (re)produce a hyper-private sphere for queer identities and desires. However, another dynamic emerged around sexual orientation’s categorization alongside other differences, namely sex/gender and race. The repeal report frames the military as asexual, analogizes but also differentiates sexual orientation from other differences, and rejects the option of sexual minorities being named a protected class. Through these discursive moves, DADT and its repeal construct sexual difference as a depoliticized difference not worth protecting. The lack of formal protection of sexual minorities akin to sex/gender and race furthers the likelihood that queer soldiers will self-regulate, keeping their sexuality in the hyper-private.

The DOD repeal report (2010) frames the military as an asexual institution, especially in the context of DADT’s repeal:

Repeal would work best if it is accompanied by a message and policies that promote fair and equal treatment of all Service members, minimize differences among Service members based on sexual orientation, and disabuse Service members of any notion that, with repeal, gay and lesbian Service members will be afforded some kind of special treatment. (Department of Defense, p. 131).

Although on its surface minimizing sexual difference would appear to foster “fair and equal treatment,” these appeals carry the subtext that queers must accommodate the normative sensibilities of heterosexual soldiers. For instance, soldiers opposed to repeal voiced concerns that gays’ and lesbians’ “open service” would breach military conduct standards: “They should just sustain the standard. I don’t like flamboyant queers,” “Flamboyant behavior by any members should not be allowed or tolerated,” or “Some will be flamboyant; they might get a beating” (Department of Defense, pp. 52–53). These statements underscore gay and lesbian soldiers’ need to minimize their sexuality to accommodate homophobic sensibilities, with “flamboyant” being used to mark the abnormal, deviant, and threatening, and adopt the heteromale norms of military culture to gain acceptance. Minimization of sexual differences operates less to create a “sexual orientation neutral” organization than to leave intact the organization’s heteronormativity and to cultivate homonormativity among homosexual service members.

Furthermore, the DOD repeal report (2010) strategically employs analogies between sex/gender, race, and sexual orientation in order to liken but differentiate amongst these differences as it recommends sexual integration of the military. For example, the report draws upon the military’s racial and gender integration as part of its risk analysis on the DADT repeal: “Although there are fundamental differences between matters of race, gender and sexual orientation,” the racial and gender integration of the military “present some useful historical lessons” (p. 81). These lessons include the tendency “to overestimate the negative consequences . . . and underestimate the US military’s ability to adapt and incorporate . . . diversity” (p. 128). However, the report also acknowledges problems in these integrative efforts: “incidents of racial hostility . . . tensions . . . [and] outbreaks of racial violence” emerged (p. 84), and “the integration of women has not been without incident,” citing “multiple cases of sexual assault and rape” (p. 87).

Despite invoking analogies to the military’s sex/gender and racial integration, sexual orientation is sharply differentiated from race and gender, namely in institutional support and recognition. In the case of sexual orientation integration, the report recommends “a minimalist approach to changes in policies, and education and training to reiterate existing policies in a sexual orientation-neutral manner” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 7). Gays and lesbians should “be treated under the same general principles of military equal opportunity policy that applies to all Service members . . . to promote an environment free from personal, social, or institutional barriers” (p. 136). Yet the “perceived ‘equal treatment’ of all Service members is key” to the sexual integration of the military: “Throughout the force, rightly or wrongly, we heard both subtle and overt resentment toward ‘protected groups’ of people and the possibility that gay men and lesbians could . . . suddenly be elevated to a special status,” and therefore gay and lesbian soldiers “will be accepted more readily if the

military community understands that they are simply being permitted equal footing with everyone else” (p. 137). In offering gays and lesbians equal opportunity, the valuing of sexual difference to enhance organizational diversity is sidestepped in favor of managing perceptions that sexual minorities are being privileged.

Perhaps most troublesome with this organization of sexual difference is the lack of policy-based recognition and institutional support to promote a culture of sexual equality: “We do *not* recommend that the Department of Defense place sexual orientation alongside race, color, religion, sex, and national origin as a class eligible for various diversity programs, tracking initiatives, and . . . complaint resolution processes” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 137). This recommendation assumes an “equal footing” between heterosexual and queer soldiers, that prior to and during personnel evaluation or promotion decisions all sexualities have been afforded equal opportunities. In light of wage disparities (Badgett, 1995), job segregation that clusters gays and lesbians into lower-paying jobs and specialties (Hewitt, 1995; Rich, 2009; Whitman, 1983), and other forms of inequality and harassment (Badgett, 2007; Lewis, 2009; Spradlin, 1998; Woods & Lucas, 1993), even in organizations considered “gay friendly” (Guiffre, Dellinger, & Williams, 2008), this assumption of hetero/homosexual “equal footing” denies commonplace discrimination faced by gay and lesbian workers and leaves untouched heterosexual privilege and heteronormativity.

The denial of sexual orientation as an institutionally recognized difference introduces complications in instances of harassment and abuse. The report states that the DOD

should make clear that harassment or abuse based on sexual orientation is unacceptable and that all Service members are to treat one another with dignity and respect regardless of sexual orientation. Complaints regarding discrimination, harassment, or abuse based on sexual orientation would be dealt with through existing mechanisms available for complaints not involving race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. . . . (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 138)

By differentiating sexuality from sex and race, the military differentiates homophobia from racism and sexism, which are afforded alternative, protected channels to address and remedy discrimination or harassment. The lack of protections afforded to gay and lesbian soldiers materialize vulnerabilities surrounding “open service,” encouraging queer soldiers to stay closeted as a protective mechanism. While race and sex/gender cannot easily be closeted, queer sexualities can be, thereby maintaining the heterocentrism of the institution via the hyper-private.

According to several queer and other critical scholars, the use of analogies between sexual minorities and categories of race and sex/gender difference are both widespread and problematic, such as in some civil rights efforts for LGBTQ individuals (e.g., same-sex marriage). First, such analogies erase meaningful differences among differences, making all differences the same; as Joseph (2002) explains, “analogy presupposes the autonomy of each incorporated community, thus erasing the prior history and current dynamics by which the community is constituted” (p. xxxv). For example, the analogies between DADT repeal and the

military's race and gender integrations both suspend the historical and political struggles surrounding these identities and downplay ongoing cases of discrimination.

Second, the use of analogy works through parallels between what are seen as separate and unrelated spheres (Joseph, 2002), thereby denying the operation of intersectionality in the production of difference and attendant systems of oppression (Puar, 2007). For example, analogies between sexual orientation and gender posit each as discrete domains (Joseph). While the report implicitly demonstrates the ideological threat is gay men, the use of an analogy between gender and sexuality presumes conditions facing gay men and lesbians are the same. Similarly, the race/sexuality analogy assumes race and sexual orientation are distinct identities, denying that a gay African American male may face different forms of discrimination than a gay White male (an especially important point given the predominant construction of the "safe" gay man as White middle class). Another outcome of the analogy of equivalence between two separate spheres is the essentializing of the categories; the race/sexuality analogy, for example, "produces Whiteness as the queer norm (and straightness as a racial norm), and fosters anti-intersectional analyses that posit sexual identity as 'like' or 'parallel to' race" (Puar, p. 118).

The report's use of analogies to racial and gender integration also illustrates organizational irrationalities created in response to sexual difference. The report uses the military's racial and gender integration as successful models of diversity initiatives, pointing out concerns over military effectiveness and institutional/cultural resistance were ultimately overblown. The report thereby argues that concerns over "open service" are also overblown. However, the analogy between sexual minorities and racial minorities or women is abandoned when it comes to institutional protections. On this point, existing attitudes in the military (and society at large) over special privileges/rights (e.g., affirmative action) are used to reverse the application of the analogy, arguing in effect that "we don't want to go down that path again"—that is, we must go out of our way to make clear that we are not offering sexual minorities any "special protections." In other words, not only are LGBTQ service members encouraged to remain in the closet and pass as straight, but they are not allowed out of the closet in the face of discrimination or even violence because they only have access to "existing mechanisms available for complaints not involving race, color, sex, religion, or national origin" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 138). We identify this as an irrationality insofar as the report selectively invokes and rejects the analogy to race/gender without any particular reasoning for these selections. While the reasoning presented is that identifying sexual orientation as a protected category creates a perception of special rights, and is counterproductive (even if erroneous), no attempt is made to address why the existing protected categories like race and sex will remain protected. It would appear that what is unspoken within this irrationality is fear of public queer organizational sexualities. Making sexual orientation a protected category would make it public—subject to institutional policy and action. Opposition to the idea of protected categories is cited in the report and used to justify keeping sexuality in the hyper-private via a lack of legal and institutional protections, while the public nature of gender and race is left intact.

The Organization of Sexual Difference

Our analysis of DADT and the recommendations for managing its repeal point to several implications for the study of organizations and sexualities. In particular, this critical examination informs organizational difference studies by illuminating two key mechanisms for disciplining queer identities while seemingly “integrating” organizational sexualities. First, creation of the hyper-private illustrates how organizations can perpetuate their heterocentric structures and practices while simultaneously maintaining an asexual image. Specifically, when the hyper-private is conjoined with the ideal of the neo-liberal, self-policing queer subject, it points to ways in which informal cultural barriers operate under the illusion of both individual “choice” and official neutrality—an approach many organizations may employ if LGBTQ individuals gain additional legal protections in the coming years. In the case of the military, the hyper-private works to constitute a rational, homonormative worker, thereby depoliticizing sexual identities and relations in the process of “integrating” the armed forces. Second, the military’s use of analogy also illustrates how organizations can (dis)organize sexual differences through establishing contradictory equivalencies and differentiations with other differences like race and gender. While proffering a number of problematic assumptions (special rights/privileges or erasing intersectionalities), such discursive maneuvers have potent consequences for LGBTQ workers, namely the embodiment of organizationally sanctioned (homo)normativities.

In addition, the logics surrounding the DOD repeal report’s (2010) analysis of service members’ views on DADT repeal and recommendations help address Pringle’s (1989a) question, “Which pleasures if any might threaten masculinity or disrupt rationality?” (p. 177). Assumptions about the nature of gay male desire embedded in the discourse of repeal opponents demonstrate it is the predatory nature of heteromale desire and its presumed invulnerability that threatens that same masculinity—the threat derives, logically, from the ideology and identity of soldier, not from the presence of gay soldiers, out (open) or not. Put differently, this crisis of heteromale results from realization of its own penetrability and its own queerness. This ideological construction of vulnerability, manifested most directly in the soap-dropping shower scenario, leads to a variety of organizational irrationalities: (1) the production of an invulnerable ideal that creates a deep fear (or fantasy) of vulnerability, (2) the claim to organizational asexuality (or “neutrality”) while continuing to relegate queer identities to the hyper-private and rely on a hypermale ideal for marketing and recruiting purposes, and (3) the use of racial and gender integration as a rationale for DADT’s repeal based on notions of social equality while simultaneously denying sexual orientation the same legitimacy as a protected category.

Nestled within these irrationalities is a paranoid compulsion to organize the containment of queer pleasures that would debase heteromale’s apparent rationality. Carrying the adage “don’t drop the soap” from joke to warning, the irrationalities proffered by DADT and its repeal do little “to destabiliz[e] the regulatory constraints of a structure of eroticized, phallic male supremacy” (Martino,

2006, p. 55), as demonstrated by the fear being simultaneously focused on feminized (“flamboyant”) gay men (the penetrated male) and hypermasculinized gay men (predatory penetrators). Rather, these discourses serve to obscure deeper insecurities surrounding nonphallic pleasures or economies of desire (Irigaray, 1985), offering a possible explanation for lesbian soldiers’ discharge rate under DADT being three times higher than gay men despite the expressed concerns being focused on gay men. Such speculations encourage communication studies of sexualities and organization to more fully engage Pringle’s (1989a) question regarding the potential disruptiveness of our working pleasures and passions.

Note

- [1] According to Sedgwick (1985), one primary way that male homosocial/erotic slippage is managed and concealed is through its “traffic in women: . . . the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing bonds of men with men” (pp. 25–26). For instance, Flood (2008) finds that male homosocial relations at a military university are policed against feminization and homosexualization by privileging male–male social relations and sex with women. The routing of homosocial/erotic desires through heterosexual relations may explain the military’s high rates of sexual assault. Acknowledging the frequency is likely higher, the DOD (2011) states 3,230 and 3,158 cases of sexual assault were reported in 2009 and 2010 respectively, and in the 2,410 nonconfidential cases reported in 2010, rape and aggravated sexual assault comprised more than half (58%). While sexual violence against women represents an extreme means of managing homosocial/erotic slippage, it is symptomatic of a broader pattern of channeling male desire through women to lubricate the gears of heteropatriarchy.

References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4, 139–158.
- Ashcraft, K. L. (2005). Feminist organizational communication studies: Engaging gender in public and private. In S. May & D. K. Mumby (Eds.), *Engaging organizational communication theory & research: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 141–169). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ashcraft, K. L., & Flores, L. A. (2000). “Slaves with white collars”: Persistent performances of masculinity in crisis. *Text & Performance Quarterly*, 23, 1–29.
- Badgett, M. V. L. (1995). The wage effects of sexual orientation discrimination. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 48, 726–739.
- Badgett, M. V. L. (2007). Discrimination based on sexual orientation: A review of the literature in economics and beyond. In M. V. L. Badgett & J. Frank (Eds.), *Sexual orientation discrimination: An international perspective* (pp. 19–43). New York: Routledge.
- Belkin, A., & Embser-Herbert, M. S. (2002). A modest proposal: Privacy as a flawed rationale for the exclusion of gays and lesbians from the US military. *International Security*, 27, 178–197.
- Bordo, S. (1993). Reading the male body. *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 32, 696–737.
- Britton, D. M., & Williams, C. L. (1995). “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue”: Military policy and the construction of heterosexual masculinity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 30, 1–21.
- Brouwer, D. C. (2004). Corps/corpse: The US military and homosexuality. *Western Journal of Communication*, 68, 411–430.
- Burrell, G. (1984). Sex and organization analysis. *Organization Studies*, 5, 97–118.

- Burrell, G. (1992). The organization of pleasure. In M. Alvesson & H. Wilmot (Eds.), *Critical management studies* (pp. 66–89). London: Sage.
- Burrell, G., & Hearn, J. (1989). The sexuality of organization. In J. Hearn, D. Sheppard, P. Tancred-Sheriff, & G. Burrell (Eds.), *The sexuality of organization* (pp. 1–28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Buzzanell, P. M. (Ed.). (2000). *Rethinking organizational and managerial communication from feminist perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clair, R. P. (1988). *Organizing silence: A world of possibilities*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Clair, R. P. (1994). Hegemony and harassment: A discursive practice. In S. G. Bingham (Ed.), *Conceptualizing sexual harassment as discursive practice* (pp. 59–70). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Clarkson, J. (2005). Contesting masculinity's makeover: Queer eye, consumer masculinity, and "straight-acting" gays. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 29, 235–255.
- Clarkson, J. (2006). "Everyday Joe" versus "Pissy, Bitchy, Queens": Gay masculinity on straight-acting.com. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 14, 191–207.
- Collinson, D. L. (1988). "Engineering Humour": Masculinity, joking and conflict in shop-floor relations. *Organization Studies*, 9, 181–199.
- Collinson, D. L., & Collinson, M. (1989). Sexuality in the workplace: The domination of men's sexuality. In J. Hearn, D. L. Sheppard, P. Tancred-Sheriff, & G. Burrell (Eds.), *The sexuality of organization* (pp. 91–109). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Deetz, S. A. (1992). *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization: Developments in communication and the politics of everyday life*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Department of Defense. (2010, November 30). *Report of the comprehensive review of the issues associated with a repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."*
- Department of Defense. (2011). *Department of Defense annual report on sexual assault in the military, fiscal year 2010*.
- Dignity and respect: A training guide on the homosexual conduct policy*. (2001). Department of the Army, United States of America.
- Dolak, K. (2010, October 17). McCain says he'll 'absolutely filibuster' don't ask, don't tell. ABC News. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/mccain-absolutely-filibuster/story?id=11903367>
- Duggan, L. (2003). *The twilight of equality? Neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Eguchi, S. (2009). Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: The rhetorical strategy of "straight-acting" among gay men. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 38, 193–209.
- Faludi, S. (1999). *Stiffed: The betrayal of the American man*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Ferguson, K. E. (1984). *The feminist case against bureaucracy*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Flood, M. (2008). Men, sex, and homosociality: How bonds between men shape their sexual relations with women. *Men and Masculinities*, 10, 339–359.
- Gherardi, S. (1995). *Gender, symbolism, and organizational cultures*. London: Sage.
- Gibson, J. W. (1994). *Warrior dreams: Violence and manhood in post-Vietnam America*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Griffin, S. (1992). *A chorus of stones: The private life of war*. New York: Doubleday.
- Guiffre, P., Dellinger, K., & Williams, C. L. (2008). "No retribution for being gay?": Inequality in gay-friendly workplaces. *Sociological Spectrum*, 28, 254–277.
- Hall, M. (1989). Private experiences in the public domain: Lesbians in organizations. In J. Hearn, D. Sheppard, P. Tancred-Sheriff, & G. Burrell (Eds.), *The sexuality of organization* (pp. 125–138). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Harding, T. (2007). The construction of men who are nurses as gay. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 60, 636–644.

- Hearn, J. (1985). Men's sexuality at work. In A. Metcalf & M. Humphries (Eds.), *The sexuality of men* (pp. 110–128). London: Pluto Press.
- Hearn, J., Sheppard, D. L., Tancred-Sheriff, P., & Burrell, G. (Eds.). (1989). *The sexuality of organization*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hewitt, C. (1995). The socioeconomic position of gay men: A review of the evidence. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 54, 461–479.
- Hot topics: Current issues for Army leaders* (2000, Winter). Retrieved from <http://www.army.mil>
- Irigaray, L. (1985). *This sex which is not one* (C. Porter with C. Burke, Trans.). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Original work published 1977)
- Joseph, M. (2002). *Against the romance of community*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kendall, C., & Martino, W. (2006). *Gendered outcasts and sexual outlaws: Sexual oppression and gender hierarchies in queer men's lives*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- Knapp, D. E. (2008). Ready or not? Homosexuality, unit cohesion, and military readiness. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 20, 227–247.
- Levine, M. (1992). The status of gay men in the workplace. In M. Kimmel & M. Messner (Eds.), *Men's lives* (pp. 251–266). Toronto, Canada: Maxwell Macmillan.
- Lewis, A. P. (2009). Destructive organizational communication and LGBT workers' experiences. In P. Lutgen-Sandvik & B. D. Sypher (Eds.), *Destructive organizational communication: Processes, consequences, and constructive ways of organizing* (pp. 184–202). New York: Routledge.
- Martino, W. (2006). Straight-acting masculinities: Normalization and gender hierarchies in gay men's lives. In C. Kendall & W. Martino (Eds.), *Gendered outcasts and sexual outlaws* (pp. 35–60). Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- McCain, J. (2010a, December 2). Senator McCain's opening statement at the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. Retrieved from <http://mccain.senate.gov/public/>
- McCain, J. (2010b, December 18). Senators met to vote on the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, the "Don't ask, Don't tell" policy in the military and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) [video recording]. C-SPAN. Retrieved from <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/SenateSession4661>
- Michaelowski, H. (1982). The Army will make a "man" out of you. In P. McAllister (Ed.), *Reweaving the web of life: Feminism and nonviolence* (pp. 326–335). Philadelphia, PA: New Society.
- Miller, S. L., Forest, K. B., & Jurik, N. C. (2003). Diversity in blue: Lesbian and gay police officers in a masculine occupation. *Men and Masculinities*, 5, 355–385.
- Mulrine, A. (2010, September 21). John McCain attacks Pentagon's 'don't ask, don't tell' study. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2010/0921/John-McCain-attacks-Pentagon-s-don-t-ask-don-t-tell-study>
- Mumby, D. K. (1993). Feminism and the critique of organizational communication studies. In S. A. Deetz (Ed.), *Communication yearbook*, 16 (pp. 155–166). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nardi, P. (Ed.). (2000). *Gay masculinities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pringle, R. (1989a). Bureaucracy, rationality and sexuality: The case of secretaries. In J. Hearn, D. L. Sheppard, P. Tancred-Sheriff, & G. Burrell (Eds.), *The sexuality of organization* (pp. 158–177). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Pringle, R. (1989b). *Secretaries talk: Sexuality, power and work*. New York: Verso.
- Privera, L. C., & Howard, J. W. (2006). Masculinity, Whiteness, and the warrior hero: Perpetuating the strategic rhetoric of US nationalism and the marginalization of women. *Women and Language*, 29, 29–37.
- Puar, J. K. (2007). *Terrist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Rich, C. O. (2009). *The longings of labor and working identity: Gender, sexuality and the organization of hairstylists and barbers* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT.

- Roper, M. (1996). "Seduction and succession": Circuits of homosocial desire in management. In D. L. Collinson & J. Hearn (Eds.), *Men as managers, managers as men* (pp. 210–225). London: Sage.
- Sears, B., & Mallory, C. (2011). *Documented evidence of employment discrimination and its effects on LGBT people*. Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.
- Sedgwick, E. (1985). *Between men: English literature and male homosocial desire*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sender, K. (2006). Queens for a day: Queer Eye for the Straight Guy and the neoliberal project. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23, 131–151.
- Spradlin, A. L. (1998). The price of "passing": A lesbian perspective on authenticity in organizations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 11, 598–605.
- Thompson, C. (2001). A new vision of masculinity. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class and gender* (4th ed.; pp. 205–211). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Thomson Learning.
- Tracy, S. J., & Scott, C. (2006). Sexuality, masculinity, and taint management among firefighters and correctional officers: Getting down and dirty with "America's heroes" and the "scum of law enforcement". *Management Communication Quarterly*, 20, 6–38.
- Ward, J., & Winstanley, D. (2003). The absent presence: Negative space within discourse and the construction of minority sexual identity in the workplace. *Human Relations*, 56, 1255–1280.
- Ward, J., & Winstanley, D. (2006). Watching the watch: The UK fire service and its impact on sexual minorities in the workplace. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 13, 193–219.
- Whitman, F. L. (1983). Culturally invariable properties of male homosexuality: Tentative conclusions from cross-cultural research. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 12, 207–226.
- Woods, J. D., & Lucas, J. H. (1993). *The corporate closet: The professional lives of gay men in America*. New York: Free Press.