

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: DO LESBIANS IN THE MILITARY “PASS” AS
HETEROSEXUAL?

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This exploratory multiple-case case study investigates if lesbians in the military, past and present, manage to “pass” as heterosexual. This project is designed with the aim of enabling new questions about old problems regarding gender and sexuality within American military culture. Data come from two sources comprised of seventy-three interviews with military lesbians from three previously published works and five face-to-face interviews with active duty lesbians conducted by the author between 2007 and 2008. Lesbians in the military are centralized here in this multiple-case case study because they are both “women” and “homosexuals” participating in an institution that has had historically tense relationships with members of both of these social groups. This project pays specific attention to non-gender conforming lesbians in the military and argues that this group in particular potentially stands to shed light on how both gender and sexual norms operate within both American society and military culture.

DO LESBIANS IN THE MILITARY

“PASS” AS HETEROSEXUAL?

By

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This research is a multi-case case study observing the variations of strategies and tactics lesbians in the military employ in order to “pass” as heterosexual. The cases are derived from two data sources comprised of texts and face-to-face interviews. The theoretical framework is an amalgamation of Rich’s (1980[1982]) ideas of compulsory heterosexuality (CH) and the institution of heterosexuality (IH) joined with the major tenets of Goffman’s (1963) theory of stigma. Rich’s (1980[1982]) theory argues, in part, that in a hetero-normative culture lesbians are systematically “disappeared” or rendered invisible (1982: 229). This systematic rendering of invisibility of lesbians in the institution of heterosexuality, according to Rich (1980[1982]), stems mostly from cultural expectations that women’s lives be centered and organized around the sexual needs of men and social and psychological needs of children (Rich 1980[1982]). In relationship to these cultural expectations of women, this project pays attention to the gender stigma (Goffman 1963) associated with being a woman in the military. I argue that, due to the stigma of gender, women in the military are more likely to be suspected as homosexuals because being a woman in the military has long represented the most extreme departure from feminine norms imaginable.

Rich (1980[1982]) presents us with a theoretical paradigm of an institution of heterosexuality where heterosexual orientation is compulsory for women. Using this conceptualization as a starting point, I additionally argue that in military culture, the institution of heterosexuality is “militarized” and suggest that this militarization has very specific consequences that vary by gender¹ and by lesbian gender².

¹Terms traditionally reduced to categories of male and female.

² Terms traditionally reduced to categories of butch and femme.

I define the militarized institution of heterosexuality (MIH) as follows. In a militarized institution of heterosexuality, military women, more so than civilian wives, women civilian workers, girls, and teenaged women on and around military bases, are expected to be heterosexual and prove it on a routine basis by negotiating “gender checkpoints³” set up by military men. Also, in a militarized institution of heterosexuality, military women are hyper visible as gender deviants, thus hyper visible as homosexuals. In short, the *stigma* of not being a man in the military means that women in the militarized institution of heterosexuality frequently find themselves at one gender checkpoint or another and some times they are allowed to pass and other times they are denied.

The main elements shaping Goffman’s (1963) theory on stigma conceptualizes how those who are somehow stigmatized manage to “cover” their stigma in order to “pass” as “normal” (7). In this research gender is identified as *the* stigma challenging lesbians in the military as they employ strategies and tactics to pass as heterosexual. Gender is not treated as a stigma in need of “cover” in Goffman’s (1963) conceptualization of passing. However, as women in the military, lesbians are not at liberty to cover their gender. This inability to “cover” gender leads to its “visibility” which brings extra attention to lesbians as potential homosexuals simply because they are women in the military.

Goffman (1963) presents two case examples of passing where “visibility” needs to be thoroughly suppressed in order to ensure that one desiring to pass as a “normal” can. First, Goffman (1963) discuss cases where Blacks routinely manage to pass as white.

³ “Gender checkpoints” is a term coined here to organize a way to think about the various ways men manage heteronormative expressions of femininity of women. Men have the social power to reward women or punish women for their appearances and behaviorisms and this ability to reward or punish represents the passage or denied passage of women through gender checkpoints. This is only one of what I imagine are multiple examples of “gender checkpoints” women are subjected to in various contexts and cultures.

Racial passing such as that noted here could only be successful as long as the stigmatized racial identity is covered, in this case by having a physical appearance that presents phenotypic standards complying with “whiteness” despite being racialized as Black (1963: 48). If it were publically known that one of the whites amongst many was no more than a racial minority wishing to pass as white, the effort to pass would fail. Similarly, Goffman (1963: 94) uses an example of former mental patients and discusses how important not being visible is for members of this stigmatized group to pass as normal. If former mental patients run into individuals who knew them when they were institutionalized, for example, they may fear being “outed” and the “cover” of being normal presented to those who did not know of this prior stigmatized status may be potentially blown.

Lesbians in the military may experience passing differently from what closeted former mental patients or racial minorities capable of passing as members of the racial majority do. The case for women and lesbians in the military is further complicated by the consequences of gender stigma which comes from many places. In military culture, lesbians and women in the military negotiate many military men who seek to enforce gender and sexual norms (Segal and Bourq 2001). Political influence in the military additionally defines gender dogma and drives the ongoing discussions on/about women in the military (Segal and Hansen 1992). In short, lesbians in the military are stigmatized for being women and as women in the military they are additionally more likely to be suspected as homosexuals due primarily to the un-coverable stigma of gender.

Though Goffman’s original conceptualization of stigma did not go so far as to include gender stigma, thinking about women and lesbians in the military as negotiating an un-coverable stigma in an institution where extreme gender norms are highly valued

helps to illuminate how much gets missed when a gender critique of military sexual politics fails to emerge.

Goffman's (1963) theories of stigma, covering and passing conjoined with the idea of compulsory heterosexuality and the concept of the institution of heterosexuality, as discussed by Rich (1980[1982]), are used in order to illuminate the ways social constructions of gender and sexuality in military culture are "apart from"⁴ rather than "a part of"⁵ the ways social constructions of gender and sexuality operate in greater society. These theories situated in a military context enable us to observe the challenges military lesbians face in their efforts to remain invisible inside of a militarized version of the institution of heterosexuality where gender alone may render lesbians (and women in general) hyper visible as homosexuals. As such, I argue that lesbians attempting to pass as heterosexual do so primarily by managing their stigma as women participating in a non-traditional occupation within an institution that has reserved national, cultural, and political fiat to discipline gendered bodies in the military differently.

Therefore, while thinking about the militarized institution of heterosexuality, compulsory heterosexuality, and the gender stigma experienced by female service members, this project investigates these overarching research questions: *Do lesbians in the military "pass" as heterosexual? And, are "femmes" as likely, less likely, or more likely than "butches" to be suspected as homosexuals?*

⁴ Samuel J. Huntington (1957) and Morris Janowitz (1960) gave military sociologists two competing ideas of how military personnel should or should not reflect members of the civilian population amongst other things considered. Huntington argues that members of the armed forces should be distinct and "apart from" civilians in as many ways as possible. This, Huntington argued, will ensure that military bearing and resolve will less likely be challenged and watered down if service members are completely re-socialized to value military culture and mores at higher esteem than those of civilian culture.

⁵ Janowitz, on the other hand, argued that members of the armed forces need to be "a part of" and reflect the attitudes and mores of civilian members of greater society. He suggested that since members of the armed forces come from society they should maintain social links to their social origins. However, some aspects of military culture have always been distinct and "apart from" civilian culture particularly as reflected in the hyper-heteronormative culture of the military institution.

What We Know about Gender and Sexuality in the Military

Explicit and complex theoretical conversations about gender and sexuality in the military are relatively new in military sociology. Early scholarship in military sociology is mostly void of either superficial or profound discussions about either topic in any manner. This is most likely attributable to the ways men, generally speaking, are rarely “gendered” or “sexualized” in any popular or scholarly accounts. The work of early military sociologists reflected this trend where thinking about military culture was chiefly structured and discussed as a reflection of the masculine heterocentric institutional norms of both military and American culture. As a result, those working in military sociology during the beginning years studied the lives of men serving the nation in the institution charged with managing “large scale violence” (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1960: 27; Moskos 1970; Moskos 1977) and not the lives of men managing homosexual identities while serving in combat, for example. This condition shaped by past norms of who served inevitably set a scholarly precedence that could only change as the demographics of the force changed. In other words, military sociologists would not ask gender based research questions or create and structure theories specifically for the military institution about gender and sexuality until enough people who “have gender” (women) or who “have sexualized identities⁶” (gay men and lesbians) became important to the general missions of the military institution and not until members of these groups increasingly made citizenship demands of the nation by insisting upon exercising their collective “right” to “fight” (Phelan 2001; Segal 1989; SLDN 2004). Therefore, most everything we know about gender and sexuality in the military has emerged from the sub-field of military sociology and within the last 35 years.

⁶ Or, military members who are also members of groups that in addition to being gendered and sexualized identities are also racialized and/or “othered” by immigrant identities or non-traditional religious identities and who, despite these multiple differences are members of the American armed forces.

Much of the contemporary sociological research focused upon gender, women and sexuality in military culture has benefitted significantly from the scholarship of Mady W. Segal. Segal (1995) developed the first theoretical framework focused upon how stereotypical ideas of gender differences between men and women have historically attributed to military institutional limits of women's contributions to military efforts across nations and over time. Segal (1995) expands these ideas by theoretically conceptualizing factors that go beyond gender and that also impact the participation of women in armed forces. The additional dimensions hypothesize that there are three broad conditions that will have greatest impact upon women's participation in armed forces. Those conditions are identified as: Military, Social Structure and Culture (Segal 1995: 759). The military variable is comprised of national security, military technology, combat to support ratio,⁷ and military accession policies. The social structure variable consists of demographic patterns, labor force characteristics, economic factors and family structure. Finally, the culture variable includes social constructions of gender and family, social values about gender and family, public discourses regarding gender and values regarding ascription and equity (Segal 1995: 759-771).

By centralizing macro sociological influences on women's military roles, Segal (1995) avoids talking about military women from typical gender essentialist perspectives and instead centers analytical attention upon theoretical ideas and historical conditions that have either enhanced or stifled women's presence in armed forces cross-nationally. In regard to national security, Segal (1995) finds that nations are more likely to use women in the military when the very survival of the nation is seriously challenged. Civil wars and wars of revolutionary proportion, for example, are often the types of conflicts

⁷ This ratio is measured as number of combat personnel to number of support personnel needed to support all missions.

that find nations relying upon women in large, or at least larger than ever before, numbers⁸.

In the case of military technology, Segal (1995) suggests that as military technology increases physical demands of being a soldier decrease; therefore, more women are able to do more military jobs than previous because fewer military jobs require “brute strength” for success. Also, Segal (1995) notes that as combat personnel increase, the number of support personnel increase, thereby increasing the combat to support ratio. Since we know women are not in combat (officially), when the number of men in combat increases the number of non-combat personnel needed, of which many are women, to support the mission increases.

Finally, military accession policies, as Segal (1995) notes, affects women’s military service – sometimes negatively, sometimes positively. Military accession policies have changed at different times in military history. In early military history, particularly during the great wars, WWI and WWII, men were drafted into military service and legal mandates limited how many women could volunteer to serve⁹. When they served, they did so in gender segregated auxiliary branches of the services¹⁰. More recently, military analysts have highlighted the ways that women (and Black men) volunteering to serve in the military largely accounted for the eventual success of the All

⁸ Segal (1999) tells us that “A common pattern is the active involvement of women in revolutionary movement. Women have been in partisan and guerilla operations, including as combatants, in, for example, Algeria, China, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Rhodesia, Russia, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, and the US Revolutionary War.” After social conditions returned to normal in all of these examples, women who supported the revolutionary war efforts are returned to “more traditional roles in society”, if they want to or not (Segal 1999: 566).

⁹ Though, it has been noted that Congress has come very close to drafting women to serve as nurses in wars past, women have been drafted in other nations. For more see Segal (1999).

¹⁰ The Women’s Army Corps (WAC) for example, disbanded in 1978. The Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard had similar units for women which all disbanded around the same time in 1948. Retrieved March 28, 2010 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_Army_Corps

Volunteer Force (AVF) which emerged at the end of the draft in 1973 (Quester and Gilroy 2002).

The social structure variable, consisting of demographic patterns, labor force characteristics, economic factors, and family structure illustrates how society and social norms, broadly speaking, also contribute to whether or not women serve in the military. In regard to demographics, Segal (1995) suggests that when there are fewer men available for military service (for reasons ranging from small birth cohorts, to fewer eligible men signing up), militaries have a tendency to turn to women, the “labor force in reserve”, to fulfill its personnel needs (Segal 1999: 566). Also, labor force characteristics speak to the degree of social acceptance that may or may not support women’s increased participation in the labor force. Additionally, economic factors, such as those that may compel single mothers to work as they represent the sole “bread winner” of a household and – compared to “stay-at-home moms” – single women¹¹ are more likely to serve in the military, for example. Finally, the culture variable includes conceptualizations of how social constructions of gender and family¹², social values about gender and family, public discourses regarding gender and values regarding ascription and equity also play into the participation of women in the military. This portion of the theoretical conceptualization takes many important elements into consideration. However, it could be theoretically strengthened if critical theories of race, gender and sexual orientation were factored into the conceptual portion of social construction of gender and family particularly since these social constructions, as well as others, have been critiqued as profoundly racialized and classed (Collins 2001).

¹¹ This is to say single women who may or may not have children.

¹² Bianchi and Spain (1996) tell us that, “The family has changed more in the last 10 years than any other social institution. Out-of-wedlock childbearing, delayed marriage, childlessness, same-sex partnership, divorce, cohabitation, and re-marriage have created many varieties of family life” and these variations show up in the lives of women and lesbians serving in the American military as well.

Segal's (1995) original conceptualization shows how military, social and cultural conditions influence and shape the experiences of women in the military¹³ and has structured many debates within military sociology and has informed policy about women and gender in the military. However, Iskra, Trainor, Leithauser and Segal (2002) expanded Segal's model by including considerations for political conditions shaping national gender and sexual norms. Using three different countries¹⁴ as case studies, (but careful to not over generalize findings from one African country to be the conditions of another African country, for example), the authors critically test the strength of the political expansion of Segal's model. The political variable included national security, civil-military relations, political ideology, current leadership, public policy regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc. and sources of change other than armed conflict (Iskra, et al 2002: 788). Therefore, between the original conceptualization of what affects women's participation in the military and its later various expansions, we know a good deal about how heteronormative conditions affect women in the military. We also have a good sense that many levels of power (military, societal, interpersonal, cultural, political, etc.) play in the professional lives of military women.

Over time, women's relationships and roles in the military have ranged from peripheral familial association to internal participation; unofficial auxiliaries to official auxiliaries (Enloe 1983, 1993; Segal 1995). Women's participation has been questioned in regards to the appropriateness and suitability of military service for women (Segal 1982; Segal and Segal 1983; Enloe 1983). On one hand, opponents to women in the

¹³ Later, Bourg and Segal (2001) "discuss [the] ways in which the military creates, sustains, and reflects gender and sexuality norms, stereotypes and stratification" and expand theoretical observation of gender and sexuality in the military to include societal, organizational – meaning the military – and interpersonal-meaning the relationships shared between individuals in the military, which aids in describing the ways "gender and sexuality are constructed and reconstructed through the daily interactions of military members (Bourg and Segal 2001: 333)."

¹⁴ Those countries were Australia, Mexico and Zimbabwe (Iskra, et al. 2002).

military suggest that if women are to serve at all, then their service should be limited to “traditional female occupations” and that women should not be permitted to participate in jobs deemed “traditional male occupations” ironically, within the already masculine culture of the military (Mitchell: 2001; Simons: 1997; Webb: 1979). On the other hand, advocates for women in the military argue that until women are fully included in all aspects of military functions their exclusions will continue to reify and justify social constructs of women service members as something less than “real soldiers” (Segal 1982: 282-287; Segal and Segal 1983; Segal and Hansen 1992). These concerns show up in the debates and are simultaneously private and public, sexualized and gendered, and originate from both national and institutional levels (Enloe 1993). Therefore, the ongoing debate about where women in the military should be or what they should represent, signals a continued lack of social, military and political consensus (Segal and Segal 1983: 236). Though military experts may have a difficult time conceding consensus about what to do about gender differences between men and women in the military, military women and lesbians seemingly agree that being women in the military requires gender “camouflage”.

Gender camouflage may sometimes be difficult to maintain, or wearing the “camo” may be more difficult for some relative to others. In a comprehensive mixed methods study of gender and sexuality in the military Herbert (1998) explores the ways military women personally conceptualize their military experiences of performing a range of gender performances in order to be successful soldiers.

Using a combination of survey data and interviews, Herbert (1998) examines many contradictions implicit of the status of “woman” soldier. Women veterans cite examples of needing to be “masculine” enough to be taken seriously at their jobs, but not

“too masculine” as to raise suspicions of their sexual orientation (Herbert 1998: 23). Others state feeling a need to be “feminine” enough in order to retain respect from male peers but not “too feminine” as to raise questions about their proficiency as a soldier. In either case, their credibility as “normal” or “good” women is likely reduced (Herbert 1998: 33). Herbert makes the following observation that is worth quoting at length:

In the military, women face ongoing battles over femininity, which is both valued and devalued, the source of both reward and punishment. This dilemma recalls the early days of women’s entry into the military, when, on one hand, femininity was discouraged because it symbolized women’s inappropriateness for the role they were filling, while, on the other hand, it was emphasized as a way to illustrating that women could perform military duties and still be “good women” (Herbert 1998: 32-33).

This study uses theories of gender and sexuality as the primary theoretical lenses to peer into the experiences of women in the military. Herbert (1998) explicates the role that sexuality plays in the gendered performances required of women. Many respondents of this study confirmed that their gender performance while in the military had a great deal of influence on how they wanted others to perceive their sexual orientation. If a woman was “homely” or stocky and proved proficient at her job she was suspected of being a lesbian simply because she proved capable of doing a “man’s” job well and thus failed to meet the standards of beauty expected of women (Herbert 1998: 76; hooks 1980; Collins 2005). On the other hand, women who were attractive, small in stature and otherwise conformed to hegemonic standards of feminine beauty, regardless of her ability to do a “man’s” job well or not, was often times assumed incompetent and “slutty” (Herbert 1998: 78). Britton and Williams (1995), in a study critiquing the policy of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT) from a perspective that considered the policy a legal instrument that privileged heterosexual military men and disadvantaged all military women regardless of sexual orientation find the same phenomenon:

“This places women in a complex catch-22 situation: The fact that they are women presumably makes them incapable of meeting the demands of military service; yet if they distinguish themselves through their military service (which is viewed as masculine behavior), they are labeled lesbians, therefore also unsuitable for military service” (1995: 15).

Military sociologists have theoretically explored the relationships shared between gender and sexuality and speculate differently upon what difference these differences truly make in the functioning of the military for the last three and a half decades. In that time many military scholars have produced copious and varied literatures on the subjects. As a result, these debates continue to thrive and what we know is that gender, or rather militarized versions of traditional ideas about gender and sexual norms¹⁵ matters on multiple conceptual levels and have countless literal outcomes. Women may be drafted, as is the case in some nations past, or they may be denied access to the service jobs after war’s end. There were times in military history when military women could not get married or have children (Humphrey 1990). These facts are all thought of on heteronormative terms. For example, when women were forced out of military jobs at the end of large conflicts and encouraged to return “home” we should also think of the number of women forced out and who were also lesbians. In other words, in order to increase what we know about women in the military we must not assume all women in the military have, generally speaking, qualitatively similar experiences (military

¹⁵ Two examples of militarized versions of traditional gender norms, as I imagine them, would be The Soldier and His Wife Back Home. The soldier is the ideal man - he defends the country from enemies, both foreign and domestic. His wife is the ideal woman - she keeps home and hearth alive for the warrior man representing and protecting the nation. It seems clear that starting at the idea that gender is a social construction is useful when thinking about gender and sexuality in the military, but since gender and sexuality in the military are, as is argued here, “militarized”, it may be increasingly important to think about the way the nation and military institution influence sexual systems of power in military culture and set the gendered and sexualized standards for American culture. In other words, how gender and sexuality are constructed in the military necessarily will have national as well as military institutional overtones and this extends beyond the social culture of America (Connell 1993; Mosse 1985; Puri 2005).

sociologists more frequently note gender, race, rank, and time in service will make a difference in what one experiences in the military) or that they are all heterosexual. Such broad sweeping assumptions potentially weaken the strength of critical critiques of how we study and understand women in the military and the myriad issues that uniquely shape their lives professionally, socially, and sexually.¹⁶

The “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Factor and Lesbians

The context of this project is situated historically around codification of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell (DADT)¹⁷. In 1993, DADT became law through Congressional mandate (Belkin and Bateman 2003; Belkin and Embser-Herbert 2002; Bonner and Segal 2005). DADT is the policy governing the identities of lesbians, gays, bisexual, and transgender people (LGBT) in military service. Briefly, it states that though gays and lesbians are known to have served before, during, and since anti-gay policies have been enforced, LGBT persons in uniform are not free to openly acknowledge that they are not heterosexual. Prior to the codification of DADT, televised debates dominated public discourse as elite military and political leaders, academics, and former service members actively debated whether or not allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military would be good for the institution.

¹⁶ There are a few military sociologist and political scientist scholars who centralize examination of women in the military within these complex relationships of race, rank and gender and routinely consider these differences in their work. For more see Enloe (1983, 1993); Miller (1997, 1998); and Moore (1996).

¹⁷ The DADT statement reads as follows: “The Department of Defense has long held that, as a general rule homosexuality is incompatible with military service because it interferes with the factors critical to combat effectiveness, including unit moral, unit cohesion and individual privacy. Nevertheless, Department of Defense also recognizes that individuals with a homosexual orientation have served with distinction in the armed services of the United States. Therefore, it is the policy of the Department of Defense to judge the suitability of persons to serve in the armed forces on the basis of their conduct. Sexual orientation is considered a personal and private matter and homosexual orientation is not a bar to service entry or continued service. Homosexual conduct, however, is grounds for separation from the Military Services.”

In the academy, opponents of DADT argue that the policy violates the integrity of individual gay and lesbian service members who are forced to “live a lie” in order to “serve their country” (Belkin 2003). Supporters of the policy argue on grounds of Christian notions of morality and suggest that gays and lesbians in the military contradict the political and religious foundations of Americanism (Ray 1993; Schumm 2004; Wells-Petry 1993). Then there are those arguments that compare the ban on gays and lesbians to previous service limitations placed upon Black men and women of all racial groups. These most commonly argue that inherently, the issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation are analogous, and eventually the solutions leading to racial and gender integration in the military will likely be similar to how the military decides to integrate open gays and lesbians¹⁸ but such assertions remain open to debate (Devilbliss 1994; Horner and Anderson 1994; Thomas and Thomas 1996).

The “Public” and “Hidden” Transcripts of DADT

DADT was said to be necessary for three core reasons. First, the banning of open homosexuals was said to be necessary to preserve military effectiveness (Ray 1993; Wells-Petry 1993). It was argued that gay men and lesbians would disrupt the smooth functioning of military culture, due to the “disruptive nature” of their sexual orientation. Next, keeping gays and lesbians from coming out was believed to be a good way to ensure national security¹⁹. Here, proponents of the ban on homosexuals suggested that gay men and lesbians, due to their homosexual orientations, potentially posed a greater

¹⁸ It is important to note that there were in place differently articulated anti-gay policies in each branch of service prior to DADT (Sarbin and Karls 1988; Goral 1988). However, after DADT became standardized military law, many more individuals were discharged for homosexuality than ever before, and most of those discharged were white women (GAO 2005; Lehring 2003; Moskos 2000: 27; SLDN 2004).

¹⁹ Even though it is legally mandated that gays and lesbians keep their sexual identity secret from others, it has been found that many gay men and lesbians in the military come out to someone that they trust at some point during their military career. For more see Herek (1996).

security threat as they, unlike their heterosexual counterparts, would be more likely to be vulnerable to blackmail and extortion if discovered (McDaniel 1989; Ray 1993; Wells-Petry 1993). Next, forbidding gays and lesbians from coming out has been considered an important element in preserving the privacy rights of heterosexuals men and women in the military. Concern for the privacy of heterosexuals was considered legitimate since men and women currently do not berth, bunk, or shower with one another therefore, ostensibly, members of either gender group are spared from experiencing sexual tension, sexual discomfort, and are relieved from the potential threat of sexual violence due to the physical separations²⁰. It was argued that since the separation of the sexes in intimate spaces has been achieved in military culture allowing men *known* to be attracted to men and women *known* to be lesbians in the showers with heterosexuals would be unfair to the heterosexuals. These three points of the debate, military effectiveness, national security and privacy of heterosexuals are approached as representing the core rationale of the “public transcript²¹” defining and shaping the national debates on gays in the military which eventually led up to the codification of the policy known as DADT. However, this paper also considers the “hidden transcript²²” of DADT and highlights the ways these arguments veered from the standard public transcript in three specific ways.

First, formal debates were overwhelmingly shaped by heterosexual men in the military who expressed how they felt about serving with openly gay persons (Lehring

²⁰ Despite the physical separation of men and women in private, intimate spaces, women in the military are frequently subjected to sexual harassment from their male comrades. Also, women in the military face threats of violence to include sexual assault in public as well as private spaces on and off of military installations.

²¹ In *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, Scott (1990: 45-69) discusses elements of what he calls “public transcripts” which are said to be dominant accounts created by those in elite positions of power to mask conditions of inequality with the use of euphemisms. This is only a strand of a more complex theory.

²² Scott (1990: 1-16) also discusses the “hidden transcript” as the “truth” shared by the oppressed but this truth is rarely expressed publically to members of the dominant elite responsible for the public transcript. This too represents just a strand of a greater theoretical treatment on resistance.

2003; Miller 1994). Frequently, military men expressed an even mixture of “homo-hysterical²³” fears (of being “eyeballed” and/or hit on by another man) and hegemonic masculine expressions of group disgust towards gay men. Here most comments indicated that heterosexual men in the military imagine gay men would be a confirmation of their deepest homo-hysterical fears: homo-sexual predators – the type that threatens the sexual sovereignty of other men (Lehring 2003; Miller 1994). Next, elite military and political leaders opined upon and eventually recommended legally supporting military men’s popular declaration that they planned to simply not follow the orders of leaders known to be homosexual (Schumm 2004). Here, heterosexual military men’s group assertion of willingness to disobey lawful orders delivered from homosexual leaders compelled elite military leaders to suggest that the mere anticipation of such mass refusal to obey orders could result in widespread breakdown of military effectiveness, and thus represented probably the most important reason to not allow gays and lesbians to serve openly (Miller 1994). Finally, heterosexual men in the military frequently expressed a willingness to leave the service if gays and lesbians were allowed to serve openly, or if forced to serve with known gays and lesbians these men expressed desires to commit violent and murderous acts against them (Miller 1994). By centralizing the experiences of lesbians in the military, this case study highlights the central role gender, though absent in the formal as well as informal discussions, played in the debates on homosexuality in the military and currently plays in the issues dominating the sexual politics of military culture.

²³ This term is coined to capture the volatile emotional climate commonly constituted between men who most identify with hegemonic masculine norms and their group based fear/desire/disgust of men who are gay. Though exploring this notion will not be carried out here, I imagine two levels of homo-hysterics (possibly more). Micro-Homo-Hysterics applies to individual men or groups of men: The public display of fear, anger, disgust, mocked desire, ridicule and violence against gay men by allegedly heterosexual men. Macro-Homo-Hysterics: the political, economic, and social penalties allegedly heterosexual men with power excise from openly gay men specifically, and all others more generally.

Women and Lesbians in the Military

Women in the military make up approximately 15 percent of the overall military force (Segal and Segal 2004) but they account for over 30 percent of discharges for homosexuality (GAO 2004; SLDN 2004). Numbering so few in the force and accounting for so many of the gay discharges, women in the military and the impact anti-gay policy enforcement has had upon this group constitutes a trend best described as an anomaly and deserves closer investigation particularly given the exclusive focus upon military men's homo-hysterical attitudes, feelings, and fears about gay men, and specifically illuminates the conditions of historically observed problematic gender disparity in military sexual politics.

This project privileges lesbians for two reasons: they are "women" who are also "gays" in the military. This brings critical attention to the following. First, lesbians are not the "gays" military men fear, as they are not conceptualized as sexual threats towards men. Next, lesbians are "women" and military men are known to routinely disregard, disobey, and challenge the legitimacy of military women's authority (Miller 1997). Finally, lesbians are the "gays" in the military that heterosexual military men expect attention from because they are women. This latter assertion is based upon the ways men rely upon women to demonstrate that as women they are "normal" by adhering to sexual norms sine they are already in violation of gender norms. Military women demonstrate that they are "sexually normal" by either being in a heterosexual relationship that is publically known or indicate an active desire to establish a heterosexual relationship. These are important points to consider given the lack of attention and privileging the perspectives of military women played in the formal and informal development of DADT.

Lesbians in the military need to convince military men of two key things: a.) that they are not trying to be men, and b.) that they are, in very meaningful ways, sexually attracted to men and interested in always presenting themselves in ways that men commonly find sexually attractive of women. However, some lesbians comply with heteronormative expectations for women, and some do not. *Therefore, I not only identify what lesbians do in their ongoing attempts to pass as heterosexual women in the military, I also focus on how lesbians describe themselves (or are described by others) as either “butch” or “femme”.* This additional focus on “lesbian gender” in the analysis of the data helps to highlight what happens to women in professional environments when they comply or refuse to comply with heteronormative gender and sexual presentations of self (Halberstam 1998; Moore 2006; Munt 1998). In short, professional military women who look, act, or perform their military duties in ways deemed inappropriately masculine run the risk of being suspected as lesbians.

Some lesbians in the military blatantly eschew heteronormative expressions of femininity. By doing such, they also elect to frequently negotiate the gendered penalties and consequences associated with gender non-compliance which brings me to my final argument. I argue that at the intersection of military culture and the institution of heterosexuality is the “militarized²⁴” version of the institution of heterosexuality (MIH). In the militarized version of the institution of heterosexuality, we see that women and lesbians experience many of the same drawbacks of being women in the military. Such a focus also clarifies the ways in which the institution of heterosexuality, gender stigma,

²⁴ A standard definition of the term “militarized” is “to convert to military use” or “to imbue with militarism,” retrieved March 24, 2010 from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/militarize>. Here, “militarized” is added to Rich’s (1980[1982]) concept of the institution of heterosexuality. From this point forward, I will refer to the “militarized institution of heterosexuality” in order to highlight which aspects of gender and sexual culture in the military are “apart from” rather than “a part of” American culture.

and the military's anti-gay policy intersect and produce conditions whereby women, more so than men, are routinely compelled to present themselves as women compliant to heteronormative conditions, i.e. demonstrating that they presently are, or will be in the future, women who compulsively order their personal and sexual lives around the sexual needs/desire of men and children.

Many lesbians partaking in this study report that when such perception is not projected, especially those whose appearance, behavior, and professionalism are determined to be "too masculine", the routine of sexual harassment, and other gender based punishments in the forms of institutionalized lesbian baiting, sexual violence, and rape intensifies.

This project ultimately aims to bring attention to whether or not lesbians in the military manage to pass as heterosexual while working under militarized conditions of the institution of heterosexuality. In order to do this, their views, experiences, strategies and tactics to negotiate the military's anti-gay policy are described, and later on discussed. Also, this project seeks to clarify the various ways women and lesbians in the military experience militarized gender and sexual norms by bringing attention to the ubiquitous nature of heterosexual harassment, lesbian baiting, and persistent threat of heterosexual violence to include rape. All of these types of gendered and sexualized violence deeply define and shape the lived experiences of many women as well as lesbians in the armed forces. Next, by cataloging lesbians as either "transgressive" to gender norms (i.e., those electing to present butch/masculine presentations of self) or are "compliant" to gender norms (i.e., those electing to present femme/feminine presentations of self and analyzing content of lesbian interview responses about their experiences of serving before and/or during enforcement of DADT), we are able to newly

speculate from the perspectives of the gender fluid²⁵ women and lesbians about the myriad ways the systems making up the institution of heterosexuality as constituted in military culture may differ substantially from the same sexual institution within greater American society. In short, this case study presents a “queer” perspective of military culture by trying to ascertain to what extent gender stigma leads to stigmatized sexual identity.

Description of the Sections

The following describes how this project is organized. Section 2 is where the design of the case study is detailed. Also in this section, the sources of data, how the data were collected, and how the data were organized are described. Also, in Section 2 the ways the texts contributed to the development of the interview schedule for the five active duty lesbians of color who were interviewed over 8 months during 2007 and 2008 is discussed. Section 3 discusses how the methods were derived. Section 4 presents excerpts from the interviews and these discussions are presented thematically. Next, Section 5, Results and Analysis, discusses the findings. Section 6, Discussion and Conclusions, readdresses the initial arguments raised throughout and offers suggestions for how future research about gender and sexuality in military is conducted.

²⁵ Here, I mean for “gender-fluid” to be read as follows: neither are all feminine and some are more masculine than others; but some may be heterosexual, bi-sexual or lesbian; either way, feminine or masculine, heterosexual or asexual, none are compelled to dedicate themselves to performing any type gender deference ritual to men who expect such deference from women, in any form, for any reason, under any circumstances, ever.

SECTION 2: RESEARCH DESIGN

This exploratory case study focuses upon lesbians and the challenges they face while employing strategies with the aim of passing as heterosexual. This focus enables us to examine more precisely how heteronormative meanings and ideals of female gender and sexuality operate in military culture. Again, the research question(s) guiding this work are as follows: *Do lesbians in the military pass as heterosexual? And what difference does lesbian gender make when talking about passing?*

This study does not include accounts from gay men veterans or gay men on active duty. The reason for this exclusion was so that all analytical attention would be trained upon lesbians, particularly “butch” lesbians. This approach stands to highlight the missing gender critique about sexuality in military culture by critiquing heteronormative gender from the social standpoint of masculine lesbians. In 1993, the opinions and attitudes of heterosexual men dominated the hidden transcript shaping the public discourse around the debates on gays in the military. Heterosexual men made statements that indicated that they were primarily concerned for their sexual safety in a military where homosexuals could come out of the closet. This concern of sexual safety, as I see it, is one which illuminates heterosexual men’s homo-hysterical social orientation towards gay men, and as such has little to do with lesbians.

Therefore, in this study, the lesbian who self-identifies or is identified by others as a masculine female or “butch” gains the lion’s share of analytical attention. Femmes or less masculine or androgynous lesbians are also a part of the population analyzed. However, the experiences of butch lesbians are considered especially important for these five reasons. First, butches are immediately physically identifiable as women expressing

behaviors that strongly indicate deviating from heteronormative feminine norms. Next, though women are penalized for “acting like” men, stereotypical lesbian butches additionally “look like” men, thusly deliberately maintaining a masculine presentation of self, and this particular presentation is commonly identified in the interviews as what a lesbian “looks like”. Third, since masculine women draw greater attention as visible gender deviants they are, according to the trends found in the interviews, also more likely to be suspected as lesbians for they are hyper-visible as women violating gender norms. Fourth, focusing upon the experiences of self-identified “butches” or those identified as butch may help to highlight how gender and sexual systems of power operate to keep women “in their place”. Finally, analyzing how gender and sexuality operate at the micro level from the perspectives of lesbians allows one to hone in on the ways individual lesbians strategize to pass as heterosexual while serving in the military and magnifies the additional challenges faced by women as a group serving under enforcement of DADT.

In the following sub-sections, three descriptive tasks are executed. First, I describe the texts used to gather the initial data in greater details. Next, I explain how these texts factored into the development of the interview schedule and aided the development of the coding scheme. Finally, I explain how the data were analyzed.

Description of the Texts

The three works used, *My Country, My Right to Serve* (Humphrey 1988), *Conduct Unbecoming* (Shilts 1993) and *Secret Service: Untold Stories of Lesbians in the Military* (Gershick 2005), provided the initial data; preliminary readings of the texts aided in the development of the interview schedule prepared for the five active-duty lesbian

participants living and working in the military in the DC/MD/VA²⁶ area; provided evidence for a historical account of lesbians military experiences as both homosexuals and women. The specificities of these texts follow.

The textual sources were selected on the basis of three points deemed most important to this project: multiple accounts, rich accounts, and accounts spanning various eras. First, each text provided data from military lesbians describing their lived experiences as homosexuals in the military, which include accounts from earlier years of America and its military history, and each also includes accounts from lesbians serving more recently and specifically under a congressionally sanctioned anti-gay policy. Second, since participants found in each text represented a wide range of era-specific veterans this project has the ability to make comments about what lesbians' experiences as women in the military has been like over time. Finally, these accounts also provided material information that enable critique capable of either confirming or disconfirming the military sociological hypothesis that theorizes a "postmodern" shift has occurred in military culture. It is suggested that one sign of the postmodern effect in the military is reflected in the positive turn of men's attitudes towards women in the military, as suggested to be the case in one of the main theses as advanced by Charles Moskos in the *Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War* (Moskos, Williams and Segal 2000).

The texts selected to collect data provided accounts of lesbians as they perceive themselves as homosexuals, as women, and as specific kinds of lesbians, i.e. butch or femme; tomboy or androgynous; "soccer mom" or "butch daddy". Each account selected for analysis herein was selected for rich content that helped to explain how being either a

²⁶ District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia

homosexual or woman in the military has remained pejorative on the grounds of sexualized and gendered stereotypes which illuminate how many lesbians have in the past and do presently experience military culture.

In the texts, periods of service in the interviews spanned from WWII to 2005. The works were used to conduct textual analysis and set the stage for how the data were eventually coded. Coding data for qualitative analysis provides “A systematic way in which to condense extensive data sets into smaller analyzable units through the creation of categories and concepts derived from the data.”²⁷ In this case, deciding what needed to be coded relied upon extensively going through the personal stories repeatedly until patterns began to emerge. Finding patterns in what lesbians were saying about their experiences in the military became clear only after countless re-reads. Only then could I decide which patterns were most prevalent and most needed highlighting.

Descriptions of the Interview Structure

The second source of data for this exploratory research came from five face-to-face interviews conducted by the author with self-identified lesbians who, at the time of interview, from 2007-2008, were serving on active duty. The questions used in the interviews with these five participants were constructed from ideas inspired by preliminary readings of the texts. Though a survey instrument was employed, the structure and flow of questions were not rigidly adhered to. This allowed for some supple nuance between what the researcher expected and what the research participants actually said.

²⁷ Lockyer, Sharon. 2004. "Coding Qualitative Data." In *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, Edited by Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Timothy Futing Liao, Vol. 1, 137-138. Thousand Oaks California: Sage.

The interview questions were ordered in the following fashion: Section I. Before Military Service and section II. During Military Service - which was split between a.) On-Duty Socialization (Described as professional time spent working with other service members while specifically conducting tasks related to one's military job, or engaged in collective actions meant to enhance military preparedness or aiding in executing "real time" military missions as related to one's military unit role) and b.) Off-Duty Socialization (Described as personal social time spent away from military installations.). Next were sections III. Perceptions of Presentation of Self as a Female Soldier (Sex); IV. Perceptions of Presentation of Self as a Women Soldier (Gender); and V. Perceptions of Presentation of Sexualized Self (Sexuality). This ordering of interview questions was inspired by the interviewing techniques used by Gershick (2005) and Humphrey (1990) texts. The Shilts (1993) text had less of an influence upon this design.

Recruiting Research Participants

I originally proposed to conduct 25 interviews and then settled on ten face-to-face interviews, but it was surprisingly difficult to schedule meeting times with participants who had originally indicated desire to participate. Many lesbian veterans who had previously agreed to be interviewed backed out at the last minute. Of those who cancelled, most stated personal concerns. They wanted to help me do this research by being a participant but they were afraid that helping me may not be worth the personal difficulty of recalling traumatic experiences of being lesbian-baited, sexually harassed, or sexually assaulted while serving their country. After a terrible dry spell²⁸ without any

²⁸ During this time I was certain my committee would dump me. This assumption, that I would be abandoned in the intellectual elephant graveyard similar to where little Simba found himself after disobeying his father in *The Lion King*, consumed me with bone chilling anxiety. I found that bone chilling anxiety halts creative thought and should be avoided at all costs. Finally, I re-conceptualized what I wanted

contact from potential participants²⁹ I become a bit desperate and anxious about the state of this project. In those moments of intellectual angst, I would return to the texts to refine my interview questions, sharpen my abstract, fine tune the methodology. I dealt with the ideas until they were no longer intellectually unwieldy. There were no magical moments during this time that the theories simply became more comprehensible. It was rather at every revisit of an article, book, book chapter, website, blog, or website for homosexual service members in militaries all over the world, I found that I came away with a bit more of the whole picture. Though sometimes fuzzy and slightly out of focus, I could gradually visualize where my findings and existing theories could take the analysis, and eventually figured out how to frame the contexts in which lesbians employ passing strategies were worthy of intellectual investigation. Then, I interpreted the passing strategies indicated by paying particular attention to the racial, class, and gender differences separating military lesbians from one another and joining them with their heterosexual counterparts.

to do (I changed my methods) with this project and started a new path. The bone-chilling anxiety abated and my committee stuck around.

²⁹ I used a couple of standard methods to spread the word about this project. I circulated the early stages of this paper to many of my friends who were yet on active duty, recently retired or even long time separated honorably or otherwise (personally, I have only known two lesbians who were dishonorably discharged; each happened in the early eighties; one was Black and the other white; the Black woman was in the Army and the white woman was in the Marines). My friends who received early drafts of this thesis represent a demographically diverse bunch. They are homosexuals and heterosexuals; both female and male; trans identified and “queer passers”, civilians and my military “homies”. After gaining their feedback, on what to keep, clarify and abandon, I crafted a message and posted multiple ads to recruit participants on social websites for lesbians, gender queers, drag kings (in the drag king community there is also a strong community of leather dykes, S/M lesbians and trans-men). I also asked my friends who were willing to talk about my research to talk about my research. Each of these communities are familiar to me as they are my communities. Many organizers, presidents of queer organizations, and multiple variously situated activists in the DC/MD/VA metropolitan area, are my contemporaries and some, my friends. Many of the variously self-identified persons in these communities are also veterans. An example: I performed as a drag king at the DC Eagle, a leather bar that for the last six years, until February 2009, held Dyke Night. In fall 2007, the performance was for a fund raiser for the DC Kings, headed by Ken Las Vegas. I was in drag as a soldier (I still have my uniforms and I drew a neat goatee to affect facial hair). That evening, I met two trans-men veterans of the Iraq War. After discovering our shared veteran status I began talking about my research to them. Each of the men, who appeared to be white (though I did not ask them their race), expressed great interest in wanting to participate in my study; later, neither returned my calls. I was interested in considering all of the theoretical interpretations and implications of their complementary dualities. They are both of the same and each maintained identities the military would identify as homosexual pre and post-operative. They shifted from one sexualized embodiment to the other; they each began their military careers as military lesbians and each ended their careers as military men who only date men.

My questionnaire began with questions about early childhood. I wanted to know what they were doing before joining the military. I wanted to know the circumstances inspiring their decision - whether their parents were veterans of any branch of service and if so, did they serve in combat; whether or not my participants had left their parents' homes by the time they decided to join the military. In this respect, my survey instrument followed inquiry patterns indicated in each of the texts.

Next, I asked my face-to-face participants to qualitatively describe how they go about "acting straight" while serving in the military. Some suggested similar strategies that were frequently noted in the published interview accounts such as wearing long hair, wearing make up, wearing the skirt component of the dress uniform despite preferring the slacks because men think that women who wear skirts are likely straight. There is value gained by wearing clothing that indicates compliance with the norms of hetero-contained expressions of female gender and sexuality. This observation enabled a rare opportunity to quantitatively measure theories suggesting that the concept of gender may be little more than learned acts and cultural performances that have come to represent what it means to be a "man" or "woman".

The accounts of interviewees in the texts and my own face-to-face interviews each had their own unique and rich³⁰ or "thick descriptions" of interpretation of what it means to be a woman anywhere, including the military. They noted the things that cause one to become noticed as a lesbian, and these things were surprisingly the same things that cause one to be labeled a whore (Gershick 2005; Humphrey 1990; Shilts 1993). They

³⁰ In qualitative studies, rich or thick description is said to "go beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard (Denzin, 1989: 83)."

also indicated understanding that there exists a real need to frequently pretend to be interested in men at least on a semi-regular basis and as arbitrarily as possible (any man will do) to not draw attention to one's non-conforming sexual self³¹. However, of the texts used in this exploration, only Gershick (2005) directly asks interviewees if they do things to deliberately fool people into thinking that they are heterosexual.

Another element of the design was determination of eligibility. I confined eligibility for participation in this study to those with no less than three years of service from 1994 to present. The reason for this time consideration relates to the historical moment when DADT became an official policy³². This is when the subject of gays and lesbians in the American military took a front position in American culture as a national debate on politicized sexuality was played out in the military institutional context.

³¹ Some lesbians suggested that too much display of male adoration can easily lead a lesbian attempting to pass as heterosexual to being misinterpreted as a “man crazy” woman who does not take her soldier role seriously. It is a tricky balance to show heterosexual interest, one element necessary in the effort for lesbians wishing to establish heterosexual credentials, without being stigmatized as a woman with loose morals as indicated in her showing *too* much interest in *too* many different men.

³² This matters to this project because DADT made *talking* about homosexuality popular in military culture from both legal and interpersonal perspectives (Butler 1997: 103-126).

SECTION 3: METHODS

Case studies are “research involving the study of issues explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell 2007). The qualitative methods of interviews and textual analysis were used to collect the data because the subject matter and the institutional context would not lend itself well to most other methods. For example, the population of interest, lesbians in the military, could not be targeted with an ad in the local post newspaper announcing a research experiment being conducted by a graduate student in the sociology department at the University of Maryland and to contact if interested. This being so, the method of textual analysis plus content analysis of interviews, though not a representative sample,³³ provides a range of participants whose accounts indicate many different contexts and many different experiences where similar strategies of passing as heterosexual were employed. Therefore these methods increase the strength and reliability of the data.

The themes organizing the following section were selected and coded as umbrella concepts. Next, the specific tactics employed within themes were also coded. There are five organizing themes and each theme has three corresponding dominant tactics. Initially, I attempted to conduct count content analysis coding words, themes, phrases, that showed up repeatedly. After a long while, I abandoned that endeavor – counting words did not produce meaningful data when what I want to know is whether or not lesbians in the military manage to pass as heterosexual. This being so, I shifted to presenting and measuring tactics employed as follows: *more likely* (ML), *less likely* (LL) and *unlikely* (UL) to be used as a passing strategy in accordance to lesbian gender.

³³ We do have *estimates* of lesbians serving in the military over time. From statistically based data we learn that “Estimates suggest that more than 36,000 gay men and lesbians are serving in active duty, representing 2.5 percent of active duty. When the guard and reserve are included, nearly 65,000 men and women in uniform are likely gay or lesbians, accounting for 2.8 percent of military personnel” (Gates 2004: iii).

The measurement of *more likely* (ML) indicates that some passing tactics were more likely to be employed by *most* lesbians *regardless* of lesbian gender. The measurement of *less likely* (LL) indicates that some passing tactics were less likely, though *not unlikely* to be employed by lesbians *and lesbian gender apparently makes a difference* on which tactics are less likely to be employed. For example, lesbians who identified as butch were less likely to engage in gender deference rituals with their male counterparts, electing rather to establish “buddy” relationships understood by all parties to be permanently non-sexual professional relationships. Finally, the measurement of *unlikely* (UL) indicates that some passing tactics were *highly unlikely* to be employed by most lesbians particularly lesbians identified as masculine. For example, lesbians who identify as butch are more unlikely to wear their hair long and are more unlikely to establish sexual relationships with male peers. However, lesbians who identified as butch were more likely to marry male peers who knew the truth about their lesbianism and were willing to assist them in their effort to pass as heterosexual (Gershick 2005; Humphrey 1990; Shilts 1993).

This qualitative measurement allowed for multiple tactics to be considered simultaneously and rather than indicating findings such as 36 lesbians wore wedding bands or 13 lesbians elected to have sex with military men, tactics could be considered holistically rather than discreetly. Therefore, the competing strategies employed by the butch lesbian whose passing tactic is to “wear make up in BDUs” but she also “argues with men” on a regular basis, shows how one tactic may enable passing (wearing make up in uniform) while the other tactic may thwart passing (argues with men regularly) and neither tactic is more important than the other.

I selected the case study as the qualitative form of study in order to consider the experiences of lesbians more thoroughly. However, since I am also thinking specifically about lesbians in the military and am curious to know how anti-gay policies affect them as women and as homosexuals, the military institution, the institution of heterosexuality (IH), compulsory heterosexuality (CH), stigma, and the policy of DADT, all play into what units are analyzed in this project (Cresswell 2007: 79). Variables are “Lesbian Gender” and “Effort to pass as Heterosexual”. Lesbian gender is simplified as “Femme” and “Butch” but in the tables these categories are broadened as follows. Femme is described as “Lesbians *more* compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity” and Butch is described as “Lesbians *less* compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity.”

The second variable, “Effort to pass as Heterosexual”, in the tables is shortened to “Effort” is measured as follows: *more likely* (ML), *unlikely* (UL) and *less likely* (LL) to be employed according to strategy and lesbian gender. To be specific, the “strategy” as identified in this project, is the ongoing plan to pass as heterosexual in any given context and in order to be successful at passing specific “tactics” are employed in various combinations both complimentary to passing and/or contradictory to passing such as wearing wedding rings (though single) or playing sport, or dating men in one’s unit (though in a long term relationship with another lesbian in the same unit, for example.) So, even though the terms “strategy³⁴” and “tactic” bear close resemblance, I use them distinctively in the tables reporting the findings.

³⁴ In *The Face of Battle*, Keegan (1976: 22) discusses the fine differences between strategy and tactics as these terms apply to maneuvering men and equipment in war. He says of the difference between the two, “it is as alusive as it is artificial”. Indeed, this characterizations dovetail nicely with how I have decided to “divide” lesbians passing tactics from strategies.

Demographic Break-Down of Sample

Of the sample, fifty eight accounts were from the pre-DADT era and fifteen accounts were from the post-DADT period.

Table 1: Participants Distribution/Representation by Era of Service

Pre-DADT WWII-1992	58
Post-DADT 1993-Present	15
Pre and Post-DADT Total	73

That two of the texts relied upon where published before DADT became a reality (Humphrey 1990 and Shilts 1993) may help explain this trend. Gershick (2005) included a wide variety of lesbian veteran accounts, most of which were from lesbian veterans who served before DADT. Those accounts from the face-to-face interviews each represented lesbian veterans who served before and since enforcement of DADT and of whom, all were lesbians of color, and at the time of interview, all were serving on active duty with no current or pending threat of discharge for any reason to include reasons related to charges for homosexuality. In Table 2, the data about race/ethnicity of participant included 59 Whites, 8 African Americans, 3 Latinas and three were missing data for race/ethnicity are presented.

Table 2: Race of Participants

African American	8
White	59
Latina	3
Unknown	3
Total	73

What we do know is that of women discharged from the military for homosexuality, most are young, white, and enlisted (SLDN 2005; GAO 2004). What we do not know is why this trend persists particularly given the following. White women, relative to Black and other racial minority women are underrepresented in the armed forces (Katezenstein and Reppy

1999: 18; Manning 2005: 10; Segal and Segal 2004: 30). Manning (2005: 10) reports that “more than half the enlisted women in the DoD services are minority women (51.8 percent) as are 31.7 percent of women officers” and that “a significant proportion of all US military women are African American; they account for a considerably higher percentage of military women than of [minority] military men (29.5 percent versus 16.4 percent). And Segal and Segal (2004) tell us that:

“One interesting phenomenon in the military is that black women have a greater representation than black men...Army has the highest percentage of black women: Nearly one-fourth of enlisted women are black (2004: 30).”

Similarly, Katezenstein and Reppy (1999) note that, “In today’s military, understanding the confluence of race and gender is more problematic: too often policy implicitly assumes³⁵ that all military women are White – even though nearly half of all enlisted women in the army are African American – and that all minority personnel are men (18).” White women make up the fewest women in the military and yet represent the greatest percentage of gay discharges³⁶. There may be a number of reasons for this outcome.

For example, that white women in the military are overrepresented in homosexual discharges indicates that the sexual politics of homosexuality in the military are deeply

³⁵ Likewise, homosexuality in American culture has been historically shaped by race, class and gender politics and is believed comprised of mostly whites, both men and women (Somerville 2000). The policy of DADT makes no mention of race but it is clear that of those discharged from the military whites top the charts and white women are ahead of white men. These long-steady, clearly raced and gendered discharge trends may indicate that gays and lesbians of color in the military may actually benefit from commonly held race-specific beliefs that homosexuality is “a white disease” (Collins 2004: 108).

³⁶ Since enforcement of DADT, military sociologist Charles Moskos has taken note of the race/gender trends that have come to light. His observation of separation data find that whites are more likely to be affected by anti-gay policies than Blacks (Belkin and Bateman 2003) and women are more likely affected than men (Moskos 2000). Of race, Moskos posits that low rates of separation of Blacks may be the result of homosexuality having a higher stigma in Black communities (Belkin and Bateman 2003: 62) and of higher rates of separation of white women possibly reflecting fewer taboos towards homosexuality amongst women relative to men (Moskos 2000: 24).

influenced by social constructions of race (Collins 2005; hooks 1980; Omi and Winant 1990). Though the military may not actively “racially profile” white people in the military for homosexuality as suggested by Moskos in Belkin and Bateman (2003), the politics of homosexuality in America have been observed as being historically socially constructed as a sexual phenomenon racialized as “white” (Sommers 2007) and this racialized politicization of homosexuality seems to be reflected in the raced trends of homosexual discharges from the military³⁷.

Explaining why white women in the military are more likely to be discharged for homosexuality when they are the fewest women present in the armed forces exceeds the boundaries of this research. However, future research specifically seeking to improve our current understanding of the relationships shared between race, gender, and sexuality and military culture would make a great contribution to strengthen the theoretical conceptualizations underpinning what we currently know about how these systems of power (race, gender and sexuality) operate together outside as well as inside of military culture. Finally, the rank break-down of participants were: 51 enlisted, 22 officers is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Rank of Participants

Enlisted	51
Officer	22
Total	73

Fewer officers are represented in this sample. Again, we can turn to our demographic knowledge of the force and explain this in at least two ways. First, women are more heavily concentrated in the enlisted ranks, and of enlisted women most are women of color (Segal and Segal 2004). Therefore, it may be the case that enlisted women are simply more

³⁷ Moskos further informs military sociologists that white women are 3 times more likely than Black women to be discharged from the military for homosexuality and white males are 2.5 times more likely than Black males to be discharged for homosexuality. For more see Belkin and Bateman (2003).

vulnerable to investigations than are officers and white women, though accounting for fewer women in the enlisted corps, seemingly even more vulnerable than African American women. To give context to what this vulnerability looks like, approximately eighty-five percent of the force is comprised of enlisted personnel and fifteen percent of the force is comprised of officers (Segal and Segal 2004). This statistic is fairly consistent from branch to branch. Also, women comprise approximately 15 percent of the force (the same percent of the entire officer corps in each branch) yet account for over 30 percent of homosexual discharges. Most women discharged for homosexuality are enlisted and white.

Junior enlisted lesbians are young, holders of high school diplomas, and are likely single. Young, junior ranking lesbians are possibly more likely to be subjected to greater scrutiny from more sources than their older, senior ranking, counterparts. They (junior ranking lesbians) face scrutiny from male subordinates, peers and superiors. As junior enlisted women, they have little recourse to avoid scrutiny of their personal as well as professional life. As a result, enlisted lesbians are apparently simply more vulnerable to gender containment politics to include lesbian baiting tactics due to their vulnerabilities of youth, junior rank, and their lack of experience of being exposed to “boys” who are engaged in the historical group effort to “become men” (rather than competent soldiers of sound character³⁸). On the other hand, lesbians who are either senior ranking enlisted or commissioned officers are seemingly less likely to be vulnerable to gender containment

³⁸ The trope of the role military service is said to play in the maturation process of men focuses on the mythical processes of “boys becoming men”. However, less focus is trained upon the moments men become soldiers. Also, this trope highlights that women are not boys and though in the military can not become men. However, in the accounts of military lesbians, many indicated that their reasons for joining the military were patriotic and focused on being the best soldier, airman, sailor, Coast Guardsman or Marine possible. Women and lesbians in the military are seemingly not burdened with the “gender role evolution” that boys go through in order to reach manhood via military service. Therefore, lesbians and women in the military are likely more able to focus upon doing their jobs well while boys are distracted with becoming men. However, the gender role evolution faced by boys and men in the military does take a toll on women and lesbians who are in various ways forced to “do their feminine gender” better than their military jobs.

politics to include lesbian baiting due to their privileged statuses of being older, their greater experiences with military boys and men, and their senior rank. In summary, the majority of the cases in this study come from pre-DADT era (WWII – 2008) is mostly white (n=59) and is mostly enlisted (n=51).

In the following section, each of the accounts presented here are representative of lesbians who have served prior to and since enforcement of DADT. Their stories indicate that there has always been a need to “pass” to keep their military jobs. The narratives of lesbians in military service are as unique as they are similar; unique because individuals, circumstances and options to pass vary from lesbian to lesbian. Similar because each lesbian is a woman and as a woman each lesbian is yet expected to comply with the cultural limitations assigned to women, actual individual capabilities notwithstanding. In this thematically ordered sociological exploration into the “everyday/everynight³⁹” lives of lesbians in the military presented by this research, Smith (1990) offers words of sociological support to the importance of sociological explorations that begin with the lived experiences of women by stating the following:

“Thus the practices of thinking and writing that are of special concern here are those that convert what people experience directly in their everyday/everynight world into forms of knowledge in which people as subjects disappear and in which their perspectives on their own experiences are transposed and subdued by the magisterial forms of objectifying discourse (Smith 1990: 4).”

The perspectives privileged in this work illuminate the historical conditions defining many lived experiences of many different lesbians in the military over a considerable

³⁹ In, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (1990), Dorothy Smith sets out to “examine the properties of a patriarchal sociology from the standpoint of women’s experiences” she seeks to “characterize just what it is in sociological practices of writing that alienates and occludes the stand point of experience...(Smith 1990: 4).” Similarly, I set out to examine the gender and sexual properties of the most important patriarchal institution in society from the perspectives of lesbians in the military - the “women” who are also “gays”.

period of time, WWII – 2008, and illuminates how lesbians in the military “pass” as heterosexual before and since enforcement of DADT.

**SECTION 4:
LESBIANS IN THE MILITARY TALK ABOUT
PASSING STRATEGIES AND CORRESPONDING TACTICS**

Some lesbians serve for more than twenty years in the military without ever employing any of the strategies or tactics covered here. Others employ many of these strategies at one time or another or for the entire time they serve. Of course there are those that may employ all of these strategies and still fail to pass, finding themselves discharged as homosexuals within the first six months of service. Therefore, some lesbians in the military pass as heterosexual and some fail to pass; either way, *most* lesbians who have or do serve in the military have been faced with situation requiring them to at least try to pass as heterosexual.

In this section, the five most prevalent strategies employed by lesbians in the military to pass as heterosexual are presented, and excerpts from the interview accounts from both the texts and from the face-to-face interviews are provided to further illustrate whether or not, when and if, lesbians in the military pass as heterosexual. The tactics are explained in greater details in the Results and Analysis section. However, they are mentioned here to provide depth to how the strategic themes are organized and have been conceptualized. Essentially, the tactics are what some lesbians *actively do* to pass as heterosexual and the strategies are what some military lesbians *actively avoid doing* to decrease the likelihood of being suspected as homosexuals. Therefore, when trying to pass as heterosexual, what lesbians choose not to do (challenge men) may be as important of what they choose to do (wear lipstick in Battle Dress Uniform). The following is a list of the strategic themes and their corresponding tactics:

1.) *Military lesbians avoid lesbians whose appearance is “obvious” and many military lesbians personally strive to avoid “looking” like a lesbian⁴⁰. This strategy is supported by the following most prevalent tactics employed by military lesbians managing their gender stigma as women in the military:*

- a. Wear Long Hair
- b. Wear make-up while in Battle Dress Uniform (BDU)
- c. Wear Skirt Component of Dress Uniform

2.) *Military lesbians avoid athletic behaviors deemed overly aggressive or inappropriate for women to engage in seriously such as play competitive sport, weight lift, etc. This strategy is supported by the following most prevalent tactics employed by military lesbians managing their gender stigma as women in the military:*

- a. Avoid Extra Workouts
- b. Avoid Playing Organized Sports⁴¹
- c. Play Sports like a “Lady”

3.) *Military lesbians avoid doing most things that may indicate that they either desire to be men or that they may wish to seriously engage men competitively. This strategy is supported by the following most prevalent tactics employed by military lesbians managing their gender stigma as women in the military:*

- a. Avoid Arguing with Military Men
- b. Avoid Challenging Military Men
- c. Avoid *completely* declining sexual advances from male peers – better to let them think there is a chance

4.) *Military lesbians make up imaginary male partners or pretend to be in formal (married) or informal (dating) public intimate relationships with men. This strategy is supported by the following most prevalent tactics employed by military lesbians managing their gender stigma as women in the military:*

⁴⁰ Lesbians who were described as “obvious” were characterized as “masculine” women whose manners were “manly” and who were often mistaken as men.

⁴¹ Common site for military witch hunts

- a. Create and share stories about an imaginary male partner
- b. Wear wedding ring; display pictures of man in work space
- c. Marry a man

5.) *Military lesbians negotiate gender and sexual containment politics by “dealing with it” rather than formally complaining to military leadership for fear of formal (denial of promotion) or informal (threats of sexual assault) retribution.* This strategy is supported by the following most prevalent tactics employed by military lesbians managing their gender stigma as women in the military:

- a. Engage in Gender Deference Rituals
- b. Accept Sexual Advances (Date/or have sex with military men) for “cover” or to gain “heterosexual credentials”
- c. If harassed, assaulted or raped, elect to not report incident for fear of retribution

These five strategies and their corresponding tactics are explored in greater detail in what follows shortly. What we learn here and have further discussions about later in the next section is that if military lesbians pass as heterosexual at all, it is primarily due to their willingness and or ability to employ a combination of efforts to do most things expected of women beholden to traditional gender and sexual norms. However, lesbians who elect to disregard what is expected of women beholden to traditional gender and sexual norms, often find passing to be very challenging.

I. Strategy #1: Masking Female Masculinity and Avoiding those who Present

Transgressive or “Butch” Expressions of Lesbian Gender

Masking “female masculinity” and avoiding those who present transgressive or “butch” lesbian gender was the most prevalent strategy employed. The frequency that lesbians passed as heterosexual by either masking their normal day-to-day expressions of female masculinity or who routinely avoided lesbians who elected *not* to alter their day-

to-day expressions of female masculinity suggested that this strategy was extremely important.

Also in this section, lesbians who self-identified or were identified by other military lesbians as “butch”, “tomboy”, “masculine woman”, or “manly”, assert that masking female masculinity and/or avoiding masculine military women *were not* strategies used to pass as heterosexual. Contrary to dominant passing strategies, some masculine lesbians report establishing friendships with military men who know they are lesbians and who, after a while, learned to treat them as “one of the guys” while maintaining respect for the fact that they are “women” (Interview #1: June 2007). The differences of being gender policed or not, apparently depend greatly upon the combination of an individual lesbian’s degree of comfort with her sexual orientation, experience in the military, age, rank, and even possibly race.

“Although clerk/typists were as likely to be lesbian, they were rarely suspected; mechanics almost always were. Husky women were suspicious; petite women were not (Shilts 1993: 496).”

1. Hospital Corpsman Chief Petty Officer Shirley Geiling, US Navy.

Shirley Geiling served in the Navy for twenty-two years from 1964-1987. She had had relationships with women but had not known the term “lesbian” and had recalled reading somewhere that the definition of a lesbian was “a woman who said she was” (Gershick 2005: 1). At the time of joining the Navy, Geiling had not decided that she was interested in claiming this sexual identity (Gershick 2005: 1). The following is what the sailor recounts about how she came to recognize herself as well as others as lesbians:

Gershick: Once you were in boot camp, did you see other women whom you recognized as lesbians?

SG: I didn’t recognize lesbians at the time. I didn’t even recognize myself by that name. There were some women who were more masculine, who had shorter hair, carried themselves

differently. At that time, my head said, *tomboy* (original emphasis). I'd never met anyone who said they were a "lesbian." (Gershick 2005: 3)

Though Geiling did not name herself as lesbian and knew no one else who claimed this identity, she was sexually active with other women and was ultimately concerned with what the Navy expected from her as a woman since she knew that sexual relationships with other women while serving the nation was illegal. It was at 21 that Geiling learned something critical about her own sexual identity.

Gershick: At age 21, you'd discovered something about yourself; the light came on. How did this happen and how did that affect your being in the military?

SG: "I found this woman that I was attracted to, and I said, "No, I'm not going to do this because the Navy does not approve of it."

Of course that went out the window in about two seconds. And so I was sleeping with this woman who said *she* wasn't a lesbian...I finally admitted to myself that if I'm sleeping with women and enjoying it, then I must be a lesbian...It was difficult for a while. I had a little problem with that. It wasn't a societal norm. It wasn't a military norm. I didn't know anyone I could talk to about it that had some authority, that had some experience, that had some background, that had some knowledge, anything. You wouldn't dare talk to anybody for fear that you'd get caught and canned. It was hard to come out to yourself without someone to talk to (Gershick 2005: 4)."

Geiling expresses experiencing difficulty when attempting to find a way to "come out" to herself. However, the sailor manages to employ what she and others call "gaydar". This ability to spot other queer folks is perceived as a benefit described in the following excerpt:

SG: "It's the gaydar that you develop when you are in the military so that you learn to recognize somebody. I don't know how to explain it. It's just a feeling. You say, "Well here's some-body." You look at 'em and you go, "Well, gee. I wonder if this woman's a lesbian?" It's some sixth, seventh sense that you pick up from hiding all those years." (Gershick 2005: 5)

Though there may be some concerns of gaydar accuracy, Geiling suggest that the "sixth or seventh" sense one develops from "hiding all those years" is the magical key to recognizing other homosexuals. However, the interviewer asks her a following question that leads Geiling to consider the role normative gender plays in organizing myriad aspects of women's public and private lives. Geiling admits that she needs gaydar for *identifying feminine lesbian women*, indicating that rarely is gaydar needed to identify

less feminine women as queer. This is an example of how women in the military, particularly women who are demonstratively masculine, are differently penalized for not adhering to hegemonic cultural practices of heterosexual femininity.

Masculine women, lesbian or not, are frequently labeled lesbian. As such, more masculine lesbians wishing to pass as heterosexual may find themselves compelled by militarized gender norms to mask their masculinity by presenting themselves in more feminine ways such as wearing make up while on duty or wearing the skirt dress uniform rather than the slacks. The interviewer follows through this line of query to complete this observation of lesbians whose presentation of self may be identified as femme versus butch⁴²:

Gershick: And I imagine you especially need that gaydar if the woman is very femme in appearance.

SG: “Those are the very hard ones! If a woman is very feminine in appearance, it is very difficult. The gaydar doesn’t work most of the time on that. And some women are fairly borderline...I think lesbians carry themselves differently from straight women.” (Gershick 2005: 5)

If indeed lesbians do carry themselves differently from straight women, as Geiling suggests, and gaydar works less if the subject is *very feminine in appearance*, adherence to notions of heteronormative femininity remain the most powerful passing strategy available to military lesbians. What make this problematic for some lesbians in the military and not others is that the assumed “naturalness” of gender is likely lost on the lesbian who is in fact more masculine in her demeanor and whose expressions of masculinity are not forced fabrications but rather behaviors that have been well cultivated over time and embraced just as enthusiastically as those lesbians whose gender presentation enables them to “fly under gaydar”.

⁴² For a more thorough discussion on lesbian genders see *Butch/Femme: Inside Lesbian Gender* (Munt 1998).

2. PFC Angel Ramirez, U. S. Army, 1994-97

Private Ramirez was medically discharged as a specialist (E-4). Ramirez never came out to anyone in the Army. However, she always felt that her “boyish appearance and assertive manner” outed her. No one in her unit or in her chain of command ever asked her pointedly about her sexual orientation but she was “asked” to “tell” that she was heterosexual in many different ways, for example:

“...I was never asked up-front if I was a lesbian. I was asked a couple of times why I wasn’t dating anybody. Why did I choose to be by myself? And why not hang with the other people...because you can’t trust everyone.” (Gershick 2005: 81)

Specialist Ramirez recounts a few ordeals of dealing with being harassed for being “too masculine” and the interviewer asks, “Why were you the focus of the company’s wrath?”

Ramirez answers:

“The only reason I can come up with is that, deep down inside, they knew I was a homosexual. But because of “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, they could not pursue me, and that’s what aggravated them so much: I was able to continue serving. And, of course, being female and them being males and being drill sergeants and they can’t get into my pants. I think that irritated them more.” (Gershick 2005: 82).

However, the following excerpt paints a very different picture from the one presented by the Specialist Ramirez. The participant below is an African-American lesbian officer serving in the Army. At the time of interview, she had returned from a command position in the Iraqi theatre. The line of questioning sought to gain a more keen understanding of how the participant perceived their typical presentation of self in uniform. To be specific, the line of questioning began with reference to Army Regulation (AR)-670-1, which is the Army’s guide governing the wear and appearance of ones military uniform and details which issued and non-issued accoutrements may or may not be worn or adorned while in uniform. This officer indicated that not only does she not try to appear extra-feminine in uniform, she establishes a “one of the guys” relationship with male peers and

superiors as she conceptualizes herself first and foremost as a soldier - not as a woman soldier, but as “a little tomboy” soldier.

3. Face-to-Face Interviewee #3

Interviewer (I): According to your services regulation for the wear and appearance of your uniform, how do you present yourself in uniform?

Participant (P): As a soldier.

(I): Same walk?

(P): I'm one of those people where I'm always in regulation, not prissy. I carry myself as a soldier, so I can line up with the guys and fit in. I don't stand out. I don't have nail polish on. I don't wear my hair below my collar. I don't have makeup on. I mean I'm a typical, soldier, like a little tomboy in uniform.

In this section, Geiling (Gershick 2005) describes how in the beginning of her Navy career, she did not think of herself as lesbian, however, she did have active relationships with other women who also did not identify themselves as lesbians. Also, Geiling does not name her presentation of self; however, she does indicate “gaydar” when describing how she identifies *other* lesbians in the military, finding it most difficult to identify the lesbians whose physical appearance best comply with heteronormative standards of femininity.

Also the account of, Ramirez (Gershick 2005) indicates her awareness of being singled out primarily for her “boyish” appearance.

II. Avoid Transgressive Feminine Gender Behaviors

This theme explores the stigma of female athleticism. Civilian lesbians/women who play varsity/collegiate/professional sports are often publicly “softened” up to appeal to male audiences. It has been noted that WNBA campaigns have been known to work very hard to make women and lesbian athletes more appealing to male audience by promoting media events to portray raw talented athletes⁴³ as good, sexy “girls” any man

⁴³ Recall the racist/sexist insults Imus, a national talk show host who lost his job amid outcries for justice, put to the Rutgers Women's Basketball Team in 2007. He called them “a bunch of nappy headed ho's”.

would desire” and they *just so happen* to be great athletes (Collins 2004: 136). However, in the military world, there are no PR shows built for athletic military women and women dedicated to sports are the women in the military most likely to be labeled as “dykes”. In short, this section highlights the frequency that “sporty dykes” are investigated for homosexuality as a consequence of being “un-lady like” and thus illustrates how important avoiding being “too athletic” is for some lesbians attempting to “pass” as heterosexual and how other lesbians risk being investigated for homosexuality if their athleticism is deemed as an over expression of masculine competitiveness.

Loretta “Ret” Collier, US Air Force, 1951 – 1953

Lesbians join the military in search of adventure, challenge and military service promises these experiences. However, military service has been primarily constructed as an exclusively male enterprise and the promises of military adventure and challenge have been made exclusively to men. The following interview is of a lesbian who served during the fifties. In her interview, Loretta “Ret” Collier, a white butch lesbian, who at the time of her interview was 57 years old, describes how and why she decided to join the Air Force in 1951:

“Since I was very career oriented, nobody in our family had ever gone to college, and we were really very poor, on relief and that whole thing, I thought perhaps the service could offer me that elusive opportunity. It would take care of me, so I thought, and give me a life long career. The bottom line is that I went into the service to be a career woman. And I’d have stayed there. I loved it!” (Humphrey 1990: 11).

Her desire to serve stemmed from her effort to seek better opportunities for herself. That these opportunities could be found in the military is what mattered and she was prepared for the questions that the military used back then to screen out homosexuals. She recounts the experience of answering these questions:

This is another very good example of the variations in American culture where women’s athleticism is devalued and how female gender, beauty and sexuality become or are racialized. For a video clip of Imus making these comments visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RF9BjB7Bzr0>, retrieved April 12, 2010.

“It was so long ago now, but once I did sign up, I had to go through a series of questions. I believe this occurred somewhere during the physical. One that particularly stood out was something like, “Do you prefer going to parties with all boys or all girls?” That was one of the questions! I remember I said, “Well, all boys, of course” [...] “Oh, and I do remember one other question that had any indication of sexual preference at all, other than that one, and that was “Have you ever had any feelings for women that you think might not be acceptable to other women?” And I said, “Only my mother” (Humphrey 1990: 11)

After answering the questions the right way, affirming that she liked boys more than girls, “Ret” goes on to describe her expectations of military life and experiences as a closeted lesbian.

“You know, I never entered the military with the idea of finding other lesbians or having any sorts of affairs or anything. I entered the military *knowing* that I was a lesbian, but also knowing that I wanted to do what was right by military standards and stay there! [] I was smart enough to know that doing anything would be my downfall. And like I said, I really wanted to stay in. There was no doubt in my mind, from the time I raised my hand and was sworn in, until the day I was discharged, that that’s where I wanted to be. I liked everything about it” (Humphrey 1990: 11).

Like many lesbians stories told in the secondary accounts and the original interviews, being suspected as a homosexual usually stemmed from one of three heteronormative gender offenses. First, being seen primarily with female comrades; second, playing sports; and third, ignoring men’s sexual advances. “Ret” tells of how the end of a basketball season set off a post- wide lesbian witch hunt:

“The OSI started stalking me. My theory is that periodically they’d go through the bases and go on these purges. They would start first with all the women who were involved in athletics and then move from there with any info they had gotten, to snare other women. They opened my mail. They’d get me up in the middle of the night and take me over to the OSI office for questioning. They’d look under my mattress for anything I might have hidden, any material, letters, notes, Valentine’s, just anything that I might have hidden that could be incriminating (Humphrey 1990: 12).”

Ret goes on to explain how intrusive the investigation became. The OSI would “wake her from her sleep” and interrupt her meals to take her “down for questioning” (Humphrey 1988). Her civilian lover was ignored by investigators because the military had no jurisdiction over her actions; however, each time she visited her civilian lover, OSI investigators were always nearby. According to Ret, they knew everything about her

weekend trips. They knew which bus she rode, what clothes she wore and the length of her stay. She remarks about the thoroughness of these intrusive moments:

“It was mind-shattering, it boggled the imagination to believe that they were so concerned about what I did in my spare time, that they would go to such lengths! (Humphrey 1990: 13)”

Many find that being under investigation for homosexuality isolates the person who is under suspicion from her support group. When one lesbian comes under investigation, other lesbians avoid her for fear of being seen as “guilty by association.” Commonly the lesbian who is under investigation understands that her friends and lover(s) are simply protecting themselves by ostracizing her. Their continued ability to pass as heterosexual relies upon maintaining social ties only with lesbians whose reputations as heterosexual are yet intact. Ret says that her experience showed this trend and she further explains how this made her and another white lesbian under investigation feel:

“When you were under investigation, you were pretty much by yourself, so except for Carol, who was also being intensely investigated, neither of us had another friend, because you were just not nice to be around during that time. Besides, no one wanted to be found associated with us for fear of their own careers. Birds of a feather kind of thing, you know, so the people that you had to talk to about it were minimal. Carol and I would commiserate, and that was the extent of it (Humphrey 1990: 14).”

Being found guilty of homosexuality via courts martial⁴⁴ has long reaching consequences for the lesbian whose discharge is characterized as less than honorable, undesirable, or as dishonorable. This is the case for any service member but the impact upon female service members can be devastating. As women, finding employment that pays a livable wage was difficult in the early 1950s and even today, women yet earn an average of 73 cents to a man’s dollar. This situation may have been and continues to be particularly problematic for lesbian veterans returning to the civilian world with negative discharges from military

⁴⁴ Courts Martial is the military’s highest judicial proceeding for service members. There are two types of courts martial, general and special.

service. Ret explains what happened to her when her undesirable discharge papers arrived in the mail:

“Two pieces of paper arrived in this envelope telling me all the things that I couldn’t do because of my undesirable discharge. I could no longer vote. I didn’t have any benefits. I could never work for any government-affiliated agency or company. I could not do anything with any state-run organization or state supported agencies like education, or any civil service that had to do with prisons. I couldn’t be involved in anything that had to do with security because I could never get a security clearance. I couldn’t even work for the post office! You know, all these places I could never work, the list went on and on[...] I am pretty much limited to laying asphalt, or digging ditches! There just is nothing available to me (Humphrey 1990: 16)

Ret struggled as a civilian. She returned to the job she left the Air Force for. It was at a factory in Santa Monica in 1953 and Ret chooses to not tell them about her undesirable discharge (Humphrey 1988: 16). The omission of the truth only delays the unfavorable outcome. On a routine day of work, Ret recalls being called into the managers’ office where she is told that they discovered the truth about her military discharge and she was welcome to leave (Humphrey 1988: 16). This went on for a while. Ret would take jobs without disclosing her military past only to be discovered later and fired as before.

Finally, feeling completely defeated, Ret goes to college and earns a teaching certificate and she states that, “Up until last June, 1987, when I retired from teaching, there wasn’t a day I didn’t labor under the threat of my credentials being revoked because I had lied on the application, which is reason enough, or because they had found out about my past (Humphrey 1988: 17).” Despite the constant fear of being discovered as a person who was dishonorably discharged, she enjoyed her life as a teacher. However, her experience in the military became a permanently negative memory when she and other lesbians came under suspicion because of their high level of athleticism. That her future was marred by the situation does not go by without comment. Ret has pointed criticisms of America, serving ones country, and offers her personal stance regarding her past sense of patriotism:

“I pay my taxes because I don’t want to go to jail, but I’d never do anything service oriented for this country, and I’m not a patriot. You know, I figured that I gave them all I had so very long ago and they just fucked me over. So fuck them now!” (Humphrey 1988: 18)

Ret did not pass as a service member. She joined the military and lived her life on active duty as if she were free to do what she wanted to do without any real concern for what men thought about her behavior or actions. However, the constant scrutiny, harassment, and ultimate dishonorable discharge taught her how to be a discreet lesbian. She learned how to hide and even though she hid her lesbian identity, the formality of military discharge followed her wherever she went for many years until she achieved a higher level of education. Once a degreed professional, Ret was not fired for her homosexual discharge; the discharge did not come back to haunt her. However, until the day she retired for teaching, she expected to be. Her failed passing in uniform led to her successful passing as a civilian save for the persistent post-service harassment of her poor character discharge. The lesson came late in life but she learned the value of being closeted, acting with greater discretion, and employing strategies of heteronormatively expressed femininity.

III. Avoid Transgressive Feminine Social Behaviors

Transgressive feminine behavior is enacted by all women in the military by virtue of their being members of the military. In addition to being women, lesbians in the military may experience stigma within stigma. As such, lesbians in the military are aware of the additional scrutiny that transgressive feminine behaviors may net if not careful.

In this section, lesbians discuss how they avoid behaving in manners that could be interpreted as transgressive feminine behaviors. By doing such, they also disclose how these passing strategies enhance their ability to pass as heterosexual while serving in the military. Conversely, lesbians who do not censor additional behaviors of expressing

transgressive feminine behaviors run the risk of being investigated for homosexuality and possibly discharged if the investigation persists, as some accounts illustrate:

“There is a saying among gay women in the military: One accusation means an investigation. Two accusations mean guilt (Shilts 1993:5).”

“The massive lesbian investigations resulted in an intriguing statistical turnaround for military investigators. While the number of gay discharges continued to go up in the early 1980s, the numbers of investigations went down sharply. Between 1974 and 1978, investigations outnumbered discharges; between 1979 and 1983, discharges outnumbered investigations, because each individual investigation yielded so many more discharges (Shilts 1993: 419).”

1. Ruth Hughes, U. S. Air Force, 1958-1965

Ruth Hughes, an African American veteran lesbian, was aware of her sexual orientation at a very young age during puberty (Humphrey 1990: 122). Despite knowing that she had sexual attractions towards women, her grounding reasons for joining the military were bound up in her sense of patriotism and love for her country (Humphrey 1990: 123). Though she loved the military she knew that being a lesbian was frowned upon. However, Hughes was not dissuaded to have relationships, both emotional and sexual, with other lesbians, be they civilian or fellow patriots. Unlike the other accounts in this section, Hughes found herself under investigation for homosexuality when her sister⁴⁵ decided to “help” her by alerting her sisters’ Air Force leadership that she was a lesbian. The following excerpt is of Hughes explains how she “performed” femininity to deflect her sisters accusations once her investigation for homosexuality began:

“...I prepared myself for the worst. I went out and bought red fingernail polish...Promptly at 8:00 AM a staff car, with two agents and a secretary, was there for me. Like I’m this criminal. I was in *supply*, for God’s sake. One fellow was nice, the other was mean - just like you would expect. The one who was mean was real big. I’m only five foot three and a half, but this sucker was over six foot four. He said, “Get in the car!” In my sweetest voice I said, “Oh, thank you very much.”

⁴⁵ In her interview account, Hughes explains that her sister was in the Army and her military affiliation provided her with the basic knowledge to navigate Hughes’ Air Force leadership chain. Her sister alerted the Air Force that her sister was “sick” and needed help because she was a lesbian.

I was nervous...It was the letter from my sister...I crossed my legs and pulled my skirt back. I thought-I'm ashamed of myself but I thought, "I'm going to get through this! I'm going to survive." (Humphrey 1990: 126)

Hughes was allowed to advance to her next duty assignment but only after taking a lie detector test. Her sister wrote a letter outing her to her command and by the time she was picked up for questioning by Air Force investigators a three page list of names of every woman she knew in the Air Force was a part of the case. The investigators asked about the others on the list by accusing Hughes of "unnaturalness" and by asking her if she ever saw any of those listed do "unnatural" things. There were only women on the list. The investigators introduced the list with the following:

"We want to know about the people on this list. They had this incredible list of names, addresses, and telephone number. Not just people I had been sexually involved with but *all* the women I knew (original emphasis)." (Humphrey 1990: 126)

Hughes describes her experience in the military after this investigation as terrifying, insisting that, "...I can't emphasize enough that we lived in absolute terror of being found out. It would have been a terribly overwhelming experience." (Humphrey 1990: 127)

Though Hughes was spared the "terribly overwhelming experience" associated with being charged with homosexuality, most lesbians and some heterosexual women who find themselves under investigation for homosexuality usually also find themselves discharged from the military. Sometimes the conditions are honorable, dishonorable or could result in a prison term. DADT stipulates that homosexuality as a charge results in an administrative separation and not a criminal charge, as was not the case when Hughes served.

In the next account a white Army Major with twenty-plus years of service details the process of going from spending a great deal of effort pretending to be "straight" in the

early years of her military career to later describing how these fastidious habits of pretense died away over time.

2. *“Major Maureen”, U. S. Army*

“Major Maureen” tells the interviewer that one of her “less straight” appearing Army lesbian peers believes that her “femme-ness” granted her “straight privilege (Gershick 2005 61).” Maureen does not disagree with this; however, she still puts up a heterosexual front. At the time of interview, she lived with her partner and they were preparing to have a baby together. But earlier in her career, being perceived as heterosexual was very important to her. With time, this became less true as the following shows.

“People at work know I have a roommate, and they know we’re looking at buying a house together, but I think they just want to assume what they want...You know, I try to be careful, but I’m kind of getting tired of hiding my life. So I am less and less. I’m just pretty apathetic about it now. I’m like, “Whatever. Believe whatever you want.” I used to really care. Now I don’t care that much.” (Gershick 2005: 60)

3. *Interviewee #4*

In this line of questioning, the participant explains how she responds when her male comrades make sexually charged comments about women in their immediate work environment who are considered attractive by most of the men present. Though she admits to not engaging openly in the dialogue with “the guys”, she also indicates that many times she finds herself agreeing with their assessments.

Participant (Army, Captain): Yeah. But at the same time, I fit in because I never took offense to it. Because I was like, oftentimes I was thinking the same...like would I ever tell them that? I wouldn’t. Discussing the professionalism of men, well, if they were talking about females, I was probably looking at the same thing they were looking at and appreciated what I saw. You know what I mean? So, I never really like thought about it. And when it comes to like levels of competence, am I feminine enough or masculine enough, I never had any issues

and no one's ever...I've never ever dealt with adversity of any type because I was a female. I would have to admit.

As indicated in the previous excerpt, lesbians in the military may be simultaneously privileged and disadvantaged depending upon age, military experience, and rank when dealing with their male counterparts, especially those who are most resistant to their being in the military.

IV. Create Hetero Decoys: Boyfriends, Fiancées and Husbands of Lesbians and

Passing

“...I...married an old “Navy salt,” who basically said that he could change me if we married...To this day he wears a scar on the side of his face that tells him what he shouldn't ought have said...Once I was in the service, I was being held for “lesbian activities,” and he showed up to get me out. He literally blew up at them. The personnel that were holding me for the investigation let me go. One of them said, “If this woman is married to this kind of man, there's no way she's a lesbian!” (Humphrey 1990: 37)

1. CT3 Barbara Owens, US Navy, 1952-1953 (Gershick 2005: 75-76)

Barbara Owens was stationed at the Naval Security Station when an investigation of homosexuality amongst Army women was announced in a local paper in Washington, D. C. The headline was to the effect of “Bevy of Lesbians Found in WACs Barracks.” Upon reading this news, Owens began work on her escape from the Navy before she found herself on the wrong end of a dishonorable discharge:

“I saw the handwriting on the wall. It was only a matter of time. I figured the only thing I could do is get out, if I wanted an honorable discharge, so I asked this nice guy in my office if he would marry me. I wouldn't have thought of marrying him under false reasons. I told him the truth, and he said, “Sure.” So we did and I got out.

Everybody else waited and got kicked out. I don't know whether they thought, *Everything'll be all right or They'll never come to me, or what*. A couple of them got married, too, but it was too late in the investigation. I did it so soon that they hadn't started to clamp down on our side of the street (original emphasis).” (Gershick 2005: 76)

2. Lance Corporal “Rhonnie”, U.S. Marine Corps (Gershick: 46-47)

Prior to joining the Marines, LCPL “Rhonnie” was out of the closet. When she decided to take the military route, she realized that she was essentially preparing to live a closeted life. This fact was difficult to deal with because “Rhonnie” had never lived a closeted life before military service. She says of her new transition into the closet that it was difficult, but military service was a means to an end: she wanted to leave the conditions of her home town. Back home “Rhonnie” fought and won a battle with crack cocaine addiction. The Marine Corps was a place to put her life back together. The following is how “Rhonnie” characterizes going into the closet:

“People ask me to come over to their house, and it would be cool if I could bring my friends, but they all look like dykes...I wish I could bring my significant other to gatherings like the Marine Corps Ball because I just don’t think it is fair. She doesn’t understand how strict the rules are and how tripped out I get when I take her on base. It’s not that I don’t want to take her. I just don’t want anyone to question me. And she doesn’t understand why I can’t say “I love you, too” on the phone at work. There’s a lot of things she doesn’t understand... You always have to put up a front. Have a fake boyfriend or something. You know? It’s hard.” (Gershick 2005: 46-47)

For lesbians in the military, decoy male significant others play an integral role in constructing a heterosexual front. Even invisible males bring sexual respectability to lesbians. The researcher asked the following:

Gershick: When men ask you out, if they do, do you have a fake boyfriend?

R: “Oh, yeah. His name is Michael...My imaginary boyfriend, I say, “Oh, I can’t do that. I have a boyfriend. He’ll be mad. I can’t go out with you tonight.” (Gershick 2005: 47)

Gershick: And do they believe that?

R: “Oh, yeah! A lot of them do because, I don’t know – I think that I am a pretty girl, and there’s maybe only five females that live in the barracks, and the rest is males. So you get harassed constantly. It’s really no good at all. You have to, like, say something. Otherwise, they’ll be like, “Oh, you dyke! You know? (Gershick 2005: 47)

Being “harassed constantly” when there are so few women in ones unit as indicated in the LCPL’s account illuminates two situations unique in a militarized institution of

heterosexuality. First, we are aware of the way single women are stigmatized for being single. Second, we learn how military lesbians are “asked” in ways that are consistent with heteronormative culture to “tell” military men that they are heterosexual. Though never asked “Are you a lesbian?” being asked “Do you have a boyfriend?” is simply a less direct way of asking the more pointed question as indicated by LCPL “Rhonnie”.

V. Comply with Militarized Heterosexual Containment Politics: Heterosexual Harassment, Accepting Unwanted Heterosexual Advances, Electing to not Report Rape and Passing.

“The way women can prove themselves to be nonlesbians is to have sex with men. Thus antigay regulations have encouraged sexual harassment of women. Those who will not acquiesce to a colleague’s advances are routinely accused of being lesbian and are subject to discharge. Some women have allowed themselves to be raped by a male officer, afraid that the alternative would be a charge of lesbianism (Shilts 1993: 5).”

“The association between sexual harassment and lesbians accusations continued to create a disproportionate rate of gay discharges for military women. In 1987 and 1988, for example, women comprised 10 percent of the armed forces, but accounted for 26 percent of gay discharges. The trend was most pronounced in the services most resistant to women, the Navy and the Marine Corps. While white females made up 3.1 percent of the Marine Corps in 1989, they accounted for 31 percent of gay discharges, a rate ten times higher than for men.” (Shilts 1993: 595)

1. Donna S., Army National Guard, 1981-1991.

This servicemember entered Army ROTC in her freshman year of college at the age of eighteen (Gershick 2005: 240). She did not come out to herself or others until she was thirty. Her sexual orientation was not an issue she felt troubled over. She did not find men attractive but assumed this would change when she met the right man. In the span of her career, how she was professionally conditioned to think about rape could be classified as counterintuitive. The soldier recounts one of her recollections of a briefing on sexual and physical safety that was given to all of the newly commissioned women officers in Basic Officer Training course, located at Ft. Knox, KY in 1982:

“And when we went to basic training we had what I called the “rape talk.” They would gather the women officers who were in charge of us and the male NCO would tell us, “You’re in Fort Knox, Kentucky. There’s not a lot of women here, and those men come

out of the field, and they haven't seen a woman in weeks, so they can't handle themselves. So you should not travel in groups smaller than five people, and do not wear shorts. Don't wear tight clothing. Because if you get raped, we're sending you home." (Gershick 2005: 251)

This excerpt highlights that in many social and professional, private and public, secular and sacred settings: rape, though impossible for a woman to commit against herself, is often times constructed as a woman's personal fault. Donna S. expounds upon this counterintuitive interpretation of sexual violence and its ubiquitous nature:

"That's how it was for me most of the time. And because of my experience in basic training, it was my worst fear. I always thought, Oh, if I get raped, I'm going to lose my career or get kicked out." (Gershick 2005: 253)

Women in the military (and anywhere else in American society) are socialized to personally bear the responsibility of rape.

2. Lt. Bonnie Clark, U.S. Navy

Lt. Clark attended a party in the late 80's where a senior officer in her command insisted that she drink more alcohol than she was able to imbibe comfortably. The following explains the outcome of the event:

"After the party, he insisted that Clark was too drunk to drive, and offered to take her to his nearby home, make her some coffee, and help sober her up. Once there he became amorous, and although Clark protested verbally she was afraid to resist. She tried to think what a straight woman would do in her place. She had seen what happened to other women when they fell under investigation; she did not want it to happen to her. The man raped her, but Clark did not file charges. She knew being drunk would damage her credibility in a rape trial and was afraid the Navy would end up investigating her for homosexuality." (Shilts 1993: 559).

This account shows that it remains counterintuitive yet common for lesbians in the military to "hide" their homosexuality by enduring heterosexual harassment, unwanted heterosexual advances and traditional heterosexual rape. These "hiding" tactics are also strategies employed to pass as heterosexual. Though many of the interviewees have similar experiences with sexual harassment, unwanted sexual advances and are always on alert for the potential of rape, military leadership has imagined that heterosexual

misbehavior is likely less egregious than what is imagined to be the consequences of so-called “lesbian harassment” of heterosexual women.

“We must recognize that women who are targets for female homosexuals experience a unique form of sexual harassment which can be even more devastating and difficult to cope with than the more traditional harassment from men... Women must be assured they do not have to exist in a predator-type environment.” (Shilts 1993:720)

3. PFC Angel Ramirez, U. S. Army, 1994-97

Private Ramirez, self-described as “boyish” in appearance, had many military men hit on her during her tour. The effort put forth by the men was more often annoying than dangerous until the time when a drill sergeant in her company and another who was not in her company each tried to “convince” her to have sex with them. The following details the events.

“One drill sergeant, the senior drill sergeant in my company, he propositioned me. And then I had a drill sergeant that was not even in my company try it. This is when I was in Fort Gordon, Georgia. He was on the other side of post, and I just happened to be walking around, leisurely walking around, and he decided to approach me. He was very insistent. I managed to get away.” (Gershick 2005: 82)

Though no one asked her “point blank” if she was gay and other than her closest friends, no one in the military knew, Ramirez identifies other sources of contention in her military tour. People who she describes as “homophobes” and “rednecks” who would routinely engage Ramirez in unpleasant one-way conversations about their suspicions of her probable homosexuality:

“I was asked by people that I felt were homophobes, what I would call rednecks, who I felt intimidated by because they are the ones you read about gay bashing someone. And I would just ignore them.”

However, just ignoring “homophobes”, as Private Ramirez names those who interrogate her rigorously and whose interrogations cause her considerable trepidation works sometimes, but not most. In the event that she would find herself under relentless

questioning about her sexuality she would elect to employ a different strategy. She would often times tell persistent inquisitors the following:

“Listen, don’t be asking me no personal questions because you are not my friend.” They asked me, “Do you have a boyfriend? I’ve never seen you with any guy. Do you *like* guys? And I would just tell them, “Off duty, it’s none of your fucking business what I do (original emphasis).” (Gershick 2005: 85)

Lesbians in the military are peculiar women. Their lives are often not organized around men and their social, emotional, and sexual attention and energy are less likely to be directed towards men. However, dominant heteronormative cultural norms outside of as well as inside of military culture require lesbians in the military to at least *pretend* to organize their social, emotional, and sexual attention and energy towards men.

Militarized conditions of the institution of heterosexuality within military culture coupled with compulsory heterosexuality as a social prescription for women constitutes an environment where all the women are possibly homosexual; therefore all women must always prove their commitment to heterosexual norms. In short, lesbians and women in the military share the stigma of gender and through this shared stigma they also share routine experiences of ritualized gender and sexual discipline. The following section reports and describes the findings.

SECTION 5: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

As discussed in the methods section, data for this project came from interview accounts of military lesbians found in the two sources previously discussed in the methods section, three text and five face-to-face interviews. The sample size for this project was $N = 73$. Of this sample, many of the lesbians who served in the military did not manage to pass as heterosexual ($n=34$). Fewer lesbians did pass as heterosexual ($n=20$). Also, there were lesbians who were discharged but not for reasons related to homosexuality ($n=19$). In the following tables and text, the overall characteristics of the total sample are discussed in greater details.

Table 4 indicates that of those stories referenced, thirty-four military lesbians were discharged for homosexuality, twenty managed to serve without being discharged for homosexuality, and nineteen lesbians separated from the military under other circumstances.

Table 4: Total of Lesbian Participants and Disposition of Discharges

Total Discharged for Homosexuality	34
Total Not Discharged for Homosexuality	20
Total Exiting the Service under Alternate Circumstances	19
Grand Total	73

Failure to Pass

Table 5 indicates the lesbians who “failed to pass” as heterosexual from the sample. Of the thirty four military lesbians (Gershick 2005; Humphrey 1990; Shilts 1993) who were discharged for homosexuality in this sample, 31 were discharged before DADT was implemented into law and two were discharged afterwards. In the pre-DADT

discharge group, one lesbian service member⁴⁶ served time in military prison at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, after having been found guilty of homosexuality in courts marital proceedings (Shilts 1993). In the post-DADT discharge group, one lesbian service member⁴⁷ chose to “come out to her commander⁴⁸,” thus, elected to force the military discharge, rather than chose to continue to serve under the militarized conditions of the institution of heterosexuality which forces military lesbians to pretend to be women who organize their lives around men and children (Gerschick 2005). This illustrates the wide range of punishment that military lesbians have been subjected to historically. We see that at one time in military history, being convicted as a lesbian could net one time in prison; thirty years later, one has the freedom to “out” themselves with the guarantee that there will be no repercussions, certainly not jail time, and, unless disciplinary actions are pending for other incidents, one should even anticipate an honorable discharge.

Table 5: Lesbians Discharged Before and After DADT

Discharged Pre-DADT	32
Discharged Post DADT	2
Total Discharged for Homosexuality	34

Most lesbians in this sample did not manage to pass as heterosexual (n=34) but some did pass as heterosexual (n=20). Of those lesbians who were discharged but not for reasons related to homosexuality there were 19. In the following tables, the specificities

⁴⁶ Lance Corporal Barbara Baum was sentenced to prison after a courts marital where she was offered freedom if she named senior ranking Marines suspected as lesbians (Shilts 1993: 611-612)

⁴⁷ After graduating from the Air Force Academy and being “three years into a five year commitment to serve, Shalanda Baker came out to her commander after deciding that “the emotional price of hiding had become too high. Upon being formally discharged from the Air Force, Baker was handed a bill for 48,000 dollars, the estimated remaining costs of her education at the service academy, which would have been fulfilled had she not come out, finished her time and continued to pay the emotional penalty of the federal “closet” (Gerschick 2005: 189; Seidman, Meeks and Traschen 2003).

⁴⁸ Under DADT conditions, service members who state that they are gay or lesbians, or who are caught “in the act”, or who attempt to, or actually do marry someone of the same biological gender, are likely to face discharge for homosexuality. Statement-Act-Marriage is an abbreviation of terms succinctly describing these sexually disqualifying acts which result in homosexual discharges and is sometimes referred to in shorthand as “S.A.M” by service members.

of the lesbians who did manage to pass and those who were discharged, but not for reasons related to homosexuality, are discussed in greater details.

Successful Passing

Table 6 illustrates the number of lesbians from this sample who exited the military honorably and for reasons which did not involve charges of homosexuality. Since they were not discharged for homosexuality, and for the purposes of this project, these military lesbians are said to have managed to “pass” successfully also, but, this group remains distinct from the others which were either discharged for homosexuality or not. However, even though military lesbians in this group and the previous group discussed were not discharged for homosexuality, many lesbians in the failed, successful, or otherwise discharged groups were investigated for homosexuality⁴⁹ and some were investigated multiple times over the span of their military careers (Gershick 2005; Humphrey 1990; Shilts 1993). Therefore not being discharged for homosexuality, though a measure for passing does not exclude whether or not one was investigated for homosexuality.

Table 6: Lesbians Completing Tours Honorably Before and After DADT

Pre-DADT	19
Post DADT	1
Total Not Discharged for Homosexuality	20

Table 7 clarifies how the nineteen participants who passed successfully exited the service and indicates the various conditions of discharge which ranged in character from honorable to dishonorable discharges – but not for reasons related to homosexuality. Of

⁴⁹ In these accounts, many lesbians were caught up in “witch hunts” and most witch hunts originated with women’s sports teams. This trend showed up in most accounts, hence it’s prominence as an organizing theme (Gershick 2005; Humphrey 1990; Shilts 1993). Other lesbians suggested that being stationed in remote areas increased the chances that one could find themselves under investigation for homosexuality (Gershick 2005; Humphrey 1990; Shilts 1993). And, other lesbians felt that serving in major metropolitan areas such as the tri-state area of DC/MD/VA decreased the odds of being investigated (Gershick 2005; Humphrey 1990; Shilts 1993). In short, where military lesbians are physically located and if they play sports could factor heavily into whether or not passing will be “easy” or “difficult”.

this group, four lesbians retired with twenty or more years in service. Two resigned their commissions as officers. One was medically retired. Two were demoted for their willingness to testify at general courts martial on behalf of fellow Marines accused of lesbianism, one died on active duty as an investigation of her homosexuality was underway (Shilts 1993:278) and nine accounts did not provide a clear indication of how the lesbian service member exited the service (Gershick 2005; Humphrey 1990; Shilts 1993).

Table 7: Lesbians Exiting the Service under Alternate Circumstances

Retired	4
Resigned Commission	2
Medical Retirement	1
Demoted	2
Died	1
Unknown	9
Total Exiting the Service under Alternate Circumstances	19

Though simplistic in design, measuring successful or failed passing in relationship to being discharged for homosexuality or not allows us to quickly arrive to the central concern of this project, which is to determine whether or not lesbians in the military pass as heterosexual and ascertain to what extent gender stigma leads to suspicions of sexual stigma.

Interpreting the Findings

The following sub-section discusses the findings related to dominant passing strategies. The discussion is broken out by lesbian gender. The units of measures are ML/LL/UL and are described as follows: *more likely* (ML), *less likely* (LL) and *unlikely* (UL) to be employed according to both strategy and lesbian gender. To be specific, the “strategy” as identified in this project, is the ongoing plan to pass as heterosexual in any given context and in order to be successful at passing specific “tactics” are employed in

various combinations both complimentary to passing and/or contradictory to passing such as wearing wedding rings (though single) or playing sport, or dating men in ones unit (though in a long term relationship with another lesbian in the same unit, for example.) So, even though the terms “strategy” and “tactic” bear close resemblance, I use them distinctively in the tables reporting the findings. In the following sub-section, the strategies and tactics are discussed and analyzed with the conceptualizations of compulsory heterosexuality, stigma, and the militarized institution of heterosexuality in mind.

Dominant Passing Strategies and Tactics (Broken out by a simplified conceptualization of Lesbian Gender - Femme/Butch)

The research questions asked: Do lesbians in the military pass as heterosexual and are femmes or butches more likely to succeed? The answer is yes and no. Some lesbians pass as heterosexual, some don't. Some femmes fare better than butches, some don't. Many different factors play into a lesbian's ability to pass as heterosexual. Most importantly, lesbians have to see a need for trying to pass (if they are personally aware that they may be “too obvious” for example). And, if they feel stigmatized and care about how others may read their gender performance, lesbians also have to *want* to try to pass as heterosexual. Without feeling as if there is a need to try to pass, there will likely be no real *desire* to try to pass. Without the desire to try to pass one may increase their odds of being investigated as lesbian.

The research findings were derived from the multiple field notes constituted from 2007 through 2009. Over four legal note pads worth of research notes, approximately 400 pages of transcribed interviews, plus approximately 100 note cards with preliminary charts and early codes were used to record the incidents described by military lesbians

about their military experiences that most compelled them to want to try to pass as heterosexual, or not. Most of the accounts came from texts exploring the national, social, institutional, and interpersonal injustices experienced by LGBT service members, so a large majority of the accounts shared by lesbians in the military reflect the consequences of layered injustices such as gender inequality in military culture, society, and interpersonally with male subordinates, peers and colleagues.

Since many lesbians experienced many different circumstances where needing to be perceived as heterosexual could make a difference in getting promoted or being discharged for homosexuality, the measures of more likely, less likely, and unlikely evolved from layering the most popular tactics employed in response to the most common strategies. For example, many lesbians in these accounts who played sports avidly employed many different tactics to avoid being caught up in a witch hunt. In this way it is clear that no lesbian employed one or two tactics to pass (wear lipstick, date men, etc.) but rather most lesbians in the accounts employed a medley of tactics over time and in response to multiple strategies and scenarios, on a case-by-case basis.

Therefore, the measurements, though not perfect, are as precise as possible given the methodological choice to layer multiple instances of one or two (three or six) different tactics employed by many lesbians, who identify as either femme/androgynous/butch or think of their presentation of self in terms such as “soccer mom”, “sorority prep”, or “the girl next door” at different times in military history.

Strategy #1: Mask Female Masculinity and Avoid those who Present Expressions of “Butch” Lesbian Gender

Lesbians more compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity were more likely to employ the three most prominent tactics emerging in response to the strategy of

masking female masculinity or avoiding those who expressed prominent “butch-ness”, as indicated in Table 8. More feminine lesbians were more likely to identify their femme presentation of self as “cover”. One lesbian described herself as “sorority-preppy” (Gerschick 2005: 174) and another described her presentation of self as “soccer mom” (Gerschick 2005: 68-70). These identities are interesting for a few reasons.

Neither “sorority preppy” nor “soccer mom” images, for example, evoke conjecture that one may be “lesbian”. On the other hand, lesbians who were less compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity reported that their masculine appearance, more than any other aspect, caused others to raise questions about their sexual orientation. In Table 8, we see that masculine lesbians, in comparison to feminine lesbians, were *unlikely* (UL) to employ any of the tactics and feminine lesbians were *more likely* (ML) to affect more compliant gender presentations also stated that they preferred more feminine clothing, adornments, and behaviorisms. This finding highlights that lesbians more compliant to appearance norms were able to fly under “gaydar” and pass as heterosexual more easily than lesbians who elected to not follow the tactics that aid one in flying under gaydar. Lesbians unlikely to affect more compliant gender presentations stated that they felt “uncomfortable in more feminine attire” and would rather “be comfortable” with their more masculine self than uncomfortable attempting to be more feminine only because of the social expectation from others.

Despite being routinely harassed about appearing too masculine for reasons such as wearing a very short haircut, not wearing make-up and routinely electing to eschew the specifically feminine elements of military uniforms, butch lesbians in the military are apparently *unlikely* to alter their masculine presentation of self and are therefore more likely to reduce their chances of “passing”. On the other hand, femme lesbians, by

constructing appearances that most emulate the standards and norms of the institution of heterosexuality are able to adapt and increase their chances of “passing” under the militarized conditions of the institution of heterosexuality. In short, though stigmatized as “women” lesbians who adhere to heteronormative expressions of femininity are *more likely* to comply to military men’s gender expectations; lesbians who do not adhere to what men expect of their presentation of self risk heavy criticism at the least and possible investigation for homosexuality and discharge for homosexuality at worse. Butch lesbians decrease opportunity to pass as heterosexual by being *less likely* (LL) to employ any of these passing tactics.

Table 8: Strategy: Mask Female Masculinity and Avoid those who Present Expressions of “Butch” Lesbian Gender

Most Frequently Employed Passing Tactic	Lesbians <i>more</i> compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Femme”	Lesbians <i>less</i> compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Butch”
Wear Long Hair	ML	LL
Wear Makeup in BDUs	ML	LL
Wear Skirt of Dress Uniform	ML	UL
ML/UL/LL	ML	LL

Strategy #2: Avoid Performing Transgressive Feminine Gender Behaviors

In Table 9, we see how lesbians who are femme and lesbians who are butch differently negotiate the stigma associated with female athleticism. Of note, it is quite a contradiction to expect military women to limit athleticism despite being encouraged to take the physical demands placed upon people in the military. Without being direct, it

seems that women in the military are encouraged to not grow physically stronger than necessary for general fitness.

In the cases where lesbians played on organized sports teams such as basketball, softball or soccer, those who played most avidly report “recruiting” heterosexual women to play on sports teams (Shilts 1993) so that when, *not if*, a witch hunt gets underway, enough heterosexual women will be present to cover the lesbians from being overly scrutinized. Therefore, despite this long standing threat to lesbians in the military who also thrive as athletes, both type of lesbians, those who are more feminine and those who are less feminine, and despite the long standing threat of witch hunts linked to sports, manage to thrive athletically, for the most part. However, in this strategy, lesbians more compliant to gender norms increase their odds of passing while lesbians less conforming decrease their chances of passing as heterosexual. In this strategy, femmes were *less likely* (LL) to avoid additional physical training or participation on sports teams, and butches were *unlikely* (UL) to avoid additional physical conditioning or participation on military sponsored sports teams. Butch lesbians decrease opportunity to pass as heterosexual by being *unlikely* (UL) to employ any of these passing tactics.

Table 9: Strategy: Avoid Performing Transgressive Feminine Gender Behaviors

Most Frequently Employed Passing Tactic	Lesbians <i>more</i> compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Femme”	Lesbians <i>less</i> compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Butch”
Avoid Extra Workouts	LL	UL
Avoid Playing Sports – Historic Site for Witch Hunts	LL	UL
Play Sports like a Lady	LL	UL
ML/UL/LL	LL	UL

Strategy #3: Avoid Behaviors deemed Non-Feminine

These tactics indicate that there is tighter range of gender containment politics played out in the military context for men and women. On one hand, women in the military are expected to maintain mythical standards of femininity. On the other hand, since they are in the military, they are also expected to be “tough” enough to do their military job well, thus they have to embody some elements of masculinity⁵⁰. However, rarely is it noted that there are limits to women’s access to *other* elements of masculinity. For example, women are allowed *just* enough access to masculine expressions to be deemed occupationally competent. In other words, women in the military are encouraged to gain a bit of toughness but not to “overdo it”.

In this militarized heteronormative culture, “inappropriately” competitive women are assumed to have homosexual orientations. Table 10 shows how tactics of “balancing” gender are negotiated by lesbian gender. Again, we see that femme lesbians increase their chances of passing as heterosexual as they are *less likely* (LL), but not *unlikely* (UL), as are butch lesbians, to avoid arguing with, challenging or completely declining any unwanted sexual advances from military men. Again, we find that butch lesbians decrease opportunity to pass as heterosexual by being *unlikely* (UL) to employ any of these passing tactics.

⁵⁰ Each of these points is more thoroughly discussed in the Introduction.

Table 10: Avoiding Transgressive Feminine Social Behaviors: Balancing Feminine and Masculine Norms

Key Tactics of Strategy #3	Lesbians <i>more</i> compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Femme”	Lesbians <i>less</i> compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Butch”
Avoid arguing with men	LL	UL
Avoid challenging men	LL	UL
Avoid <i>completely</i> declining sexual advances from men – best to let them think there’s a chance	ML	UL
ML/UL/LL	LL	UL

Strategy #4: Create Hetero Decoys: Boyfriends, Fiancées and Husbands of Military Lesbians.

Findings indicate that each group of lesbians is more likely to engage in tactics that link them to an intimate male partner, real or imaginary. Just as there is stigma associated with being a woman in the military, there is stigma associated with being a single woman anywhere. Finding men who are willing to date lesbians on honest terms, i.e., men who know they stand as an important part of her dramaturgical performance and nothing more, may sometimes prove challenging. In the accounts used to compile the data, the lesbians who married men for cover usually disclosed their identities as lesbians beforehand.

Table 11 illustrates that military lesbians, across the board and regardless of lesbian gender, were *more likely* (ML) to employ the tactics involved in presenting a real or made up heterosexual social life. Both femmes and butches were more likely to create and share stories about an imaginary male partner; wear wedding rings or display pictures of male relatives; or marry a man. Above all else, this shows that the militarized institution of heterosexuality requires military women to have public images (be they

based upon real or imaginary partners) reflecting private intimate relationships with men. As indicated in the excerpts from section 4, many lesbians elect to find assistance from men in their attempt to pass as heterosexual. These are the only tactics Butch lesbians are *more likely* (ML) to use in order to increase opportunity to pass as heterosexual. Femmes are also *more likely* (ML) to employ these tactics as well.

Table 11: Create Hetero Decoys: Boyfriends, Fiancées and Husbands of Military Lesbians

Key Tactics of Strategy #4	Lesbians <i>more compliant</i> to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Femme”	Lesbians <i>less compliant</i> to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Butch”
Create and share stories about an imaginary male partner	ML	ML
Wear wedding ring; display pictures of man on desk	ML	ML
Marry a man	ML	ML
ML/UL/LL	ML	ML

Strategy #5: Comply with Militarized Version of Heterosexual Containment Politics.

In Table 12 we see more clearly how sexualized gendered punishment shapes how femme and butch lesbians negotiate military men and their militarized version of masculinity. Though femmes are more *likely* (ML) to defer to men, accept sexual advances and if harassed, assaulted or raped, likely to not make a formal report, butches are only *less likely* (LL) to employ these tactics, but not *unlikely*. Therefore, butch lesbians increase opportunity to pass as heterosexual by complying with or not complaining about sexualized gender punishment from military men towards military women.

Inside of the institution of heterosexuality, women are expected to be enthralled to men’s sexual impulses. Rich (1980[1982]) tells us that young girls are socialized to

understand their sexuality in relationship to the sexuality of males, and that inside of the institution of heterosexuality girls and women should anticipate the sexual impulses of boys and men and accommodate. Rich says that socialization of females to understand sexuality primarily includes teaching females that males have sexual urges that are supposed to be geared toward females and females are supposed to be accommodating to these urges. Inside the institution of heterosexuality men are socialized to understand women as the people socialized to accept their sexual advances, accommodate their sexual needs, assist them in their reproductive goals, and assume the primary role as caretakers of resulting children.

Table 12: Comply with Militarized Version of Heterosexual Containment Politics

Key Tactics of Strategy #5	Lesbians <i>more</i> compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Femme”	Lesbians <i>less</i> compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity or “Butch”
Engage in Gender Deference Rituals with Men	ML	LL
Accept Sexual Advances (Date and/or have Sex with Military Men) for “Cover”	ML	LL
If harassed, assaulted, or raped, elects to not report the incidence for fear of retribution	ML	LL – ML
ML/UL/LL	ML	LL

Recap of Findings

Lesbians more compliant to heteronormative expressions of femininity were more likely than lesbians less likely to comply with heteronormative expressions of femininity to employ passing tactics. In regards to physical appearance, femme lesbians were more likely to pass as heterosexual than were butches and femmes were also more likely to avoid additional physical conditioning. Butches were more likely to be open to being

confrontational as well as competitive towards men and thereby decreased their opportunity to pass as heterosexual when electing to do such. Butches were less likely to comply with heteronormative containment politics (Collins 2005), thereby, decreasing their opportunity to pass as heterosexual. However, both femmes and butches were more likely to create real or imaginary relationships with men. Therefore, over all findings suggests that regardless of how butch a woman looks, whether or not she is highly athletic, whether or not she goes out of her way to avoid confrontation with men, or whether or not she complies with heteronormative containments politics, what seemingly matters most for a lesbian to pass as heterosexual is whether or not she has a real or imaginary romantic man in her life to talk about, show pictures of or show off the ring he bought, to interested others.

Lesbians in the military have to structure strategies that begin with unequal gender roles and potentially end with undesired sexual relationships with military men. The tactics commonly employed in this strategy finds that both femme and butch lesbians are each more likely to respond in favor of gender deference rituals, sexual harassment and possibly violence, as the consequence of not doing such may be costly. Costly in that by failing to comply to some extent one may instigate an investigation for homosexuality, and if found guilty, one may be discharged from the military.

The methods employed here are novel. The effort was driven by a desire to theoretically ascertain to what extent gender stigma results in sexual stigma. Others studying the relationships shared between gender and sexuality in military and civilian culture are encouraged to continue to forge new ground along these paths or, enhance this path by correcting the mistakes made here, all with the aim of furthering and

strengthening our knowledge base of how gender and sexuality operate differently in military culture versus civilian culture, and vice versa.

**SECTION 6:
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Adrienne Rich describes the institution of heterosexuality as a place where women are expected to be heterosexual. If, on the other hand, they are lesbians, Rich (1980[1982]) tells us that they must be *invisible*. In other words, lesbians cannot actually exist inside of the institution of heterosexuality; however, since they are there, they must remain invisible. Rich advances a provocative idea when suggesting that this *invisibility* of the lesbian woman is common, so much so that lesbians are written out of popular culture as well as feminist scholarship. Rich (1980[1982]) goes on to suggest that progressive feminists whose work fails to consider the institutionalization of heterosexuality in women's lives and the role compulsory heterosexuality plays in the lives of women and lesbians also fail to consider the politicization of sexuality broadly speaking. As women and homosexuals, lesbians in the military are at the cross hairs of politicized sexuality and by illuminating their experiences we see more clearly how military culture "militarizes" the institution of heterosexuality thus, rendering lesbians in the military "invisible" as women and "hyper visible" as homosexuals. Therefore, it is clear how the institution of heterosexuality renders lesbians invisible. It is also clear how inside of military culture where there exists a militarized version of the institution of heterosexuality, all women, regardless of actual sexual orientation may possibly be hyper visible as lesbians primarily because they are not men.

The institution of heterosexuality as described by Rich (1980[1982]) was conceptualized largely from the perspective of everyday life of men and women and lesbians living, working as civilians in jobs ranging from secretary to CEO to professor. For the development of the ideas in this project, I suggest that the institution of

heterosexuality as conceptualized within military culture represents a *militarized* institution of heterosexuality (MIH). Furthermore, I suggest that in the military the institution of heterosexuality is “apart from” rather than “a part of” the same system of power as discussed in Rich’s (1980[1982]) conceptualization. And, the difference that this represents for military lesbians is that by virtue of un-coverable gender stigma as women, lesbians in the military are almost always *visible* as lesbians and more so than heterosexual women. Therefore lesbians must be particularly mindful of and deliberate about presenting passing strategies that enable them to pass as heterosexual. Military lesbians could once have spent time in military prison for being guilty of homosexuality, and presently could lose their military job if visible as lesbians inside of the militarized institution of heterosexuality. For military lesbians, the militarized institution of heterosexuality represents the most meaningful challenge to their ongoing strategies to pass as heterosexual.

As previously stated and argued further here, two aspects of military culture are and likely will always be distinct and “apart from” civilian culture and that is the gender and sexual culture of the military. The military has Congressional approval to limit the roles of women in the military and to de-legitimize the service of openly gay men and lesbians in the armed forces. These Congressional acts separate growing social acceptance of ideas supporting gender equality and growing social acceptance of people with different sexual orientations from military culture, creating an institution where gender identity, gender behaviorisms, and sexual presentations of self must comply with social constructions of heteronormativity to some meaningful extent. As such the military, unlike any other institution or occupation in America, defines gender norms and sets the national standard for heterosexuality. Women in the military, under these

conditions, are more likely to be suspected as lesbians by virtue of participating in an institution where compliance to gender norms clearly illuminates compliance to sexual norms – and in the military, women are clearly out of heteronormative cultural compliance with both sets of norms.

Here, the militarized institution of heterosexuality is argued to be “apart from” the institution of heterosexuality as conceptualized by Rich (1980[1982]). Lesbians passing as heterosexual in the military do so under militarized conditions and failing to pass could result in a discharged from the military primarily for *not* presenting images of self that indicate one organizes their lives around and investing their multiple energies and resources in men and children. The lives of women and lesbians in the military, wives daughters of service members, civilian women working near and around military bases, and women working in the sex industry near military installations need to be theorized more broadly than usual. Such a change will likely enhance the complexity of what we wish to know more about gender and sexuality in the military.

We know that women have served in the military officially since 1901 (Manning 2005). We also know that women have served in many militaries of other countries to varying degrees of integration⁵¹ and that a number of factors play into what role, if any, women will be allowed to play in a nations armed forces⁵². We also know that women’s experiences in the military are shaped by gender norms that permeate societal, institutional, and interpersonal levels (Segal and Bourg 2001).

⁵¹ For example, women serve in the Israeli Defense Force and are technically allowed to participate in combat; however, few do. Similarly, in the German armed forces, women have access to 100 percent of the occupational specialties due to a ruling by the European Union in 2005. The ruling found the German armed forces regulations that limited women to positions in the armed forces band to be a violation of women’s human rights.

⁵² For more see Segal (1995). A discussion of this theoretical exploration is presented earlier in the Introduction.

What we do not know is how many lesbians have served in the past or serve presently. We do not know how lesbians serving in other militaries where homosexuality is not banned fare relative to their gay male counterparts of the same forces or how they presently fare compared to women in other forces. We also are unclear about what happened to the lesbians in the past who were forced out of the military when women were deemed no longer needed, such as after WWI and WWII. Where did lesbians from these eras find work in an American society that, at this period in time, had greater vocational limits upon what women could do for labor? Did they “blend” into society after leaving the military; did they find work; did they return to America if discharged overseas? Also, we are no clearer on what has happened to lesbians in the military since the advent of the All Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973. A more contemporary question linked to the occupational role military service has played in the lives of American women who have served could ask the following: Since 1973, has military service served as a vehicle for social mobility for lesbians and women who remained single relative to their civilian counterparts? Or - as an intersectional question could ask - do age, race, and rank affect how women and lesbians are treated by their male counterparts, and how do these differences affect which women or lesbians are singled out for gender or sexual harassment; which women and lesbians are more or least likely to experience gender policing by male peers; or which women and lesbians are more or least likely to experience sexual violence perpetuated by male peers?

From what we know about women in the military, we can deduce that as long as women have served in the military so have lesbians. However, in order to know more about how gender and sexuality operate in military culture, we must investigate how lesbians and women in the military experience the militarized institution of

heterosexuality in similar as well as very different ways, as done here. It is no small situation that there are legal limitations placed upon women in the military, and these limitations are coupled with militarized conceptualizations of gender where men in the military are equated to “real soldiers” and women in the military have been unofficially classified as either “whores” or “dykes” by their male counterparts. This historical problematic characterization of the women and lesbians serving in the military requires thinking about gender and sexuality in the military as “apart from” American sexual culture. Once the uniqueness of military sexual culture is thoroughly taken into account, what we know about women and lesbians in the military may very well change how we conceptualize research projects about gender and sexuality in military culture, thereby increasing the production of scholarship capable of contributing to a holistic approach aimed at increasing political as well as sexual social justice for both civilian American men and women, gays and lesbians, and their counterparts who have in the past and presently do serve in the American military.

**SECTION 7:
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