

Gays in the Military

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The conflict with gays in the military is not limited to gays alone, the expressed struggle is also between lesbians, transgenders, bisexuals and the dominant military lifestyle and power structure. As well as between joint forces that operate between countries. The main lifestyle is of warfighting, and their tradition stands to be perceived to be in jeopardy because of the limited resources involved in providing counseling, healthcare to non-traditional families and interference from the public's perception and our leaders' perception of what it means to have an able and ready military force. All interdependent parties involved include of course gays themselves, the secondary as their superiors and their subordinates, and the third interested party would be the public itself and the public's perception of the expressed struggle provided by media, mostly dominated by mainstream sources. The struggle is expressed with physical violence such as murders, suicides, extra unnecessary hazing and bullying, as well as having loss of pay as a result of being kicked out of the military. Regardless, some former military members are being compensated via separation pay for being removed from service (Malaika, 2013).

Censorship and law making is also present with politicians making rules and regulations affecting the military in the Presidential Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. The parties are interdependent as they provide each other's medical needs, professional counseling, leadership roles and tasks, professional development and are generally in charge of one another. In garrison they would need to live with each other and even on ship, and would rely totally on each other in battle on the front lines. These personnel include the Chaplains which are the militaries' version of Priests, the doctors and nurses and other families as well, not just the warfighters. Depending on the branch of military the service member is in also has a huge part in how intimate the relations are between the service members, as all branches of service have similar billets to fill. The issues and points of disagreement are wide ranging, as it is a basic civil rights issue. All civil

rights issues have roots in discrimination, abuse, ridicule, which stem from changes in culture. For instance, the traditional mom stays at home which the husband goes to work and earns the money is disrupted. Two men playing the part of deployed person so neither can stay home and watch the children completely destroys the old version of the family unit. As well, huge amounts of discrimination play a factor such as it simply being in direct contrast to the classical mode of thinking where you have one heterosexual person being with one of the opposite sex. Promotions are also held back, because of the person being gay. Higher ranking individuals would be looked down upon if they promoted someone who was openly gay, so keeping it a secret was paramount (Belkin, 2000). The other argument was unit cohesiveness, it was argued that units would not be able to function if there were openly gay or lesbian members, as the political atmosphere and ability to keep people well behaved would be in jeopardy. It was basically a question of what is good and wholesome for the military to accept, as they are an extremely conservative group which abhors change in rules and regulations. The culture of military standards remains very opposed to change, and is evidenced by their very dress uniforms and methods for teaching discipline and structure via marching in drills, customs and courtesies such as saluting officers who are of higher rank, and other traditional behaviors (USMC, 2011).

To analyze the conflict as a system there are many variables. The inputs include the styles, power structure, who has the power, the goals of individuals groups both inside and outside of the military, the interests of those groups and their behaviors towards different goals. All are different on a case to case basis, and a large percentage of the cases are not brought to light in huge events involving many lawyers. As well the most important part, the perception of the conflict as it changes over time and eventually dissolves. In the case of a dissolving conflict in the military would be to allow for members of the LGBT community to openly serve. The

outputs are concerned with the satisfaction with and changes in relationships between both primary and secondary parties, as well as their relationships outside of the conflict with interested third parties that might be affected. Society as a whole is also affected, as the transition from banning gays from serving to full acceptance as a civil right has many implications as well. For example, if men and women are allowed to openly serve in the military there would possibility be more recruitment as people would realize they would not be removed from active service for having a specific orientation. Being that the military is one of the most conservative groups in the United States, it would have implications on all conservative organizations as it would put pressure on them to catch up with the changing environment and society at large. As the law of the land changes, so do the organizations that have to operate inside of it, the military is no exception.

Concerning the interaction dynamics between specific conflicting parties, it is helpful to look at the narratives involved, the complications that might arise between interested parties, their interaction patterns and conflict spirals that take place during those interactions. For the most part, being gay meant avoidance of the subject all together, but so much has changed. The issue was supposedly solved in the United States with the President at the time Bill Clinton signing into law the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. In it, any kind of conflict concerning who was gay/lesbian was never suppose to be brought to the table (Johnson, et al., 2006). No service member could ask if another one was gay or participated in any gay/lesbian activities, as well as no service member was allowed to speak of the issue or be openly gay/lesbian. As well any kind of harassment that would have followed because of that individuals' sexual orientation would be dealt with under the policy. This kind of conflict management was complete avoidance, so any type of conflict that might arise would fall on the person who either asked or told, as they were

operating outside of the bounds of the law (Department of Defense, 1993). As of September, 2014 the policy was repealed, and active and reserve members of the U.S. Military were granted complete immunity from being removed from military service for being gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual. This had enormous implications as it became a civil rights issue, which firmly removed the military from being able to discriminate men based on their sexual preferences (Arkles, G., & Gehi, P., 2016).

Managing the conflict is done via various political outlets and persons, including the President himself signing laws into action that go into effect military wide, as the President holds the highest billet. The majority of the obstacles to effectively manage the conflicts that arise are mostly political in nature, not just with politicians, but with politics inside of the militaries rank and file as well. Captains, Majors, Generals and even enlisted men deal with the political effects of conflict management on the small scale, because those are where the issues arise to begin with. Many times though, third party intervention is needed because the issues become legal when forfeiture of pay or being released from service is an issue. The military as well has its own legal system, especially in the Marines called the UCMJ, or the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which is an offshoot of the basic law of the United States Constitution and offshoots with its own specific meanings (Bryant, 2013). For instance, being gay was banned inside the military, but currently being gay does not mean you will get kicked out of the United States for being gay, so there is a difference. In other countries currently, Iran in specific, being gay will get you executed because they live under Shariah law. The marked differences between countries who are not operating with basic human rights in mind are apparent, as secular and affluent countries tend to be the most accepting of the LGBT communities and people. This brings to

mind the need to separate the laws of the country and religious ideals, meaning secular countries tend to be the most accepting of the gay community (Pew Global, 2013).

There are also power issues involved concerning gays in the military. Most people know of the rank structure in the military branches. You have the enlisted ranks and the officer ranks. Above and parallel to officer ranks you'll see Department of Defense employees with similar power roles, but they are not fired from their jobs for being gay, which sets a massive double standard. How does one work for the government, yet only in specific departments of the government you can be gay? The eventual demise of the rules and regulations concerning the banning of openly gay members serving in the military are mirrored in that fact. With military members, the enlisted men have a lot less power than the officers. Officers are responsible for huge numbers of men, and their time in service counterparts, the higher enlisted such as Sergeant Majors and First Sergeants also carry that responsibility, so there are equivalent responsibilities present, but they do not have the expert or legitimate power as officers which is granted to them with commissions (USMC, 2011). In short, the officers are in charge of other officers, the enlisted are in charge of the other enlisted.

Of the types of power involved, such as legitimate, reward, coercive, expert and referent power. The major issues concerning the giving of power to men to be openly gay in the military, are mostly centered around coercive, reward and legitimate power. It was perceived by higher positions in the military that all three types of power would be eroded. Higher ranking conservative officers did not like the idea of not being able to punish men for being gay, because it meant they lost a part of their culture, identity and another rule was taken out of the book. This did not suite the primary parties. On the other hand, it increased the legitimate power of men who were gay who were the secondary parties in this struggle. Their struggle was that they

wanted to be able to serve in the military and not have the question of their legitimate power removed. A central argument was that if you were gay, then you were not a legitimate leader or military man, which is certainly not true. Men have been gay in the military since militaries were formed. As well, men who could now serve openly in the military as gay would gain a lot of referent power to their lower enlisted/officer ranks who were also gay. They could now form communities that showed how things were in the past, and provide leadership on what to do if any specific form of bigotry is exposed in their career, and to deal with it swiftly and in the correct interpretation of the law. Another type of power which gays would receive more of if they could serve openly was reward power. An openly gay man could now award men medals for gallantry in battle or for positions of responsibility or for strictly a job well done. As well, promotions would play a huge part. Gay men would not be overlooked for promotions of much higher rank and status. Those types of promotions though only really affected the higher ranks, as lower ranking men and women get promoted automatically based on time in grade and in service. The promotions become more political as men and women move up in rank. Expert power is a given in the military. If you are of a specific rank or billet, you are expected to follow orders inside of your field of expertise, and being gay does not change that as gay men who are officers have received the same educations and qualifications in college. The idea of being gay meaning you were not an expert in your field was downright deplorable.

The conflict styles of most officers and military men are mostly competing, where the subordinate almost always has to be accommodating. This is highly problematic as the military literally is a giant organization completely dominated by rank structure. Unless you are the President (you still have to listen to congress and the judicial branch), you are the subordinate to a man/woman who serves above you. So literally there are accommodating and avoiding

conflicts that arise all the time. As well, being a gay military officer also means you will sometimes even be compromising and collaborative to men of equal pay grade in order for the mission to be successful. The Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy of Bill Clinton was designed to not allow for competitive or accommodating behavior, it was designed to prevent any acknowledgment of the issue at hand. The policy was obviously rooted in strict avoidance of the issues. You could not ask anybody if they were gay, and you were not allowed to talk about it if you were. This was a huge precedent as it did not actually address conflict so that it could be brought to light, it simply avoided the conflict all together. Mostly avoidance of issues that are clearly unwinnable on both sides in this case was the best approach to take, and Mr. Clinton realized that. So in light of conflict resolution, it was best to leave it unresolved at the time. Most men who are officers do not compromise, accommodate, collaborate or compete with subordinates, simply because they do not have to. The subordinate only has two choices, do as your told which is accommodate your superiors or avoid them concerning the issue of being gay. This is probably a major reason why it took so long for men to be openly gay in the military. It was not suitable to their conflict resolution styles.

Also, it should be quite obvious that conflict management is looked upon inside of military communities as being described as "war" and not growing a garden or dancing, those types of worldviews concerning conflict would have been perceived as "gay" as a sort of pejorative term used by less experienced military members. As an additional issue, the mentalities and words that are used inside of military communities are used even when there is no conflict occurring. The words destruction, anger, hostiles, violence, tension, threats, enemy are always polarizing the communication into an "us" versus "them" mentality. A versus mentality is quite common in military communities. The very idea of dancing with the Taliban or

growing a garden with a terrorist is not exactly how objectives are attained in the military. Objectives are attained by a man's instant willing obedience to orders regardless of the outcome. That is how men are trained to view conflict. The enemy needs to be destroyed with extreme prejudice. It should be no wonder why the idea of viewing any conflict inside of large military structures would benefit anybody, unless the conflict was occurring outside of that group, i.e. a war in a foreign land where it is very easy to justify the murder of basically anybody who appears to be an enemy combatant. Even in the Navy, the idea of "not rocking the boat" comes into play, because if it were to capsize in a metaphorical sense it would do great harm to everyone on the ship. Even when not fully capsized it makes the lives of the sailors or Marines inside the ship absolutely miserable. For the most part, military communities are extremely conforming and "old school" to say the least. Any type of change that were to occur inside of those groups would be viewed upon as being abnormal by sheer tradition, which exacerbates the idea of conflict being abnormal, and harmony being normal. Having all your men get along and no raise any issues that might change tradition is held in esteem, for many reasons as well (Belkin, 2003). For instance if there is a long term service member such as a Vice Admiral who is accustomed to military men not being gay, there is an identity crisis that could occur. That Vice Admiral (assumably heterosexual) seeing two men kissing each other would completely ruin his day, and challenge what he perceives as normal, thus causes unwanted stress, anger and anxiety. That very stress and anxious behavior would further elevate the conflict at hand if that very Admiral decided to act upon it and take disciplinary action against the two servicemen. Regardless, conflict is a stubborn fact of organization life, it was seen that if there were any conflicts to be managed that would distract from the mission, they needed to be dealt with swiftly as people's lives are on the line especially in combat operations. Put simply, there was

just no time or energy to be wasted having a Vice Admirals stress level elevated for something as trivial as witnessing two grown servicemen being intimate.

Looking at the issues from the TRIP model of conflict brings some useful insights. The topic at hand is the actual allowing of gays to openly serve in the military. As to whether there are gays in the military was never the discussion as all militaries in the world have gay men serving in their ranks. If they are allowed to serve openly is another question entirely. The “R” would stand for the relationship between different men and women in their perspective branch. Are they in the same unit, company or battalion and who has the power in said relationship. What kind of fraternizing issues would come into being between men who are enlisted and officers who might be gay? From a leadership standpoint would the officers be setting the right example to further solidify their capacity to lead and strengthen the relationship? The identity of the men as they navigate their relationships with superiors and subordinates is also at play. Gay men do have an identity that is the complete opposite of the identity expressed by heterosexual men, and the conflict to be allowed to express this identity was the main cause of conflict in the services. How does a gay man identify with a heterosexual subordinate or superior? How does he learn to close off himself in light of an extremely conservative organization that is unwilling to admit or make laws to change the diverse community which it is comprised of? Making laws and changing the rules and regulations should become the priority of a conflict which suits to allow someone to be who they are in the military. The final question of how such change should be made leads to the process aspect of the TRIP model. In the military you have rank structures, and no one rank has complete power and dominance over another, as they have their own superiors to deal with. Military rank structure are like giant pyramids, with the President and Congress at the very top of the pyramid. Even 4-Star Generals cannot change the rules as they see fit, so the

process of changing the rules and regulations concerning the openly gay military question can only be changed from the very top. The change would need to happen by the President and Congress, as they are at the very top, and with good judgment on the part of the Judicial Branch to serve the new law when it comes into question and interpret it. This all said, there are many dozens of types of analytical methods to approach the issue of gays in the military, which is why it was so difficult to make the required changes.

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