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Abstract. This article describes problems with United States Government (USG) personnel policies on lesbians and gays in the uniformed services and assesses whether there are significant redeeming features of these problems.

The USG has recently directed its armed services to engage in training of all personnel as to the meaning of personnel policies on lesbians and gays and how these policies should be effected. Yet these policies may be seriously compromised because they are predicated on a curious psychological firewall. One can fantasize about same-sex sex. One can freely associate--i.e., socialize--with lesbians and gay when off-duty. One have one or more roommates who are lesbians and gays. One can frequent so-called lesbian and gay bars with high, moderate, and low frequencies. All the above is not proscribed. However, one cannot engage in various combinations of oral, anal, manual, and vaginal intercourse with same-sex partners. To engage in the latter is to threaten good order and discipline of one's military organization. Threatening good order and discipline is a threat to the nation's security. And threatening the nation's security cannot be tolerated.

This curious firewall approach presents problems. First, other behaviors that threaten the nation's security are tolerated and even supported by the USG. For example, in affirmative action efforts to increase the numbers of women in the military as well as their professional opportunities, women with less upper body strength and some other aspects of physical conditioning are allowed into military units that might have to fight in wartime and in operations other than war. In fact, separate and lower physical standards are authorized for women so they can "pass" as "physically qualified" in an officially authorized and "open" variant of passing that lesbians and gays who attempt to pass as "straight" or as some African-Americans who still pass as "white" can only envision in their dreams. (Luckily, such dreams are not proscribed.) Wearing various uniforms and head gear that owe more to tradition than to protection from a real and present danger are but other examples of tolerating and supporting threats to the nation's security.

Second, other situations that have threatened good order and discipline have been supported by the USG. These include the racial, ethnic, and gender integration of the armed forces. One might argue that the "threat" from such stigmatized groups is somehow easier to manage given that the stigmatized--with very few exceptions--are easily identified. The same is not the case with lesbians and gays. If easy identification is the issue, the "don't ask, don't tell" policy should be subverted into an "ask and tell" policy. If the issue is the good order and discipline threat from being a sexual object, gender integration in close quarters should logically have rendered this issue moot. Through the years, other threats to good order and discipline that have been tolerated and supported by elements of the USG have included low pay, slow promotions, and--when convenient to federal, state, or local politicians--domestic anti-military bias.

Thus, threatening security through threatening good order and discipline seems to be tolerated and supported by the USG. Fitting in with this USG proclivity is the observation that proscribing elements of

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an individual's sexuality--without an otherwise valid rationale--also threatens security through threatening good order and discipline by rendering lesbians and gays less than all of themselves (unlike heterosexuals). The counter that the status of being lesbian or gay renders an individual susceptible to coercion--e.g., blackmail--can be countered by noting that the proscription adds to this susceptibility. The counter that--regardless of proscription--coercion is still an issue because at least some lesbians and gays are not completely "open" about their sexual behaviors and partners can be countered by noting that the same applies to often surprising aspects of heterosexual sexualities that are not proscribed or at least not pursued by USG security authorities.

Another significant problem in conceiving and effecting military personnel policies on lesbians and gays is that sexual orientation is usually not a static construct but a social construct that is dynamic and encapsulates myriad differences of thought, emotion, motive, and external behavior. The official conceptions of sexuality may not apply to the real sexual world.

With all these wrongs, can the "don't ask, don't tell" policy still be right? In so far as the formulation of public policy is an acting out of conscious and unconscious psychodynamic conflict--not necessarily about sexual matters--the policy makers can (indeed, must) assert in the affirmative. (See Can one not ask and not tell about "Don't Ask and Don't Tell"? (August 20, 1999). *IBPP*, 7(7); Eliason, M.J., & Morgan, K.S. (1998). Lesbians define themselves: Diversity in lesbian identification. *Journal of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identity*, 3, 47-63; Morris, J.F. (1997). Lesbian coming out as a multidimensional process. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 33, 1-22; Morris, J.F., Rothblum, E.D. (1999). Who fills out a 'lesbian' questionnaire? The interrelationship of sexual orientation, years "out," disclosure of sexual orientation, sexual experience with women, and participation in the lesbian community. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23, 537-557; *Sexual Policy and the Military: A Need for a Primer on the Birds and the Bees*. (December 17, 1999). *IBPP*, 7(22); Singh, D., et al. (1999). Lesbian erotic role identification: Behavioral, morphological, and hormonal correlates. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 76, 1035-1049.) (Keywords: Gay, Lesbian, Security, Sex.)