THESIS TITLE  Gay Men and Lesbians in the Military: Using the Presentation of Self and the Perspective of the Outsider Within to Negotiate the Military’s Iron Cage

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Gay Men and Lesbians in the Military:
Using the Presentation of Self and the Perspective of the Outsider Within
To Negotiate the Military’s Iron Cage

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Thesis Abstract

This paper presents and analyzes the results of a qualitative research project that investigated how gay men and lesbians in the military negotiate the hostile environment of the military’s closed bureaucracy.

The literature review revealed four themes: national ideology, the cult of masculinity, culture wars, and family secrets.

Three theories were used to analyze the literature and the data derived from the research. Max Weber’s theories of bureaucracy and the “iron cage” were used at the policy level. Erving Goffman’s concept of the “presentation of self” was used at the individual level, and Patricia Hill Collins’ concepts of intersectionality and the “outsider within” were used at the group level.

Results indicated that there was a pervasive awareness among gay men and lesbians that they could be discharged for their sexual behavior confirming the concept of the “iron cage.” However, many openly homosexual servicemembers were not discharged because the military’s need for skilled personnel overrode its mandate to discharge homosexuals, and gays and lesbians used the “presentation of self” to pass as heterosexual indicating the “iron cage” could be breeched. The severity of surveillance and harassment varied among commands. Where it was less severe shadow communities of military gays and lesbians emerged; where it was most severe weak, or no military gay and lesbian communities formed. This partially confirmed the concept of intersectionality and the “outsider within.”
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The service in the armed forces of the United States by the men and women who participated in this project, as well as the military service of all other gays and lesbians, has been in the shadows for too long. I hope this paper is at least a small step out of the shadows for them and for all other gay and lesbian service members who have honorably served this country without recognition or acknowledgement. This paper is dedicated to them.
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Introduction

The phrase “Don’t ask, don’t tell...” has become so much a part of our cultural landscape that it is regularly used in casual conversation, usually in a humorous vein. Further, regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic group, everyone seems to be aware that it is the euphemism for the current policy regarding gays and lesbians in the United States military services. Most people also believe that “Don’t ask, don’t tell...” is an improvement on the previous policy, and that gays and lesbians are no longer harassed, stigmatized, or discharged solely because of their sexual orientation.

The reality is quite different, however. In their eighth annual report since the implementation of “Don’t ask, don’t tell...” the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) reported a total of 3817 anti-gay harassment cases have been documented since the policy went into effect in 1994. These incidents included a murder, assaults, death threats, and verbal gay bashing. In addition, at least 7966 servicemembers have been discharged for being homosexual since “Don’t ask, don’t tell...” was implemented. As of the SLDN’s 2001 report the total cost of the “Don’t ask, don’t tell...” policy to the American taxpayer in the form of wasted training, lost expertise, etc. is in excess of 234 million dollars (Cleghorn 2002). The Army’s discharge of seven Arabic linguists because they are gay that was reported 14 November 2002 by SLDN is only the latest example of essential military training going to waste because of the homosexual exclusion policy (Ralls 2002).
Despite the problems encountered by homosexuals in the military, the central reality underlying the debate over the service of gays and lesbians in the United States military services is that they have always been members of the armed forces even though they have always been barred from serving. In one of the many ironic twists that are common in the history of gay and lesbian military service, two gay men who served in the Revolutionary War had very different fates. At the same time that Baron Frederich von Steuben was drilling Continental Army troops and developing the first American military drill manual at Valley Forge in an effort to save the revolutionary cause, Lieutenant Gotthold Enslin was literally drummed out of the army for sodomy. After a court martial that was approved by General George Washington, Enslin became the first recorded case of a soldier discharged from the United States military for homosexuality (Shilts 1993). Enslin's ultimate end is unknown, but von Steuben became a hero of the cause and was both revered and rewarded for his service.

The military services have been and continue to be a hostile environment for gay men and lesbians. However, as noted above gay men and lesbians have always served in the armed forces and continue to do so. Depending on the cultural environment in the United States, the needs of the services, and the atmosphere of particular commands, homosexuals may be under more or less surveillance. Nevertheless, the prohibition against service by homosexuals has never really changed, and a command in which gays
and lesbians are tacitly “out” and accepted can be transformed overnight into one where “witch hunts” are the order of the day if there is a change in leadership or if unit leaders are directed by their superiors to strictly comply with the policy (Berube 1990; Shilts 1993). In fact, the casual and seemingly lighthearted use of “Don’t ask, don’t tell…” masks a deep division within the country about the civil rights of gay men and lesbians. It is part of the ongoing “culture war” to determine who in the United States will be able to pass judgment on right and wrong behavior, what is appropriate family structure, who is entitled to the rights of citizenship, etc.

Given the constancy of the ban against service in the military by gays and lesbians and the uncertainty generated by an ever-changing environment, the questions I want to answer are how gay and lesbian service members negotiate the hostile environment of the services’ closed bureaucracy? How have they managed to construct lives for themselves and create a sense of community for themselves in an organization that not only officially does not want their service but also has devised surveillance mechanisms to find them and discharge them immediately?

Statement of the Problem

There are two primary groups that advocate for gay and lesbian active duty servicemembers and veterans, The American Veterans for Equal Rights
(AVER) and the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN). AVER is a national organization with local chapters throughout the country. In the last few years it has experienced explosive growth, and new chapters have sprung up in cities like Seattle, WA and Washington, DC. At the national level AVER functions primarily as a veterans’ advocacy group. At the local level it functions both as a veterans’ advocacy group and as a veterans’ social group.

SLDN is a national organization that provides legal services to active duty gay and lesbian servicemembers and veterans. While it operates at the national level, it has a network of affiliated attorneys around the country who work with SLDN clients at the local level. AVER and SLDN are partners in a campaign to overturn the ban on gay men and lesbians serving in the military.

Additionally, both organizations are working with the Human Rights Campaign, a large, national, umbrella gay and lesbian advocacy group, on a project entitled Documenting Courage that encourages gay and lesbian veterans to tell the story of their military service in an abbreviated form. The purpose of Documenting Courage appears to be to increase the visibility of gays and lesbians generally and to specifically highlight that gay men and lesbians also serve their country.

The San Diego AVER Chapter is one of AVER’s largest local chapters. Although AVER’s primary mission is to assist gay and lesbian veterans, it is
sometimes contacted by active duty gays and lesbians for help. When such a contact is made, as a part of AVER’s advocacy mission to assist all military gays and lesbians, the local organization provides active duty servicemembers with advice, legal referrals, personal support, and comradeship. San Diego AVER also participates in numerous events throughout the year, including the City of San Diego Veterans Day parade and the San Diego Pride Festival as well other veterans and gay and lesbian events.

The San Diego chapter, like national AVER and all its chapters, seeks the end of anti-gay discrimination in the armed forces. In support of that mission, members speak to student groups, religious groups, other veterans’ organizations, the media, and other gay and lesbian organizations to inform them about the history of gay men and lesbians in the military services and the current conditions under which they serve. San Diego AVER also aligns itself with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) and other organizations that share the goal of ending the ban against open service by gay and lesbian servicemembers. Its officers and members are very active in the national AVER organization, and the local chapter vice president was recently elected secretary of the national organization.

Observations by the researcher of AVER’s activities and materials suggest that the organization is trying to “gain a seat at the table” by working
within the system. AVER uses what some call an “assimilation” strategy (Rimmerman 2002) in that its members seek to portray themselves and the organization as having the same values and concerns as their heterosexual counterparts. This is done by taking part in traditional patriotic observances like the Veterans Day parade and emphasizing the honorable service of gays and lesbians in the military. It has achieved some success in that regard in that County Commissioner Ron Roberts named the local chapter president to the San Diego County Veterans Affairs Committee in 2002. In sum, observations suggest that the strategy that AVER is pursuing is that of presenting the organization and its members as mainstream members of society who are seeking equal rights for themselves and others as veterans of the United States armed forces.

The researcher’s observations also suggest that the national SLDN is following a similar, though more focused strategy. It maintains focus on the ban at the national level by coordinating legal support from the national office, but it personalizes and tailors its legal services by operating through a network of attorneys around the country who provide legal services to active duty and veteran gays and lesbians. By providing legal services and advice to gay and lesbian active duty military personnel and veterans, SLDN is providing a badly needed service aimed specifically at a group of people who
would likely have difficulty finding legal counsel knowledgeable about the military justice system.

Working together it is likely that AVER and SLDN will eventually succeed in overturning the homosexual exclusion policy where other organizations failed, most famously during the political battles that resulted in "Don't Ask, Don't Tell..." the latest version of the homosexual exclusion policy. This is because both organizations are in the struggle for the long haul, and they understand the dynamics of both the military and legal arenas. Given those factors, this research may be of use to the missions of both organizations.

The central problem this research addresses is that very little is actually known about gay men and lesbians who serve in the armed forces. Most often military gays and lesbians are either treated as faceless, nameless statistics or as victims. However, thousands of homosexuals have and continue to serve unsanctioned but without fanfare in the military, both on active duty and in the reserves. The questions this study attempts to answer are: How do they negotiate the military's hostile environment, and how do they build lives for themselves within an organization that not only does not want their service but also has surveillance mechanisms to find them so they can be discharged immediately? The answers to these questions may be of use to AVER and SLDN in that it will document the service of gay men and lesbians in the military in a form that can be used to further the aims of the
organizations as they seek to influence public policy concerning gay men and lesbians in the military.

Literature Review

The pattern of homosexuals serving in the military, sometimes with great distinction and achieving high rank as did Admiral Stephen Decatur, while at other times discovered, humiliated, and discharged like the unlucky Lieutenant Enslin, began during the Revolutionary War and continued to the present. What is clear is that a proscription against homosexuality has never kept gay men and lesbians from serving in the armed forces. Whether their service is heroic, their skills considered critical to the military's mission, or their numbers required simply to fill quotas, in fact, the military services have been less concerned with having no homosexuals within its ranks than with creating the general perception that there are no gays and lesbians in the military (Berube 1990; Shilts 1993; Devilbiss 1994). This led to a general obfuscation of the issue that resulted in the confused, murky, convoluted and still continuing debate about whether gays and lesbians are fit to serve their country.

The public debate concerning whether or not gays and lesbians should be allowed to serve openly in the military is an issue characterized more by emotion than reasoned discourse, and it has generated a large volume of literature in the popular media. However, there have been some attempts in
the academic community to address the issue with a more nuanced analysis of the issues. While scholars addressed the issues raised by the homosexual exclusion policy in a variety of ways, a review of the academic literature revealed four basic themes: national ideology, the cult of masculinity, culture wars, and "family secrets." Each of them will be discussed in more complete detail below.

**National Ideology**

The United States was founded as a result of war; since the end of the Revolutionary War, the nation has fought a major war in every generation. In fact, it has been argued that the United States is a country made by war because for the most part the country has emerged from each conflict with greater territory, with a stronger military, or with greater political and commercial influence (Perret 1989). Nevertheless, Americans have had an ambivalent relationship with their armed forces that continues to the present. Often isolated from the greater society, the military has been characterized by civilians as primitive, conservative, and slow to change. For their part, members of the military frequently viewed their civilian counterparts as arrogant individualists who were interested only in commerce. However, the expansion of the armed forces and the ascendancy of military leaders into prominent non-military positions, particularly starting in World War II and continuing during the Cold War, facilitated an alliance among military and commercial leaders (Huntington 1957). It was this alliance of the military and
commerce that prompted President Eisenhower to warn against the dangers of a military-industrial complex as he prepared to leave office. Nevertheless, military leaders came to be perceived as the epitome of modern technical managers while also being considered “professionals in violence” (Janowitz 1960). Though the military sank into disfavor and isolation after the war in Vietnam, the military-industrial alliance continued and may even be stronger now since the high technology weapons that are prized by the armed forces were showcased in the Gulf War and touted by the Department of Defense as a way to reduce manpower requirements and personnel risks. More importantly, what has remained constant through the years is that the United States armed forces are seen by average Americans, as well as those from other countries, as the symbol of American domination in the world; of its ability to exert its will over others (Perret 1989; Adam 1994). In fact, it has been suggested that American national identity is ..."caught up with masculinist ideologies of strength and belligerence" (Adam, 1994, p. 112). American national ideology is bound up with the ability to prevail over all adversaries, to as President Theodore Roosevelt said, “Walk softly and carry a big stick.” The military services are the instrument that makes such an American national ideology possible.

Regardless of the military’s level of prestige, one of the cornerstones of American national ideology is that of the citizen soldier, the man who answers his country’s call to arms in its hour of need (Moskos 1970; Moskos 1993).
For most of the nation's history, service in the armed forces was voluntary. Starting with World War II, however, there was a 40-year period when conscription was the law, and military service became a rite of passage for the majority of young, American men (Arkin 1978; Moskos 1993). The armed forces are considered by some to have provided two important socializing influences in our society. One was an avenue for the discharge of civic responsibility for many American men, and the other was providing a place where diverse races, ethnic groups, and classes intermingled in a way that was not otherwise possible (Moskos 1993). The implication is that military experience was a valuable nation-building tool because it bound young men to the purposes of their country. It also exposed a large number of young men to an extremely powerful socialization process at a time in their lives when it would be most influential (Arkin 1978).

The armed forces remain a primary symbol of the nation's preeminent position in the world. Further, although the United States has not had a policy of universal, male conscription for a generation, the military services remain the incubator of socialization for thousands of young men, and to a lesser extent, young women as well. Public discourse, as the mainstream media represents it, seldom questions either America's right to use force around the world or the consequences of the use of that force, nor does it question the influence the armed forces have on the nation's young people. The military, in fact, is used as a device through which Americans have constructed
themselves in opposition to particular people and ideas (Berube 1990; Shilts 1993); past examples include the Japanese people during World War II and Communism during the Cold War. However, it is as a symbol of manhood and masculinity that the armed forces most resonate in our popular culture.

The Cult of Masculinity

The armed forces are male dominated like no other American institution and they personify the nation's masculine ideology including its attendant attitudes regarding gender and sexual orientation (Herek 1996). Historically, in the United States as well as in many other countries, joining the military and successfully completing boot camp has been the equivalent of passing the rites of initiation into manhood. In fact, the services often use recruiting slogans that promise to turn boys into men (Arkin 1978; Dunivin 1994; Barrett 1996) and young men often report that they join one of the armed services because they believe they must pass a rigorous test of masculinity before they can truly become men (Arkin 1978).

The military environment has been described as a masculine, heterosexualized space. It is an environment that formally bans gays and lesbians; and should gays and lesbians become service members in spite of the ban, unsanctioned methods are used to make them feel unwelcome. At the same time, some heterosexual women are allowed to become a part of the military (McGhee 1998), but only in circumscribed roles. While in the military, male recruits assimilate and internalize a homogenized heterosexual
masculinity (McGhee 1998) that has been described by others as hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1992; Connell 1995; Barrett 1996) by visually assimilating the actions of their drill instructors and submitting to the threat of surveillance discipline (McGhee 1998). From a social constructionist’s viewpoint, the hegemonic masculinity to which young military recruits are exposed is one of a variety of masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity achieves its meaning within patterns of difference; its idealized image of masculinity is attained in relation to images of femininity and other masculinities that are subordinated and marginalized in relation to it (Connell 1995; Barrett 1996). Currently, the Western hegemonic masculine ideal is that of a man who is independent, aggressive, rational, a risk-taker and heterosexual (Connell 1992; Dunivin 1994; Connell 1995; Barrett 1996).

If a cult of masculinity pervades the military environment, then military services’ archetypal role is that of the warrior. Warriors are the preeminent members of the armed forces; they have the most status, have the best jobs, and get the promotions that lead to the top. In short, they are the elite. Consequently, being a warrior is the cherished dream of many if not all men who join the military (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1960; Dunivin 1994; Connell 1995; Barrett 1996). Historically, being a warrior is a role reserved for white, heterosexual males. The services sought to limit the access of blacks, women, and gay men and lesbians to the warrior role (Rolison and Nakayama 1994, Devilbiss 1994, Stiehm 1994). However, masculinity, as represented
by white, heterosexual males, is fragile and must be protected from threats to male bonding, a bonding that the services deem to be critical to unit cohesion and fighting efficiency. Homosexuality is equated with feminization of men and femininity is antithetical to the warrior role. The fusion of masculinity with military effectiveness along with the characterization of femininity and homosexuality as the other, is embedded in military thought (Bacevich 1993; Adam 1994; Devilbiss 1994; Dunivin 1994; Rolison 1994; Stiehm 1994; McGhee 1998). By displacing the issue from discussion of the citizenship rights and military performance of gay and lesbian military personnel to attitudes of military heterosexuals toward serving with gay men and lesbians, opponents of gay and lesbian military service thereby short-circuited discussions of civil liberties, job performance and equality (Adam 1994; Devilbiss 1994; Rolison 1994; Stiehm 1994; McGhee 1998). “In short, the central locus of discourse of white heterosexual masculinity regulates the dialogue” (Rolison 1994). This point is further reinforced by frequent references to warnings from those considered to be the embodiment of the archetypical military warrior, like Colonel David Hackwork, a highly decorated retired Army officer, who believes that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would undermine discipline, order, and esprit (Moskos 1993).

By focusing on the military’s cult of masculinity, opponents of lifting the ban on open service by gays and lesbians neatly trumped any reasoned discussion of military effectiveness, and projected the debate into an
emotional, symbolic realm where political and cultural conservatives have been able to hold sway. Conservatives opposed to lifting the ban on homosexuals projected the issue of open service by gay men and lesbians in the armed forces into America's culture wars.

**Culture Wars**

The public discussion about whether or not gays and lesbians should be allowed to serve in the United States military has followed a course similar to that of earlier battles in the culture wars concerning whether or not the armed services should be integrated racially and whether women should serve in combat roles. While other issues may be debated, what has remained constant in civil-military relations is that the military services are considered by themselves, and by many civilians, to be a unique social organization that should not be expected to adhere to the same standards as other societal institutions (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1960; Stiehm 1992; Burk 1993; Butler 1993; Moskos 1993). As such, it has been argued that the military should be exempt from social experiments such as integrating African Americans, women, and homosexuals that could be threats to male bonding and unit cohesion. Proponents of this argument believe the military should not be expected to solve problems civilian society has been unable to resolve (Bacevich 1993; Burk 1993; Butler 1993; Moskos 1993; Dunivin 1994; Miller 1994; Stiehm 1994). It has also been asserted that banning gays and lesbians from military service is a question of religious morality that must be
upheld lest the foundations of the nation crumble (Ray 1994; Burrington 1996; Fetner 2001). Such a moralistic point of view is generally supported by the conservative culture evident in the armed forces as reflected in its traditional, moralistic ideology (Bacevich 1993; Dunivin 1994). Also, military supporters of the ban on service by homosexuals frequently cite religious or moral convictions as the basis for their opposition (Dunivin 1994; Miller 1994).

Opponents of the ban assert, however, that barring gays and lesbians from military service stands in opposition not only to American values of freedom and citizenship for all members of society, but to our national tradition of multiculturalism as well (Dunivin 1994; Korb 1994). Further, it has also been suggested that the military ban on gays and lesbians undermines the core values espoused by the armed services. Rather than encouraging honesty, trust, respect, courage, commitment, and integrity, all values the services claim to uphold, the ban sets up an atmosphere that promotes intolerance, suspicion, lying, distrust, bullying, and harassment (Benecke 1999). Finally, opponents of the ban also note that far from being exempt from social experimentation, past changes in the composition and environment of the military services have been the result of social pressure (Bacevich 1993; Dunivin 1994) and that the armed forces should reflect the society that they serve (Stiehm 1992; Bacevich 1993; Burk 1993; Dunivin 1994; Barrett 1996).
However, more is at stake than whether or not gay men and lesbians will be allowed to serve their country's uniformed services. The issue of allowing open military service by gay men and lesbians sets up yet another collision of opposing value systems that are a part of the larger culture war in the United States. The status of homosexuals in the whole of society is at the core of this debate (Herek 1996) because lifting the ban on service by homosexuals calls into question the paradigm that underlies the rules governing sexuality, gender roles, gender relations, and morality (Dunivin 1994; Miller 1994). Because people's value systems give meaning to their entire lives, the importance of the contest extends far beyond the issue of open military service by gay men and lesbians. Winning this battle in the culture war is essential (Hunter 1991; Miller 1994).

Opponents of lifting the ban on military service by homosexuals play upon the fears and anxieties of Americans concerning our national morals, strength, and ability to dominate others. Although political and cultural conservatives certainly know that gays and lesbians served both now and in the past in the armed forces, by refusing to acknowledge their presence, opponents of lifting the ban made current and former military service by gay men and lesbians part of an ongoing national family secret.

**Family Secrets**

The current "Don't Ask, Don't Tell..." law is the very embodiment of "family secrets." As long as gay men and lesbians do not publicly declare
their sexual orientation, it is treated as a personal, private matter; as something that is not discussed and does not affect their service, even if other service members know about the person’s sexual orientation. However, if an individual officially reveals his or her sexuality, by telling their commanding officer for example, their sexuality is now public information and the service member can be investigated for homosexuality (Burrelli 1994; Butler 1997).

Since there is little research available on homosexuals, and no country knows what percentage of its population is gay and lesbian, much less what percentage of its military is homosexual, family secrecy is apparently effective in maintaining an image of the military as heterosexual. This secret, however, is being slowly eroded. The largest database on the issue of gays and lesbians serving in the armed forces resides in the Netherlands, the country that has the most liberal policies on gay men and lesbians in the military and is the most liberal society for homosexuals. Because of the openness of Dutch society, there has been an interest from decision-makers in supporting research on the issue of gays and lesbians in the military (Segal, Gade, and Johnson 1994). Ironically, as with other “family secrets” like domestic violence and incest, when the issue is no longer hidden, research can be conducted and policies can be made based on fact and not myth.

Myth, in fact, lies at the very heart of “family secrets.” In this case, the myth is that gay men and lesbians are not members of the military. The secret is that not only are homosexuals present in the armed forces but that
they are effective, often exceptional, military professionals as well. However, because the services have sought to limit the access of gay men and lesbians as well as heterosexual women to the military’s central role, that of the warrior, acknowledging the presence of and successful performance by gays and lesbians and heterosexual women would be a threat to white, heterosexual, male domination through the primary military archetype, the warrior (Karst 1991; Stiehm 1992; Devilbiss 1994; Dunivin 1994).

Myth in the form of stereotypes also plays a part in the services’ attempts to rid themselves of threats to their cultural image. By enacting homosexual exclusion policies, the military hierarchy attempts to accomplish two things. First, they attempt to enforce the invisibility of gays and lesbians, second, they seek to eliminate effeminate men from the ranks even if they are not gay. The first goal is accomplished by forcing homosexuals who want to serve in the military to constantly live in the shadows under the threat of discharge. It is a powerful control on behavior that acts to allay the privacy fears of heterosexual men and their concerns about unit members suspected of being gay who would threaten the male image. The second goal is more concerned with controlling sodomy because in hyper-masculine environments like the military, non-gay men sometimes display their masculinity by sodomizing other men. Consequently, the military tries to eliminate men who might be easy targets for such displays of masculine domination (Stiehm
In sum, older men seek to control the behavior of younger men. However, young women in the military do not typically present the same types of problems to the military hierarchy because they do not engage in similar behavior. Yet, the policy is applied generally; that is, to both men and women, and women are discharged from the services for homosexuality at an even higher rate than men. As Stiehm notes, "For women, looking and acting professional makes one suspect as a lesbian; for men, looking and acting professional means one is not likely to be suspected" (Stiehm 1994). In this case, acting "masculine;" i.e., professional, makes women suspect, but it protects men from suspicion (Stiehm 1994). Consequently, in yet another ironic twist, the stereotyped notions about men and women held by members of the military hierarchy act to protect the gay men they most fear of undermining their warrior ethos and to hurt women, many of who may not be lesbian.

This leads to the further irony, which is that the military has little or no evidence of the presence of the type of homosexual within its ranks that it specifically wants to exclude, the uncontrolled homosexual who is alleged to desire to infiltrate the ranks of the armed forces and in so doing disrupt good order, discipline, cohesion, and military effectiveness. Studies in both the United States and the United Kingdom assert the presence of such gay men and lesbians, but they have produced little evidence that such identifiable and
disruptive personnel are indeed present (Dyer 1990; McGhee 1998). In fact, in a blatantly self-serving act, the Department of Defense deliberately suppressed the results of a 1988 study it had commissioned on the suitability of homosexuals for military service because the study found that gay men and lesbians were suitable and reliable for military service. It was not until Representative Schroeder and others in Congress discovered the report that its contents came to light. Its results were finally published in 1990 through the efforts of Congressman Studds (Dyer 1990). Apparently, the truth of some family secrets is simply too much for the military to tolerate.

This leads to the final "family secret." If gay men and lesbians are not generally obvious in stereotypic ways, have been found to be suitable for military service, and have served in the armed forces since the Revolutionary War, it must be concluded that they are "passing for straight." "The passing, non-disruptive, assumed heterosexual, homosexual...leaves a trace, like footprints in the sand...This trace of non-evidence is not a presentation of something identifiable, but is evidence...of something other, which exceeds the dominant interpretation" (McGhee 1998)

Although discussed separately, the themes discussed above interact to form a complex web of mutually reinforcing cultural assumptions and expectations. Most of the ideas that are the underlying support for these beliefs and assumptions cannot be observed and in some cases are
contradicted by other ideas and beliefs. Nevertheless, they combine to form
the basis for the military's homosexual exclusion policy.

Theory

To understand the conditions under which gay men and lesbians serve
in the armed forces, it is necessary to use three different but complimentary
theoretical perspectives. First, the prohibition against service by gay men and
lesbians is examined at the policy level, using theories developed by Max
Weber about bureaucracy and his concept of the "iron cage." Next, Erving
Goffman's concept of "the presentation of self" is used to highlight how gays
and lesbians negotiate the hostile military environment, construct lives for
themselves, and develop a sense of community. Finally, the military services
are viewed from the standpoint of gays and lesbians in the military using
Patricia Hill Collins' concept of the "outsider within." This perspective will
illustrate how gays and lesbians in the military use their access to the
military's "hidden transcripts" to help them develop their presentation of self
and will help illuminate the unexamined assumptions and beliefs of the
dominant society that are the underpinnings of the ban on service by
homosexuals.

Bureaucracy and the "Iron Cage"

Weber's ideas concerning rationalization, domination and legitimacy,
and the growth of bureaucracy provide useful starting points for
understanding the military structure and how it affects gays and lesbians in
the armed forces. While Weber discusses practical, theoretical, substantive, and formal rationality, it was the formal rationality that arose in the capitals of the West in the late 19th and early 20th centuries most concerned Weber. According to Weber, calculability, efficiency, predictability, the use of technology to replace people, control, and irrational consequences characterize formal rationality (Weber 1978). Although Weber discussed these concepts nearly 100 years ago, they remain relevant today. In fact, elements of many of these characteristics can be seen in the themes discussed previously in the literature review. For example, the rise of the armed forces as large, technical organizations beginning in World War II led the military to adopt practices that reflect the characteristics of formal rationality. Procedures were adopted that created routines for buying weapons at the lowest possible cost. Weapons such as guided missiles were developed to replace manned aircraft. Joint commands were created to command and control the war fighting resources of more than one service in a theater of operations.

The services applied these principles to personnel as well, although with less precise results. The homosexual exclusion policy is an attempt to make personnel procurement and training more predictable and efficient by eliminating a category of people that the services do not want in their ranks. Ironically, it also leads to the irrational consequences Weber alluded to in that
gay men and lesbians continue to serve as unwanted and undetected citizen soldiers in the services, in spite of the military's surveillance.

Despite the ironies that resulted from applying the principles of rationality to the personnel procurement system, the military was more successful in achieving predictability when it applied the principles of rationality to military training. The results of military basic training are a large group of mostly young men who have internalized the national and military ideology of hegemonic masculinity.

Weber was also concerned with matters of domination and legitimacy. He defined domination as the probability that commands will be obeyed by a specific group of people, and he was primarily concerned with legitimate forms of domination that he called authority. Although he acknowledged that legitimate authority could take several forms, he was most interested in bureaucratic forms of legal authority (Weber 1978). As argued by (Lemert 1999), one of bureaucracy's most salient characteristics is that it will work for anyone who knows how to gain control of its impersonal and rationalized nature. The rank structure of the armed forces stands as an exemplary illustration of a bureaucracy that is able to dominate through its authority. The likelihood that service members will obey the commands of those higher up, and the official rules and regulations, is reinforced not only by its training, but by the national ideology and prevailing cultural norms. The hegemony of national ideology and cultural norms results in even those who oppose the
homosexual exclusion policy being against service members disobeying proper military orders. Consequently, the military's hold on legitimacy is exceptionally entrenched in the minds of those both in and out of the service. This legitimacy is further reinforced by the unacknowledged presence and contributions of gay men and lesbians in the military.

Unfortunately, in this case the military's ability to dominate through legitimate authority can have disastrous consequences. If a person is "outed" in the military, it brings down the full weight of the bureaucracy on them. They can be discharged in less than 24 hours, no matter where they are in the world. Employing the logic of bureaucracy, otherwise kind and caring people, who follow the rules and use the same standards for everyone, can devastate an individual's life without remorse or regret.

Weber's ideas regarding bureaucracy are directly related to his ideas about rationalization and domination and legitimacy. Bureaucracy is itself a form of rationalization and one form of legitimate authority. While he viewed it as an improvement over traditional forms of administration and government, his major fear was that the rationalization that permeates all aspects of bureaucracies was a threat to individual liberty or a path to the "iron cage" (Weber 1958). The "Don't ask, don't tell..." policy embodies Weber's worst fears. The issues explored in the themes of national ideology, the cult of masculinity, culture wars, and "family secrets" coalesce to form the hostile environment that gays and lesbians must negotiate in the military services.
They unite to form the "iron cage" that constrains homosexuals in the armed forces.

**Presentation of Self**

Goffman's (1959) concept of the presentation of self is useful for analyzing how homosexuals negotiate the hostile military environment on a daily basis. Goffman used what he called a dramaturgical perspective to determine what takes place within social establishments, which he defined as any place enclosed by fixed barriers to perception and in which particular activities are regularly conducted. Using the stage metaphor, he asserted that within social establishments, teams of actors seek to define a situation by performing for an audience in an area called the front region or front stage and prepared themselves for a performance or relaxed sans a performance facade in a back region or backstage area. Further, both the actors and audience collude to ensure that the show is successful and goes on without disruption because disruptions can have far reaching negative consequences for individual actors, social groups, and social structures. In other words, it is in the best interests of the audience, as well as the actors, that "the show goes on" without incident (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman (1959) also argues that impressions are an observer's or audience member's source of information concerning unapparent facts about both people and things. Ironically, the more people are concerned about a reality that cannot be concretely perceived through the senses, the more they
must rely on appearances. Sensing this, people try "to give the right impression," and in so doing, it is possible for the actor to manipulate the observer's impression of him/her because it is the actor's appearance of being a particular type of person, not actually being that type of individual, that the audience uses as a test of reality. People are not concerned with living up to prescribed standards; they are merely concerned with creating the impression that they are living up to these standards. In this sense, the actor creates his/her self by constructing and carrying out a successful performance (Goffman, 1959).

The concept of presentation of self can be easily applied to the situation in which gays and lesbians find themselves in the armed forces. Because many people still hold stereotyped notions about the appearance and behavior of homosexuals, gay men and lesbians, in teams and as individuals, engage in performances on a daily basis in order to "pass as heterosexual." In addition, they usually have the cooperation of their audience, the official military structure, in "covering up" or correcting mistakes because the services appear to be at least as concerned with the perception that there are no gays and lesbians in the military as they are with the fact of having no homosexual service members. Consequently, because the fact of being homosexual cannot generally be perceived with any certainty, gay men and lesbians continually engage in impression management. They are not concerned with actually being heterosexual; they are only interested in
appearing to be heterosexual. By successfully creating this façade, gay men and lesbians in the military are able to create a public "self" that is congruent for their audience (the military establishment at all levels) if not for themselves.

**Intersectionality and the "Outsider Within"**

Using Collins' (1998) concept of intersectionality, it is possible to approach the military's homosexual exclusion policy from the standpoint of members of a group. Collins argues that individuals occupying the same social location in a constellation of unjust power relations create groups. While discrimination against homosexuals is legal in most parts of the country, in civilian society heterosexism and homophobia are somewhat amorphous. While there is one legal code, civilian society is made up of many diverse and competing groups. Everyone does not fall under a unified umbrella of legal, social, and moral authority, as is the case in the armed forces. In the armed forces gays and lesbians are legally oppressed both as individuals and as a group by one system that controls all facets of the lives of all servicemembers. The "Don't ask, don't tell..." policy explicitly places gays and lesbians in the services in a position of unjust power relations by barring them from openly serving. Ironically, the policy has the effect of constructing an underground group within the armed forces that might not otherwise exist. Since military gays and lesbians are comprised of both genders, all races, classes, and ethnic groups, they may have little in common besides their
sexual orientation and military service. By focusing on sexual orientation, the policy placed thousands of otherwise unrelated individuals in the same unjust power location, thereby encouraging group formation.

Collins (1998) also notes that people most often develop their personal identities as members of a group, African-Americans for example. However, it is possible for individuals who have already formed their personal identities to come together as a group, as many feminists have done. In this regard, individual gay men and lesbians in the armed forces may be of both types. Some may have always known their sexual orientation and feel a group identity before joining the service. Others may not have identified as gay or lesbian prior to joining the armed forces and may not feel any group identity until "coming out" as homosexual and experiencing the oppression of the military policy. Due to the heavy surveillance imposed by the military generally, and by the homosexual exclusion policy in particular, it may be difficult for military gays and lesbians to form group support or group identity except in the shadows of the military's unofficial spaces. Nevertheless, it is likely that an underground network exists. Regardless of how well organized they are, the intersection of their sexual orientation and military service places gay men and lesbians in the border spaces that mark positions of unequal power relations, clearly marking them as "outsiders within" the armed forces.

"Outsiders within," according to Collins (1998), are people who no longer belong to a single group. They are people who are subordinated by
the dominant community, but because they live and/or work within the dominant community, they gain insider knowledge about the dominant group without achieving the power held by that group. They remain full members of the subordinate community to which they belong, but they are different from other members of their community because of their access to the dominant community.

Although marginal members of the dominant community, they frequently move between the dominant community and subordinate community where they are full group members. As members of both groups, they have access to the “hidden transcripts” or private knowledge of both groups, including the knowledge that members of the dominant group develop supremacist ideology and circulate it among its members to justify and obscure unjust power relations. Thus, the unique characteristic of “outsiders within” is that their membership in both the dominant and subordinated communities, and their migration between the communities, enables them to develop a distinctive collective standpoint (Collins 1998).

Although Collins was describing the position of African American women when she made this argument, homosexuals in the armed forces occupy a position that is similar to the one she described. They cannot serve openly but have access to information held by the dominant group because their presence is either not known or not acknowledged. They also move frequently between the dominant heterosexual group and the subordinate gay
and lesbian community, thereby gaining access to the “hidden transcripts” of both groups. Because of their standpoint, they have a unique perspective on the armed forces and the “Don’t ask, don’t tell…” policy. They know, for example, the heterosexist supremacist discourse that is developed by the dominant group with the support of the military hierarchy and circulated not only in the armed forces but also in the greater society to justify the ban on gay and lesbian servicemembers. At the same time, they also have access to resources and support within the gay and lesbian community that they can use to benefit themselves or other gay and lesbian servicemembers. Although unable to take action on their own to change their situation without being discharged, gays and lesbians in the military can contribute a more realistic picture of what life is like inside the United States military for homosexuals than can either heterosexuals inside or outside of the military or homosexuals outside the military, particularly those who have never served.

Used together the theories of Weber, Goffman, and Collins facilitate the analysis of the homosexual exclusion policy and the position of gays and lesbians in the military. Each theory illuminates a different aspect of the problem, but when they are combined a complete picture is formed. It is anticipated that when the data from this study is viewed through these theoretical lenses, that a clearer picture of the lives of gay men and lesbians in the armed forces will emerge.
Methods

To gather data for this study a modified life history study was conducted with former members of the military services. This method was chosen because it has been shown to be an effective method to use when attempting "to include formerly unheard voices in public discourse" (Connell 1992). It is also useful for being able "to document social structure, collectivities, and institutional change at the same time as personal life" (Connell 1992). Consequently, a modified life history approach seemed most likely to elicit the data required to answer the central research questions of this study: How did gay and lesbian service members negotiate the hostile environment of the military's closed bureaucracy? And, how did they construct lives for themselves and create a sense of community for themselves within an organization that not only officially does not want their service but has also devised surveillance mechanisms to find and discharge them immediately? It allowed the participants' voices to be heard and thus positioned them as the experts about their experiences in the armed forces. They described their lives in the military in their own words and emphasized what was most important to them.

It is important that the voices of current and former gay and lesbian servicemembers be heard because the vast majority of research conducted on gays and lesbians in the military takes a macro view and is quantitative, theoretical, conjectural, or polemical and is based in a heterosexual military
framing. Researchers who use these approaches make gay and lesbian servicemembers the object of the story. They "look at" them and appraise their suitability to be soldiers, sailors, airmen, or marines without concern for their experiences as gays and lesbians in the military. By conducting modified life history interviews with gays and lesbians who are former military personnel, it was possible to switch the framing to that of gay men and lesbians in the armed forces, thus allowing gays and lesbians to tell their own stories. Modified life history data captured their experiences, perceptions, beliefs, understandings, and meanings in their own words. Taking a micro approach not only situated gays and lesbians at the center of the story so they could tell their own stories, but they were also be able to look at the military system and offer an assessment of it from their standpoint.

Exploring how gays and lesbians negotiate the military environment from their standpoint shed light on the military’s homosexual exclusion policy from the point of view of a group whose existence is not acknowledged. It allowed the expression of alternative interpretations of policy, procedures, and events from the standpoint of those who know the most about homosexuals in the military, the gay men and lesbians who are or have served in the armed forces. This is particularly important because the standpoint of the military and government hierarchy has completely dominated the public discourse on “Don’t ask, Don’t tell...” and previous versions of the homosexual exclusion policy.
Following Connell (Connell 1992) and others (Barrett 1996; Kaplan 2000), since an attempt to ascertain the structural effects of the military on personal actions and strategies deployed by gays and lesbians to cope with the military environment was one aim of this research, this could be considered to be a study based on a single case – the fit between the military and gays. However, since this investigation also dealt with the multiple dynamics of this single social location, a group of cases from that location was used to illustrate the range of possible coping practices used by individual gays and lesbians as well as the type of collective coping strategies in which gay and lesbian servicemembers engage. To this end, 10 former servicemembers were recruited as interview subjects. The researcher interviewed 10 participants as part of an initial study that allowed for assessing multiple modified life history perspectives in a timely manner.

Several methods were used to recruit research participants. Because the researcher is acquainted with gays and lesbians who are both active duty and former military personnel, some former military personnel were contacted and asked if they would be willing to be part of the research. No active duty servicemembers with whom the investigator is acquainted were asked to participate for reasons previously discussed. The snowball technique was also used in that they were also asked for referrals to acquaintances of theirs who might be willing to be interviewed for the study. In addition, the San Diego and Los Angeles AVER chapter officers were contacted and interviews
with them were requested. Finally, an introductory message from the researcher and the study information sheet developed as a recruitment tool was posted on the California State University at San Marcos (CSUSM) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Club listserv on two different occasions.

Three acquaintances of the investigator agreed to be interviewed and referrals from those participants resulted in three more interviews, one of whom is the president of the Los Angeles AVER chapter. Two officers from San Diego AVER, the president and vice president were interviewed, and two participants responded to the CSUSM LGBT listserv announcement.

It was desired to have approximately equal numbers of former and active servicemembers take part in interviews and it was also desirable to have a range of ages represented among the interviewees. However, it was difficult to recruit active duty personnel as participants. This was partially because of confidentiality concerns. Not only were active duty personnel reluctant to participate because of concerns about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell…” but the investigator also decided not to ask personal and professional contacts still on active duty to participate because the characteristics of their education and occupational specialties that would likely become part of the interview could unintentionally “out” them. Although there was only a minor risk that this would happen, the researcher believed it was not a risk potential participants should be asked to take as it could result in the loss of their
career and possibly worse, depending on the actions of the military hierarchy. Active duty military were also less available because of large-scale deployments to the Persian Gulf during 2002 and 2003. Consequently, all study participants were former service members. A range of ages was achieved, however. The oldest participant is now 70 years old and served in the 1950s. The others ranged in age from early 50s to early 30s.

In addition, it was desired to interview approximately equal numbers of men and women. This was because the rate of discharge for homosexual behavior among women appears to be higher than for men and because gay men and lesbians seem to have somewhat different experiences in the military. However, the military remains a male-dominated institution and it seemed likely that the sample would be predominantly male. Nevertheless, it was possible to recruit a fairly balanced sample in that three women and seven men were interviewed for this study.

It was desired to choose as broad a sample as possible in terms of gender and age rather than focusing more in depth on a more limited sample in an attempt to reveal whether or not there are similarities regarding the experiences of gay and lesbian military personnel across both gender and time. Because of the possible pitfalls noted above it was anticipated that this might not be entirely possible. As previously noted participants ranged from 32 to 70 years old; three men and two women were in their thirties; two men were in their forties; two men were in their fifties, and one woman was 70.
Consequently, women were not represented in three cohorts, 20 to 30 year olds, 40 to 50 year olds and 50 to 60 olds, and men were not represented in two cohorts 20 to 30 year olds and 60 to 70 year olds. The age group most heavily represented was that of 30 to 40 year olds represented by five participants. However, the overall goal of a broad sample in terms of both genders across the life span was generally achieved.

It was also desired to have as broad a sample as possible in terms of race and ethnicity. Out of a sample of 10, seven of the respondents were Caucasian, two were African American, and one was Latino. Two women and five men were Caucasian; one man and one woman were African American, and one man was Latino. This is not a representative sample of the larger population either in the United States or in the military services and no attempt should be made to construe the experiences of this study’s participants as representative of the experiences of gay men and lesbians who are members of particular racial or ethnic groups.

All the respondents in this study are former enlisted personnel. No officers were included in the sample. Consequently, it is not possible to determine if there are differences in the experiences of gay and lesbian officers from those of their enlisted counterparts.

Many of the participants in this study are either officers or members of gay and lesbian veterans’ activists groups or their associates. As a result, the sample for this study is likely to be biased towards those who became openly
gay or lesbian and who may have more concern than others with the status of gays and lesbians in the armed forces. Consequently, the results of this project may be influenced by various efforts to portray the military experiences of gay men and lesbians in a positive light in an effort to advance the cause of full rights for gays and lesbians in the military services. However it is unlikely that this is a serious issue in this sample in that the task of identifying those who did become openly gay or lesbian after leaving the military is beyond the scope of this research project. Therefore, the participants in this study are in some sense informants on what life was like for other gays and lesbians, men who had sex with men, women who had sex with women, and bisexuals. Finally, the range of experiences in the military described in the results indicates that none of the participants attempted to whitewash their experiences. While no effort should be made to generalize from this data about the experiences of all homosexually-active servicemembers, this data does provide clear evidence of the multiple methods that gays and lesbians employ to negotiate the military environment and those strategies' varying degrees of success.

To carry out this project it was necessary to develop interview questions, recruit interview subjects, conduct and record modified life histories, transcribe the modified life histories, code the data, and interpret the data. One of the objectives of this study was to capture what life was like for gay men and lesbians in the military in their own words. Consequently, when
interview questions were developed, topics addressed focused primarily on how stigma is managed in a closed bureaucracy and how a sense of community is created. Generally, the questions covered military life, same-sex activity, same-sex subculture, the homosexual exclusion policy, surveillance and camouflage, and life affect of military service. The questions were grouped by topic area and were as open ended as possible to encourage in-depth answers that would yield as much life history information as possible. While multiple questions were developed for each topic area, it was seldom necessary to ask more than two or three prepared questions as the participants usually addressed the topic areas relevant to the study as they spoke about their experiences. A complete list of the questions is in the Appendix.

The 10 modified life histories were conducted as much like a normal conversation as possible. After discussing the consent forms, which did not require a signature to further ensure confidentiality for the participants, and ensuring that any questions the participants had about the study were answered, the investigator started the interview with a general question concerning military life.

To provide participants a greater sense of comfort and commonality, the researcher always disclosed her military background. The investigator for this project is a retired military officer. For over half of her career she lived as a married, heterosexual woman in the military. After "coming out," she
personally experienced living with the military ban on homosexuals. Consequently, she has personal knowledge of the issue from "both sides of the ban." This personal knowledge sensitized her to recruitment issues for active duty servicemembers and facilitated the interview process because of her understanding of the military environment and the issues that face gay men and lesbians in the military.

She employed a matching probing technique, similar to that used by Barrett (Barrett 2000) in his interviews with working class gay men, throughout the interviews to indicate understanding of situations and events being described (e.g. "I've heard of that happening.") However, care was taken to avoid matching probing that would give interview subjects any sense of desired direction in the interview. Interviews always concluded with the researcher reminding the participants that she wanted to preserve the stories that were important to them and asking them if there was there anything that had not been discussed so far that they felt was important.

The interviews were taped using a small cassette tape recorder so it was as unobtrusive as possible. One interview was conducted in a hotel room, seven were held in the participants' homes, two were conducted in a private room at a military club, and one was conducted on the patio of a snack bar. The tapes were then transcribed exactly as recorded. The participants' real names were never used on the tapes and they were given
pseudonyms in the transcripts. In addition, identifying military unit names were not used.

Once the modified life histories were transcribed, they were coded during numerous readings by the investigator. After they were coded, sociological themes common to all or most of the interviews were identified and analyzed. The themes were analyzed in relation to each other as well as in relation to previous findings in the literature and the theories used to help explain how gays and lesbians negotiate the military environment. The results of that analysis will be discussed in the results section that follows.

Results

The central research question in this study is how have gay and lesbian service members negotiated a hostile environment? How have they managed to create lives for themselves within an organization that not only officially does not want their service but also has devised mechanisms to find them and discharge them immediately? As previously noted, gay men and lesbians have served their country in its military forces from its beginnings although they have been forced to do so in the shadows.

Nevertheless, they have continued to serve and despite the restrictions placed on them by the homosexual exclusion policy, most have survived and many have flourished. In the course of living their daily lives gay and lesbian servicemembers have used numerous creative techniques to persevere and
overcome the obstacles they faced in a hostile environment. In the pages that follow the stories of how some gay and lesbian servicemembers negotiated the military’s hostile environment, created a shadow community for themselves, and constructed lives for themselves separate from the military will be retold both in greater detail and in their words.

**Negotiating the Hostile Environment of the Services’ Closed Bureaucracy**

Although each of the military services has its own culture and takes pride in being different from its sister services, they all are governed by the same homosexual exclusion policy and always have been. As previously noted, the gist of the policy is that to serve in the armed forces, gays and lesbians must hide their identity. If they are officially found to be homosexual, they are discharged from the service regardless of the character of their service. However, there are many layers involved in the ban and its enforcement, as will be discussed below.

**Facing the Fact That There Is a Ban...**

The possibility of receiving an unwanted and possibly less than honorable discharge looms over every facet of military life not only for gay men and lesbians but also to a lesser extent for heterosexual men and women who might be accused of being homosexual based on stereotyped notions about appearance, behavior, and associates. Although the enforcement of the ban is not monolithic, as will be seen below, the fact of the
ban sets up an environment that breeds not only concealment and subterfuge among homosexual servicemembers, but surveillance and intimidation among heterosexuals as well.

It is this atmosphere that leads gays and lesbians to experience a pervasive awareness that they could be discharged, and it begins when they are inducted into the service as the following excerpt from Bill illustrates:

I knew it was going to be an interesting career when I was doing a phone-in interview with the recruiter....he was filling out my application form, this and that and he came down to asking about homosexuality. His exact words were, “You don’t suck dick do you?” (laughing) I didn’t respond, and he marked down “no”...so I said okay...this is going to be very interesting. So I realized I would have to maintain my own inner confidentiality about who I was... I mean about homosexuality the lifestyle...

Although not quite so graphic, Dale’s recruiter made a similar comment the first time he visited the recruiting station:

The first thing the recruiter said to me when I walked in, I was kind of effeminate...he said to me... “Are you, are you,” I can’t remember if he said, “homosexual” or “gay.”

The remarks of both recruiters, one from the Navy and the other from the Army, illustrates that the homosexual exclusion policy is one of the first things of which potential service members are made aware. Further, the awareness of the ban and its potential consequences continued throughout their service. Sometimes it was the result of an internal awareness as illustrated by the following comment from Jeri:
It didn’t affect my behavior and my activities as much as it should have if I had been a little more intelligent. (laughing) But because you’re always aware…of having to be careful… even when you weren’t being careful. Even if you were getting into it, hot, passionately in your damn room in the barracks and later you were thinking, “Oh, God. That was a stupid thing to do.”… But you were aware that you were supposed to be. So it did restrict the things that you could do. It restricted how you could… talk to people, or …be in public.

It was not always just an internal awareness of the ban that censored behavior. Sometimes it was witnessing the treatment experienced by other members of the unit as described by Kate below that caused people to monitor and circumscribe their behavior:

…I did remember when I was in Okinawa, and completely clueless, there was this one woman who was completely thrown out and completely mistreated and publicly humiliated for being gay…. So, I was like I don’t want that to happen to me where I’m like paraded… and then in Okinawa there were all these things like, “Oh my God. She’s going to NIS [Naval Investigative Service]!” And everybody knew, and it was very much like scoffed at by your platoon sergeant with disgust.

However, as was unfortunately experienced by Eve, it could be the experience of being the target of surveillance and harassment that caused behavior to be modified and restricted. The following excerpt is her response to my question as to whether or not she was ever officially investigated:

…but it was an unofficial investigation. For example, they would come into my room, I know they would come into my room and they would check my footlocker. They would check around in my room. I guess they were looking for pornography, I don’t know what they were looking for. They would harass me every single day at work…checking is there anything wrong with
my uniform. They even got to the point where they, they let the rumor out and all of my co-workers, started saying, you know negative things about me. "Oh you, you’re, you’re, what is it, ah, you’re a tri-sexual, you’ll sleep with anything." Just things, just evil things like that...."I heard that you, I heard that you screwed some," just stuff I don’t want to repeat....Negative things. "Oh, I heard some, some girl came over to you and your girlfriend... you and your girlfriend have some guy over to your house and ...you both had sex with him." Just things like that. Just to get you started, so they could have a reason...to put me in the brig or something. Or kick me out the Marine Corps....That’s what happened. And I remember... when I first moved from the women’s barracks to the other barracks, they put me in this room with this other woman. She was getting kicked out the Marine Corps on a Dishonorable Discharge because... someone found out that she was gay and they asked her, and she told them yes and they did...a formal investigation on her.

As can be seen in all these excerpts, awareness of the ban was never far from anyone’s mind even if it did not completely alter behavior. Further, it was not just officers and senior enlisted personnel in the military hierarchy that maintained their awareness of the policy and enforced conformance with heterosexual norms. More often, as both Kate and Eve noted, it was peers and junior noncommissioned officers who constantly reinforced expected standards of behavior. (See endnote 1 for a description of the military rank structure.)

...But Sometimes It Isn’t Enforced

At the same time, there were many instances when the policy was not enforced. Many participants reported that several openly gay and lesbian
servicemembers were not harassed, investigated, or discharged. The following excerpt from Randy illustrates this point:

... But I know they had to know, because this one guy, that lived right below me in the barracks, I know like they had to know cause his room was decorated and had all these...fancy drapes that he'd made because he was a seamstress..."How do you pass inspections?" And he said, "Well, they never say anything." And I know they didn't because they'd always say, "Oh, such a neat room."... And they'd never say anything to those guys. You know.

In an even more improbable example Rob related:

...the other group of gays on the ship which was much larger...they were called "The Family" and they were open...one of the guys even wore makeup on the ship...he was very flamboyant, and they were kind of open, they didn't really hide their homosexuality too much, and for the most part people didn't seem to care.

As can be seen from Randy and Rob's reports, the services were inconsistent, not only in enforcement of the policy, but oftentimes ignored instances of blatant displays of stereotypical homosexual behavior. In fact, there were times when those in charge very clearly knew that an individual was gay or lesbian but declined to enforce the policy. Bill remembers:

...ironically this one guy turned himself in right before we were going on a cruise and he was the most flamboyant guy on the ship. But the command saw it as if he was trying to get away from our six month deployment. So... I was asked to do an investigation about his activities as a gay man. Everybody referred to him as "Diana Ross" because he would sashay and all this stuff...it was not until we pulled into our first port that he went and bought makeup and Italian porn magazines to show "proof" of his
own sexuality, to accommodate the stereotype... So he had to go to that extreme to deal with that.

In this case, as Bill said, the belief held by the chain-of-command was that the sailor was simply trying to avoid the rigors of a deployment.

However, as Jeri, who served during the Korean War era before gay liberation relates, there were other reasons that seniors in the chain-of-command ignored the ban. Her comments follow:

Now, I did some really dumb things when I was in Germany as far as... relationships with women are concerned. Never got caught at any of them. Nothing ever came up with them. And I don’t know if I was just lucky, or if I was... needed by them. That’s true... they were not making any effort at that time, ... recruitment and retention was poor in 55, ... they were not making any effort at that time to seek out gays in the States nor in Germany anywhere. Not in Wiesbaden or anywhere else... it pretty much just didn’t come up... that was my feeling, that when they needed us, they just didn’t look. And ... when the Korean War was over... I don’t have any particular knowledge, but I was told that they wiped out about half a barracks up in San Francisco. They started getting... gung ho.

Later in the interview Jeri was talking about some of her experiences in the active reserves:

I was with a woman... Sherry, who is to this day a very good friend of mine... I was stationed out at Lompoc... so, she would come with me for the weekend, get a motel room, but she’d hang around, and they got to know her. Now this is my lover right, and I’m sure that there was more than one person who knew what was going on. Well anyway, they got to like her, so they asked her to join. Well now, you can’t just join even the reserves, you’re supposed to go to Boot Camp. Well they waived the Boot Camp for her. She never went to Boot Camp. For three years... we went to the reserves together... We got... the motel room, because
they didn’t have any women there...Now what I absolutely know is that the person who’s in charge of me directly knew that we were lesbians. And I know that because at about 14 years when her three years was up, I said, “I’m going to quit this thing. You know, I’m really tired of this drive to Lompoc and going to God knows where for the two weeks, Idaho or Lackland Air Force Base.” I said, “I quit.” And he didn’t want me to quit. I said, “I quit, I’m not going to, I don’t know, I quit.” “No you can’t quit.” I said, “I am quitting, I’m a lesbian and I’m quitting.” He says, “I don’t care if you are a lesbian. I want you back here.” I went back for another couple of years. So he, Glenn, was actually verbalized and he didn’t care one way or the other. I worked, I was a good worker. And by then I was a Master Sergeant.

It is obvious from her remarks above that Jeri believes that the Air Force was willing to overlook the fact that she is lesbian both because they needed her at a time when there were personnel shortages and she possessed a superior work ethic. Similarly, Rob remembers the experience of a Marine Corps friend:

...a friend of mine who...had been in the Air Force...wanted to join the Marine Corps, so I got him in the Marine Corps and I went to his graduation, I came down to San Diego and came down to his graduation, met him the day he graduated...then...during Desert Storm, somebody turned him in. Him and his lover, they turned him in, and because they were both over there serving and they kept him in until after the war. As soon as the war was over then they kicked him out...he’s now a Sheriff for [a county in California].

Based on the incidents related by several of the participants, it seems most likely that when gays and lesbians have skills and talent needed by the armed forces, they are allowed to serve even if they engage in behavior that labels them as gay or lesbian. However, once they are no longer needed, the
military "cracks down" and once again enforces the ban. In fact, the armed forces' need for trained personnel to fight the 2003 war in Iraq may be the reason that discharges under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell..." fell for the first time since it was implemented in 1993 (Heredia 2003).

Participants also indicated that different standards were used for officers and senior non-commissioned officers than junior enlisted personnel when it came to enforcement of the homosexual exclusion policy. They were either discharged quickly, which meant that they were not subject to the humiliation and harassment that frequently accompanied an extended discharge process, or they were quickly and quietly transferred, which saved them and the service from the embarrassment of people in leadership positions being exposed in a compromising situation. In their positions in legal administration and personnel, Bill and Randy were in unique positions to know how discharges due to homosexuality were handled. Bill remembers:

...it was amazing what I saw first hand. If it was a junior enlisted person, um, the process for some reason seemed long, stretched out. But if it was, I knew of some E7's and above who revealed themselves, they were out right away. Um, I never experienced or saw officers resigning from their commission, I never saw that. But I'm sure if they did you know there would be no problem right away.

Similarly, Randy said:

Now I know of some cases where um, like with commanders that were caught. It seemed, it seemed like the commanders would protect one another. Because they would, you know they would either be reassigned or, or something all of a
sudden you know would happen to that commander. Or that commander wasn’t kicked out of the military. Or he was sent to another base or something of that nature.

The fact that junior enlisted personnel were treated differently than senior non-commissioned officers and officers is not surprising. In the armed forces as in other large bureaucracies, senior people have more perquisites than those of lesser rank and position. In the military this is due both to the training investment the service has in officers and senior non-commissioned officers but also to the privilege that comes with rank, particularly for officers. Consequently, it sometimes seems that even when they are in trouble officers, and to a lesser extent, senior enlisted personnel receive better treatment than junior enlisted men and women.

However, there are other reasons for the different treatment received by more senior service members. The military hierarchy does not want the aura of authority enjoyed by the officer corps to be diminished by officers caught in what is perceived to be a compromising situation. So, they are quickly and quietly removed from the scene. In the case of junior enlisted people they are often retained for long periods of time while their separation is being processed. This allows them to be harassed and humiliated which serves as an example to others of the negative consequences that result from violating the ban.
Playing the Part of Being Straight

With a constant awareness that they could be discharged for their sexual orientation, many participants felt pressure to appear to be heterosexual. In the following Rob describes feeling under pressure to appear straight the longer he remained in the Marine Corps because more and more of his peers got married and had children. As an unmarried sergeant he could be suspect if his behavior did not conform to group norms as he related below:

...I was sleeping with women, usually because I had to not because it was something I was out hunting for, I just really wasn’t really that sexually driven yet...that wasn’t a key thing in my mind, but we’d go down to Tijuana and we’d go to...the whore houses down there and...you’d have to sleep with a prostitute because if you didn't the other guys would look at you. So we did that or...you come into the barracks and...your roommate would bring home two girls so you had to sleep with the other whether...you wanted to or not cause...that's what you had to do.

As can be seen from Rob's recollections, there was enormous pressure exerted in the military environment to enforce conformity to normative sexual behavior. The pressure to conform to normative sexual behavior was also keenly felt by participants who did not yet identify as gay or lesbian, as the following comment from Rick illustrates:

...there was a good guy I met...he was a real nice...young kid. Young, well of course I was only 20. So I think he was 18. I was very attracted to him. It turns out he had a gay brother. And he was very open about his body....and we used to go out and we'd play racquetball all the time, and we'd shower together and...I'd sit there other times...
he'd be in the shower; I'd just come into shower with my clothes on, because it was a community bathroom, open shower stall, room, and I'd just stand there and watch him shower, ...and talk and ... he was very open with his body. ...but you know here again, because I was still in the closet and not comfortable with my own sexuality, ... I was always afraid to make moves on people because I didn't want to one, either ruin the relationship that I had already established as a friend; or two, was afraid of ridicule or even worse getting caught or being labeled as a queer.

Being labeled "queer" by their peers was major fear for several participants, and that fear acted to shape their behavior so they would not be suspected of being homosexual. The reaction of some service personnel, heterosexual as well as homosexual, to co-workers who did not display normative gender behavior standards is described below. Again, Rick recalls:

"...we had a pharmacy technician that came from basic training to Italy. You know the guys just can't hide; they wear their sexuality on their sleeve. And this guy was obviously just a flaming, flaming faggot. (laughing) ...he was probably 20, maybe 19, but ...it was obvious. I mean just everything about him was screaming gay. And ...because of that, people were scared of him. And they treated with him as if they ... became his friend, then they might be labeled. So it was known that he... was gay.

Gay men and lesbians used several strategies to avoid suspicion. One technique, as Rick alluded to above, was avoiding people who were open or suspected of being homosexual.

In a somewhat different context, Rob described his fears about being exposed as gay if he brought gay friends to the base:
...trying to get relationships, I had a lot of problems with that, because being in the military, I was afraid of bringing anybody who was gay to base...I was always afraid that they would expose me. Because they would be too feminine in some way...to find another guy who was masculine enough in my opinion at the time to not give any perception at all that he was gay was really hard for me. I was very judgmental on that and I might sleep with them and they be my friend, but I'm not going to introduce them to anybody that I know because I would be embarrassed. So, that became an issue, and what was funny about that was when I met my current husband...I was just about to get out of the Marine Corps...and I was just finishing out my last few months... until my contract ended. And I met him and he had been closeted and he was afraid to take me and introduce me to any of his friends. And...he's not feminine, but he was more than I was, I thought, being a Marine and he was afraid to take me...a Marine Sergeant and...he thought when people met me they would think he was gay. And I thought all of a sudden the shoe was on the other foot and I was like wow, it's really you know weird, but I mean, that's the kind of fear that I was going through.

Randy made the following observation about those who had problems with their peers:

I would see some problems with those guys that were really flamboyant. Say like “switching” cross base or something the guys would call them names and stuff like that. But if you were mostly quiet and kept to yourself...And I wasn’t one to be showy...I never had any problems at all...The guys who are more, I guess, really discreet, or they just carry themselves in that manner, and they didn’t bother anybody...I think it was the way you carried yourself.

It can be inferred from Rob’s concern about not wanting to appear to be feminine and Randy’s comment that “it was the way you carried yourself,” that great care was taken by at least some military gays and lesbians to
present the image desired by the services when in the military environment or with military people.

Some respondents reported protecting themselves from scrutiny by the military by developing heterosexual relationships. After witnessing the investigation of two women in her Army Basic Training class, Eve, who was first in the Army National Guard and then in the Marine Corps became very frightened. Not wanting to be discharged from the military and uncertain about her sexuality, she decided to "go straight." She relates her experience in the excerpt that follows:

...I got really scared, and I pretended to be straight, and I took on a boyfriend...it got to the point, that I played the role...so much, to the point where we had even scheduled a weekend where we were going to stay in a hotel and we were going to consummate the relationship, right. But I couldn't do it...we went together for like ah, about ah, the entire time we were there, we even bought T-shirts that said, "I'm Hers" and "He's Mine." That's how far I went with it, because I was so afraid you know, I didn't want to get kicked out of the military, and I had to go into the closet...and I went out with him because one, he was more mature. I selected him because he was more mature. He was older, and he wasn't so much into having sex. And he, he had a kid, so he was serious as to something he was focused on...he was like 24, 25 something like that. So I knew if I went out with him, he wouldn't pressure me to do anything I did not want to, right. So we went out like one or two months...So, the first night we're in the hotel room, we're in bed, we don't have any clothes on, I said I can't do it, I can't do this, I can't do this, you know. I lied, I said to him, I'm just not ready yet, you know, I'm not ready to do this you know. Because um, I can't even remember what I said, but it wasn't true...him and I got into an argument, and he said, "The only reason why you don't want to be with me is because I think you're gay."...I didn't say anything, right, and I didn't know how to respond to it...But after that...I caused a really big scene to break up with him...and it was just a horrible argument I created cause
I didn’t want anyone to figure out that I was gay.

Although Eve tried to develop a relationship with a heterosexual man and the relationship floundered because she was unable to engage in sexual relations with him, there were occasions when gay men and lesbians teamed up to produce sham heterosexual relationships that served as cover. Again, Randy recalls:

I knew a married couple... military officers... And they were, she was gay and he was gay and they both had their own set of friends but they were living together... [then, speaking about another couple] This one girl I knew, she married another guy that was gay. They had it worked out, but I said how in the world, that, that’s so much confusion. Because you’ve got to go someplace, you’ve got to take your husband. But then when your girlfriend comes over you want to be together. They would actually leave town, because she didn’t want anyone in town to see her with her girlfriend. Now she would go like to maybe your house or my house, or just a group that she knew. But other than that she wouldn’t unless she went to Paris or some other city or something like that.

Although it might seem easier for a gay man and a lesbian to carry off a front relationship than for a homosexual and a heterosexual, as Randy’s comments made clear, it was complicated and put intense pressure on everyone involved to keep stories straight, to present the correct façade at the right time, and to juggle relationships with romantic partners as well as front partners.

Nevertheless, it is obvious from the experiences related above that there was great pressure to appear to be heterosexual and gay and lesbian
military members coped with it by making artful use of the presentation of self. They took care to present themselves in a way that was in keeping with the gendered behavior expectations of the military environment.

However, the pressure of carrying out such ongoing heterosexual performances consumes a vast amount of emotional resources. Conducting daily life in such a charged atmosphere necessitates an area to which people are able to retreat to relax, regroup, and recharge their batteries for the next performance. How this was accomplished will be discussed in the next two sections.

**Creating a Shadow Community**

The military services each seek to create a community shaped by its unique culture. The indoctrination process starts in the introductory training received by all officers and enlisted personnel and continues throughout an individual’s tenure in the service through schools, ceremonies, social functions, etc. Many participants reported fitting into the culture of their service very well. However, they were, as previously discussed in “Negotiating the Hostile Environment of the Service’s Closed Bureaucracy,” always cognizant of the fact that they could be discharged because of their sexual orientation even as they sought others like themselves with whom to associate. As will be seen, this led to the creation of a shadow community within the military services.
Finding the Community

Because of the homosexual exclusion policy, gay men and lesbians in the service were unable to be open about their personal lives in the same way that their heterosexual counterparts were. They were unable to interact freely on a social basis with other gay and lesbian military members or to include their civilian gay and lesbian friends and partners in the military social activities that remain a large part of military life, especially overseas or at remote military installations. Consequently, their personal and professional social interaction within the military was severely circumscribed.

Nevertheless, there was a strong desire to interact with other military gays and lesbians.

Even though his experiences in the Navy handling the discharge packages of gays and lesbians who were being separated because of the ban frightened him, Bill finally decided he had to visit a gay bar in Hawaii as he recalls below:

...it was not until I was in my last year of Hawaii where I decided that I was going to go check out this one bar cause, I, I just had to go visit one on my own...I felt like I had to hide in the shadows of the dark just to go inside the bar. So when I walked in there, to my surprise, the majority of the clientele was Air Force, Coast Guard, Marine and Navy, so it seemed to me like I found a home. And...I was fortunate that at that time that I was able to meet with the click of gay military men in there, I was able to go to their social events, parties, barbeques and stuff like that. Fortunately they had contacts where...I got orders to ...Norfolk, Virginia and they told me places to go and the interesting people to be with and meet. So I was able to do that, so when I
went to my ship, the John F. Kennedy, I was able to meet other men on my ship, there was about 32 of us, I'm not sure. We'd always socialize when we would go in ports or when we were back home...the United States.

It is evident from Bill's comments that not only did he want to meet other gay men, but he wanted to meet other military gay men. Once he connected with them, he was able to make connections wherever he went in the Navy.

Not everyone had this experience of developing a shadow community in the military, as Dale made clear in response to my comment that one of the things I was trying to learn about is whether there is a sense of community among gays and lesbians in the military:

When I got to Saigon, there was a guy there in the barracks who I thought was good looking and he had a lover off base somewhere, a lieutenant lover. And...I asked if I could meet him. I just wanted to meet him, you meet different people you get to know a lot of people, you know what I mean? That's where I was going. I guess he thought I was trying to move in on his territory, I have no idea, but he said "No." So, I mean I never picked up a gay sense of community in the military.

In Dale's case it is likely that the intimidation tactics that were freely used at that time discouraged any community building among gays and lesbians. His own experience with some of the tactics used by the military hierarchy during the Vietnam era, which was previously reported in Conduct Unbecoming (Shilts 1993), is recounted below:

Convinced he would be killed if he went to war, Dale wrote President Johnson and explained he was gay...After Dale
had been in Vietnam several months, CID [Criminal Investigation Division] agents burst into his hooch and took him off for interrogation. The agents ... demanded that Dale sign a statement saying he was heterosexual and had just written the letter to get out of going to Vietnam. Dale refused. After threats of informing his parents failed to secure a recantation, one of the CID agents pulled out his service revolver and put it against Dale's head. According to Dale's recollection, the agent said, "We can shoot you and tell your parents you were killed in action." Or Dale could sign a statement saying he was not homosexual. Dale signed...

Others reported mixed results in terms of finding a gay and lesbian community in the services, as Rob's experiences during two different shipboard deployments illustrates:

...it was really hard to get close to somebody as a friend, because there was always something I was hiding. And so I didn't have any really, really close friends, I had a lot of buddies, but not anybody that I could confide in...but when we learned about the ship, there was two groups of gays on the ship. And one was a small group of mostly corpsmen who worked on the flight deck...There's a Battle Dressing Station on the flight deck and there's a Main Sickbay down below. And this group was kind of closeted [The group with whom Rob associated.]...they didn't socialize much with the other group of gays on the ship which was much larger...they were called The Family [Rob did not associate with The Family] and they were open ....one of the guys even wore makeup on the ship, he was very flamboyant, and they were kind of open, they didn't really hide their homosexuality too much, and for the most part people didn't seem to care. But I didn't want to be associated with that group because I was afraid if they mentioned one sergeant was gay, well it had to be either me or the married one who had kids, and I thought they'd probably would have figured out it was me...that made life in the military okay for me for, for quite a while, that lasted six months and knowing other people that were gay there just gave me an outlet, both mentally and physically, but there was for me, the mental part of having
somebody else to talk to and confide in was, was a big thing and we met almost nightly as a group...whenever flight-ops would end, we’d all meet there and we’d stay up until two or three in the morning, every night just talking. And it wasn’t a sex thing at all it was just...being able to talk and be free and be open.

Once he found a group of gay men he could relate to and with whom he felt safe, Rob had enough of a community to sustain him through the deployment.

While that experience was at least satisfactory for Rob, his next shipboard deployment was more difficult as he relates below:

...the Gulf War came around... I went over on a ship again, this time it was the Germantown. It was a big ship of about, I want to say 3,000, there may have been fewer, I’m not sure. That life started becoming really difficult...we’d hit a port and ...you would go and have sex and that was not a problem, you’d meet other sailors or Marines. Sometimes they were married, sometimes they weren’t...that was pretty easy to find sex, but I had no outlet as far, I knew not one person on that ship that was gay...I had suspicions...on the way to the war we stopped...in the Philippines for New Years Eve, and I got really drunk with another sailor who I thought was gay and I came out to him and he says, “Well I’m not gay.” I said, “Oh”... I was in tears...I just told this guy I was gay, I’m out...what’s going to happen, but he stayed my friend and...it never became an issue. But then when the war ended, during the war of course we were busy...when you were at sea it wasn’t as bad, but it was very lonely and when the war ended, we ended up staying there nine months after on the ship. And almost all the time it was at sea...it got so lonely...I couldn’t develop a real close bond with anybody because I had that thing that I was always hiding. Plus it was getting to a point where...after you’ve been in the Marine Corps, I was at that time...8 years, I was...a little bit older, I’m not married, it’s very unusual...you’re not going to find too many people... maybe in the Navy more than you would in the Army or the Marines...guys are usually married by then or at least divorced.
So people...are going to start to wonder, why isn't this guy married...unless he's some real weirdo...I became very, very lonely and when I got back, I had decided that I would never do that again. I couldn't...just psychologically...not to be able to open up to somebody for six or nine months and...and just sit...be able to talk freely is just like a prison. I said...I couldn't do this again...

It is clear from Rob's description of his Gulf War deployment that his inability to discover any gay community during his second shipboard deployment and the fact that he did not deploy with anyone from the community of which he was a part in the San Diego area made the Germantown deployment immeasurably more difficult than his previous tour on the Carl Vinson.

He was not alone. Kate also indicated mixed results in terms of finding a gay and lesbian military community as she describes in the excerpt below:

...at first with these women on the softball team, I felt like an outsider anyway. I was very young. Everyone else could go out and drink and party and that kind of thing. And...now that I'm older...I don’t know whatever it is with people’s first experience there’s this saying 'kids can be cruel' kind of thing so, these women I wouldn’t say they were particularly kind about it...a lot of machismo women on this team. But not bad...but they were definitely the in crowd. And there were basically like three of us that were not the in crowd...so it wasn't really great timing...It wasn’t bad, but I was still fascinated by it. When I look back on it I think I must have acted a lot like a little sister or a tag along...So, it was...just internally...stressful because I can remember being in the Marine Corps where those women had legitimate...everyone is so suspicious of people...I can't remember exactly because it's been a while now but I think they weren't completely trusting...They had their group of friends, people knew who people were but then it's like a new comer. What is this person? People were paranoid. They actually felt like there were cameras and people were watching. I think there was
distrust about this new person...

And, Jeri's comments also reflect how difficult it was to make friends due to suspicions that others who could not be trusted might be listening or watching:

...it was harder for me to make friends although I was a jock, and so I was involved...I mean I was in all the sports and I knew...other jocks, most of them probably lesbians. We didn't discuss it. We never discussed it of course because you couldn't. There was somebody around the corner who, who might be listening.

Kate's problems gaining entrée to the lesbian community through the All Marine Softball Team because of the groups' suspicion of a person they did not know illustrates the difficulty stigmatized groups have in establishing groups where they can feel comfortable and safe. The surveillance imposed by the dominant group and its threat to individual and group well being impedes the development of community among stigmatized groups like gays and lesbians in the military. The more severe the surveillance and sanctions imposed for violating the rules, the more difficult it is for a community to form. It is likely that Rob was unable to locate a gay community on the Germantown because the surveillance in the commands on board was so harsh that a community was unable to emerge.

The situation Jeri encountered is a reflection of the fact that the ability to create a gay and lesbian community is a relatively recent phenomenon in the civilian community much less the military community as she reminded me:
...there wasn't when I was in. We're talking before Stonewall... So, there was no community at all before Stonewall...and only after that did it start to develop. In the days that I was in, if you did get caught and you did get discharged, that was it. You didn't go anywhere with it. You just, you just put your tail between your legs and sneaked home and went on with your life. Because there was no support there. There were not attorneys that would take up your cause. Even the ACLU wasn't what it is now...if it even existed then...so early, in the late '60s, or even early '70s.

Most changes in civilian society are also reflected in the military. Therefore, it is possible that the differing levels of surveillance and community feeling experienced by participants reflects a variation of feeling about the importance of the ban at different commands or in different services as a result of the fluxuation in attitude toward gays and lesbians in the civilian community since Stonewall occurred in 1969. Certainly there are times and places where a shadow gay and lesbian community has existed as described by both Bill and Randy. As Bill told me in response to my question about whether or not the gays he knew on the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy were a tight community:

Yes...socially, some people joked we were a “Gay Mafia”...we had the insights because most of us worked in the admin or personnel or disbursing, medical...those type of job trades...we were able to communicate easier that way or just...pass the message along to somebody...we would just network where we would meet at certain bars...if we were...in the ports, in Norfolk or, we'd meet up somewhere, where we could spread the word like, “Hey we're going to meet out at this certain bar,”...when we got to Italy or France, and we would all just meet up there...it would just be word of mouth...we wouldn't leave any notes or like that...oh, well maybe on
occasion somebody did, but I never did. So that’s how we just basically communicated. Or we just talked on daily interaction.

However, the “Gay Mafia” was able to operate on official levels as well. Bill continues:

One guy apparently had revealed to another sailor that he was [gay], and I didn’t know that guy was, so it was a surprise to me. He wasn’t part of our circle...it’d got to the point where people were like pushing him against the wall, or messing up his rack on purpose...my friends who I worked with on the command said go see Bill, and he told me his story where people were shoving him or punching him or pushing him or messing up his rack..."I’ll see what I can do." So I talked to my Division Officer and I said, “We need to get,” because they already started the admin discharge process...I said, “Maybe we can continue this process on the mainland.”...because we were off the coast in the Atlantic Ocean. So we were able to fly him off the ship the next day...

Although Bill indicated that was his only experience of being able to help someone through unofficial connections in the gay community, it is likely there were other incidents that he was unaware of based on Randy’s recollections of his experience in Germany:

...my roommate worked in the MP [Military Police] station; he was the supply sergeant there... a lot of things...I would hear it from him. Oh, such and such is going to happen so we don’t want to go to that club tonight, because they are going to come and check...but we know they can’t get in...so we say we’ll just avoid that all together because we wouldn’t want to be a part of that. Supposedly they’d be hanging outside or something like that...we would tell others, you know, this is going on, they’re looking for this and that and the other...and, I think it became more of...a close knit group because you knew everybody in this unit, or if you meet somebody then you find out, well this person in this unit is gay and this person
As can be seen from Randy’s recollections, there was a well developed gay and lesbian network that operated not only to “tip off” members of the community about potential bar raids and to protect them from potential punishment for fighting and other infractions, but also to help people with personnel, finance, and medical problems. It is likely that these connections helped people avoid scrutiny for various problems including contracting sexually transmitted diseases.
In contrast to the experiences of Bill and Randy, Eve reported that she believed that it was closeted lesbians in her unit who started the rumors that led to harassment from her peers, non-commissioned officers, staff non-commissioned officers, and officers. In addition, her best friend in her unit, a woman she described as her mentor, was also harassed and eventually transferred. Consequently, her support system was removed; she was unable even to call her mother, with whom she was very close, because her mother did not have a phone at that time. In Eve's case the unit officers not only sanctioned the harassment, they participated in it as she recalls below:

...I didn't get promoted until after I got out of the military. And the reason why I did not get promoted is because when I turned down my commanding officer...for sex...I was supposed to get promoted; he actually told me, my promotion papers were on his desk, and he was going to sign them if I went to bed with him and...I was told that the trail that came along with me when I was switched over to that company, by me being gay...being harassed, I didn't get promoted. Even though I was almost perfect on my PFT, I took college courses...my work was excellent work, great uniform...I was a gung ho...I was gung ho to the point, now that I think about it, I was sick, but I didn't get promoted because I was gay. I didn't get promoted because I didn't sleep with him, I didn't give my body to someone. And that was another form of harassment there.

What appears to be the primary difference between Eve and Dale's experiences in comparison to Bill and Randy's and even Kate and Rob's experience on his first ship, the Carl Vinson, is that the officers, the official hierarchy, sanctioned and participated in the surveillance and harassment. Therefore, those who were subordinate to them in the chain-of-command
were free to badger Eve relentlessly and to threaten Dale’s life without fear of being reprimanded. In addition, the command sanctioned the harassment of Eve’s friend and severed their friendship by transferring her friend not only to another unit but to a remote location in Turkey. It was an unsubtle message to both of them that the Marine Corps could and would punish them for their perceived behavior.

It is a tribute to Eve’s spirit and strength of character that she managed to complete her enlistment and receive an honorable discharge. The promotion to corporal she should have received after three years on active duty was mailed to her after she was discharged.

In Dale’s case CID apparently considered the case closed once he signed the statement he was heterosexual. It only surfaced once more when he requested an extension in Vietnam. Initially it was denied based on that incident, but he contested the denial when he found out that was why his request for an extension was rejected. Finally, he got his extension and served a second year in Vietnam.

Dale also showed great strength and conviction. Wisely, he did not test the CID agent’s resolve to kill him, but he refused to be denied an opportunity he wanted after he had complied with what the Army wanted him to do, to say he was heterosexual.

The desire to be able to connect with other military people who were gay or lesbian in spite of the ban led to the formation of informal networks
within various commands. As can be seen from the participants' experiences, some efforts were more successful than others. In commands where officially sanctioned surveillance and harassment was low, gay men and lesbians were able to form shadow communities that provided both a social outlet and an informal assistance network. In commands where the officers participated in the surveillance and harassment, not only was it difficult for networks to be formed by gays and lesbians, but it appears that there were gays and lesbians who would inform on others.

For those fortunate enough to be members of commands where the surveillance and harassment was least evident, the gay and lesbian shadow community made life in the military much more pleasant. For those unfortunate enough to be assigned to commands with high levels of surveillance and harassment, life could be miserable. However, this was made more complicated by having to figure out who was gay and lesbian and who was not because it was not always possible to tell by the players or where they played.

"What Goes on at Sea, Stays at Sea..."

Not everyone who participated in same sex behavior identified as gay or lesbian. Two men in this study did not identity as gay until after they left the service: one man engaged in both heterosexual and homosexual sexual relations while on active duty, and the other man engaged only in limited heterosexual sexual contact. As can be seen from some of the participants'
remembrances that follow, many in the military who were involved in same
sex activity did not identify as gay or lesbian. Rick recalls his roommate in
Italy:

...unless you were higher ranking, it was an unaccompanied
tour...if you were E4 or 5 and below, you didn't get to bring
your spouse because they didn't have the housing you know
to support it. So, they would come over for short tours of a
year, sixteen months or something, and they'd end up having
to stay in a barracks, in a dorm room and these married men
would go out and have sex with the other guys. You know,
it was just totally shocking. My roommate, who was this married
guy, and who is very nice looking and um, I used to fantasize
about him, because I would see him all the time naked. You
know, and he's sit right above me when I'm sleeping. And I
used to fantasize about him, you know, a very nice looking
guy and everything. Well this other guy got stationed at our
base, and this was about four months after I was there. And
um, he was very outgoing and had no problem just, like he
would be walking up and down the halls all the time completely
naked you know, and he would sit in his room and watch TV
completely naked with other people there that were completely
clothed. So he made it quite clear that you know...so, I go over
to this guy's room one day, and it was about 10 o'clock in the
morning and here's my roommate in bed with him. My married
roommate is having sex with this guy. I was just like stunned.
So, there, because a social circle of people that you know,
you knew who was willing to have sex and um, you know
people would do this on a fairly regular basis.

Although Rick, who was in the Air Force, was shocked by his first experience
of men who identified as straight having sex with other men, similar activity
was reported by members of each of the services. Randy also knew married
men who had same sex sexual relations with men who lived in the barracks
on his Army post, as he recalls in the following excerpt:
...there were a couple of guys in my barracks there, they never left the base, but they were gay. They never left the base...they had these other partners that were so-called straight that were on base, that they would just come to their rooms and so forth. Because they refused to go out to a club or to meet anyone but they had these supposedly straight, married, military guys that were visiting them at night. You know they would, they would do things together and all this, and I found that really interesting because I'd never knew that aspect of the military... I thought...how well it was kept, and if you didn't say anything, people knew, but nobody said anything...some of the guys to me it was very obvious, but nobody said a word, you know, because I guess they had partners here and there and nobody ever said anything.

Others reported similar incidents. Bill remembers a shipboard experience of his:

...the term that's commonly used was 'what goes on at sea stays at sea'...this one guy and he told me about his wife and two kids and everything, and what surprised me he was making all the advances, but I was still on my safeguard...I didn't know what to expect...until I realized he was really you know pursuing me and so I gave in. And we had our activities, and then we left it as that, it was pretty much consenting...he wasn't looking for anything, I wasn't looking for anybody, it was just something that we both accommodated.

Likewise, Rob reported:

...we'd hit a port and you know you would go and have sex and that was not a problem, you'd meet other sailors or Marines. Sometimes they were married, sometimes they weren't, and that was pretty easy to find sex...on the way to the war we stopped...in the Philippines for New Years Eve, and I got really drunk with another sailor who I thought was gay and I came out to him and he says, well I'm not gay. I said, "Oh"...Then I was like, I was in tears, I was like I just told this guy I was gay, I'm out, you know, what's going to happen, but he stayed my friend and you know, it never became an issue.
Alex, who acted on sexual feelings for men and identified as gay only after he got out of the Army found himself pursued by a Catholic Priest who was a chaplain on the post where he was stationed:

...there was a military chaplain, a Catholic Priest who actually made advances at me and actually had sex with Joe. Um, and we hung out at this guy’s house, he was, he lived off post, he had his own place, a really nice place, which was a lot better than living on post... he was a really nice guy generally but, I had this aversion to him because he was a Catholic Priest and he used to justify his sex with men ...that when he took his vow of celibacy it was only with women. And it just irked me to no end; it was just like another one of those marks against the Catholic religion.

Although the women did not report the same type of sexual activity as the men in terms of picking up other women for anonymous sex, there were women who became involved with other women while they still identified as heterosexual. Kate recalled the first woman with whom she was sexually involved in response to my question as to whether they had developed a relationship:

We had a sexual relationship and...no complaints. It was fun. She was great, but I don’t remember how we got together because she was a married woman. She was married to a man, obviously. But I was so easily influenced and...I had a crush on her I just went with it you know, wanted it but I don’t remember exactly what all happened. It was all thru softball, we were alone. It was brief, very brief.

What can be seen from all these recollections is the pervasiveness of same sex activity not only by those who identify as gay or lesbian but those
who identify as heterosexual. Some of these people may eventually identify as homosexual, as did the woman with whom Kate was first involved; however, it is likely that many, if not most, always identify as straight and never acknowledge their same sex activity.

This same sex activity is not acknowledged by the military hierarchy. Not only that, very few of those who identify as heterosexual are discharged for their homosexual behavior. It is gays and lesbians who are pursued by the military, not people who engage in same sex activity. The issue is sexual identity, not sexual activity, as the military claims.

Despite the dangers of being found out, all the participants in this study indicated that they and the other gay men and lesbians that they knew tried to construct lives where they could be themselves, apart from the military. Those efforts will be discussed in more detail below.

Constructing Lives for Themselves Separate From the Military

The participants in this study employed various methods to construct lives for themselves separate from the military. Those mentioned most often were socializing and making friends at gay and lesbian clubs in the civilian community, participating in sports and off base activities, and compartmentalizing their lives. Most participants reported some combination of all three techniques. Each will be discussed in more detail below.
Almost all the participants mentioned the civilian gay and lesbian bars off base as places of refuge, places where they could relax and be themselves. Kate’s recollection is typical:

I will never forget my first night going to that club. I remember exactly what I was wearing. I mean I was wearing a maroon turtleneck and white shorts, white cut off shorts you know the kind of shorts that used to be in and you’d wear them you know the style. And they were jeans shorts and I was wearing tennis shoes... I think I actually went to the club about two weeks before I turned 21. I had a fake military ID; they were in black and white anyway and they never gave anyone military at the door a hard time. It was like go in... It was in San Diego at the Flame. I literally went there every Friday and Saturday night. And I would never now go to a club when it opened at 9 o’clock and I couldn’t even stay until they closed, but I would be there from 9 till 2. And I would be so upset that the weekend was over. I lived for the weekend, you know. I would try to stay down there, but if I couldn’t I would just drive back and forth... I made friends with people in the club who were in the military, not [with] people in the military who went to the club...I made friends there. A lot of the friends I made were also civilian people and the group feeling came from the people who were always at the club, not whether they were in the military or not. Everybody who was there every Friday and Saturday night... Tami and I became very good friends but it was a very superficial kind of feeling. Still, I liked it because you know that Cheers saying you like going where everybody knows your name. So, it was still a good feeling to go, to be free, to feel like you could be who you are, you know.

As can be seen from the excerpt above, for Kate and many others the bars were not only the only places where they could be free, but they were places where they had a good time and made friends. Randy’s experiences recalled
below highlight the enjoyment experienced by many who went to the gay bars in Europe.

So, this other guy that took me out...we took a taxi from the base and we went into Wiesbaden and I think that was my first time going to, well my first two gay bars that I went to that particular night. So I've never gone to a gay bar there. And so there, through the interim of that night, I was so surprised to see all of these military and this is where I started meeting people. Other gays that were in the military that had already, they were already over there and they were stationed and we were all on the same base, some were in like supply, some maybe were in finance. I got to know a few officers...And the good thing about Europe at that time ah, the clubs over there are more private, so you had to ring a buzzer to get in. And they would let Americans in...if they thought it might be the police or something they wouldn't let them in. MP's or something. And most of the, most of the guys that were in the clubs, they knew other people, other say, Germans, other people in the club, people that lived there, that they associated with. And so from there, we developed this little group of friends that we were always going places and traveling places with other foreigners that we knew. A lot of American friends of mine had partners that were another nationality either German or French or one happened to be Italian. But most of these, well all of them in fact were military guys. And the clubs...just Frankfurt or Munich and you walk into the club and you see all these Americans and you go my goodness. (laughing)And that was shocking. But that was my first experience.

From both Kate and Randy's reminiscences it is easy to see not only the importance civilian gay and lesbian bars played in providing servicemembers opportunities to meet other gays and lesbians and "let their hair down," but also that the bar owners were aware of and understood the implications of the military ban on homosexuals. Kate recalled that the person checking identification cards at the door of the Flame never slowed
the entrance of anyone in the military, and Randy recalled that customers of German bars had to be identified and allowed to enter through a locked door. In effect, the bars colluded with military gays and lesbians to thwart any attempt by the services to entrap military personnel patronizing the bars.

For some gay and lesbian servicemembers the bars may have started out simply as enjoyable social refuges from the military. However, in some cases, the bars took on a more important meaning. For example, in the excerpt below Eve describes how the bars were initially just a place for fun and to be herself.

...either go down to the Flame and go dancing or we would go to City Heights, or we would go to Crackers or we would go to a house party. ...it was just fun for us to get dressed up and to go out and hang out with our friends. And that’s what we did, you know. We really didn’t have that much money...at all, so we did what we could afford. And that was one of the most fun times that I had in my life just hanging out, talking and driving down to San Diego and dancing because we would all get on the floor and we would come up with some of the craziest dance steps, like karate chops and sometimes someone would bring a whistle and would be dancing around whistling you know, bring bubbles, oh, it was just so much fun. You know, it was so exciting, it was exciting and new...and it was just amazing to see so many you know, so many women and men that were gay and were dancing and having a good old time. And wasn’t worried about, there wasn’t anybody in there, no persecuting you saying that you’re going to go to hell because you’re gay. Or ah, you should go in a mental hospital because something is wrong with you, you’re insane, you’re sick. You know nothing like that.

However, things changed drastically for Eve when she was accused of being a lesbian by some closeted lesbians in her unit. Once she became the
subject of intense harassment and surveillance by her peers as well as her
superiors in the chain-of-command, the bar became even more important as
a safe haven. What began, as an enjoyable, social activity became almost a
life saving ritual as her recollections that follow illustrate:

...after the harassment started, and we got separated, that
stopped...I went out a few times by myself, because I just had
to get away, I had to get as far away as possible from Oceanside.
So, I was so desperate to the point, what I would do. I would go
out and buy me a new outfit, a new suit not an outfit, I had to
have a suit; had to look really good. (laughing) Um, at the time
I had a curl and I weighed probably like 135. I was a size 7,
and I thought I was fat (laughing). I thought I was fat...I was so
desperate, I would plan my weekend. I would go and buy a
roundtrip Greyhound bus ticket, and I would take the bus down
to about like seven o’clock, no six o’clock, get to the bus station,
take a cab from the bus station to the Flame, get there right
before 9 o’clock where I wouldn’t have to pay and I would dance,
just dance and have a good old time and afterwards...after the
club closed, I would take a cab back to the Greyhound bus station
and wait until about two, catch a bus, and come back home.
That’s how much I wanted to get away from there, you know.

Gays and lesbians sometimes found the bars important for other
reasons as well. While people met potential sex partners in the bars, it was
possible to find sexual activity elsewhere; and Rob was also seeking
companionship. The bars became essential to him as places to make friends
and to connect with others on a non-sexual level.

...there were groups down in San Diego, we had a little
group of Marines, and Navy guys who met every weekend
down at the club and we hung out in certain part of the club
a little corner of the club and that was ours... I wanted to
be near gay people. It wasn’t the sex, cause I could have
gotten that in Oceanside. I wanted to be near gay people...
Regardless of the reason they went to the clubs, they were an oasis in the lives of most gay men and lesbians in the military. Without them there would have been very few places for them to go off base where they could not only get away from the military establishment and its pressures, but more importantly connect with other gay men and lesbians in an atmosphere where they could be themselves. This applied to officers as well as enlisted personnel.

"I Got To Know a Few Officers..."

All the services have a policy against fraternization between officers and enlisted personnel and between junior and senior personnel in general. Some of the services enforce the policy more strictly than others, but all of them take an especially dim view of officer-enlisted relationships. However, several participants, all of whom were enlisted, recalled relationships with officers or knew of relationships that other enlisted personnel had with officers.

As Randy recalled, “I got to know a few officers.” Ultimately, he got to know more than a few officers as he remembers below:

I did meet ah, one colonel...I dated or two colonels. And one colonel... we...dated him for a while. But we came real good friends. And another colonel became a good friend of mine... after I got out and moved here, he came to visit once, but I guess he retired um, but they were very friendly. You know, ah, this one colonel was married; in fact his wife lived in officer’s housing and when I was seeing him, he would always leave his house and meet me at the club. We would never go to his
house and that was, and when I questioned him, "Why don't we go to your house?" Well his wife was there, and that's when I found out that he was married. And I said, "Well, how in the world do you go out this often? ...and you leave your wife at home?"

He said, "Well, she's you know, at home, taking care of the kids, or else she's a sleep." And this was a full bird colonel.

As noted earlier in "Creating a Shadow Community," Dale recalled meeting a fellow soldier who was in a relationship with a lieutenant, and Kate remembers being involved with her platoon commander in the excerpt below:

...my experience toward the end was I was involved with you know [no name given on tape but it was her platoon commander] and that made me feel even more self conscious because that made it more obvious to me how much people... protect their identity...I think people find ways to be together um like with [platoon commander] she had some power and authority and she kinda made sure I was around where she was. That's kind of the way that happens. I think that probably happens a lot. I don't mean that in a bad way. People feel safe...

The relationships Randy and Kate reported with officers were mutual, consenting relationships. However, crossing the fraternization line could be hazardous as Bill describes below:

I have to deal with...among our circles we had an O5 who was infatuated with E2, they came to the point where the O5 was stalking the E2 and the E2 was freaking, "What do I do? What do I do,?" But when you are in the middle of the ocean in uniform, you have to follow the officer's orders and um, I somewhat had to approach him...respectfully while he's in the uniform and I'm saying, "So and so's really upset. " But ...out of the office and in a very out of the way area, and I explained the situation, and I guess he calmed down but, it was kind of odd seeing this officer taking advantage of fact that he was in uniform and an O5 and this E2 was just
freaking out. So it was somewhat a form of sexual harassment, but... it was a unique situation where the E2 told... he revealed himself as well.

As can be seen from the excerpt above, sexual harassment can also occur in same sex situations. What is also interesting about this situation is that the officer was apparently a part of the group called the “Gay Mafia” since Bill described him as “part of our circle.” That put the officer and Bill in an extremely awkward situation in that Bill had to approach someone fairly senior about his inappropriate behavior, and none of this could be done openly. By making gay and lesbian relationships illegal, the military sets up a situation that is ripe for abuse.

“...Go Out And Do Something”

Participants reported a wide variety of off-duty activities including participation in civilian organizations, travel, and sports. While unusual, Ted’s activities as part of a civilian theater group illustrates the variety of activities in which gay and lesbian servicemembers took part:

...I had to figure out how to get off base and not tell people where I was going. I had had a theater course my senior year in high school and I had an interest in theater; so, I found out that El Paso had a community theater and I immediately joined. That summer I was part of the crew for a big “Sound of Music” production. I'd go back to the base and all these guys would be so disgusted with El Paso and I'd say "Go out and do something. I'm having a ball." Five nights a week for a six week period I had to be at that theater to work on that crew. I made friends in the theater crowd and had a very good time in El Paso. And I left there with a lot of new acquaintances and friends...
Although he did not specifically say that he assumed he would be able to meet gay men by participating in a theater group, it seems likely that Ted believed the stereotype of gay men being involved in theater enough that he would be able to meet other gay men in El Paso’s community theater.

More typically several people mentioned travel as a favorite off-duty pastime, particularly if they were stationed in Europe. While most military people take advantage of travel opportunities, for the participants in this study the primary objective was to relax and be themselves in the company of other gay men and lesbians. They never traveled with heterosexuals. Jeri remembers:

...the Air Force and Army ran a recreational area, the Garmish recreational area for the military and you could go there and it was like two hours drive from where I was. You could get your leave time. And that’s one thing, my lover and I did while in Germany. I saw beautiful art work; it was in the churches but nevertheless, it’s just, you know, beautiful artwork and, and I feel fortunate I was able to see the Pieta, for example before they put a cage around it so you can’t touch it, and get close to it now. Because of the damage. We traveled a lot, we saw a lot of churches. But ah, we saw the Sistine chapel before they cleaned it too, I’m sure it’s much better now, but you could, you could just really stand in some of the wonderful artwork and had I not been in the military, I would never have never had gone to Europe and been able to experience Italy, to just travel around it and, and Holland and just look at the dikes for example and the necessity for them that really exists, I mean you see these pictures and I mean, they’re everywhere... Gloria...would figure out the itinerary of where we were going to go...so the two of us could get away from the base and, and be together and also, also sightseeing of course...we would try to get away...because you could relax so much more with each other and, you didn’t care all that much about...who saw you.
If you were out ... in the countryside in that country, they don't look upon lesbian relationships in the same way. In fact it was my understanding when I was in Germany there was no actual law that covered lesbian relationships. There was one that covered male relationships...it was like, oh who cares about women...what can they do anyway.

Randy also remembered travel as a favorite pastime as shown in the excerpt below:

So basically on the weekends like, we would travel, Paris, Amsterdam. Switzerland...had a lot of German friends...there were always parties, and plenty of clubs to go to...

Similarly, Rick recalled some of the things he and his friends did when they were off duty:

Well in Italy when I was stationed there we traveled a lot. We would go out and see things. We also, because we were on the Adriatic where we had beaches, we'd go to the beach a lot. And so we did snorkeling and stuff like that. But, we liked to go out and eat and go on the economy and just sit in cafes and sit and watch people. You know...experiencing the culture. I remember one time we went to Naples and that was with that guy that took my roommate. And he wanted to go to a gay bar that he had heard about. And we spent all night looking for this place and never did find it. So we never...went to any kind of gay establishments when I was in Europe.

As Jeri said and Randy and Rick implied, travel gave gay men and lesbians opportunities to be together with their partners and friends without the surveillance of the military.

Sports were a popular off-duty recreational activity with both men and women. At times it was informal like the snorkeling mentioned by Rick, but they also participated in organized sports that were part of the services'
organized sports programs. The respondents' participation in sports is a more complicated issue than their involvement in travel. Sports played multiple roles for the participants. Besides simply being fun, sports allowed gays and lesbians to be an integral part of their units even though they might otherwise feel alienated from the group. For people living in an athletically oriented environment, playing sports was an important way to maintain group status.

The excerpt below describes Alex's participation on the unit softball team and the Fort Meade tennis team:

...we had really good athletic programs. I was on the softball team...for our company and the tennis team...And...we finished first place in both of those. And I was on for two years, so there were other areas that I...participated...but even then...I would go there for practice, I didn't hang out with any of the people on the team, very much, you know. I played third base...its kind of like that hot position nobody wants to be at, and I was pretty good at fielding, but throwing was not my good (laughing) throwing was not my good asset. Fortunately we had a very, very tall first baseman and a very agile first baseman and he was able to scoop and leap. (laughing)...but I could reach anything I got close to me, that was the key for them, and I could stop Marines who were running into third base, which was one of the things that did happen, I had a collision during the championship game with ah, a Marine who had gotten a base hit and I was blocking the plate and I had to miss the championship game and he actually, there was a playoff, we lost the first game and we won the next two. But I had to miss those two games...the tennis, we were ah, individuals, there was only like four of us on the teams...So...it was interesting because you would play people from other posts...because this was the post...team then. So we actually went to...the championship in Washington, DC. It was on clay courts, it was my first time on clay...It was a good experience...
Kate too was active in sports both informally with friends as well as formally as part of the All Marine Softball Team. She recalls:

...at the time I worked out. I jogged. I had some guy friends I did those things with... I was literally chosen for the All Marine Softball Team and there were 15 of us finally chosen. And this was basically two or three weeks of tryouts and everything and... 13 out of the 15 women were gay and I had no idea. It was like one day in August I think I was even at a party and they were all there with their girlfriends and I still didn’t get it.

On one level sports were simply an enjoyable activity; on another, they were a way to connect with people in their unit who were not gay or lesbian, and, as could be seen in Kate's excerpt, they could also be an avenue for making friends with other gays and lesbians through a militarily sanctioned activity.

While most participants reported having friends and enjoyable off-duty activities and having opportunities to see and do things that would not have been possible otherwise, they nevertheless reported experiencing stress from having to maintain two distinct personas, their military persona and their personal persona. Further, as previously discussed, one of the major reasons for these activities was for them to get away together with other gay and lesbian people without the surveillance of the military and so behave more naturally and be more relaxed with each other. The ways they handled the stress of their day to day situation will be more fully discussed in the next section.
“...Leading Two Different Lives”

Most participants reported at least some compartmentalization of their lives while in the service. Kate commented that once she came out she did not socialize very often with her heterosexual peers. Her response to my question about how that affected her behavior was typical:

Well, I think basically I was leading two different lives. I was self-conscious and felt like I had to hide who I was. It was like I had to... and then my experience toward the end was I was involved with you know [her platoon commander] and that made me feel even more self conscious because that made it more obvious to me how much people ... to protect their identity...

Bill recalled that when he was in the Navy it was necessary to maintain a separation between his work and personal life:

I think once you were on a ship and you're not with your... close circle of old friends... you maintain your confidentiality or you put on a second face of the straight act sailor... in your work environment...

The necessity to keep inventing “cover stories” as Ted describes below was also common:

One just had to keep on making up stories to be free as I wanted to be, to enjoy myself as much as I did. You just had to be creative all the time. One thing about being in when I was during the end of Vietnam, it got so nobody really cared what you did. When I was back in El Paso, it got so I would leave the base during lunch to go meet my then lover at a gay bar for drinks in uniform, in uniform, and nothing was ever said...
But, ultimately Ted reports, “I got tired of hiding and hiding it.”

Primarily as a result of being tired of hiding it and wanting more privacy to shield their personal lives, six of 10 participants reported they moved off base even though they were not eligible for military housing allowances. (Only married personnel who do not live in military housing are eligible to receive a housing allowance.) Randy’s comments that follow are typical of the reasons given for moving out of the barracks:

...my first big thing was to get...an apartment on the economy. Because I was living in the barracks at first and I didn’t like that because you didn’t have that much privacy. So I stayed in the barracks for maybe the first half of year that I was there. And then I ended up moving into an apartment with a roommate...another gay soldier who was friend of mine. And we ended up getting an apartment together...I said well in order for me to be more private, because I knew how the military was in certain aspects you know...I wanted to be off base...You know so I could come and go and do what I please, you know, I felt much better... I saw ...what they called the witch-hunt...that's what they called them...and I think this was... around the time too, I decided to get a place off base, that was part of it too. Because they, somehow they were saying that they were doing...this witch-hunt.

In a somewhat different situation Rob was authorized to live off base because he was on recruiting duty. However, because of where his recruiting station was located he lived several miles away because he wanted to be near gay people as he describes below:

...I had some friends, they helped me get stationed in a nice area in Chicago ah, it was in the suburbs off like in farm land. Ah, I was pretty good at what I did, my quota was basically
two a month, two recruits a month, and I didn’t have too much trouble doing that, most of the kids out there were unaffected by crime, cause in the Marine Corps you couldn’t have any speeding ticket, you had to get a waiver, so they weren’t too involved with that. A lot of them wanted to get out of their small town...most of the guys were living out there, and this... was forty minutes from downtown Chicago. I would always commute, there was no way I was going to live out in that little farm community and be gay. So I had to commute all the way back to Chicago... But you know you wanted to be near gay people...

Ultimately, for many of the participants it was the strain of keeping up the façade required to maintain the compartmentalization of their lives that caused several of them to leave the armed forces. Randy, who had been selected for a commission, recalls the factors that prompted him to get out of the Army:

I think, the way that it affected me the most was that, is for being totally free and open. I don’t think I could be, and I like to be honest with people, I don’t think I could have been open and honest with people. Because I think a lot of the discharges that I saw, were people that were gay that they, gave general, general discharges...handled a lot of them. And I wanted to be open...I could be open with some people, but I couldn’t be open with everybody. And I felt like um, that in the military... back then, they had this thing, they might put you in the brig or send you off to...you committed this immoral act or something like that...so that always made me feel uncomfortable...I couldn’t commit to taking the bars...because I said well if I accept these bars then I have to hide something that I don’t want to feel like...I’m in the dark or hiding or running around at night to hide...so to me I felt I didn’t want to be this dishonest with myself or saying yeah let me take these bars and I have to live under these pretences because I’m in the military... when I decided to get out...My thinking is this, if we are going to actually live together, it couldn’t happen with me
being in the military. I said it would never happen. . . . But that was another reason to get out, because after we decided that we were going to...stay together, I said well you know...the best thing is to get out of the military...cause they want, they were, they were really pressuring me to become a lieutenant. Because I had passed that and I said oh no. Because ...my thought was, well I take these and it would be six years and I could get out. But ...after I met him it was like, do I really want to do this, because we can't live together...could live together but then I would always have to be lying or sneaking off someplace and I don’t want to do that, especially as an officer. You have to go to this function or that function and you don’t want to be trying to sneak off.

Bill and Rob reported similar feelings about why they ended their careers in the military. Bill recalls why he left the Navy:

...I really enjoyed my military career, but it came to a point where, based on the ban and the person who I was. I had to get out. I had 10 ½ years where, I was at the point where I could have stayed in and retired... when I was up for orders...and it got to a point where I was going to go to Japan and I had just met my current partner. We've been together now for six years, so I made the decision to get out...But to be transferred to another country... or continue my relationship, it wasn't the right thing, so based on that.

Rob’s feelings about why he got out of the Marine Corps are recounted in the excerpt below:

I changed so much from when I was that little kid that went in the Marine Corps to then where I started realizing my sexual identity and started becoming more politically aware that this organization that I was for was against me, then I thought I just can’t put up with it anymore... And the whole thing is ah, it worked out for me, because I met my lover and we've been together now for 10 years ah, next month. So, I mean the whole military thing and...as I look back on it, it all worked out for me, even the recruiting
duty... even though it was something I didn’t want to do you know, and I hated it, you know I ended up meeting you know the guy who’s right for me my whole life and ah, he helped me deal with getting out of the military because I was really scared. I mean I had guys that talked to me before, you know straight friends, they were like, you are afraid to get out of the military, because it’s such different life style and it is. But it was just time... at this time I was twenty ah, 28, 29 years old. ... I mean you just become an adult. You...want to start doing things... I was starting to do it even though I was still in. And ... you start to concern yourself who’s president, and...you want to speak your ideals and everything.

Although compartmentalizing their lives initially allowed gay and lesbian servicemembers to simultaneously maintain their personal privacy and their careers for a while, it ultimately had its limitations. Based on the recollections of the study’s participants during the interviews, it seems that for some of them the years of hiding and creating cover stories over the period of one enlistment was all they could endure. For others, the years of strain caused by maintaining the necessary façade were finally made untenable when they met someone with whom they wanted to have a committed relationship. At that point the respondents put their personal integrity and long-term happiness became more important than their careers. For all of them the daily necessity of hiding the most personal, core segment of themselves was finally too much.

Having spent several years in an extremely demanding institutional environment, it would be expected to have an impact on most people who join one of the armed services. How the participants in this study, who also had
to deal with the additional factor of being gay or lesbian, felt about their military experiences will be discussed in the next section.

**The Impact of the Military on Their Lives**

As might be expected in any diverse group of people, the participants' responses to my question varied as to how being in the service affected their lives. For some it was a generally positive experience; for others there were emotional scars and residual drug and alcohol problems to deal with. Their responses appear below.

"...It Fit Me"

All the participants in this study enlisted in the armed forces, even the men who served during the draft era. Although none of them chose to remain on active duty long enough to retire, one man did retire from the active reserves, and one woman served 12 years in the active reserves, and others served multiple enlistments on active duty. In addition, several of them received honors and awards for their service. Although as previously discussed, the pressures they faced as gay men and lesbians in the military's hostile environment ultimately caused them to leave the service, many believed they fit into the military environment well. Jeri's remarks in the excerpt that follows illustrates that point:

My specific experience with the military was very good. I was in the Air Force...I joined immediately out of high school, literally the day I was eighteen...I had ideas in the back of my mind of staying in and becoming a career person but by the time I was 21, and had been in relationships even short-term
ones in the military, and knew the pressure that there was. I decided it would be smart for me not to stay in. I really did enjoy the military. It fit me...so I joined the active reserves fairly soon after...a little bit of military...that one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer thing. For twelve years, but it left me totally free outside of that time period to be and do whatever...and I wanted to go back to school and get my bachelors degree...Now we're talking about 12 years of active reserve...a reserve medical unit...I was named, now this is a unit that had a thousand people in it...it was a big hospital unit...Because it had about a thousand people, of which of course 950 of them were male...well I don't know how many, I don't exactly know how many officers there were. But I was named Airman of the Year for the entire unit. One year. ...so that was interesting, because of all those guys and at that time, I had maybe four stripes, maybe five stripes at that point. And...I don't know who figures that out? I guess it's the commanding officer...does the naming. But they named me Airman of the Year.

Similarly, Bill's response to my question about how he fit into the Navy indicates that he and his fellow sailors of all ranks believed he was a good sailor. He remembers:

In the Navy there was a term called “4.0 [4 oh] sailor,” I always had high marks, I was well respected by everybody...I treated them the way they treated me, is basically what it was. I got along really well with the officers I worked with. And the junior personnel that worked for me...I really enjoyed my military career. But, it came to a point where, based on the ban and the person who I was, I had to get out. I had 10 ½ years where, I was at the point where I could have stayed in and retired.
Rick, who retired from the Air Force reserve as a Chief Master Sergeant, the highest rank that can be achieved by an enlisted person in the Air Force, answered my question this way:

Oh, I feel like I fit in real good, you know because I was dedicated and...I made that transition from being a worker to middle management and then to upper management you know. And you know there’s attitudes and thought processes that go along with that whole transition, you know you go from..."Why can’t we do this?"..."Change this." "This isn’t right.” “It’s stupid; it’s dumb.” To, “Okay. Well, you know this probably isn’t the best thing, you know, but this is what we’ve got to do.” And..."You know we’re going to support this because the commander says we’ll do it.” You know. And I thought...I fit in, like a glove. You know I was very comfortable with it.

Rob was an extremely dedicated and proficient Marine. Two of his assignments, Sergeant of the Guard of Marine Security Forces on board an aircraft carrier, and as a recruiter, are only given to the Marine Corps’ best non-commissioned officers. His remembrances follow:

...I picked up rank very quickly... when I reenlisted I went on sea duty to be on an aircraft carrier...security forces... I enjoyed the whole time I was in the Marine Corps...I’m sure it was like any other job...sometimes I had a good command, sometimes I had a bad command, or people...the work was fun it was...exciting when I went on sea duty. I enjoyed my sea duty a lot more. I don’t know if it was just because of the, I was able to be out a little bit, or it was more challenging...in artillery we spent a lot of time in the field. My first three years in the Marine Corps I spent a year and a half of that out in the desert out in the field...it was really rewarding, I mean I liked all the guys I worked with... I liked being in the Marine Corps, ...I liked interacting with the Marines...I was an instructor at a school, Artillery Section Chiefs School and I just loved it; I was being a teacher. I was just so happy. I did it right before the war and after the war [Desert Shield/Desert Storm] I came back and they put me there again, and I was just I
could have stayed there my whole life.

Even Eve whose experience in the Marine Corps deeply wounded her recalled:

I was almost perfect on my PFT [physical fitness test];
I took college courses; my work was excellent work;
great uniform, you know, I was a gung ho; I was a gung ho...
I was a gung ho military person.

It can be seen from the quotes above and Randy’s comments earlier about being selected to receive a commission as an Army lieutenant that most of these participants fit into the military services well. They were proficient in their specialty, they got along well with their seniors and their subordinates, and they excelled at the military aspects of being in the service like physical fitness, appearance in uniform, etc. They were good soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. Nevertheless, it came at a price and for some there are scars that remain.

There Were “Battles”

None of the participants in this study received a less than an honorable discharge, and as noted before many garnered military honors, recognition, and promotions. However, even for those who did well in the military system, memories and feelings were not always completely positive as Kate’s comments in the excerpt below indicate:

...my time wasn’t horrible but I was definitely impacted like I said because I was so young. It was hard; really, really hard but one thing that I really get pissed off about
is that like I was a good Marine and at time exceptional and I saw through Clinton's whole thing of Don't Ask, Don't Tell... you have women like you or [her platoon commander] or [woman in Okinawa who was discharged under the ban] who are exceptional people doing an exceptional job and you have the ability of other people to think less of these people or subjugate them you know and yet these people are beating up on their wives or sleeping around or doing other things that are wrong and that just like makes me so angry you know just because of who you are. I mean even my brother who's in the Air Force said, "Oh, they shouldn't be in," and I just wanted to turn around and say they're doing a great job you just don't even know it. You just seem to think because they're gay they're what less than you or they must just be all about sex or they're disgusting or something. And that whole thing is allowed to go on... I'm just so glad I'm not the person I was back then. I'm glad I am who I am now because nobody can make me feel that way now. Nobody. That thing, that whole brouhaha of over the Don't Ask, Don't Tell... Policy was so ridiculous... wait until you pay Uncle Sam 30%, you're gonna want to say whatever the fuck you want... I pay into that big pot, I'm a good citizen so it's just ridiculous.

Even though Kate did well in the Marine Corps, it is clear from her comments that serving under the threat of the ban took its toll. For Rob it is the memory of taking the chance of driving drunk so he could be with gay men that is a troubling memory:

...when I was stationed here at Pendleton, I was driving downtown, down to San Diego every night and driving back drunk because ah, I wanted to be near gay people. It wasn't the sex, cause I could have gotten that in Oceanside. I wanted to be near gay people so I was willing to drive drunk you know, four or five nights a week, if I had the money all the way back from Camp Pendleton, you know, well I was living off base, so all the way back up to Oceanside just to be near gay people. It was a destructive life style but I was just very lucky that I didn't hurt nobody, I didn't hurt myself.
As Rob noted in the excerpt above, it was a destructive life style. However, had it not been for the homosexual exclusion policy, it is probable that he would not have felt obliged to engage in it to be near friends.

Other participants used drugs and that sometimes became a long-term problem for them as Dale relates in the following:

...I wanted to go to Danang, but they didn't want me to... by that point, I was actually...nuts. I was actually crazy. I was into drugs; I was into amphetamines. And I was crazy and I wanted to go to Danang because I had seen very little action and I wanted to go kill people... my favorite kind was opium. They had an opium thing down the street ... it was also the laundry. In the back was where you smoked opium. The other big thing then, I don't remember the exact name, but I did speed a whole lot. I continued for a while... it was easy to get to in Quin Yon...You could walk into any pharmacy in Quin Yon and get anything you wanted. That was my drug of choice but I loved the opium...you hang around with the guys who do them and the feeling was that I was going to die anyway so I was going to try every goddamn thing, except women [pause] and little boys... we'd go to bars and stuff and wander around...And the guys actually a lot of them knew I was gay um because I had met a guy. We were going through the holding company and I instantly fell in love with him. Actually it was the two of us instantly fell in love with each other. And we slept together. We didn't do any sex. But then we ended up in the same bunk together and I told my roommate to get out. (laughs) And the two of us were in there just cuddling, you know, and we wrote back and forth to each other while he was out and about. And one day they came and the sergeant came and asked for his record. He was dead. And there I was at work, and the rest of the guys knew what had happened and they said, “We’ll cover for you, Dale. Don’t worry; just go to your room.” They were really nice....That [drugs] carried over a lot...The drugs. I eventually stopped drugs probably about 1980 except for an occasion beer. I just said one day what's a nice Jewish kid doing drugs.
Yeah, I stopped about 1980.

It is difficult to assess whether or not the ban was directly related to Dale's drug use. However, due to the threat on his life by the CID (Criminal Investigation Division) agent and the grief he suffered over the loss of his companion, who he could not officially acknowledge, it is likely that both of these extremely stressful and unfortunate incidents played a role.

Although she did not abuse drugs or alcohol, Eve's experiences also left deep wounds. She is only now coming to terms with some of her experiences as can be seen in her comments below:

...it was really...the really sad part about it is you would see how desperate some people would get to hide their sexuality to the point where they would point their fingers at other gay men, other gay woman and, and, just to this day I still can't understand it. I come to the point to believe that maybe that they just hate who they are and they want to hide who they are so much because...they shun us, this society shuns...it...they don't want anybody around them that reminds them of who they are... as far as negative things, I've seen, um, how mean and hurtful people can become if you do not fit into a specific image or type based on standards set by a specific group and how much you can be mentally injured or physically injured because of it. I learned how to be patient, how to endure, how to um, fight battles, cause they were battles...Battles... in a way to where sometimes when I, when I do get into disagreements or debates or sometimes how I treat certain people, sometimes I'm actually called a "B I T C H" [spelled out each letter]...some people don't like that because they say I'm too strong, (laughing) they don't like it, and it's...because of what I went through the Marine Corps and I have to deal with certain types of things and in the Marine Corps um, you have to be that way, and I've learned how to come to a point in my life if I don't have to put up with certain things and I don't have to hide who I
am and I don’t have to live by a certain standard. And, and if people can’t deal with...who I am, then it’s their loss, so. It just really made me reflect who I am, who I am as a woman and the importance that I could stress or emphasize, being out and who you are as much as possible and don’t hide and don’t let anyone damper your spirit, and don’t let anyone try and make you change...your sexuality, because they don’t like it, they don’t believe in it...it’s probably...forced me to be more out, you know, to be more open then anything, because I, I used to hide it.

As can be seen from Eve’s remarks, she is a strong and resilient woman. More to the point, however, is that if the homosexual exclusion policy did not exist it is likely that she would have been very happy in the Marine Corps because as she indicated in a previous section she was a “very gung ho military person.” What makes her story even more poignant is that she transferred from the Army to the Marine Corps because she was impressed by a performance of the Marine Corps Silent Drill Team and Drum and Bugle Corps. She wanted to be a part of that organization. Sadly, she discovered that the organization that could perform precise and impressive ceremonies could also be quite brutal in its treatment of people when it determined they did not fit in.

“...I Don’t Know Who They’re Trying To Fool”

It is clear from the recollections of the participants in this study, that they had widely varied experiences. None of the participants in this study painted their military experiences wholly in black and white; and they displayed high levels of sophistication about the armed forces as an
institutions, the way the services operate, and their place in them. As Ted remarked at the end of our interview, “I made it work for me.” Some were more successful at this than others. However, what is common to all of them is that they knew there were large numbers of gay men and women serving in the military. Randy’s comments summarize the feelings of all the participants extremely well:

...I listen to them a lot of times when they talk about the gays in the military, and they say well there aren’t that many gays. And... this person has never been in the military evidently. And then they have, ...Don’t Ask and Don’t Tell and all that... But they just don’t know that there are so many gays in the military...in all branches...I have friends even now that are in the Navy and in the Marines and these guys are in the military right now. And they’re serving on ships and everything else, you know... when they come up with these statistics and they say well, there aren’t that many...I don’t know who they’re trying to fool (laughing).

Who are they trying to fool? The answer to that question and further implications of these findings will be discussed in the following section.

Impact and Significance

The stories told by the participants in this study illuminate an aspect of the armed forces that is seldom acknowledged or seen, the honorable military service of gay men and lesbians. These stories also shed light on the military services from the standpoint of military gays and lesbians and how they negotiate the military environment on a daily basis. While these stories stand on their own as interesting reflections of individual people, their true value is
in the critical perspective they bring to bear on some of our society's most closely held and unquestioned beliefs about the United States armed forces and the place in those forces of gay men and lesbians as soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. In the pages that follow the issues raised by the respondents' interviews will be more closely discussed as they relate to the theoretical ideas of Weber, Goffman, and Collins.

**The Door on the “Iron Cage” Is Broken**

The homosexual exclusion policy is the services' Weberian attempt to rationalize the military personnel system. The ban on service by gays and lesbians is an attempt to exclude people who challenge the masculinist, warrior hero image of the military. As recounted in “Facing the Fact That There Is a Ban” by the two men who recalled their encounters with recruiters, this effort to exclude is made abundantly clear to everyone who joins the military. It is also clear, however, that the policy doesn't work since all of the participants voluntarily joined the services.

However, the military is more successful in its bid to dominate through legitimate authority. As several participants recounted, they experienced a pervasive awareness of the ban. This was due to training about the ban as a part of routine military indoctrination that inculcated a constant internal awareness of the ban and to seeing others harassed or humiliated for violation or suspicion of violation of the ban, or experiencing harassment oneself. Thus, this constant awareness of the homosexual exclusion policy
creates a typical Weberian "irrational consequence" of suspicion and distrust in a situation that is supposedly aiming to facilitate male bonding. But, as was shown, the bureaucratic apparatus of the military is unable to completely ensnare gay and lesbian personnel in an "iron cage."

There are two primary reasons gay and lesbian servicemembers were able to escape the military's "iron cage." One reason is the military's need for trained personnel. As several respondents described in "But Sometimes It Isn't Enforced," the military's need for personnel who could do the job trumped, at least for a while, its mandate to exclude homosexuals from the service. Using gays and lesbians when manpower is needed demonstrates the bureaucratic principle of retaining policy but changing practices and procedures to meet current needs. When the military did revert to separating gays and lesbians, its differential treatment of officers and senior enlisted personnel served to underscore the implicit agenda of the policy. Officers and senior enlisted people, who are integral models in perpetuating the power structure, were quickly and quietly removed from the service or command when discovered to be gay. Junior enlisted personnel, however, were sometimes retained and harassed for long periods of time to visually reinforce for their peers the negative consequences of violating the ban.

The other reason gay and lesbian military members were able to break out of the "iron cage" is they engaged in various forms of human agency. This primarily involved presenting themselves as heterosexuals when they
were in the military environment. Clearly Goffman's concepts of front stage and backstage were demonstrated in that participants described engaging in heterosexual sexual activities because it was expected by others, developing cover heterosexual relationships to “look straight,” and cultivating an appearance that was neither too masculine nor too feminine while they were in the military environment. However, when they were backstage with their friends and partners, as many interview subjects recalled in “To Be Free...To Be Who You Are,” whether it was in gay and lesbian bars, on trips with other homosexual friends, etc., gays and lesbians felt free to be themselves. It was only backstage where they could relax.

The need to separate ‘front’ and ‘back’ stages is learned very early, as was evident in the fact that both men who related incidents with their recruiters succeeded in joining the services. So, even as the framework of the “Iron Cage” is being put in place, its potential inhabitants are already developing strategies to avoid being entrapped.

While it can be argued that by taking care to present themselves as heterosexuals, gays and lesbians remained within the “iron cage,” I believe the more important point is that they understood the stereotypes and ideas about normative, gendered behavior held not only by the military, but by the dominant society, and used them for their own purposes. They were able to undermine the power structure’s control of them by using the power structure’s belief system against itself.
A further example of Goffman’s concept of the “Presentation of Self” at work is the military’s tacit collusion with some gay men and lesbians who engaged in stereotypically homosexual behavior or who were widely known to be gay or lesbian, as participants described in “But Sometimes It Isn’t Enforced.” In cases like these it is probable that the military is more concerned with its own “Presentation of Self” in that it is more focused on providing the appearance to the American public that there are no homosexuals on active duty than it is with whether in fact they are present. Since few civilians have access to military bases, ships, and other facilities, it is unlikely that that perception will be challenged. Consequently, it is easy for the military to overlook discrepancies in personal presentation by some gay men and lesbians, particularly when they are needed either because they are effective servicemembers or simply because the military needs another body.

Collins would say that it is the knowledge of the military’s homosexual exclusion policy and how it could affect them personally that awakens many gay men and lesbians to their vulnerable position in the armed forces’ unjust power relations. At the same time, their knowledge of the inconsistent manner in which the services implement the ban provides them with access to their first military “hidden transcripts.” When they arrive at this understanding, they become, as Collins described, “Outsiders Within.” This awakening and their desire to know and be with other homosexuals is the impulse to be part of a military gay and lesbian community that can, if the
conditions are favorable, result in the development of a Shadow Community. The implications of such a community emerging and what Weber and Goffman would have to say about it will be discussed below.

**Building a Shadow Community**

As the participants related in “Finding the Community,” there was a strong desire to make connections with other gay and lesbian service personnel, but they were unable to be open about that desire. Further, as Collins would argue, being instantly subordinated in the services’ system of unjust power relations, regardless of their previous civilian status, the military unwittingly encouraged all gays and lesbians to band together with people to whom they might not otherwise have been drawn.

This is a contradiction of Weber’s ideas about bureaucracy and the “Iron Cage;” the legitimate authority of the military’s policies and procedures should be sufficient to maintain the “Iron Cage.” Instead, it appears that the use of authority had the additional irrational consequence of creating the desire to be with people with whom one can form open relationships, and thus drives the formation of informal groups, that exist in the shadows of the military hierarchy.

The consequence of this for the armed forces is that they have unintentionally created the conditions necessary for an extralegal group to form in their midst. While it is certainly not a powerful group because its members can be expelled and lose their livelihood if they are exposed, it
nonetheless creates an unofficial hierarchy. It also sets up conditions that make potentially exploitative situations such as the sexual harassment incident described in the "I Got To Know A Few Officers" possible. Ironically, a policy that supposedly reduces personnel problems can create them instead.

What the formation of a Shadow Community does for gays and lesbians in the military most immediately is that it provides a backstage area in which to refresh themselves before and after front stage appearances in the formal military environment. Even if the Shadow Community is weak it can provide some respite to gay and lesbian servicemembers who must always appear straight except in the company of trusted friends or away from their military station.

The formation of a Shadow Community facilitates gays' and lesbians' presentation of themselves as heterosexual by providing additional "actors" with whom alliances can be formed. It also provides a space where they can prepare for their heterosexual performances and exchange useful information through conversation and other interaction with friends. Therefore, the formation of a Shadow Community by a group of "Outsiders Within" coupled with the use of the "Presentation of Self" undermines the "Iron Cage."

As had been expected prior to the study, an underground network of gays and lesbians existed in the services' unofficial shadow spaces. However, the data provided by respondents' testimony suggests that these
communities were often uneven in their development and strength, and some participants were unable to find a community.

As noted in "Finding the Community," the development of a shadow community is highly dependent on the level of surveillance and harassment in a command. Further, if a command's officers are involved in the surveillance and harassment, it not only prevents a community from forming but it encourages gays and lesbians to inform on each other. Based on this testimony, it appears that for the "Iron Cage" to remain intact, severe and punitive surveillance and enforcement must be used constantly.

While effective, at least in the short term, in preventing the creation of a support group among gays and lesbians, it is likely that the poisonous atmosphere that is established by encouraging spying, fear, and lying will in the long term create unit discord and disharmony. Therefore, the homosexual exclusion policy indirectly sows the seeds that destroy unit morale and teamwork which is based on trust, openness, and shared purpose. Again, ironically, the military is engaging in practices that not only violate its stated goals but impairs its ability to perform its mission.

In those commands where a shadow community can take root, it acts as a protective shield for gays and lesbians by offering "tips" concerning potential bar raids, help with medical problems, and other issues. In more extreme situations, as illustrated by the incident where a sailor was being
physically harassed prior to discharge, the community provides access to “hidden transcripts” which helped get the sailor away from the harassment.

The Shadow Community is not acknowledged by the armed services, but it is probable that the military hierarchy has at least informal knowledge of its existence in those commands where it is able to emerge. Another aspect of the Shadow Community that is not acknowledged is that members of the heterosexual community frequently cross its borders. In “What Goes On At Sea, Stays At Sea” it is clear that same sex activity between those who identify as straight and those who are gay or lesbian is extremely common. This is not only not acknowledged, but it is vehemently denied by the military hierarchy. The fact that those who identify as heterosexual are not pursued and discharged for same sex activity as gays and lesbians are, is only further evidence of the essential hypocrisy of the military on this issue.

Such acts of 'border crossing' by heterosexuals make problematic Collins' conceptualization of “Outsiders Within,” since the concept of “Outsider” appears to equate behavior with identity (and vice versa). As the cases of 'border crossing' suggest, identity and behavior are not linked and, in fact, any connection between behavior and identity is denied. In the cases reported in this study, behavior and identity seem to situational and shifting. It may be that identity is the key concept because for those who identified as gay and lesbian, Collins' ideas concerning intersectionality and the “Outsider
Within" hold true. They do not for those who identity as heterosexual but have same sex sexual relations.

**Separate Lives**

An important institution within the Shadow Community, as reported by the participants, was gay and lesbian bars in the civilian community. They functioned as important locations for military gay men and lesbians to meet civilian gays and lesbians who became both friends and partners. Consequently, the bars played an important role in connecting the military gays and lesbians to the civilian gay and lesbian community.

Acting as a connection between the civilian and military gay and lesbian communities became an even more important role with the advent of the All Volunteer Force, as fewer American men went into the armed services and the civilian gay and lesbian community became increasingly opposed to the military establishment. It is one of the few places where the very tenuous relationship between the military and civilian gay communities can be maintained.

The Shadow Community also facilitated relationships between gay and lesbian officers and enlisted personnel by providing a space where they could meet and socialize away from the surveillance of the military. While such breaches of the fraternization rules take place among heterosexuals in the military as well, it is likely that there is a greater incidence of fraternization among military gays and lesbians due to the smaller number of gay men and
lesbians in the force. This suggests that their identity as a gay man or lesbian is more important than their identity as an officer to those officers who “cross the line.” It is also probable that the presence of officers in the community could strengthen the gay and lesbian network in that it would provide the community entrée to higher circles of power, but it was not possible to determine if that was the case from the data gathered in this study.

It is clear that the potential for the military services to build an “Iron Cage” is present in our society’s laws, norms and faith in legitimate authority as well as in the normal bureaucratic functioning of the armed services. However, it is also clear that people as individuals and groups will devise ways to undermine the rigid controls placed on them by one of society’s so-called “total institutions,” the armed forces.

Despite the ability to use “hidden transcripts” and staging to maintain a sense of self and get around the supposed “Iron Cage”, the stress of leading two different lives finally necessitated leaving the military services. The rewards that they received for their service were no longer worth it. That was one of the consequences of the ban, but there are others.

**Consequences of the Ban**

The negative consequences of the homosexual exclusion policy on gays and lesbians in the military are fairly clear. They range from living with the stress of leading a double life to struggling with daily harassment and surveillance, to dealing with residual drug use.
Further, although the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell..." policy is believed by the general public to be an improvement in the treatment of gay men and lesbians in the military, it is not. What became apparent in this project is that there has been essentially no change in the way the services treat gays and lesbians, and there has been no change in the way gays and lesbians feel while they are in the military, regardless of the specific policy in force at the time of the participants' service. The more things change, the more they stay the same, in terms of the gay and lesbian military experience.

Unlike the armed forces' attitude toward them, most gays and lesbians who participated in this study had at least some positive feelings about their military experiences, and retrospectively several had very positive feelings. Several mentioned that it instilled in them a sense of discipline that continues to benefit them in their daily lives. In this respect they are similar to their heterosexual counterparts and this is likely due to the fact that most participants and their "straight" brothers and sisters were very young when they entered the service. Most also indicated that military service broadened their horizons through their experiences with fellow servicemembers as well as through travel and learning new skills.

However, the services lose many dedicated and able servicemembers who might otherwise remain on active duty. All the people who participated in this study did well in the service; even the woman who was severely provoked and harassed received an honorable discharge, quite an achievement under
the circumstances. They were good and sometimes exceptional soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. Many considered and rejected the option of remaining on active duty because of the ban; some made that decision after they had several years invested in the military and could have remained in long enough to collect retirement benefits. This is a loss to the armed forces. Not only have they lost the time and money spent training them, but it is not likely that the services have so many highly qualified personnel that they can afford to drive away good servicemembers.

The significance of this research is that the experiences of the participants in this study contradict the image that has been perpetuated of gays and lesbians in the military as misfits and victims who cannot contribute to the armed forces. Certainly, the men and women whose experiences are recounted here reflect only a small number of the gay men and lesbians who have served in the armed forces. They are also an uncommonly intelligent and reflective group, which might suggest that they are atypical not only of most gay men and lesbians in the military, but of most people in the armed services. However, I argue that it is their atypical military experiences that contributed to the thoughtful and insightful answers they gave to my questions. Being “Outsiders Within” forced them to reflect on their military experiences, and the meaning their military service has for their lives. Some may argue that they are not representative experiences. I argue that we do
not yet know what represents a typical gay and lesbian experience in the military. The answer to that question requires further research.

However, the recollections of this study's respondents may well have answered Randy's earlier question, "Who are they trying to fool?" Having recounted the military experiences of the participants in this study, who does the military and governmental hierarchy think they are fooling when they claim there are no gays and lesbians serving in the armed forces? One last recollection from Bill may answer that question:

Bill...in 92...when Congress was having hearings regarding gays in the military, Sam Nunn had to come to our ship to do an investigation or do an inquiry. He, me and another sailor had to show him our berthing space and he asked about ah, what we thought if we had to share rooms with a gay, with gays. For me, I didn't respond, but my other sailor did, and he's like, "Oh, if we had to share this, or they're too close to that, they'll be looking at me." And, and Sam Nunn would say stuff like, "Oh, well...these quarters are too tight"...so it was just frustrating because I couldn't really voice my opinion...even if I was straight; you know I couldn't voice my opinion saying I support gays in the military; next thing you know I'd be a target.

Interviewer: Did this guy that [said that] the other sailor, did he... know that you were gay?

Bill: No, no, not at all. He was from another department that stayed in our berthing space...

Although those who oppose lifting the ban rail on about the dangers of sharing close quarters with homosexuals who they claim are easy to detect because they are so "obvious" and sexually irresponsible, it appears that not
only was the government official who came to investigate living conditions unable to identify a gay man when he was with one, the sailor who was so concerned about being “looked at” did not know he had been just a few feet from a gay man for months. This incident exposes yet again the myths that are the basis for the homosexual exclusion policy. Consequently, it can only be concluded that the military is trying to fool themselves and the public by perpetuating the myth that there are no gay men and lesbians in the military, thereby upholding the sanctity of the family secret that homosexuals serve now and have always served. Preserving the family secret is in the best interests of various political and cultural conservatives.

In the meantime, gays and lesbians continue to serve their country as recounted in this study. They serve in the shadows, but I believe this study represents a first step out of those shadows by gay men and lesbians who have served in the United States armed services.

Recommendations

Public policy and law concerning gay men and lesbians and the armed forces are based on myth and family secrets. An entire segment of the population is subjected to legal discrimination based on untrue information. Based on the fact that it suits the purposes of political and cultural conservatives, it is unlikely that presenting them with evidence that contradicts their views will change policy. However, if the abolition of the homosexual exclusion policy is viewed as a long term process, there are
some public policy recommendations that can be made based on data gathered here.

On a national level gay and lesbian advocacy groups, particularly AVER and SLDN, must maintain alliances with current friends and educate potential allies. In that context this research data could be used to provide information to support the positions of allies who oppose the ban and to educate those who might be willing to oppose the ban.

As a corollary to this, advocacy groups should provide the media with this information in the context that current research indicates gays and lesbians have a long history of being dedicated and effective servicemembers who fit into their service cultures well. This gives the journalist valid data that can be used as the basis for a story or segment without having to engage in tedious research on a short deadline. More importantly it helps to educate the public about gays and lesbians in the services so that they are likely to support attempts to overturn the ban.

On a more localized level, AVER and SLDN could use this information in their public education campaigns. This information could be given to local media outlets in the same way as to national media organizations. In addition, it could be used by those who make public appearances for AVER and SLDN in their speaking engagements with veterans' organizations, civic groups, and governmental bodies. Again, this would help educate the general public so that they would be more likely to support abolishing the ban.
This data also needs to be used to educate the civilian gay and lesbian community about the experiences of gays and lesbians in the military. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the civilian gay and lesbian community has little understanding of, or interest in, the military gay and lesbian community or in the role of military authority in cultural processes. The data gathered for this study could be adapted for publication in national gay and lesbian magazines such as the Advocate to gain as large an audience as possible. It could also be adapted for publication in many local gay and lesbian newspapers nationwide. It is hoped that the outcome of this information campaign to the increasingly politically-powerful civilian gay and lesbian community would be the creation not only of public support for lifting the ban on gays and lesbians in the military, but also the development of services within the gay and lesbian community to support both gay and lesbian active duty personnel and veterans.

In addition to the public education and advocacy use of the data recommended above, there is further research that needs to be conducted. A rich vein of research material relating to gay men and lesbians in the military is just waiting to be tapped. The following recommendations are made for future research: 1) Additional qualitative research should be conducted with other military gays and lesbians. Qualitative research is recommended because their stories provide insight into the military and governmental systems that quantitative research cannot as it is able to demonstrate the
effects of policy on human lives. 2) The participants in this study were all former military personnel. Future research should be conducted with active duty members to collect data on current conditions in the services so that comparisons of conditions in the services for homosexuals can be made over time. 3) This study did not include officers from any service. Future research should include both active duty and former officers among the respondents so their feelings, perceptions, and insights can be gathered and compared with those of current and former enlisted personnel.

Finally, it is the opinion of this researcher that until further research is conducted with gay men and lesbians who are both active duty and veterans of the armed forces, and such research is used as the basis of public policy and law, that this country will continue to enact legislation concerning one segment of the population on the basis of myth and family secrets, not fact. Unhappily, that does not generally lead to good law or public policy, and it certainly results in injustice for gay men and lesbians.
Appendix

The following open-ended questions were prepared for use during interviews with the subjects of this study. They are grouped by topic area. It should be noted that the researcher never had to use more than one or two of the questions as the participants generally spontaneously covered the areas of interest for this research project.

The respondents were not given a copy of the questions. The researcher used them only as a point of reference to ensure all areas of interest were addressed during each interview.

Similarly, the research question was never explicitly stated as it is shown below to the participants. It also was used to help the investigator "stay on track" during interviews by reminding her of the overall goal.

Finally, the introduction was also used as a reference by the researcher. During the conversation with the respondent that led up to each interview, the investigator covered the information in the introduction to frame the interview for the participant.

Research Question: How did/do gay and lesbian service members negotiate the hostile environment of the military's closed bureaucracy? And, how did/do they construct lives for themselves and create a sense of community for themselves within an organization that not only officially does not want their service but has also devised surveillance mechanisms to find and discharge them immediately?

Introduction: I'm trying to find out about your life and your experiences in the service and what you think is important about your military experiences. I'm not looking for either good or bad information about the military services. I simply want to know what things were like for you and people you knew. As a
part of that, please be as explicit as you feel comfortable with about all topics including sexual activities, drinking, drug use, or anything else that you may feel are sensitive topics. I'm not trying to be intrusive; but anything that was/is significant to you and others in the military is important, and I want to make sure it is discussed.

Interview Questions By Topic Area

Military Life: Tell me generally about your life and experiences in the service. What were your daily activities on and off duty like? What did you do for fun? Who were your friends? How do you think you fit into the military?

Same-Sex Activity: Tell me about how and when you first became aware of same-sex activity in the military? How did you get involved? How did you figure out who you could trust, where to go, etc.?

Same-Sex Subculture: Tell me about the visibility of the military same-sex subculture when you were in the service? What was it like? How did you get into the group? How well did it meet your needs? How do you feel you fit in? Describe the differences at various commands.

Homosexual Exclusion Policy: Tell me about how you and others dealt with the ban on same-sex sexual activity. How did it affect your feelings, behavior, and activities? Did you ever experience a witch-hunt? Tell me how if affected you and others in the command. Were there people who could help you or others?

Surveillance and Camouflage: Were you ever aware of or suspect that someone in the command was an informant? What made you think that? How did that affect your feelings and behavior? How did you and others deal with having to be "in the closet?"

Life Affect of Military Service: Tell me how serving in the military affected your life.
### Endnotes

1 Military Rank Structure—An explanation appears on the following page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Navy and Coast Guard</th>
<th>Marines</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
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<td>0-10</td>
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<td>Admiral</td>
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</table>

**Special Grades:**
- (5 stars) General of the Army
- Fleet Admiral
- (none)
- General of the Air Force

**Warrant Officers**
- W-1 Warrant Officer. Grades W-2 to W-5 Chief Warrant Officer

**Enlisted Personnel**

<table>
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<th>Navy and Coast Guard</th>
<th>Marines</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
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<td>Master Chief Petty Officer</td>
<td>Sergeant Major Master Gunnery Sergeant</td>
<td>Chief Master Sergeant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special Grades:**
- Sergeant Major of the Army
- Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
- Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps
- Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force
The chart on the previous page shows the rank structure for all the United States military forces. The extreme left column indicates the pay grade for each rank. The columns on the right give the name of the rank for that pay grade in each service. For the purposes of this study, it is most important to note that the pay grades E-1 through E-3 are considered junior enlisted personnel. Those in pay grades E-4 and E-5 (and E-6 in the Navy) are considered junior non-commissioned officers. E-6 (E-7 in the Navy) through E-9 are senior non-commissioned officers. There is a large increase in prestige and authority as people move upward in rank and move from one group to another.

A similar pecking order exists among commissioned officers. Pay grades O-1 through O-3 are considered junior officers. O-4 through O-6 are senior officers, and O7 to O-10 are generals and admirals.

Warrant officers are technical specialists who are considered officers but their rank is based on a warrant rather than a commission. They usually were enlisted personnel before receiving their warrant although there are exceptions. The details regarding the position of warrant officers in the military hierarchy goes beyond the scope of this paper.
References


