OUT OF THE CLOSET, ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD:

LIFE FOR GAY SERVICEMEN BEFORE AND AFTER

THE REPEAL OF DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

by

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Abstract

The U.S. military has struggled with the implementation of diversity efforts throughout history and a key factor supporting this failure is the lack of information collected from its minority groups. An extensive examination of women and gays in the military illustrated a continued disadvantageous environment for both minority groups, which was created by the military's sexual based discrimination. More specifically, the history of sexual orientation discrimination of gays in the military coupled with the lack of research available indicated a need for additional exploration in this field of study. Seminal research efforts provide little insight to the gay service members' perspective within the military. Additionally, current research is excessively narrow, focusing on military readiness, cohesion, and overall military effectiveness. In an effort to close the gap in literature, this qualitative study explored the perspectives of 11 gay men and their experiences as gay service members, before and after the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). The results of this phenomenological research indicated, as per social identity theory, participants struggled with being gay in the U.S. military. Based on the in-depth interviews, participants felt DADT was an unfair policy which silenced them as a minority group. The DADT policy created family issues and a hostile work environment where participants were subject to sexual orientation discrimination, leading to a sense of alienation, a reduction in job participation, and a decrease in overall job satisfaction. After the repeal, participants reported a slow and sometimes forced attempt at cultural change which resulted in continuing discrimination and ongoing family issues. Out of fear of military retaliation, only some of the participants chose to reveal their sexual orientation following the repeal. Some of the participants who chose to come out of the

closet reported continued harassment from their peers and leadership. These gay servicemen suffered from minority stress related to their experiences and expressed concerns regarding their future treatment in the U.S. military.

Dedication

This publication and study are first and foremost dedicated to the love of my life, Paul Opdahl. If not for you and your tremendous amount of love and support, I would not be where I am today. There are no words to describe how important you are to me. You are my best friend and other half. I don't know where I'd be without you, I just know I'm so much better with you. Thank you for being my everything.

I also dedicate this to my family and friends who have been supportive to me along this journey and throughout life. During this journey, I lost one of my biggest supporters in life, my father, Rick Spinks. My dad is a big part of where I am today. Throughout life he was always excited by my achievements but never surprised. He gave me the confidence to do whatever I set out to in life – I miss that. I miss him. So wherever you are dad, I did it – just wish you were here to smile, give me a hug and tell me, "I never doubted you for a second."

And finally, this study is dedicated to all those who experience inequality in their everyday lives. Never give up and always fight for a better tomorrow. Keep your head up; there are many that care and want to help you receive the fair treatment you deserve. I am one of those people. And there are many more willing to stand behind you in your struggles and beside you as friends. May this study be part of a better tomorrow, a world where all agree that every person should enjoy the same freedoms and equality they wish for themselves.

Acknowledgments

To my mentor, Dr. John Herr thanks for sticking with me during this journey. I appreciate all of your support and am grateful to have learned so much from such a wise and talented person. I feel blessed to have had such a wonderful mentor who took the time to invest in this study and invest in me. I would also like to thank Dr. Janet Salmons for assisting with this study. She provided a tremendous amount of expertise in online interviewing. Also thanks to Dr. Linda Dell'Osso for being a board member to this dissertation and giving me a quantitative outlook on things. I would additionally like to give thanks to all the professors, instructors, and fellow students who have helped along this journey. Finally, I want to thank all of the mentors I've had throughout life. I've learned a lot from you and deeply admire the work ethic, kindness, patience, and morals you have instilled in me. I would have never been able to climb to the top of this ladder if not for your help each step of the way. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual orientation discrimination has been said to be the last tolerable bias within today's modern workforce (Day & Greene, 2008). Within the U.S. military, the practice of sexual orientation discrimination is as old and deeply rooted as any other military tradition. Throughout history, there has been much opposition in allowing this minority group to enjoy equal rights within the military. Over time, sexual orientation policies have continued to evolve along with new social norms, most notably changing in 1993 with the implementation of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), which allowed gays to silently serve in the armed forces and again in 2011 when the ban on gays was all together lifted (Spitko, 2012). While some studies have been conducted addressing the possible change in organizational environment regarding the shift in sexual orientation policy, there is a considerable missing component: how gay men have and continue to experience the military. Hence, the goal of this study was to better understand the minority group of gay men in the military, more specifically, how gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment before and after the repeal of DADT.

Researcher's Personal Interest

Diversity and equality have and continue to be ongoing struggles for many minorities throughout the world. The fact that individuals have to fight to be treated as equals is bothersome. Equality has and will always be at the core of my belief system.

As a young child, it was upsetting to witness the struggles minorities faced in their everyday fight for justice. It was hard to understand how slavery was practiced in a country such as the United States, when this country itself was formed on freedom, liberty, and justice for all. It soon became a realization that these freedoms were not for everyone. Learning more about American history, it was disturbing that a core theme seemed to be the continued discrimination of minority groups. Treating others poorly and taking away their rights for characteristics such as gender and race, in my eyes was unacceptable.

After high school, I joined the U.S. Army. It was at this time I was introduced to sexual based discrimination first hand. During my service, sexual based discrimination and harassment were ongoing struggles many had to face. It was at times a very hard environment to work in. As a woman, working among many men, reported sexual discrimination was often a subject, which many took lightly. On one particular occasion, a junior enlisted soldier was observed talking loudly to a group of fellow soldiers. The soldier used many anti-women and anti-gay slurs before he escalated into joking about rape. The soldier was promptly told his behavior was unacceptable and it needed to stop. He replied, "Well Sergeant, see all these other leaders around here that have more rank than you? They don't care, so I'm going to keep doing it." It was true, none of them cared or at least not enough to stop it. It was then I realized that unless all leadership was aboard, the hostile work environment would not change. It was angering and very disappointing that this organization and many of its leaders condoned this kind of behavior.

Within the military, there are rules and regulations that must be followed and while serving DADT was one of these mandated policies. As a human resource manager, policies had to be enforced, to include the discharge of service members under the DADT policy. During this time, a service member who had disclosed his sexual orientation was processed for discharge. Despite the soldier's abilities and work ethic, he was forced out of the military for disclosing his sexual orientation. This discrimination was troubling and has never been forgotten.

The sexual based discrimination experienced in the U.S. Armed Forces among service members due to gender and sexual orientation needed to be addressed in order to create a safe and fair work environment for all military members. This is much of the push behind the current research: to help change the discriminatory practices and laws, ensuring a better future for all. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (as cited in Hammons, 2013), "An injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere" (Hammons, 2013). We must speak for those who have been silenced through discrimination. Instead of ignoring this injustice by looking the other way, we must be strong enough to create a better tomorrow, if not for us, for all those around us. Let us remember the words of Martin Niemöller (as cited in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2014):

> First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out - Because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionist, and I did not speak out - Because I was not a Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out - Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me-and there was no one left to speak for me. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2014, p. 1)

Background of the Study

The repeal of DADT ended a 232-year-old American military policy, which previously allowed for the discrimination of individuals due to their sexual orientation (Marshall, 2010). Despite this enormous change in organizational policy, there continues to be a lack of empirical data from studies addressing how this policy change has or will affect gay service members (Allsep, 2013). Many seminal studies were created to support the exclusion of gays in the military instead of actually researching this diversity group (Frank, 2009). Other more recent studies, while attempting to understand gays in the military, focus on the opinions of others about gays serving in the military, instead of focusing on the actual minorities' perspectives.

Sexual orientation discrimination has a long history in the U.S. military (Parco & Levy, 2010). With the recent change in policy, more specifically the repeal of DADT, which allows gays to openly serve in the military, there was a need to understand how those who have been discriminated against due to their sexual orientation view their organizational environment and their future in the U.S. military. The controversial topic of gays in the military has long been a central issue for gays wanting to serve their country as well as those opposing homosexuals in the military, yet there is a gap in literature regarding the gay perspective (Parco & Levy, 2010). Throughout history, the Department of Defense (DOD) has offered many reasons to ban gay men from serving in the military. Some of the arguments presented by the DOD to ban gay men from serving in the military included the notions that homosexuality was a: a) mental disorder, b) security risk, c) behavioral risk, d) risk to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and e) risk to unit cohesion (Knapp, 2008).

Along with varying arguments regarding gays and their right to serve, the military also changed its policies. Through the mid-1970s, the military excluded and separated gay men, citing homosexuality as a mental illness, until the American Psychiatric Association (APA) stated that homosexuality was not a mental disorder (Knapp, 2008). In 1981, the military revised regulations to include the discharge of all gay men regardless of the quality of their previous service in the armed forces (Robinson, Franklin, & Allen, 1989). Just over a decade later, President William Clinton resolved to end the ban on gays in the military but was met with such intense opposition from the U.S. Congress and the military that he was unable to do so. Instead, he settled on the compromise known as the DADT policy of 1994 (Wesley, Hendrix, & Williams, 2011).

While DADT was intended to be an interim resolution (Parco & Levy, 2010), it stayed in effect for almost two decades until, in December 2010, when President Barack Obama signed into law the repeal of DADT (Obama, 2010). Previously gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) service members were silenced by the DADT policy, which punished GLB service members who disclosed their sexual orientation (Gullickson, 2011).

The policy of DADT allowed for discrimination based on sexual orientation as service members were taught that being openly gay was wrong and that openly gay service members were to be segregated from the heterosexual population and separated from the armed forces (Estrada & Laurence, 2009; Spitko, 2012). After the repeal of DADT, the U.S. military allowed members of the gay population to openly serve in the military. With the past discrimination, which had been part of the military's culture for so long, it was unknown if gay service members would feel accepted in the military under new policy. With this drastic change in culture affecting gays in the military, there was a

need to research this minority population to better understand their perspective of the organizational environment in which they serve.

On March 2, 2010, prior to the repeal of DADT, the Secretary of Defense compiled a team to assess the impact the repeal of DADT would have on the military and to address how it may impact the military's overall effectiveness. This massive study interviewed nearly 400,000 service members, 150,000 military spouses, and former gay and lesbian service members, some of which had been discharged under DADT regulation. This study provided some much needed data in order to understand the views of service members and their families, along with gay and lesbian veterans no longer part of the armed forces (Department of Defense, 2010). However, because this study was conducted while the DADT policy was still in effect and by the DOD, the research did not include the views of gay service members.

The DOD's research, along with others throughout history, has focused on gays in the military, without interviewing and understanding the actual gay military population. While these studies have provided some insight to how service members, their families, and previous GLB service members view policy changes, it did not address perhaps the most critically affected group of individuals, GLB service members. Additionally, literature prior to 2012, only addressed the topic of gays in the military during the DADT era and the anticipated culture change if DADT was repealed. It could not accurately discuss the military environment after the repeal of DADT because the military was still operating under the DADT policy. Furthermore, literature after the repeal of DADT lacked the viewpoints of the gay population currently serving in the military (Parco & Levy, 2013).

Because the repeal of DADT was a relatively new policy, there was a lack of literature regarding organizational change, especially from gay service members' point of view (Allsep, 2013). As with any other minority group, it was important to understand the gay service members' perspective. Previous literature has not provided data from gay service members. Therefore, there was a need to research this minority group and its perspective of the organizational environment in which they serve in order to close the gap in previous literature.

Statement of the Problem

The U.S. military has struggled with the integration of minority groups into its organization throughout history. Homosexuality, in particular has been something the U.S. military has not openly accepted. Instead, members of the gay population have been discriminated against, regardless of their quality of service (Estrada, Dirosa, & Decostanza, 2013). While it was known that this population has experienced discrimination, there was a lack of empirical data (Levy & Parco, 2013), which focused on the lived experiences of gays in the military.

The Department of Defense (DOD) conducted a massive study to better understand if the military's environment could withstand such a drastic cultural change by modifying their sexual orientation policy. Missing from this report, however, were the viewpoints of the minorities themselves (Department of Defense, 2010). It is difficult to truly understand a minority population by studying the opinions of others towards the minority group, rather than studying the minority group itself.

Previously, GLB service members were unable to talk about their personal lives because the military's DADT policy prohibited such behavior. The DADT policy allowed for discrimination based on sexual orientation as service members were taught that being openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual was wrong (Estrada & Laurence, 2009). Current military regulation allows for members of the GLB populations to openly serve. But with the past discrimination that has been part of the military's culture for so long, it was questionable if this population would be accepted in the military under the new policy. With this drastic change in culture, it may create a problem within the organization, where this minority population feels they are not accepted or not truly able to openly serve their country. Scholars such as Dr. Parco & Dr. Levy (2013) noted there was very little literature available on the gay military population (p. 150). Dr. Allsep (2013) agrees noting that current literature on gays in the military lacks the gay perspective (p. 392). This study provided an understanding of a minority subculture of the military because it gave a voice to gay servicemen.

Purpose of the Study

From history, it is easy to see the U.S. military has struggled with managing diversity within its ranks. In this organization, African Americans, women, and members of the GLB population have all been treated as second class citizens (Department of Defense, 2010). Because the military once supported and enforced discriminatory policies, they have created a clear separation within the organization. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell taught by example that gay people are inferior, and that heterosexual people are justified in feeling uncomfortable around gay people…and in discriminating against

them" (Spitko, 2012, p. 208). But DADT did more than discriminate against all service members self-identifying as GLB individuals, it forcibly, under penalty of law, silenced the entire group who was discriminated against (Murphy, 2013).

For almost two decades, from 1994-2011, GLB service members were forced to hide their self-identity in order to serve their country (Gullickson, 2011). In February of 2005, the U.S. government reported the loss of about 9,500 service members in the first decade, equating to a loss of $95 million in employee turnover. In total, over 13,000 service members were discharged under DADT (Gullickson, 2011). In 2011, with the change in military policy, which completely lifted all bans on gays serving in the military, GLB service members were able to openly serve their country. But this policy change couldn't possibly change the organizational environment and treatment of gays overnight.

Since the recent repeal of DADT, scholars have continued to study minority groups in the workplace as diversity continues to evolve. More specifically, work continues to be done on understanding the aftermath of DADT (Estrada et al., 2013; Wilson-Buford, 2013). Although past studies have been completed regarding how changing DADT would affect some service members, there is a lack of knowledge when it comes to how this policy change affected the minority population itself (Department of Defense, 2010). In order to effectively manage human capital, it is essential that the organization understand all perspectives of this diversity issue.

With the absence of studies regarding the gay service members' perspective, this group was once again a silent minority serving in the U.S. military. While the repeal of DADT has made it possible for gay service members to openly serve in the military, does

this population feel they can openly serve or do they still have concerns about the overall organizational environment? Understanding this minority's point of view will help contribute to understanding gays in the workplace, more specifically in the U.S. military. By conducting this phenomenological study, people will be able to better understand the gay service members' perspective. Gay members of the military have been silenced for far too long and it is time their voices be heard. Following the Creswell template, the purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of gay U.S. military servicemen, before and after the repeal of the DADT policy (Creswell, 2007).

Rationale

This study added to the management and organizational fields of study, more specifically in the areas of human resource management (HRM) and human capital management (HCM). In order to operate at full potential, organizations need to understand their employees, including minorities (Martın-Alcazar, Romero-Fernandez, & Sanchez-Gardey, 2012). Within the military, management has struggled with building HCM from all available sources (Hite & Wilshusen, 2005).

Women and gay service members have both been discriminated against which has led to an overall decrease in human capital. Organizations that want the best staff, cannot afford to participate in discriminatory practices (Lansing & Cruser, 2009). Doing so limits the talent pool and decreases their ability to recruit, retain, and promote the best individuals. A well-known example of military discriminatory practices which hindered human capital was the discharge of gay Arabic linguists. Despite the desperate need for

individuals to serve in this field, the military discharged several qualified individuals due to their sexual orientation (Frank, 2009).

What exactly is being done to ensure that this minority group is being included as a vital part of the military's human capital? Are they being given the same chances to succeed as others that wear the uniform? Although military studies have been completed regarding how changing DADT would affect some service members, there was a lack of data when it came to how this policy change affected the minority population itself (Department of Defense, 2010). In order to effectively manage human capital, it was essential that the organization understand all perspectives of this diversity issue.

Now that gays can openly serve, understanding how they feel about their organizational environment along with their future in the military would provide this organization with a vast amount of knowledge to improve their overall organizational cohesion. This research was an exploratory study which attempted to provide data on gay servicemen currently serving in the U.S. military.

Through the use of phenomenology, this study was able to make a contribution to the field of organization and management as it focused on understanding a specific minority in the workplace. More precisely, this study focused on diversity in the workplace by understanding the viewpoints of a specific minority population. Because phenomenology focuses on studying the shared meaning of an event, occurrence, or happening based on several individuals' lived experiences (Connelly, 2010), it provides readers with an understanding of what it means to be a part of a group who has lived through an experience. In this particular study, readers will be able to understand the

diversity issue of being part of a minority group which has been largely discriminated against in the past by the organization in which they serve.

It may be difficult for people, organizations, or society as a whole to understand how members of a culture, different from their own, have experienced or are experiencing the workplace (Caleb, 2014). Phenomenology allows for the understanding of a minority group based on shared experiences. In a sense, it paints a picture for the reader of what it is like to be a gay serviceman in the U.S. military. Additionally, as a phenomenological study, this research can serve as a basis for creating or changing policy, which may be needed in organizations (Creswell, 2007). Because of the lack of information available on this minority group in the military, this phenomenological study additionally increased this knowledge base.

This study also advanced the scientific knowledge base by using phenomenological methodology to sample a military population of gay servicemen regarding the change in sexual orientation policy. When this study was completed, there was a lack of perspective from the gay population regarding this subject (Burks, 2011). This study may also be used in conjunction with other studies to assess a larger population of service members. Additionally, this study may serve as a base for future research of gays in the military.

Research Question

The research question for this study was: how do gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment before and after the repeal of the DADT policy? This research question was broken down into two individual parts: (a) how did

gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment before the repeal of DADT? and (b) how do gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment after the repeal of DADT? While it is important to understand gay service members as a whole, this research solely concentrated on gay servicemen. Gay service members, as a whole, do need to be studied in the future, but for this study, this population was considered too large for a phenomenological study and thus was deemed to be outside the scope of this study. With the huge shift in military policy concerning what was acceptable regarding the service, treatment, and day-to-day lifestyles of gay service members, the entire organization has been affected. Given this change, it is important to understand the perspectives of gay service members regarding the change in sexual orientation policy and their treatment in the U.S. military. Additionally, it was vital to capture how gay service members perceived the military prior to the repeal and after the policy change to better understand the minority and organizational culture.

Understanding this minority population within the U.S. military will positively influence the organizational environment. Minorities in the military have had to struggle for equality throughout history. Both African Americans and women service members have had to fight to be considered equal to their Caucasian male counterparts (Department of Defense, 2010). Through numerous struggles and much research, the military has been able to create a more accepting environment for these minorities. Understanding the past and present experiences of any minority group is important in creating future policies regarding successful integration, change policies, and cohesive organizational culture. Gay service members in the military have experienced an

enormous change in policy regarding their rights to serve. It was important to capture how they perceived the military before and after the policy change to better understand the minority as a whole.

Significance of the Study

Today controversy surrounding the repeal of DADT continues to erupt as a central issue for the U.S. military, which not only affects this minority group but also the entire organization as a whole. This research study may help provide an understanding of gay servicemen within the U.S. military and how to successfully move forward with continued diversity efforts. The U.S. military has struggled with the integration of minority groups into its organization throughout history. Homosexuality, in particular, has been something the U.S. military has not openly accepted. Instead, members of the gay population have been discriminated against, regardless of their quality of service (Estrada et al., 2013).

While it is known that this population has experienced discrimination, there is a lack of empirical data, which focuses on the lived experiences of gays in the military. The Department of Defense conducted a massive study to better understand if the military's environment could withstand such a drastic change in sexual orientation policy prior to the repeal of DADT, missing from this report, however, were the viewpoints of the minorities themselves (Department of Defense, 2010). It is difficult to truly understand a minority population by studying the opinions of others towards the minority group, rather than the opinions of the minority group itself.

This dissertation, by contributing to the understanding of gay servicemen in the U.S. military, may contribute to larger scale diversity efforts, within the military as well as corporate America. It additionally provided scholarly contributions, which advanced the field of business management and increased organizational knowledge by providing insight to a diversity group within today's modern workforce. The findings of this study could have an effect on the overall culture of the military because it gives a voice to gay servicemen. Many serving in the military may not know or understand the challenges, struggles, and experiences unique to gay servicemen because of their sexual orientation. This research has created a universal understanding of what gay servicemen experience as a minority group in the armed forces. Thus, this study may influence the military culture and could positively contribute to the overall effectiveness and readiness of the military as a whole. In comparison to ignoring differences, understanding a minority group can increase the acceptance, which in turn increases overall group cohesion and organizational effectiveness (Cundiff, Nadler, & Swan, 2009).

Definition of Terms

Armed Forces in this study refers to service members in the United States Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps or Navy; including active duty, National Guard and Reserve components.

DADT although originally called Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass, is more commonly known as simply, Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Don't Ask, Don't Tell was a military policy regarding the service of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals (GLB) in

the military from 1993 until its repeal in 2011. It allowed GLB individuals to serve as long as they kept their sexual orientation hidden.

EEOC is the abbreviation for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission which is a federal enforcement agency responsible for enforcing laws against workplace discrimination (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2013).

Effeminate is a term to describe a man having or showing characteristics regarded as typical of a woman. At one point in U.S military history, men showing effeminate qualities could be rejected from military service (U.S. Army, 1923).

Gay can refer to men or women (gay or lesbian).

GLB stands for gay, lesbian, and bisexual. This term is used when speaking specifically of those serving in the military since transgender individuals are not allowed in the military at this time.

GLBT also refers to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender individuals.

GLBTQ refers to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender individuals. The "Q" stands for queer, which is sometimes used as an umbrella to cover all GLBT and "QA" (questioning) individuals (Harris, 2005).

Military Sexual Trauma or MST refers to "experiences of sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that a veteran experienced during his or her military service" (Veterans Affairs, 2014, p. 1).

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD develops when a person experiences a traumatic event. A traumatic event can include something seen, heard, or something that has happens to an individual. In the military, PTSD is most commonly developed from

combat exposure and military sexual trauma (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014).

Queer Theory is the study of gay and lesbian matters and a queer theorist is someone who studies these issues (Harris, 2005).

Serviceman (Servicemen*)* in this study refers to men serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Service member(s) refers to all members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Sexual Based Discrimination in this study refers to both gender discrimination and sexual orientation discrimination.

Sexual Orientation Discrimination refers to discrimination against individuals based solely on their sexual orientation (GLBTQ).

U.S. Military in this study refers to service members in the United States Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps or Navy; including Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve status.

Veteran is any person who has served in the military. A service member who is still serving can be considered a veteran. For example, an Iraqi Freedom veteran could still be serving in the military. However, when used alone (not preceded by a war such as Iraqi Freedom) the term veteran solely refers to those individuals who have been separated from the armed forces.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

The assumptions associated with the research design concluded that information would be best obtained through the use of online, individual, and multi-iteration e-mail communication. Interviews conducted individually and through e-mail communication were assumed to be best suited for this study because of the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed. Researchers agree that when dealing with sensitive matters, individuals feel safer and reveal more details in individually conducted interviews (Bowker & Tuiffin, 2004; Hunt & McHale, 2007; Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003; Meho, 2006; Salmons, 2010). The individual sense of anonymity from an individual interview allows for individuals to reveal more personal information without losing face (Hodgson, 2004).

An additional assumption in relation to study design was that online interviewing would allow the researcher to contact a greater geographical population of participants. With the estimated gay, lesbian, and bisexual population at just under two percent (Frank, 2009), online interviewing would make it more likely for the researcher to find participants than simply conducting face-to-face interviews in one geographical location (Olivero & Lunt, 2004).

The last assumption regarding the research design concerned an individual's ongoing thought process. When conducting interviews through e-mail correspondence, the researcher and participant were not limited to what came to mind during a face-to-face interview. Instead, through the use of multiple e-mail correspondence, individuals could contact each other if they thought of additional information, outside the initial frame of the interview. Moreover, online informants were believed to provide more

thought out answers as they were able to read and reread their responses and questions (Curasi, 2001).

A methodological assumption associated with a phenomenological study design was that all participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied and there would be some similarities in what they reported (Connelly, 2010). This methodological approach assumed that there were going to be common themes in the data, which participants reported as individuals based upon their lived experiences as a group (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007). Criterion sampling was chosen as part of this study, as it ensured that all participants met some criterion, which was also important for quality assurance (Suri, 2011). It is assumed that criterion sampling would ensure a population with shared experiences.

Past research exploring the changing sexual orientation policies within the U.S. military most often concentrated on how these policies would affect the organization as a whole, what the mass majority of service members thought about the change, and how Americans felt about the change. There was a significant gap in studying the actual minority group of gays within the military, both before and after the repeal of DADT. This was thought to be due to the discriminatory practices which have coincided with military policies and practices (Parco & Levy, 2010). Up until the repeal of DADT, gay service members have had to hide their sexual orientation in order to serve their country. It was assumed that gay service members, just as any other minority group, wanted to be accounted for, thus this study was designed to solely hear from this group of individuals, which increased the overall knowledge of gays in the military.

Limitations

Because this study was a qualitative one, the information could not be generalized to a larger population. However, the researcher deemed it appropriate to conduct this study through the qualitative methodology of phenomenology because it would do more than communicate numbers or percentages, like those found in a quantitative study. Instead, it painted a picture for the readers of what it is really like to be a gay serviceman in the U.S. military based on the subjects' lived experiences. While the researcher hoped this study will help communicate the phenomenon of being a gay serviceman before and after the repeal of DADT, the reality of this study was due to the small sampling sizes and non-representative sampling, generalization beyond the sample frame or generating any kind of policy change within the military were beyond the scope of this study.

Additionally, this study was done through an online system and did not afford all gay servicemen the chance to participate, because not all gay servicemen subscribe to or know about the online website in which the researcher was recruiting participants. Allowing this entire population the opportunity to participate in this study would have meant conducting it through military controlled websites. The researcher did not want to conduct interviews through the military because it was believed that participants may not have been as open and honest if they were communicating through their employer, who up until recently punished gay service members for sharing their sexual orientation in the workplace. Conducting interviews through a website that is dedicated to helping the effort of gay service members created a higher level of trust which resulted in a higher level of information rich data.

Conducting interviews online while useful for this study did not allow for the observation of nonverbal cues which researchers typically rely on in traditional face-to-face interviews. When many nonverbal cues are unavailable in an online setting, the researcher will need to adjust the language, structure, and style as well as other communicatory cues (Walter, Loh, & Granka, 2005). Because of the unavailability of nonverbal cues, additional measures were taken to ensure the validity of the study.

When people communicate solely through the use of text, meaning can be misconstrued through misguided interpretation. To address error which may have occurred in interpretation, all questionable text was clarified through the use of member checking. Member checking refers to reviewing the conclusion drawn from the interview with the participant to confirm the researcher's interpretations (Webb, 2003). Additionally, peer reviewing was utilized as an external check to increase the validity of the study (Wittkower, 2009). The role of the peer reviewer was to play the devil's advocate, analyzing the study, its process, and asking difficult questions to keep the researcher on track (Md. Ali & Yusof, 2011).

Another limitation present in online interviewing dealt with the time or length of the interview process. If interviews are too long, the researcher doesn't limit response time, or takes too long to respond to the participants, the study may suffer (James & Busher, 2006). Salmons (2010) confirms when online interviews take too long, focus can be lost and enthusiasm can decline (p.7). Interviews were conducted within a six-week window which gave both the researcher and participant enough time to complete the interview process. The researcher studied and assessed the limitations present in this study and felt that the strengths of online interviewing outweigh the weaknesses.

Nature of the Study

Social identity theory guided this study, providing an explanation of intergroup behavior (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). Part of a person's self-concept comes from their perceived membership within a social group. This theory explains intergroup behavior within a larger social group allowing for the prediction of certain intergroup behavior based on an individual's perceived status or acceptance (Miles & Kivlighan Jr., 2012). Social identity theory states that an individual's social behavior is determined by the relationship between interpersonal behavior and intergroup behavior (Bilewicz & Koffa, 2011). For the most part, an individual's behavior is driven by a compromise of interpersonal and intergroup behavior. However, when an individual is not able to find a balance because of extreme differences, it may be difficult to maintain positive self-concept and fit into a certain social group (Madera, King, & Hebl, 2013).

Within the U.S. military, it was apparent that minority groups have had a difficult time maintaining their positive self-concept, while being able to simultaneously identify with the majority social group (Bilewicz & Koffa, 2011). Specifically related to this study, gays have not been able to successfully serve in the military without compromising their individual self-concept. Gay men have had to hide their self-identity in order to serve in an organization that has openly persecuted against them for their sexual orientation. This blatant discrimination has created a hostile environment for gay men and although the law now forces the military to permit the service of openly gay service members, this does not mean the end of anti-gay practices and culture, which have existed for well over two centuries.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Prior to the presentation of this study's research, a thorough literature review is presented in Chapter 2, in order to provide a greater understanding of the minority group being studied. Empirical studies on gays in the workplace provide a broader examination of the societal and cultural trends regarding the acceptance of gays in the workforce. Because military culture is different than the civilian workforce, a brief overview of military culture provides a look into the differences experienced by U.S. service members. This, along with a history of gender based discrimination and sexual orientation discrimination in the military, build a foundation on where gays in the military stand today. Social identity theory then explains current gay servicemen's perceived acceptance in the organization in which they serve.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in this study. Purposeful sampling was used by selecting individuals as participants from an online website dedicated to helping gays, lesbians, and bisexuals fight for equality within the armed forces. Participants were selected based on set criteria later outlined in this study. Information was collected online through multiple iteration interviews. More specifically, interviews were completed individually through the use of e-mail. Online interviewing was selected as it increased the geographic population and allowed for participants to be interviewed in an environment of their choosing. When dealing with such a sensitive subject, the comfort of a familiar environment, was thought to give the participant additional confidence, to share more information than he would be willing to reveal in person (Salmons, 2010).

Questions were open-ended, allowing participants to describe what they have experienced and how they have experienced it, thus allowing common themes in the study to present themselves (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007). The questioning protocol began with a few broad open ended questions (Moustakas, 1994) allowing participants to describe the phenomenon in their own words. Additional questions were asked as deemed appropriate (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). These online interviews were accomplished over e-mail through multiple correspondences between the researcher and participant.

In reviewing data collected, a concentration on the subject's experience, including such elements as: (a) perceptions, (b) judgments, (c) emotions (Connelly, 2010), (d) attitudes, and (e) beliefs allowed the data to lead this phenomenological study. Once individuals' common or shared experiences were determined, this data was then used to develop a deeper understanding about the phenomenon. This information may also be helpful in creating or changing policies to better accommodate this minority group (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007). The study's results are presented in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a final discussion of the study's results and implications and need for further research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature associated with sexual orientation as a diversity topic in the workplace which forms a foundation for the phenomenological study researching gay servicemen in the U.S. military before and after the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). This literature review first provides an introduction to sexual orientation as a diversity topic. Next, in order to better understand the study, a background on military culture is presented to include the sexual based discrimination of women and gays in the military. The chapter then discusses the implications of social identity theory and its relevance to gay service members. Finally a brief analysis of the literature on sexual orientation in the military is presented, evaluating the gap in literature which reflected the need for additional research.

Sexual Orientation as a Diversity Topic

The study of gays in the workplace is a relatively new concept. It is also a very controversial diversity topic. It wasn't until the late 1960s into the 1980s that seminal research on this minority group began to make a presence. During this time, very little was known about gays except what was communicated through religious means. Many religious groups viewed homosexuality as morally and ethically wrong and much of this negativity flowed from the religious sector into mainstream America affecting the everyday lives of gay men (Kite & Deaux, 1986). Several were shamed into hiding the fact that they were gay, as they feared discrimination. Because discrimination against

gays was openly acceptable in the workforce, it was even more difficult for those who were gay to be open about it. Additionally, minimal research had been completed on this minority group (Parco & Levy, 2013). This is believed to be because of the small population of gay men in the workforce. In 1969 it was estimated that only 4% of the American male population was homosexual (Harvard Law Review Association, 1969).

Although often overlooked, homosexuality as a diversity issue is very important, as this group is a minority, like any other in the workforce. Early research showed that of all the diversity groups, gays were the least accepted in the workforce (de Boer, 1978). According to public opinion polls, published in 1978, 70% of Americans and British citizens surveyed from 1970-1977 thought that homosexual relations were always wrong. The polls showed that gays were discriminated against more than any other minority group, to include Blacks. The polls also showed that even though gays were the group most discriminated against, the people taking the surveys did not think anything needed to be done to stop the discrimination (de Boer, 1978).

One major theme from the aforementioned public polls was that even though gays were the most discriminated against group, people thought that nothing needed to be done to change this discrimination (de Boer, 1978). Seminal works provide many reasons for this. One reason was that this discrimination was so widely accepted as the norm. Even in the United States federal government, gays were discriminated against. When early research reports came out, studies showed that it was lawful for an individual to be removed from a government position due to his or her sexual orientation (Robinson et al., 1989). The reasoning behind this was many employees were required to hold a security

clearance. According to a law passed in 1966, a gay person could be denied both a security clearance and a job for participating in what was considered to be immoral behavior (Kite & Deaux, 1986). Many seminal works point out, at the time of the research, it was widely assumed that it was perfectly legal for employers to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation (de Boer, 1978; Harvard Law Review Association, 1969; Kite & Deaux, 1986; Robinson et al., 1989).

Homosexuality alone should not affect a person's ability to function in society, yet much of society has determined otherwise (Bell, 2011). Not long ago, many states in the U.S. considered it illegal to participate in homosexual activity. Some states went so far as to rule it a felony, punishable with up to 20 years in prison (Wing, 1986). It was not until the 1980s that these practices came into question. One particular article, "What is Big Brother doing in the Bedroom?" addressed the control government had over an individual's sexual choices. The research presented in this seminal work, as many others, supported the notion that legislation regarding homosexuality didn't protect the civil liberties of these individuals (Wing, 1986).

In the case of Watkins v. the United States, many of the questionable employment practices regarding gays were brought into public view, which initiated additional research regarding homosexual policies. Perry Watkins, a U.S. Army soldier, joined the service and successfully served close to 15 years. He was upfront and honest about his sexual orientation from the beginning and was allowed to serve. This was until the Army regulation changed. The change in policy made Watkins unfit for duty, due to his sexual orientation, regardless of his past performance in the military. Watkins fought this

decision and won. The courts considered the Army's new policy to be unconstitutional (Robinson et al., 1989). This ruling challenged many previously accepted organizational practices regarding gays in the workplace.

Many of the early studies that were to understand prejudices against homosexuals showed that some discrimination in the workplace was due to homophobia and the fear of AIDS. In one particular study, researchers wanted to determine if the fear of AIDS and homophobia were two in the same. In this quantitative study, two scales were used, one to measure attitudes towards the fear of AIDS and one measuring the attitudes towards homosexuals. While the researchers' hypothesis, that much discrimination against homosexuals was due to the fear of contracting AIDS, the results proved otherwise. The results indicated that discrimination against gays was not directly correlated to the fear of AIDS (Bouton et al., 1987).

Early philosophical assumptions point to the belief that homosexuals are more like White heterosexuals males than other minority group. This similarity may be another reason for the lack of early research. Regardless of similarities, there are people who are tolerant and others that are intolerant of homosexuals. For this reason alone, gays in the workforce needed to be studied (Kite & Deaux, 1986).

More recently, data on gays in the workplace was also light on research. Dr. Strader (1994) notes, in his review on the topic, literature regarding gays, lesbians, and bisexuals (GLB) is greatly lacking in academia and popular press (p. 241). Louis Diamant's book *Homosexual Issues in the Workplace* has attempted to fill these gaps by combining much that has been written on the subject, but as Dr. Strader notes, much

more needs to be done in order to advance this growing field. In a more recent literature review, Trau and Hartel (2007) also note the lack of information which is available on gays in the workplace (p. 208). Even though some research has been completed, it is not to the level it needs to be, in order to truly understand this minority group.

Dr. Strader (1994) notes that the review of information on this topic provides a sad reminder that there isn't much information available (p. 241) and ten years later Trau and Hartel (2004) report the same (p. 208). While both reviews of literature suggest that more research needs to be done in order to better understand the minority population and what can be done to reduce discrimination in the workforce, very little work has been completed. The push to research gays in the workplace has increased over the last two decades by changes in public opinion, media, diversity initiatives, and cultural norms (King, Stewart, & Barr, 2008).

More recent studies on gays in the workplace are often broken down into different fields of study. One particular field is psychology. In this field, the authors are concerned with understanding the individual and the minority group as a whole. However, this field of study has been tainted by individual beliefs. Some in the field of psychology have suggested that homosexuality is a mental illness and have concentrated on this aspect of the issue (Knapp, 2008) rather than attempting to understand this diversity group. Still others have taken a different approach, which is to understand the difficulties facing homosexuals in a heterosexual world.

Another area of study deals with the law regarding the discrimination of homosexuals in the workplace. As previously noted after the case of Watkins v. the

United States, much of this came into the public eye. However there has still been a struggle between different groups on whether or not the discrimination of gays in the workforce is ethically sound. Berg and Lien (2002) note legislative initiatives have been set forth to outlaw workplace discrimination based upon sexual orientation because it is a significant problem (p. 395). But they also note that not all people feel the discrimination of gays in the workplace is a problem. In fact, they believe individual views of this issue falls into three categories of beliefs: (a) those that support the discrimination, for perhaps moral or religious principles, (b) those that oppose the discrimination and (c) those that think this discrimination is not a significant problem (Berg & Lien, 2002).

Earlier attempts to end sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace failed in the 1970s through the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). This act was meant to extend the same basic protection to homosexuals, other minority groups were afforded. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act made it into legislative proposals again in 1994, 1995, and 1996. At that time, the current U.S. President, Bill Clinton supported ENDA stating, "all Americans regardless of their sexual orientation can find and keep their jobs based on their ability to work and quality of their work" (Berg & Lien, 2002, p. 395). But ENDA never became a national law. It was passed at some state levels but still only protects a limited group of gays in the workforce.

Intrigued with the lack of information present on this topic and a curiosity to better understand this workplace discrimination, Berg and Lien (2002) completed quantitative research to evaluate just one aspect of homosexual discrimination. Conducting a study to compare heterosexual men to homosexual men, with all other

demographic factors being the same, the researchers found that the salaries of homosexual men were on average 16% to 28% less than that of heterosexual men (Berg & Lien, 2002). This study provided support that there was in fact workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Part of the reason research is lacking on sexual orientation as a diversity topic is because discrimination against homosexuals has been tolerated for a very long time. United States law still to this day does not cover sexual orientation as a protected class. However, studies show that some organizations have taken the lead to protect gays from discrimination within their workplace. To keep a competitive edge in the workplace, organizations that want the best staff will not discriminate against potential candidates. They will choose the best candidate for the job regardless of a person's sexual orientation. Lansing and Cruser (2009) point out that 83% of Fortune 500 companies included sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies in 2005 (p. 47). The authors feel that there are two primary motivators for this, one being a genuine desire to protect gays in the workplace and the other a desire to maintain a competitive advantage in the workforce.

Much of the recent literature on gays in the workplace focuses on equality, comparing it to the struggle for racial equality in the 1960s. It is clear from the literature that this group has been and continues to be discriminated against as people take sides for or against the equal rights of the gay population. However, there is very little literature and even fewer studies available on this minority group and the role they play in today's workforce. More frustrating is the missing voice of this minority group. Despite being

considered a minority group in the workforce, the gay population and their voice is often overlooked in diversity studies (Bell, Ozbilgin, Beauregard, & Surgevil, 2011). While some literature is available, it is very minimal. The literature that is available adequately synthesizes the seminal works with the current status of gays in the workplace, but does not go further to evaluate if programs are working or what new studies can be done in order to advance this field.

Military Culture

An organization's culture can be difficult to understand and even harder to explain to outsiders who are not a part of the unique or individual establishment. Organizations operate in various ways according to their organizational culture, mission, values, and industry (Kim, Fisher, & McCalman, 2009). Many times those not in a specific organization will not understand what it is like to be a part of that unique culture. This is especially true in the military. Military life is much different from civilian life and while the general population can appreciate a difference in cultures, Parco and Levy (2010) note, civilians know very little about the military culture itself (p. 276).

Within the United States, less than 0.5% of the population has served in the armed forces (Eikenberry & Kennedy, 2013). This has significantly decreased since World War II, when 12% of the U.S. population served. As of 2012, the Gallup Poll reported, 13% of the overall population was veterans, with the majority of veterans being 65 years of age and older (Newport, 2012). The fact that the majority of the U.S. population has not served in the armed forces coupled with the lack of military knowledge the civilian

population possesses (Parco & Levy, 2013) has led to a gap in existent knowledge. Considering these factors, it is presumed many who read this study may lack the intimate understanding of military culture. Thus it is important to discuss military culture in order to better understand this study as a whole.

The U.S. military is headed by the Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States (United States Institute of Peace, 2014). The military is made up of five branches: Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Navy (Military Advantage, 2014). Service members may serve in either an active duty status or part time as members of the National Guard or Reserves. Although separate, the internal structure of each branch is built on a very similar hierarchy or caste system, with one individual heading each organization. From the bottom of the ranks, each individual can trace their leadership, called the chain-of-command, all the way to the Commander-in-Chief. In 2013, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the U.S. military employed just over 1.4 million individuals. Of that, 17% of these individuals operate as officers, working in managerial positions (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

The U.S. military has a long history of strict leadership and strong traditions. Duty, honor, and country are at the forefront of the military's value system. Additional core values include discipline, courage, obedience, trust, and mission before the individual (Howard, 2006). It is governed by warrior ethos and military regulations that guide organizational operations (Rayment, 2014). The military culture has always been masculine and values physical and mental toughness. "The image of the male warrior still dominates military culture, to the exclusion of women and homosexuals" (Allsep, 2013, p. 381). The organization has specific rituals and symbols to convey important

meanings (Dunivin, 1997). In the military, camaraderie and community are important aspects, as the team is always put before the individual (Hsu, 2010).

The term GI refers to Government Issue and not only refers to things issued by the government, but also to the service members themselves. When an individual joins the armed forces, unlike most civilian jobs, they sign a contract of service obligation. This contract means the service member belongs to the U.S. military (Howard, 2006). The service member's entire life is ultimately controlled by the military. They are told what to wear, how to look, where to be, who they can and cannot socialize with, and how to act on and off-duty. They belong to the military for the term of their contract which ranges from two to eight years (Kristiansen, 2012). After an initial contract, an individual may choose to extend their term of service.

Unlike the common 40 hour work week, many Americans relate to, the military experience is much different. A service member's job does not end at the close of the day or even the week. They are on call 24-7. Duty days may be long and service may take them across the globe for months at a time (Goodale, Abb, & Moyer, 2014). Service members are often called to war and have a higher rate of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to work related trauma (Goodson, et al., 2011). The unique challenges and experiences that service members face together has created a bond, often referred to as the band of brothers.

Introduction to Sexual Based Discrimination in the U.S. Military

Although the basic goal of those enlisted in the military is generally the same, to serve their country, there are fundamental differences between the individuals who have answered the call of duty. Despite a person's desire to serve their country, some characteristics such as gender and sexual orientation have hindered an individual's right to serve and succeed in the military (Howard, 2006). Both an individual's gender and sexual orientation have been deciding factors in whether or not an individual should be allowed to serve in the military or be afforded equal opportunity within the military ranks.

When studying gays in the military, much can be learned from understanding other minorities and their struggles. Specifically, the war for equality fought by the gay military population closely emulates the struggle also faced by women in the military. There are many similarities in the history among gender and sexual orientation discrimination in the U.S. military (Allsep, 2013). Researching the history of sexual based discrimination within the U.S. military provides a wider breadth of information and greater understanding to the struggles of these minority groups.

Women in the U.S. Military

"Declaring that all women cannot perform the duties of combat because some women cannot is as foolish as declaring that all men can because some men have" (Haynie & Haynie, 2012, p. 48). Women have been present in all major U.S. wars to include service in the Continental Army under General George Washington during the

Revolutionary War (Steele & Yoder, 2013). The majority of women that served in the U.S. Revolutionary War worked as cooks, maids, laundresses, water bearers, and seamstress; as they followed their husbands to war. These women were only allowed to serve with the permission of the commanding officer (Micklos Jr., 2009). Some women also served as spies in British camps. It is unknown how many women served during this time or to what extent. One reason for this was that some women wanting to serve in the military were forced to hide their gender. Deborah Sampson, for example, successfully served in George Washington's Army disguised as a man (Berkin, 2006). It was only when she was wounded in war that her gender was discovered. At this point Deborah was forced out of the military but received an honorable discharge for her service.

However, not all women posing as men were treated so kindly. Others who disguised themselves as men, such as Sam Gay, who was promoted to Corporal before her gender was discovered, were arrested and imprisoned (Berkin, 2006). Berkin (2006) noted "An imposter could be led out of camp behind a wagon, her hands tied, her back bleeding from the lash, with the drum and fifers playing a tune that they called 'the whore's march'" (p. 16).

Throughout history, women continued to have a presence in the military in the medical, administrative, and culinary fields, but they were never officially allowed to join the military. Women instead served as volunteers. During World War I and World War II, hundreds of thousands of women served in the U.S. military, hundreds were killed, and many were taken as Prisoners of War (POWs). Despite their service and dedication during peacetime, with the exception of nurses, women were not authorized to serve in the military (Borlik, 1998).

The discussion of women serving in the military started around the same time as the call for racial integration. As with racial integration, military leaders were concerned about what integrating women into the military might do to unit cohesion and military effectiveness. Marine Corps director of Plans and Policies, Brigadier General C. Thomas stated, "The American Tradition is that a woman's place is in the home" (Department of Defense, 2010). Retired Army Colonel Mary Hallaren, who began her military career in 1942 as a volunteer, stated much of the resistance at the time was concern for military cohesiveness, stating: "A prime objection which we were told was discussed in closed sessions, was that if women were in the regular military, men would have to take orders from a woman, Heaven forbid" (Borlik, 1998, p. 2). Historically, the U.S. military has not been keen on the notion of women serving in their organization (Dichter & True, 2014).

Despite many concerns, the same year as President Truman's Executive Order ending racial segregation, the Armed Services Integration Act was passed allowing women to officially join and serve in the military in regular and reserve statuses in all branches of the military, during both wartime and peacetime. At this time, women were to be limited to 2% of the personnel population and excluded from combat positions (Goldman, 1973). In addition, each branch of the military was limited to one female colonel, for a total of five colonels among the entire military population (Dunivin, 1997).

Although integration of women into the military was passed in the late 1940s, it wasn't until 30 years later, in the late 1970s that women began to make a more significant presence in the military. At that time, the military conducted studies of military men and

their acceptance of women in the military. These studies showed strong opposition to women serving with men, but most notably from higher ranking officials. In 1976, four years after retiring as the Army Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland released a statement regarding women in the military, stating:

> The purpose of West Point is to train combat officers, and women are not physically able to lead in combat. Maybe you could find one woman in 10,000 who could lead in combat, but she would be a freak, and we're not running the Military Academy for freaks (Chicago Tribune, 1976, p. 8).

Parallel to societal trends, women have had to fight gender based discrimination in the workplace. The glass ceiling, also referred to as the brass ceiling in the military, has kept many women in the military from reaching the upper echelons (Dichter & True, 2014). Despite a woman's qualifications or achievements, she has had to fight this barrier on her way to the top (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001). In corporate American, the glass ceiling is present, but most often hidden or denied by the organization (Pichler, Simpson, & Stroh, 2008). However in the military, it has been written into regulations and practiced as common law. Regulations, which have prohibited women from serving in some military positions, have limited their opportunity for advancement (Dichter & True, 2014).

The Military's Combat Exclusion Rule of 1994, more formally referred to as the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule for Women, addressed which positions women were eligible and ineligible to serve. This policy noted:

> Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground. (Vergun, 2013, p. 1)

This exclusion applied to assignments to the U.S. Armor, Infantry, and Special Forces units. This policy had been in effect for over six years when retired Air Force General Lester L. Lyles headed a movement to end the policy, noting it's unfairness to women serving in the U.S. military (Stephens, 2009). Over a decade after General Lyles called for change, the pentagon did change the policy. The change removed gender restriction on 14,000 military positions, however women still remained ineligible to serve in 238,000 positions, which equates to one-fifth of all military positions (Stephens, 2009).

The Military's Combat Exclusion Rule was rescinded on January 24, 2013 (Department of Defense, 2013). As Senator Patty Murray noted, many women had already been serving in combat situations (Lawrence & Starr, 2013), but now they were allowed the same benefits men were afforded for serving in combat. The policy change opened 418 of 438 Military Occupational Skills (MOSs), or jobs, to women (Stephens, 2009). The struggle for women to officially serve in positions they had been successfully working in since the beginning, has been a long battle and many female soldiers were lost along the way. Dichtre and Gala (2014) note women, as a minority in the military have faced greater dissatisfaction with the military and thus have shorter military careers (pp. 1-2). The brass ceiling which has limited a woman's ability to be promoted at the same rate as men is a main contributor to turnover among women in the military (Dichter & True, 2014).

Another main contribution to turnover among women service members is the sexual harassment and sexual assault present in the military. In the U.S. military, sexual

harassment is more of a normal occurrence instead of a shocking incident (Sims, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 2005). The 2012 Workplace and Gender Relation Survey found that 6.1% of active duty women reported unwanted sexual contact in 2011. This is approximately a 16 times higher rate than reported by the general population, whose annual rate reported at 0.37% (Burns, Grindlay, Hold, Manski, & Grossman, 2014).

The Department of Defense has consistently reported an increase in sexual assaults, noting a 27% increase in sexual assaults from 2010 to 2012, with 26,000 assaults in 2012 (Olson, 2014). This equates to 70 assaults per day (Goodman & González, 2013). One in three military women will be sexually assaulted during her military service (Park, 2010). Additionally, the DOD estimates that 80% of active duty women do not report sexual assaults while in the military, compared to the civilian rate of 60%. When analyzing these statistics, it is important to note that the military service is commonly 2-6 years whereas the civilian statistics are over an individual's entire lifetime (Hynes, 2012).

Sexual harassment and sexual assault are so prevalent in the military that it provoked the Veterans Affairs (VA) Office to coin the clinical term Military Sexual Trauma (MST) (Park, 2010). The VA defines Military Sexual Trauma as "experiences of sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that a veteran experienced during his or her military service" (Veterans Affairs, 2014, p. 1). According to the VA national screening program, one in four women reports experiencing MST (Veterans Affairs, 2014).

Victims of MST have shown a significant decrease in overall mental and physical health related to the trauma suffered. Women who suffer from MST report more depression, PTSD, chronic health issues, alcohol addiction, and drug abuse (Burns, et al., 2014; Hynes, 2012; Pryor, 1995). Often, women in the military are required to work in close quarters with their perpetrators after the abuse has occurred. This may be due to the unique context of military operations or due to the victim not reporting the harassment or assault. Military sexual trauma does not only include the actual acts of sexual harassment and sexual assault (Burns, et al., 2014). It is much more than just the act and occurs before and after the acts themselves (Hope & Eriksen, 2009).

There are many reasons women do not report sexual harassment and sexual assaults in the military. Hynes (2012) notes women working in a male dominate culture often fear not being believed, the risk of retaliation, and the fear of looking weak or disloyal (p. 1). The author goes on to note additional reasons such as the unique military relationships and the no-exit environment in which women work. Within the military, there is a strong sense of camaraderie where its members are seen as family (Hynes, 2012). Thus, sexual assaults by "brothers in arms" (Benedict, 2009, p. 12) add to the victim's fear, self-blame, embarrassment, and internal struggles commonly seen in victims of incest (Stalsburg, 2009).

Under contract and possibly serving in a war zone, military women find themselves in a no-exit environment. Women in the military, like all service members, have a contract securing their service for a specific amount of time. Additionally, the prevalence of higher-ranking and older service members engaging in or supporting sexual

harassment and sexual assault has created a frightening work environment (Ziering, 2013). Many times the military culture is conducive of the sexual harassment and assault, trying to cover up these crimes instead of fixing the problem (Wolf, 2012).

Sexual harassment and sexual assault have also resulted in many negative organizational consequences. Those reporting harassment or assault have been shown to demonstrate a decrease in job satisfaction and often withdrawal from work (Sims et al., 2005). This can be especially dangerous in the military, as service members often work under hazardous conditions. Willness, Stell, and Lee (2007) identify sexual harassment as one of the most damaging barriers to job satisfaction and career success for women (p. 127). The ongoing harassment and assault paired with the military's inability to protect these service members has resulted in a higher turnover rate for women (Sims et al., 2005).

Studies have also shown a negative financial impact as a result of the military's inability to retain qualified women in its ranks (Dichter & True, 2014). Allowing women to equally serve next to their male counterparts has been resisted for so long because it was believed it would weaken the military because of women's lack of strength. It was additionally believed women would weaken the military through other means such as inappropriate relationships, including preferential treatment and sexual misconduct (Haynie & Haynie, 2012). Women have not been able to equally serve because of the environment created and cultivated in discrimination. This has not only hurt the military, but each and every woman affected by its bias position on gender equality.

The difficulties that women continue to face in the armed forces nearly 70 years after their integration, points to the organization's inability to successfully address and implement cultural and diversity efforts into its organization's culture. Dr. Allsep (2013) draws a direct link between the military's treatment of women and gays, indicating that the military's response to integrating gays into the military will be insufficient based upon past efforts to integrate women in the their ranks (p. 381). Unless the military addresses the deeper cultural issues behind sexual based discrimination, women and gays will never be able to experience service without discrimination (Allsep, 2013).

The military has been accused of promoting a male hyper-heterosexual culture consisting of "hard-charging, hard drinking, skirt chasing, arrogant conqueror[s]" (Dunivin, 1997, p. 12). This is especially true in its male only or combat arms units (Enloe, 1993). This masculine warrior ideology has created an environment of hostility towards the feminine identity (Allsep, 2013). The feminine identity has been equated to weakness and thus perceived as inferior to military standards (Department of Defense, 2010). In addition to discriminating against women, the military created policies to exclude effeminate soldiers, or men having feminine characteristics (U.S. Army, 1923). Spitko (2012) notes the fundamental objection of gay men being able to openly serve centers on the magnitude of masculinity. Openly gay soldiers threaten to emasculate heterosexual servicemen and undermine the military's masculine appearance (p.195).

Throughout history the military ranks have been dominated by men. In almost every culture, masculinity has been associated with warrior ethos. Despite the increase in women serving in the military, the link between the military and masculinity still remains

(Spitko, 2012). The U.S. military "defines itself as a combat, masculine-warrior organization-a characterization that by definition, excludes members who do not perform combat roles (i.e., many women) or who are not perceived as masculine (gay men)" (Dunivin, 1997, p. 11).

Introduction to Gays in the U.S. Military

America owes much of the freedom it enjoys today to great soldiers who fought in various wars, protecting their rights. Soldiers like Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, who has often been credited for the U.S. victory over England in the American Revolutionary War. "Upon arriving at Valley Forge, von Steuben was immediately accepted by Washington, who recognized his military genius. Steuben single-handedly turned a militia, consisting mostly of farmers, into a well-trained, disciplined and professional army" (Ferroni, 2012) able to take on and defeat the world's foremost military superpower, England (Segal, 2013).

Those not familiar with American or U.S. military history may not know of von Steuben. Von Steuben was recruited by Benjamin Franklin while living in France. Aware of George Washington and the colonies' need for help from seasoned military experts, Franklin wrote Washington to tell him of von Steuben's military genius. But before Franklin contacted Washington about von Steuben, he was warned by some French figures of von Steuben's homosexual tendencies (Ferroni, 2012). Despite these allegations, Franklin decided to judge von Steuben on his talent and expertise and not his sexual orientation (Segal, 2011). Historians, time and time again, have acknowledged

that without von Steuben's talent, commitment, expertise, and service, the Revolutionary War may have had very different results (Ferroni, 2012).

Also recorded during the Revolutionary War was the first discharge of a gay man for his sexual orientation. Gotthold Frederick Enslin was "ushered out of the army in an elaborate ceremony in which an officer's sword was broken in two upon the soldier's head" (Frank, 2009, p. 1). Because Lieutenant Enslin was forced out of the military, no one knows what this man may have contributed to The Revolutionary War or how different history may have been. The story for Enslin ended very differently than von Steuben's and one can't help but wonder why. Both men were gay, but only one was discharged for his sexual orientation, yet the other is honored as an American hero. Some go as far to say "If George Washington was the father of the nation, then von Steuben, a gay man, was the father of the United States military" (Segal, 2013, p.1). Shouldn't von Steuben, the father of the United States military, been proof that a gay man could serve and do so very successfully? Not everyone agreed.

Most people know of the continued battle to determine whether or not gays should be able to serve in the military. Most have heard of Don't Ask, Don't Tell and know that gays are now permitted to openly serve in the United States military. But what most don't know is the long and difficult struggle behind today's gay freedoms. Figure 1 displays a timeline of significant events in gay military history which provides a general guide to better understanding the struggles of gays in the U.S. military.

Figure 1 Timeline of Significant Events in Gay Military History

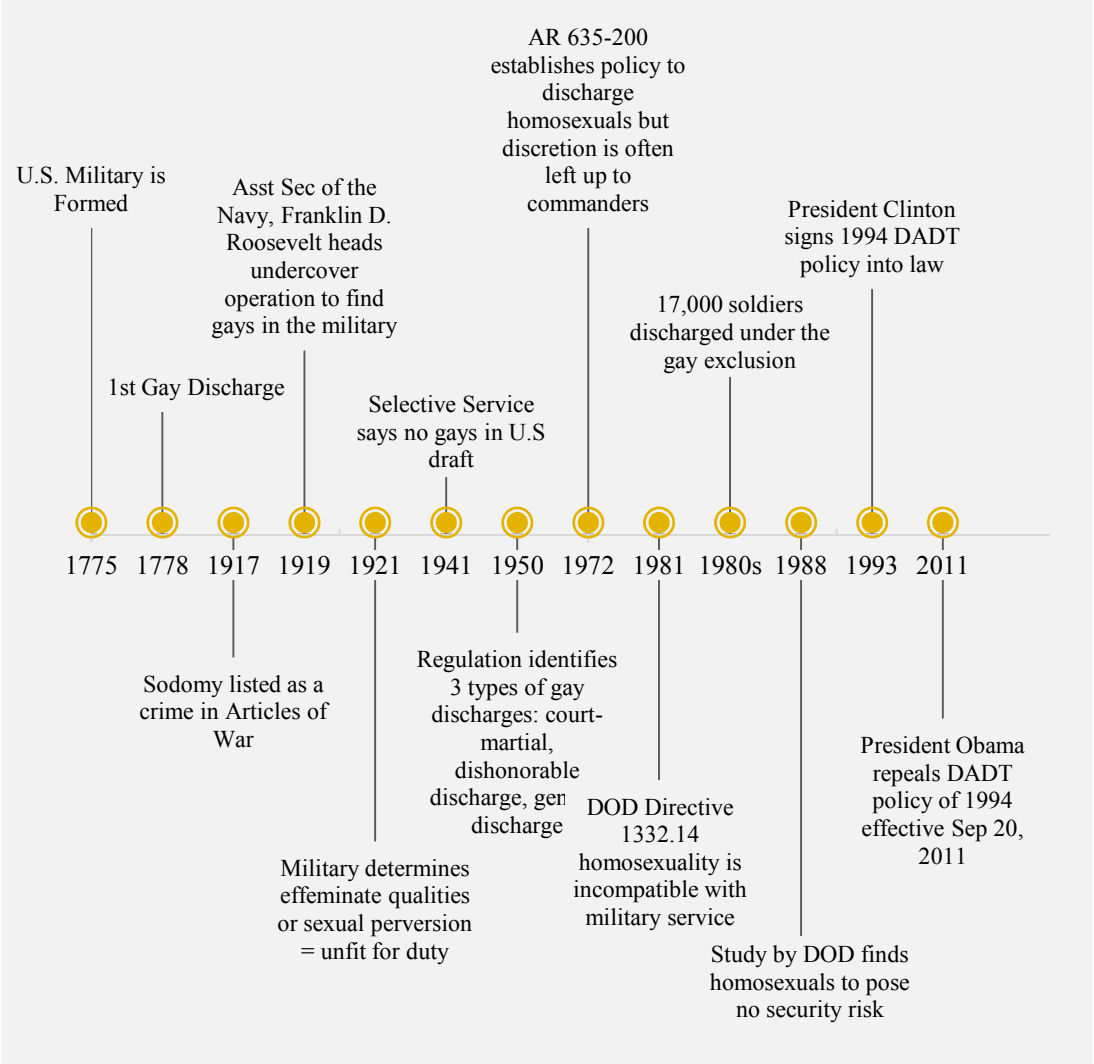

Figure 1. Adapted from "The End of DADT," by Glenn Gullickson, 2011, Echo Magazine, pp. 10-11.

The war on gays in the United States military dates back to the first American war. Gay men, like von Steuben served in the Revolutionary War alongside their heterosexual counterparts in a fight for freedom, yet throughout history gay men have

been questioned as viable members of the organization and been stripped of the freedom to serve. Von Steuben was only one gay soldier turned military hero during the Revolutionary War, and for the most part, his sexuality is rarely mentioned. But why should it be? Is sexual orientation an important factor in determining a service member's ability to perform? Surely, the stellar example set by von Steuben should have been proof enough that homosexual tendencies did not make a man any less able to do his job. But it was not.

Gays in the U.S. Military

"A gay person can be an excellent soldier – until it is know that he is gay. At that point, he becomes unfit to serve and a threat to the military mission" (Spitko, 2012, p. 186). The study of gay men in the U.S. military is not in and of itself a new subject. In fact, there have been more studies on this diversity group than people might think. However, much of this research within the military was created and conducted to support the preconceived notions of the gay exclusion. Most seminal works within the military did not actually research this minority population and thus these research efforts provide little insight into the gay military service members' perspective of life within their organization (Frank, 2009).

Throughout history, the Department of Defense has conducted and used these internal studies and their results to ban gays from serving their country (Belkin, 2008). Some of the more popular arguments, supported by this research included homosexuality was a: (a) mental disorder, (b) security risk, (c) behavioral risk, (d) risk to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and (e) risk to unit cohesion (Knapp, 2008). In the past,

these military studies have helped to support sexual orientation discrimination which has long been part of the U.S. military's culture (Parco & Levy, 2010).

Scholars, such as Dr. Frank and Dr. Allsep, have questioned if the military's seminal research on gays should actually be considered research or just an undercover operation to identify and eliminate homosexuals from the organization (Allsep, 2013; Frank, 2009). Take into account one such effort by Chief Machinist's Mate Ervin Arnold. Chief Arnold, with authority from the military's Commander in Chief, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, conducted a study to identify and punish homosexuals in the Navy. After determining that spying was not enough, he formed a group of sailors with the mission of entrapping suspected gay men by soliciting and having sex with them. At the end of this study, 12 individuals were arrested for sodomy and spent many years in prison, not to mention the psychological damage it caused for all those involved. At this point, many individuals outside the military found this research to be grossly unethical and called for an immediate change in military research (Frank, 2009). Soon after this incident the military stopped requiring proof of homosexuality and refocused their research efforts.

As previously noted, many of the early studies on gays in the military emulated fear of the unknown. Much of what was dictated as policy in the U.S. government stemmed from societal beliefs, based on the majority's religious views. Although U.S. law requires the separation of religion and state, many religious groups view homosexuality as morally and ethically wrong and their members often transfer these views from church to work. These negative projections which flowed from the religious sector into mainstream America have affected the everyday lives of gays in the

workforce. (Kite & Deaux, 1986). Unfortunately, many research efforts were often tainted by preconceived notions based on these religious preferences.

Much of the research on homosexuality in the military has been driven by fear. Even research conducted to understand the effects of allowing gays to serve in the military narrowly focuses on: (a) the disruption of unit cohesion following the integration of gays into the organization; (b) the compatibility of gay and straight service members; and (c) the overall acceptance of gay service members, by the heterosexual majority (Estrada & Laurence, 2009). The main goal of these studies wasn't to understand a diversity group, but instead to determine if the majority population approved of this minority population openly joining its ranks and if not, why this minority group should not be allowed to serve.

While it is important to address the concerns of all those working in an organization, there is much more that should be considered when conducting organizational studies. The Research and Development (RAND) Study, which was published in July of 1993, was conducted by a team of 75 researchers from the National Defense Research Institute. These researchers:

> exhaustively studied scientific literature on a broad range of topics: group cohesion, the experience of foreign militaries, the theory and history of institutional change, public and military opinion, patterns of sexual behavior in the United States, sexual harassment, leadership theory, public health concern, the history of racial integration in the military, policies on sexuality in police and fire departments, and legal consideration regarding access to military service. (Frank, 2009, p. 114)

From this exhaustive study, researchers concluded that sexual orientation should not be the sole identifier in keeping an individual from serving. Researchers concluded that

DADT could be repealed without any significant setbacks or issues as long as military leaders supported the change and the change was clearly defined and disseminated through the ranks (National Defense Research Institute, 1993). This extensive 500-page study cost taxpayers $1.3 million, but was never used by the military.

According to the *New York Times*, Pentagon officials tried to keep this study from going public (Frank, 2009). Many Pentagon officials refused to talk about the study and others admitted the RAND report was never considered in creating, maintaining, or changing the military's sexual orientation policy (Schmitt, 1993). However, changes were made in the military policy regarding sexual orientation that year by the 42nd President of the United States, William J. Clinton. While he originally wanted to put an end to the military's discriminatory practice, President Clinton was met with so much opposition he ended up settling on a compromise known as Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass, more commonly known as Don't Ask, Don't Tell or DADT (Wesley et al, 2011).

This policy was intended to be an interim resolution (Parco & Levy, 2010), however it stayed in effect for nearly two decades until December 2010 when President Barack H. Obama signed into law its repeal (Obama, 2010). During this era, numerous concerns were raised and additional studies were performed. A common theme in these studies was how members of the military felt about openly accepting homosexuals into their organization. Personal privacy was brought up repeatedly. People were concerned about showering and sleeping arrangements in regards to the homosexual population. Although gays were silently serving in the military, showering with, and sleeping next to

the heterosexual population, individuals still believed personal privacy would be affected if DADT was lifted. Many studies addressing personal privacy found very little concerns regarding homosexual service members (Department of Defense, 2010; McGarry, 2010; National Defense Research Institute, 2010; Martinez, Hebl, & Law, 2012; Moradi & Miller, 2010).

One such study, conducted by the Department of Defense's Comprehensive Review Working Group, researched service members who served in a unit with an individual they believed to be gay. The research found that when it came to sleeping arrangements, over a quarter of respondents would do nothing different if gay service members were allowed to openly serve. When it came to showering, the most talked about homosexual concern, 25% said they would do nothing different, another 25% of respondents said they would simply shower at a different time, and another 11% would discuss behavioral expectations within their military unit (Department of Defense, 2010). As the 2010 Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of DADT pointed out:

> The reality is that people of different sexual orientations use shower and bathroom facilities together every day in hundreds of thousands of college dorms, college and high school gyms, professional sport locker rooms, police and fire stations and athletic clubs (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 13).

Synthesizing various studies and their findings, there was a clear division of those who were accepting of gays in the military and those who were not. Table 1 illustrates the acceptance of gays in the military. As can be expected, other minorities who have experienced similar discrimination in the military tend to be more accepting of another diversity group.

Table 1

Acceptance of Gays in the Military

Individual Characteristic	More Accepting of Gays in the Military	Less Accepting of Gays in the Military
Gender	Women	Men
Ethnicity	African American	White/Latino
Age	Younger	Older
Religion	Less Conservative	More Conservative
Politics	Less Conservative	More Conservative
Military Unit	Non-Combat or Combat Support	Combat Unit
Military Rank	Less Rank/Lower Ranking	More Rank/Higher Ranking
Time-in Service	Less Time-in-Service	More Time-in-Service
Gay Experiences	Know a Gay Person	Don't know a Gay Person

Note. Information in table is adapted from "Gays in the U.S. Military: Reviewing the Research and Conceptualizing a Way Forward" By A. Estrada, G. Dirosa, and A. Decostanza, 2013, Journal of Homosexuality, 60, pp. 334-335.

Additionally, Table 1 aligns personal characteristics with individual acceptance of gays in the military. Younger service members tend to have less time-in-service and less rank which would explain the results of all groups being more accepting of gays in the military. Those with more conservative views in both religion and politics were more likely to have a negative outlook on homosexuality as a whole, which would lead to the unacceptance of gays serving in the military. Those serving in combat units were less accepting of gays, which was thought to be due to the lack of women present in these

organizations coupled with the more masculine atmosphere. Finally, those with no personal ties to the gay community were less understanding due to lack of personal experiences with the gay population.

When analyzing U.S. policy on gays in the military, researchers have also looked to studies performed in other countries. Before the repeal of DADT in 2011, other countries had changed their policies, allowing gay service members to openly serve. Just to the north, Canada had lifted their discriminatory ban almost twenty years prior to the United States. Belkin and McNichol (2001) reported that changing the military's sexual orientation policy in the Canadian Armed Forces had little to no impact on the organization (p. 80). Australia and Great Britain's Armed Forces have also been able to successfully transition, allowing gays to openly serve in their ranks (Frank, 2009). Parco & Levy (2010) contribute this to placing emphasis on equal standards in the organization and keeping the regulations easy for all to understand (pp. 213-216).

In 2010, of the 43 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) partner nations, 35 allowed the open service of gay service members. Only five nations, besides the United States excluded gays from the military (Department of Defense, 2010). The following countries allowed the open service of gay service members as of 2010: Albania, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, and United Kingdom (Department of Defense, 2010). During this

time, the DOD reported Bulgaria, Jordan, Poland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and United States of America did not allow the open service of gay military members. Information was unavailable on the Republic of Macedonia and Singapore (Department of Defense, 2010). Despite what foreign militaries have deemed appropriate for their armed forces, the United States military has continued to explore what they feel to be best suited here at home.

When DADT was implemented, it brought the U.S. military's policy on gays into focus and both military and civilians took note. The polls which were taken and studies which were conducted showed both support for DADT as well as a call to have this policy repealed (Estrada et al., 2013). America's war to keep gays from openly serving in the military has not been a one-sided battle. In addition to those fighting to keep homosexuals out of the military, this controversial topic has long been a central issue for gays wishing to serve their country with the same equal rights, as the heterosexual population as well as gay allies fighting for freedoms associated with equality (Belkin, 2008; Ramirez, et al., 2013).

Organizations such as the *Washington Post* and *ABC News* have reported on civilian polls regarding public opinion of gays serving in the military. And while reports, such as a 2008 *Washington Post – ABC News* poll showed that 75% of Americans believed that gays should be allowed to openly serve in the U.S. Armed Forces (Dropp & Cohen, 2008) and public opinion polls have showed a decrease in opposition to lifting the DADT ban (Estrada & Laurence, 2009), Parco and Levy (2010) note, these civilians know very little about military culture as military and civilian lifestyles differ drastically

(p. 251). Thus, while results of these surveys provide information regarding societal beliefs, and trends, they are given little, to no consideration, in driving military policy (Estrada & Laurence, 2009; Frank, 2009).

A significant report published in 2008 by the General Flag Officers' Study Group similarly found that allowing gays to openly serve would not cause significant adverse effects on either unit cohesion or military readiness (Department of Defense, 2010). The report also concluded that the U.S. military had lost talent because of DADT. The military had also experienced a decrease in unit morale, as unit commanders had to choose between breaking the law by allowing a known gay service member to serve his country, and openly discriminating against him for his sexual orientation. Additionally, it has caused gay service members to hide their identity which has prevented some from receiving psychological and medical care or religious counseling when needed (Aitken, Gard, Alexander & Shananan, 2008). Also in 2008, *The Military Times* conducted a survey regarding gays in the military. The random selection survey found of the 2000 active duty personnel polled, 71% of service members would continue to serve if gays were able to openly serve, while 10% would not re-enlist (Military Culture Coalition, 2009).

On March 2, 2010, prior to the repeal of DADT, the Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates compiled a team to assess the impact the repeal of DADT would have on the military and to address how it may affect the military's overall effectiveness. This massive study interviewed nearly 400,000 service members, 150,000 military spouses,

and former gay and lesbian service members, some of which had been discharged under the DADT policy (Department of Defense, 2010).

The study provided some much needed data to understand the views of service members and their families along with gay and lesbian veterans (DOD, 2010). But because this study was conducted while the DADT policy was still in effect, and by the Department of Defense, these research efforts did not include the opinions or viewpoints of gay service members who were still serving. So while this report did provide some insight to how service members, their families, and previous gay service members viewed the DADT policy, and possible changes regarding military sexual orientation policy, missing were the viewpoints of perhaps the most critically affected group of individuals, gay service members.

When analyzing military studies, Allsep (2013) notes that the research conducted on gays in the military has become "excessively narrow and entirely too dependent on work produced at undergraduate institutions under military command" (p. 391). The author went on to point out the flaws in current military research on gays in the military. The military, he and many other researchers note, focuses on military readiness, cohesion, and overall effectiveness, and neglects the viewpoints of the diversity group in understanding what it means to be a gay member in the U.S. military (Allsep, 2013). Despite having fostered an anti-gay environment for so long, military leaders treated the repeal of DADT as a simple policy change rather than addressing the need for an entire culture change (Allsep, 2013). By ignoring fundamental issues such as change in

military culture, including all social groups present in the military, leadership is missing a large component in moving forward and away from sexual orientation discrimination.

The military has repeatedly failed to include the minority group being discriminated against in their studies. When the military expressed concerns about allowing women to serve, opinions were based on stereotypic prejudices, rather than studies of the minority population (Dichter & True, 2014). Most recently, with the repeal of DADT, the gay service members' voice is also unaccounted for (Allsep, 2013; Belkin, 2008; Estrada et al., 2013). Parallel to the absence of women in decisions based on their equality, gays have been silenced by the very organization which has targeted them for unfair treatment (Murphy, 2013). Despite the repeal, which allows service members to openly serve, studies have focused on the majority's opinion and forgot about perhaps the most critically affected group of individuals, the gay population. Given the history of ignoring the minority perspective, the military has struggled with understanding these groups, implementing diversity efforts, and creating the cohesive organization.

Social Identity Theory

The military describes itself as one huge melting pot, comprised of people from all different walks of life. But not all of these different people have been welcomed or even accepted into the military with open arms. As discussed in this literature review, women and gay service members have both been treated as second class citizens and have not been afforded the same opportunities as all other groups present in the military.

Social identity theory explains that within a larger group, such as the U.S. military, there are smaller groups whose intergroup behavior is based on their perceived status or acceptance (Miles & Kivlighan Jr., 2012). Gay service members have had to hide their true identity in the military, not only to fit in, but because if they didn't, they could face retaliation, punishment, and separation. Social identity theory continues to explain, internal struggles are present when a person's behavior is driven by a compromise of interpersonal as well as intergroup behavior (Bilewicz & Koffa, 2011). Up until recently, intergroup behavior made being gay a threat to unit cohesion and national security. It was also considered morally wrong by the organization (Allsep, 2013). Because gays wanting to serve their country were subject to negative attitudes regarding their self-identity, it created an environment consisting of extreme differences, making it difficult for gay service members to maintain positive self-concept and fit into the military's social group (Madera et al., 2013).

Since gays in the military have been forced to remain silent regarding their self-identity, they have been referred to as an invisible minority (Bell, et al., 2011). While this minority group no longer has to hide their sexual orientation after the repeal of DADT, this does not equate to an overall change in culture. The military culture and view on homosexuality has been bred in fear and hate instead of acceptance and understanding. So while the military has changed its policy on homosexuality in the military this is merely on paper (Allsep, 2013). A paper policy cannot change generations of compiled hostility overnight, in weeks, or even years.

When studying homosexuals in the workplace Conlin (2004) told of the troubles many men faced while working in an organization, especially those working in a more masculine environment. To hide their self-identity and fit in to the organization's culture, gay men were shown to act more masculine, adopt heterosexual male behaviors, and remain silent about their sexual orientation, or the topic in general (pp.32-33). The silence of minorities is intertwined with an organization's culture, structure, climate, and its processes (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Don't Ask, Don't Tell and many sexual orientation policies before it, have been put in place as a way to silence a minority, when dealing with diversity in the workplace (Bell, et al., 2011). Perceptions in powerful climates of silence, like in the U.S. military, are that it's not worth the effort to speak up or doing so will result in negative repercussions for the individual and others in the group (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). This has led more gay service members and gay allies serving in the military to keep quite regarding this issue.

In order to reduce the negativity experienced by gays in the organization, the military must address past discrimination and understand what it's like to be a gay service member struggling with self-identity, due to the hostile environment they have created. Doing so will positively affect human capital. If the organization (a) studies, (b) understands, and (c) implements positive change to create an accepting organizational culture, they can expect (a) higher levels of work satisfaction, (b) positive work attitudes, and (c) increased commitment from the gay population to the organization (Roberson, 2006). Even more important than the human capital in this case are the ethics associated with righting a wrong for so many that have been discriminated against. The military cannot simply forget the long history of oppression it has bestowed upon the gay

population. They cannot successfully move forward without understanding the destruction they have caused and how to repair the damage. Understanding the gay perspective is a very vital part of successfully creating and maintaining a cohesive and effective military (Allsep, 2013).

Summary and Recommendations

It is clear there is lack of literature and research present concerning sexual orientation as a diversity topic in the U.S. military. In previously performed studies, the view points of the gay population are absent. Scholars, such as Dr. Allsep (2013), point to the fact that current literature lacks the gay perspective and understanding in what it means to be a gay soldier serving in the U.S. military (p. 392). Dr. Parco & Dr. Levy (2013) agree, noting when they searched literature from the scholarly community, they quickly realized there was very little research conducted on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) veterans (p. 150). The U.S. military has struggled with the implementation of diversity efforts throughout history and a key factor supporting this failure is the lack of information collected from the diversity group itself.

Understanding the gay perspective in the U.S. military can bridge the gap in literature and give military leaders, service members, and scholars valuable information on this minority group. But most of all, conducting additional research will give a voice to the silent minority and hopefully help create a better future for gays and all minorities in the U.S. military. This study is based on the need to better understand the gay perspective in the military to close the gap in literature and pave a way for additional

research. Chapter 3 will present the methodology behind this study and chapters 4 and 5 will present and analyze the data as well as make recommendation for further research.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research was to understand the phenomenon of being a gay man serving in the U.S. military, before and after the repeal of DADT. To truly capture the lived experience of being a gay serviceman, it was essential to learn from those that had experienced the phenomenon firsthand. In the chapter that follows, the methodology and approach used to understand this phenomenon are discussed. To open the chapter, the overall research design is presented. Next, the research sample and study's setting are addressed.

Prior to the start of this study, a field test was completed. This field test was conducted in order to assess the appropriateness of the interview tool. The complete details of this field test will also be explored in this chapter. The instrumentation used in this phenomenological study is also presented. Next, the data collection and data analysis process of this study is provided. As a qualitative study, the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are addressed. The ethical considerations for this study are then presented. The chapter ends with a summary and look ahead into the upcoming chapters.

Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative method of phenomenology in order to capture the lived experience of being a gay man in the U.S. military, before and after the repeal of DADT. Phenomenological studies attempt to understand the meaning of a phenomenon

for several individuals based on their lived experiences (Connelly, 2010). Within the field of phenomenology, this study used transcendental phenomenology. More specifically, this study followed the phenomenological approach outlined by Clark Moustakas. Transcendental phenomenology was chosen as this particular design requires the data to be looked at undisturbed (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology allowed the phenomenon to be described by the participants, which was the goal of this study. Within transcendental phenomenology, specific steps such as bracketing out the researcher's possible prejudices and supporting the study's findings with select quotes from participants ensured the results of the study paralleled the subjects' perception of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Like in all phenomenological studies, the researcher first selected a phenomenon or concern, which was considered significantly important (Pringle, Hendry, & McLafferty, 2011). In this case, the researcher identified the phenomenon as being a gay serviceman, before and after the repeal of DADT. Next, the researcher bracketed out personal experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher's experience was considered minimal since the researcher was not part of the military's gay population and did not have any close friends or family members identified as part of this population. However, the researcher did serve in the U.S. military and thus carefully examined and bracketed out any experiences or possible biases regarding DADT or other sexual orientation policies, so as not to let them influence the study. After any possible biases had been bracketed out, the researcher was clear to start the interview process (Moustakas, 1994). Biases were also checked during data collection and analysis.

Sample

For a study attempting to understand the lived experiences of gay men who have served in the U.S. military, before and after the repeal of DADT, the researcher took into account much nominal and current literature on the qualitative method of phenomenology. Additionally, because of the military's previously discriminatory policies regarding the service of gay men, the researcher attempted to create a sample frame that would take into account possible concerns of participants such as: (a) confidentiality, (b) safety, and (c) retaliation. It was thought that if a person did not feel completely safe, he would either withhold information during the interview process or chose not to participate in the study. It was with these considerations, the researcher designed the study's population, sample, and sampling strategies.

Sample Population

This study's population consisted of: (a) gay men, (b) currently serving in the U.S. military, (c) who had also served during the DADT era. It was important that the study's population had served before the repeal of DADT so they could establish a history as a gay man in the military, under varying sexual orientation policies. This would allow for the subjects to have more profound experiences regarding the military's sexual orientation policies. Interviewing a service member who had only served during one policy period would limit the study's potential as the participants would not be able to reflect or compare and contrast their experiences during multiple time frames.

Criterion or purposeful sampling was used to ensure all participants met the set criteria for the phenomenological study (Suri, 2011). The sample inclusively consisted of: (a) gay men, (b) currently serving in the U.S. military, (c) who had also served during the DADT era. Exclusion criteria for this sample included: (a) heterosexual men, (b) women, (c) veterans who were not currently serving, and (d) current service members who did not serve before the repeal of DADT.

Originally, the researcher wanted to include all service members that identify themselves as part of the gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) population, but it was determined that this study's population may be too broad, so it was limited to gay men. Further studies may wish to research the differences between the GLB population and their perspective of the U.S. military based on their sexual orientation.

Sample Frame

Once the population was determined, the sample frame was created. It was important that the sample frame allowed for the safety of all potential participants, while maximizing potential participation. After much thought, it was decided that conducting the study online would allow the researcher to reach a larger geographically sampling pool. But there was still the issue of safety. Since sexual orientation discrimination was so recently allowed in the military, the researcher did not want to utilize a military organization to conduct this study. Doing so may have both intimidated and discouraged participation. After much research, a website dedicated to helping gay service members, was chosen for the study's sample frame. This meant the sampling frame consisted of: (a) those who subscribed, (b) had access to, or (c) simply viewed the website. The

researcher received permission to recruit potential participants from the representative for this website.

Sampling Size

Qualitative studies generally have smaller sample sizes than quantitative studies (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). Qualitative studies should be large enough to uncover most important perceptions, but no larger (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). If the sample is too large, data will become redundant and unnecessary (Mason, 2010). In general, qualitative studies should follow the concept of saturation. Data saturation occurs when the collection of new data does not produce any further information on the subject being researched (Charmez, 2006).

While data saturation determines the majority of the qualitative researcher's sample size, there are other factors which help determine the appropriate number of participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Within qualitative research, the specific research method and data collection process play important roles in sample size determination. Specific to phenomenology, Polkinghorne (1989) recommends interviewing between 5-25 participants who have experienced the phenomenon (p. 43). Morse (1994) recommends at least six participants (p. 229) and Creswell (2007) recommends up to ten for a phenomenological study (p. 227).

This phenomenological study collected data from participants through multiple in-depth interviews. Studies which use multiple in-depth interviews require fewer participants (Lee, Woo, & Mackenzie, 2002). Salmons (2010) additionally notes that

longer interviews may provide more information than shorter interviews and thus result in a need for a smaller sample size (p. 101). The author added, based on the nature of the study, the researcher may decide to conduct a larger number of short interviews or a smaller amount of longer interviews (Salmons, 2010).

Chamberlain (2009) notes that phenomenological samples are usually small, but need to be large enough for the researcher to collect sufficient information rich data (p. 52). Salmons (2010) notes that online interviews are best conducted with a small purposeful sample containing information rich cases (p. 116). In addition, information must be collected until themes present themselves to the researcher (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007).

Based on the type of study and data collection methods, 10-15 participants were determined to be an appropriate number for this study. The goal of this phenomenological study was to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of being a gay man, serving in the U.S. military, before and after the repeal of DADT. The interviews were longer and conducted through multiple iterations. Because there was an increased chance that a participant may withdraw from the study, the researcher attempted to recruit more participants than needed to conduct the study. The researcher believed that interviewing 10-15 participants should provide sufficiently descriptive information.

Sampling Procedures

Recruiting for this study was done through an organization's website. This organization is dedicated to serving gay military members. First, the researcher contacted the representative for this organization and received permission to recruit potential participants through the online website. Once the researcher gained institutional review board (IRB) approval, the recruiting flyer was e-mailed to the point of contact working for the chosen organization, which was posted to the website's homepage as an invitation for individuals to participate in the study.

Potential participants were instructed to e-mail the researcher their individual interest in the study. Interested individuals were instructed not to include their name or any identifiable information in the emails sent to the researcher. This was done as an additional security measure to ensure each participant's identity remained anonymous. All individuals who contacted the researcher were emailed a demographic survey to determine if they met the inclusive criteria for the study. Again, inclusive criteria for this study consisted of: (a) gay men, (b) currently serving in the U.S. military, (c) with service during the DADT era.

Setting

Because interviews were conducted online through the use of e-mail, the researcher was only able to directly control her personal interview setting. However, the researcher did provide information to participants on creating an individual setting during the interview process. Individuals were encouraged to complete their portion of the interviews in a comfortable location where they felt safe and had time to think about and

give thorough and thoughtful answers. It was mentioned that completing an interview at work or in a public location may allow for the sharing of unintended information with others. Therefore, individuals were encouraged to complete interviews in the comfort of a familiar environment. When dealing with such a sensitive subject, the comfort of a familiar environment may give the interviewee more confidence to share more information than he would be willing to reveal in person (Salmons, 2010).

Field Testing

In the early stages, when creating the interview for this study, the researcher studied both the topic of gays in the military as well as online interviewing to determine if online interviewing was the appropriate method to conduct this study. Once a decision was made, a group of individuals were pooled to conduct a field test of the researcher's designed interview. The researcher e-mailed a group of individuals to review the overall appropriateness of the study's instrument including: online interviewing and the interview questions. This group of individuals was selected for knowledge and or experience with the topic of gays in the military, military service, or online interviewing.

The first individual chosen for field testing was selected for his experience and knowledge in qualitative studies and human resources (HR). He has acted as a PhD mentor to many students in qualitative studies, using interviewing as their primary data collection procedures. Additionally, he served in the military and was familiar with the organizational environment. This was very important to the study, as it solely focused on the military. Finally, as a HR professor and dissertation mentor, this individual was considered an expert in the field of qualitative studies and the HR profession.

The second individual selected for field testing for was chosen as an expertise on online interviewing. This individual has published extensive literature solely dedicated to the instrument of online interviewing with some literature concentrating specifically on qualitative online interviews. Not only was the researcher able to use this literature to improve the study, but also received direct input on the interview tool, from the expert.

The researcher also field tested the study's instrument with: (a) gay men, (b) a gay service member, (c) a gay veteran, (d) a gay rights advocate, and upon suggestion from the gay service member, (e) a heterosexual male service member. The feedback the researcher received from these individuals is highlighted in *Appendix A*. The researcher asked each field tester the following questions:

- Validity: Does the intended population (gay service members) seem like an appropriate population to answer the research question?
- Logical coherence: Is the research question a reasonable question to ask gay service members?
- Readability: Is the research question stated in a way that is understandable to gay service members?
- Overall appropriateness of instrument and individual items: Does the use of individual online interviews seem like an appropriate way to engage this population in the study?
- Additionally, all members were encouraged to give any comments or suggestions they felt may improve the study.

Instrumentation

In qualitative studies, the researcher is considered the primary instrument of both data collection as well as data analysis (Sanders, 1982). Because the researcher is the primary instrument, there is room for human error. Does the researcher have experience in conducting a qualitative study? How will the researcher choose the best method to conduct the study and develop a suitable research tool in order to conduct a valid and reliable study? All of these concerns were addressed when researching, designing, and deciding on appropriate measures for this research.

For this qualitative study, phenomenology was chosen as the most appropriate method as it helped answer the research question by providing an understanding of shared meaning of an event based on several individuals' lived experiences (Connelly, 2010). This research method provides readers with an understanding of what it means to be a part of a group who has lived through an experience.

Because the researcher used phenomenology as the chosen qualitative approach, one of the first steps taken was the process of bracketing or epoché to remove or put aside personal perspectives or assumptions related to the study. This process helped the researcher in viewing the data as though it was being experiences it for the first time (Jones, 2001, p. 68) without preconceptions to influence the researcher's personal judgment.

Upon exploration and discussion, the researcher felt the use of online interviews would be the best choice for this study. But before the researcher made a final decision, a field test of the interview guide was conducted. This field test was conducted in order to test the methodology as well as the questions in the interview guide. The field test

assessed the adequacy of the research questions and overall research design in obtaining an acceptable range of responses (van Teiglingen & Hundley, 2001). The researcher consulted with qualitative research and online interviewing experts to assess the appropriateness of the methodology and research design. Additionally, because the researcher lacked direct experience in interviewing this sensitive population, members of the gay population were consulted to ensure the (a) interview questions, (b) language, style, and (c) strategy, were appropriate. This field test will be more thoroughly discussed later in this chapter and can be found in *Appendix A*.

The results of the field test concurred it was beneficial to conduct interviews online. The researcher did have experience conducting interviews and more specifically has conducted interviews with service members while serving in the U.S. military. The researcher designed, conducted, and analyzed interviews of service members returning from overseas deployment in an attempt to understand organizational retention based on individual service members' perspectives. After being asked to present this information at the annual Sergeant Major's Conference, the researcher was asked to complete a statewide study. The researcher designed, conducted, and analyzed this study online.

The main differences from the researcher's previous interviewing experience and this interview process were that: (a) the sample size for this research was smaller and more in-depth; (b) the target population consisted specifically of gay service members; and (c) the interviewer had gained additional knowledge through education, more specifically through the study of qualitative research. Throughout the pursuit of her Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate degrees, all focused on human resources, the

researcher was trained in interviewing and has gained additional experience from performing research under the direction supervisor of her professors.

The researcher took many steps to compensate for the areas where she lacked experience by: (a) utilizing other researchers' experience through publications regarding phenomenological interviewing; (b) consulting with Dr. Janet Salmons, Capella Faculty, committee member, and expert in online interviewing; (c) researching information provided by queer theorists pertinent to the study (queer theorists concentrate on the entire gay population as it continues to evolve) (Harris, 2005); and (d) communicating with members of the gay population to ensure the researcher used appropriate and sensitive language during the study.

Data Collection

The goal of this phenomenological study was to capture the lived experience of being a gay man, in the U.S. military, before and after the repeal of DADT by understanding the perspectives (feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and outlook) of gay service members. It is true an individual's perception is made up of both external and internal influences, thus no two people will experience and interpret a situation exactly the same. In addition to external influences, the way in which an individual perceives a situation, event, or phenomenon is based on internal feelings which come from an individual's past experiences (Otara, 2011). Social identity theory provided additional insight to an individual's perception, explaining that an individual's perception and behavior will be based on: (a) their interpersonal views, (b) the basis of perceived status within the larger

group, and (c) the intergroup or organizational environment (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1982).

When studying the phenomenon of being a gay service member, both before and after the repeal of DADT, the conceptual definition of perspective expected individual's to have different feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and outlooks. However, the goal of a phenomenological study was to describe the shared meaning for several individuals based on their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the key phenomenon for this study was not an individual's perspective, but instead, gay servicemen's perspective as a whole.

The recruitment flyer asked for individuals that wanted to participate in an online study analyzing the phenomenon of being a gay service member. Additionally, noted in the flyer was the research criteria for study participation. All individuals who contacted the researcher wishing to participate in the study were asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire. This questionnaire helped determine if each person met the study's inclusive criteria of (a) being a gay man, (b) who was currently serving in the U.S. military, and (c) had additionally served during and after the DADT era. The demographic questionnaire also asked for additional information which the researcher felt might be important for data analysis. The demographic questionnaire used for this study can be found in *Appendix B*.

All individuals who met the inclusive criteria were sent an informed consent form which: (a) described the study, (b) who would be conducting the study, (c) what participation in the research involved, (d) why they were being asked to participate, (e) the risks and benefits associated with the study, (f) confidentiality, and (g) how participants could withdraw from the study. Since all communication was done online,

through e-mail, individuals were asked to carefully read the informed consent form and respond to the researcher acknowledging they had read and understood the informed consent form and wished to participate in the study. Individuals wishing to participate in the study were asked to respond to the email, confirming they agreed with the informed consent form and wanted to be in the study. Individuals who chose not to participate in the study were told they needed to do nothing.

The online interviews were conducted individually through e-mail with questions being asked to the subjects in a semi-structured approach. This approach started with a broad opening question followed by more in-depth questions. This study's interview guide can be found in *Appendix C*. The following broad question was first asked to all participants was: Can you please describe your experience as a gay service member in the U.S. military during the Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) era? This broad question was followed by more detailed questions which again can be found in *Appendix C*. After the participant had sufficiently described the phenomenon of being a gay man serving during the DADT era, the research moved on to the next broad question: Can you please describe your experience as a gay service member in the U.S. military after the repeal of DADT through today? After these initial questions, the researcher continued the interview process, asking participants for more information where appropriate, to better understand the phenomenon.

During the interview process, the researcher limited the response time between the researcher and participant. A study may suffer if: (a) interviews are too long, (b) the researcher doesn't limit response time, or (c) takes too long to respond to the participants (James & Busher, 2006). When online interviews take too long, focus can be lost and

enthusiasm can decline (Salmons, 2010). The researcher conducted interviews in a six-week window gave both the researcher and participant enough time to complete the interview process. The intent was to keep the interviews short enough so that the participant didn't lose interest but also to give them enough time to reflect on their experiences in order to provide information rich data for the study.

Many times qualitative researchers observe their participants when conducting interviews. Doing so, allows the researcher to collect additional nonverbal cues, which can be used to better assess an individual's feelings (Panteli & Fineman, 2005; Salmons, 2010). Conducting interviews online, while useful for this study, did not allow the researcher to observe nonverbal cues that researchers typically observe in traditional face-to-face interviews.

When many nonverbal cues are unavailable in an online setting, the researcher will need to adjust the (a) language, (b) structure, and (c) style, (d) as well as other communicatory cues (Walter et al., 2005). Because of the unavailability of nonverbal cues, the researcher took additional measures to ensure the validity of the study. When people communicate solely through the use of text, meaning can be misconstrued through misguided interpretation. Throughout the interview process, the researcher employed linguistic tools as a substitute for nonverbal cues, which could not be observed through online interviewing (Walter et al., 2005). Popular acronyms, emoticons as well as font manipulation, including: (a) underlining, (b) capitalizing, and (c) bolding text were used to draw attention to or clarify certain points.

Because the researcher collected information through e-mails there was no need to transcribe data from the interview. To address the error that could occur in

interpretation, the researcher confirmed interpretations through member checking. Member checking refers to reviewing the conclusions drawn from the interview with the interviewed participant to confirm the researcher's interpretations (Webb, 2003).

Data Analysis

When attempting to understand what it means to serve as a gay man in the U.S. military, before and after the repeal of DADT, it was vital to paint a picture to the reader of what these individuals have experienced and lived through. Phenomenology allowed the researcher to study gay men in the U.S. military and synthesize their experiences, producing a depiction of what it meant to be a gay man serving under various sexual orientation policies. The specific methodology used for this data analysis was transcendental phenomenology.

Once again, it was important for the researcher to address any pre-conceived notions or biases related to the study in order for her to approach data analysis with an open mind and to ensure the data was from the participants', not the researcher's perspective. Normally, after data collection, interviews must be transcribed into written form. This is so the data may be more thoroughly studied, allowing for the researcher to study the information as a whole and later in segments, while looking for emergent trends. However, in this study, interviews were completed via e-mail and thus were already provided to the researcher in written form, meaning there was no need for transcription. The researcher chose to transfer and save the participant's individual e-mails in word documents, which were organized individually by each participant.

Each participant's file contained the individual's interview. One by one, the researcher individually studied each participant's interview responses in order to get a general sense of the person's whole statement and his experiences as a gay service member, before and after the repeal of DADT. The researcher chose to manually code and analyze the data as transcendental phenomenology points out, it is important for the researcher to read and become familiar with each participant's transcript (Moustakas, 1994) and the researcher felt that using a computer software program would not allow for the same intimacy with the data. Using a computer software program can put a machine between the researcher and the data (Creswell, 2007). By reading through each participant's transcript multiple times, the researcher was able to better understand the data.

After becoming familiar with the transcript, the researcher reviewed it again, this time focusing on the phenomenon being studied. Using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology, data was analyzed by reducing interviews into significant statements and combining these into themes (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher developed clusters of meaning with a focus on the phenomenon being studied (Flood, 2010). In reviewing the collected data, the researcher was able to concentrate on the participant's experience, including such elements as judgment, emotions, perceptions (Connelly, 2010), attitudes, and beliefs. This was done one by one with each participant's transcript.

Lastly, the researcher synthesized each of the participant's statements into a collective voice, which captured the true essence of the phenomenon being studied (Pringle, Hendry, & McLafferty, 2011). It was here the researcher looked for key points and commonalities among participants. Redundant or irrelevant statements were then

eliminated. Building on Moustakas' approach, verbatim narratives were taken from the participants' responses to record the phenomenon in their own words. Selecting quotes from participants ensured the results of the study paralleled the subjects' perception of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). By analyzing these elements, the researcher was able to communicate the essence of being a gay service member, as expressed by the individuals, who lived through or experienced the phenomenon. At the end of this study, the reader should understand the phenomenon of being a gay serviceman, before and after the repeal of DADT.

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Conformability

The four key areas for evaluating this qualitative study include: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) conformability. To ensure credibility of the results, the researcher used member checking to verify the participants' writings were correctly interpreted. Again, member checking asked the participants if their statements were correctly interpreted.

When addressing the transferability of this study, the researcher had to consider the unique population being studied. Gay men within the military may have a very different experience than gay men in other organizations. Likewise, other minorities such as lesbians may experience the phenomenon differently. Other research regarding minorities such as women and African Americans in the military have been used to compare to gays serving in the military, however it is noted that there are major differences in each diversity group (Department of Defense, 2010). For these reasons,

while the data gathered from this study may provide a base for other studies, it should not be transferred to other organizations or minority groups.

The dependability of this study refers to the changes that may have occurred within the study's setting. Because interviews were conducted online, through the use of e-mail, the researcher only had control of her side of the study's setting. However, participants were encouraged to complete their interviews in a location they were comfortable, felt safe, and had time to think about and give thorough and thoughtful answers. Additionally, this study, like all phenomenological studies started with broad opening questions and was followed by additional questions, which allowed for the participants to describe the phenomenon in their own words (Webb, 2003). While all follow-up questions were consistent throughout the study, additional questions were asked based upon individual responses. These questions provided a slight change for variation of questions asked to the participant. Nevertheless, all questions stemmed from the two broad opening questions and the follow-up questions, which were asked to all participants.

This study's results should be able to be confirmed or duplicated by most others because the researcher used transcendental phenomenology, which notes specific steps such as: bracketing out the researcher's possible prejudices and supporting the study's findings with select quotes from participants to ensure the results of the study parallel the subjects' perception of the phenomenon.

Ethical Considerations

This study is considered a minimal risk study. The potential benefits outweigh any possible risks and the researcher did everything within her power to ensure maximum benefit and minimal risk. The potential benefits to participants included that they as participants would get to be the voice of an unaccounted, underrepresented population, which may signal change for their minority group. As far as the benefits to science and society, this research provided much needed information of a population within the military that is unaccounted for. There is a lack of information from the gay population within the military and this study will give society a better understanding of this minority population. Within the military it may help leaders better understand a minority group within their organization. Although this research possessed minimal risk, there were still risks which needed to be addressed by the researcher.

The risks of this study included social and psychological risks as well as risks to employability and damage to reputation. The topic being studied dealt with an individuals' sexual orientation. Within society and the U.S. military, gay men have not been completely accepted. If an individual's sexual orientation was exposed, he could experience risk to employment and social risk through damage of reputation.

To minimize the possibility of employability and social risk through damage of reputation, the researcher ensured the confidentiality of all participants. The initial contact in the research process was from the participant to the researcher. The researcher was not provided the participants name nor solicited this information. Instead, individuals that wished to participate were asked to contact the researcher via her university e-mail and not include their name in the e-mail. Participants were never asked

to give their name during the recruitment or screening process. They were asked to fill out a demographic survey if they wished to participate to ensure they met inclusion criteria. Their name, social security number, or any other personal data which could expose their identity was not collected.

Finally, the participants were briefed on the importance of internet and e-mail safety to include: (a) password protecting their e-mail, (b) not sharing passwords, and (c) logging out of their e-mail in order to protect their privacy. Additionally, subjects were advised not to use public or work computers to contact the researcher. If the participant, for any reason, did identify himself, the researcher made sure any identifying characteristic were removed and never put into the dissertation report.

Another risk factor consisted of stress during the interview process. Because previous military law allowed for the discrimination of individuals due to their sexual orientation, the researcher felt it might be possible that participants may experience physiological stress when recalling these events. Because participants were asked to recall certain events in their lives related to their sexual orientation and military experience, there was a chance of emotional distress in recalling certain events related to DADT or other military policies.

To minimize physiological stress, the researcher let participants know up front that they only need answer questions they felt comfortable answering and that they may end the interview at any time. The researcher also provided the phone number of a 24-hour veteran's help line if participants would like to contact anyone regarding stress they felt from talking about their lives as gay service members. Additionally, the Veterans' Affairs hospital provides free care for military members when related to military service.

Since all of the participants are in the military, they were able to contact the VA for assistance. Finally, every military unit has a military chaplain they could contact.

During the entire research process, the researcher used a personal computer which is password protected. The researcher was the only one that has access to the computer and it was only used in the privacy of her home. Additionally, the secured university e-mail was used to conduct communication with the participants. After an interview commenced, all interviews were transcribed into blank word documents and simply labeled subject one, subject two, and so on. The corresponding e-mails were then double deleted, permanently erasing the data. No identifiable information was present in these encrypted files. When the researcher chose to print any documents, they were kept in her home in a locked safe when not being used. When done with this paperwork the researcher shredded it.

After the completion of the study, the researcher cleared the computer, transferring the only remaining data to a flash drive. These files contain no identifiable information and are also encrypted. The flash drive will be stored in the researcher's locked safe until all data is destroyed, seven years after the publication date, as required by Capella University policy. At this time, the flash drive will be physically destroyed.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology used to understand the phenomenon of being a gay man who has served in the U.S. military under two different sexual orientation policies. One policy, DADT, allowed for discrimination of individuals based upon sexual orientation and the other, most recent policy, lifted the discriminatory ban.

When designing this study, the researcher determined the discussed methodology and approach would best allow for this phenomenon to be explored by the researcher, explained by the subjects, and understood by the audience. In the chapters that follow the researcher will present the study's results and analyze the data as well as make recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated the perspectives of gay servicemen through their lived experiences, before and after the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). Prior to the repeal of DADT, gay servicemen were silenced by a policy which punished any gay member of the U.S. Armed Forces that didn't keep his sexual orientation a secret (Gullickson, 2011). Because of this discriminatory ban, there has been a lack of empirical research on gays in the military, both before and after the repeal (Dichter & True, 2014). While studies have been conducted, they focus on the majority's opinions and leave out a critical element. The key component missing from this field of study is the perspectives of the gay servicemen themselves (Allsep, 2013). The objective of this study was to understand the gay servicemen's point of view through exploring their thoughts, perspectives and lived experiences. In this study information was collected from 11 gay servicemen through semi-structured, online interviews, asked in an open-ended manner.

In this chapter the results of the phenomenological study, "Out of the Closet, onto the Battlefield: Life for Gay Servicemen before and after the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell" are presented. First, this chapter provides a brief introduction of the study and the researcher, describing the researcher's interest and role in the study. Next a succinct review of the data analysis is provided, followed by a comprehensive description of the study's population. Because this study examined life for gay servicemen, before and

after the repeal of DADT, data for each period is presented separately. First the data, results, and analysis are presented for the DADT era. Subsequently, the data, results, and analysis are presented for the period after the repeal of DADT. Following the presentation of data, a chapter summary, and overview of Chapter 5 will close this chapter.

Introduction: The Study and the Researcher

The researcher served in the military under the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy. Working as a human resource manager (HRM), the researcher often dealt with discharges of service members, to include the discharge of gay service members per the DADT policy. During the DADT era, the policy regarding gays stated that any person who identified himself as gay would be discharged from the military (Gullickson, 2011). Although the researcher did not personally agree with the military's diversity policy regarding gays, the regulation made it clear that openly gay service members were not to be tolerated in the U.S. military. It troubled the researcher that so many individuals had opinions on gays serving in the military, but it was the gay population that was not allowed to speak up, because doing so would mean their dismissal from the armed forces.

The researcher felt it was unfair that this minority group was not only discriminated against but also forced to be silent about the discrimination they faced. While in the military, the researcher interviewed a soldier who was discharged for his sexual orientation along with others involved in the case. The gay solider expressed a genuine respect for the military and all that served. His direct supervisor said he was one

of the most intelligent soldiers he had ever worked with. However, many others voiced stereotypical prejudices and fears regarding this soldier without actually talking to or knowing him. It was frustrating that people with a lack of personal knowledge regarding this soldier or the gay population were making assumptions based upon preconceived prejudices. The researcher felt it was likely this was how policies regarding sexual orientation in the military were formed. At this point, the researcher knew more had to be done to understand this military minority in order to change the prejudices fostered through the organization's culture. Although not much could be done while serving in the military under the DADT policy, after leaving the military, the researcher was able to freely study this minority population in order to provide a new perspective on gays serving in the military.

The background the researcher had in the military helped with understanding of military language and culture. This was a valuable asset in designing the study, interviewing the participants, and in interpreting and analyzing the data. Additionally because the researcher previously conducted military studies, she was able to draw upon prior experiences to better this study's design, process, and analysis.

Description of the Sample (Participants)

In order to answer the research question: "how do gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment before and after the repeal of the DADT policy?" the researcher set forth inclusive and exclusive criteria for participation in the study. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure all participants met the inclusive criteria

set forth for this phenomenological study (Suri, 2011). Participation inclusively consisted of (a) gay men, (b) currently serving in the U.S. military, (c) who had also served during the DADT era. Exclusion criteria for this sample included (a) heterosexual men, (b) women, (c) veterans who were not currently serving, and (d) current service members who did not serve before the repeal of DADT.

In addition to the inclusion criteria set forth, the research collected demographic data from the participants. Paired with the researcher's previous military experience, the additional examination of literature concluded certain characteristic would be helpful in detecting patterns in this phenomenological study. The demographic data the researcher collected consisted of the participant's: (a) age, (b) race, (c) civilian education, (d) religion, (e) military rank, (f) military occupational skill (MOS) or job, (g) military unit, and (h) military branch of service. A copy of the demographic survey may and reasoning behind the selection of demographic questions can be found in *Appendix B*.

Thirteen individuals responded to the recruitment flyer posted to the chosen organization's website. Of these 13 individuals, 11 met the criteria set forth and completed the interview process. One individual was screened out as he did not meet the study's criteria. The other individual, who did not complete the study, initially expressed interest in participating in this study, but withdrew when asked to complete the demographic survey. Neither of these two individuals started or completed any portion of the interview process. Of the 11 participants who started the interview process, all participants completed the interview process and individual member checking. None of the participants withdrew once they started the interview process. Table 2 provides an

overview of the participants' demographic information, which is supplemented by a brief individual description of each participant.

Participant one (P1) was a White, 36-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 1996 and served in the Army National Guard for his entire military career, serving one weekend a month and two weeks a year. In addition he had been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). During the time of this interview he had been in the military for a total of 18 years. Throughout his military career, participant one served in the field of Information Technology (IT) and spent the majority of his service in headquarter companies. This participant served as an officer and his highest rank held was a Captain (CPT/O3). He had completed his Bachelor's degree and was working towards his Master's degree. This participant had no religious preference.

Participant two (P2) was a White, 20-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 2011 at the age of 17 and served in the Army National Guard for his entire military career. This participant had not been deployed. During the time of this interview the participant had served a total of three years. Throughout his military career, participant two had served as a medic and spent the first two years, or over half of his military career, in military training. He spent the rest of his military career in a support unit. This participant served as an enlisted soldier and had reached the rank of Specialist (SPC/E4). He had completed one year of college and had no religious preference.

Table 2

Individual Participant Demographic Overview

Participant	Age	Race	Branch	Rank	Years in Military	Civilian Education	Religion
1	36	White	Army National Guard	O3	18	Bachelor's plus some Master's	None
2	20	White	Army National Guard	E4	3	1 year complete	None
3	24	White	Army	E4	6	Some complete	None
4	38	White	Army	O4	19	Master's	Lutheran
5	47	White	Army Reserve	E8	16	Bachelor's	Catholic
6	39	White	Army	E7	20	Associate's	Catholic
7	22	White	Army	E5	5	High School Diploma	Lutheran
8	26	Black	Army National Guard	E4	5	Associate's	Baptist
9	28	Hispanic	Air Force	E6	10	High School Diploma	Catholic
10	31	White	Air Force	E7	8	3 years of college	Catholic
11	32	White	Army	O3	8	Bachelor's	Catholic

Participant three (P3) was a White, 24-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 2008 and served in the Army his entire military career. During the time of this interview, participant three had served a total of six years and had obtained the rank of Specialist (SPC/E4). Participant three had been deployed once in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Throughout his military career, this participant worked as an intelligence analyst in a cavalry unit. He had completed some college and did not have any religious preference.

Participant four (P4) was a White, 38-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 1995 and served in the Army his entire military career. This participant had been deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm (ODS), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). During the time of this interview this participant had served a total of 19 years, in various positions, most recently in human resources. He was serving as a Commissioned Officer and had reached the rank of Major (MAJ/O4). Throughout his military career he worked in headquarter companies. He had a Master's degree and his religious preference was Lutheran.

Participant five (P5) was a White, 47-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 1998 and served in both the Army as well as the Army Reserve. He served the first six years of his military career in the Army and the rest of his time in the Army Reserve. Participant five served in Korea and Germany during his active duty time and was deployed as a reservist in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). At the time of this interview the participant had served 16 years and noted he would be retiring once

he reached 20 years of service. This participant had reached the rank of Master Sergeant (MSG/E8) and served his entire military career in the communications field. He had worked in both signal battalions and at the brigade level. Participant five had a Bachelor's degree and he identified himself as Catholic.

Participant six (P6) was a White, 39-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 1994 and served his entire military career in the Army. During the time of this interview, participant six had served a total of 20 years and been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Throughout his military career, participant six had served in the supply field and he had reached the rank of Sergeant First Class (SFC/E7). He had worked in various units, mostly support units, and most recently a combat support Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC). Participant six had an Associate's degree and identified himself as Catholic.

Participant seven (P7) was a White, 22-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 2009 and served his entire military career in the Army. At the time of this interview, participant seven had served a total of five years and had obtained the rank of Sergeant (SGT/E5). He had not been deployed. He worked his entire career as a mechanic, more specifically a track vehicle mechanic, and was assigned to an armor unit. Participant seven had a high school diploma and identified himself as Lutheran.

Participant eight (P8) was a Black, 26-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 2009 and had spent his entire career of five years working as a military cook. At the time of the interview, participant eight had obtained the rank of Specialist (SPC/E4) and had not been deployed. He spent his entire career working in the

Army National Guard in an infantry unit. This participant had completed an Associate's degree and identified himself as Baptist.

Participant nine (P9) was a Hispanic, 28-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 2004 and had spent his career in the Air Force. At the time of the interview, he had reached the rank of Technical Sergeant (TSgt/E6) and had served for 10 years. Participant nine had served his entire military career as a medic working in military hospitals and field hospitals. He had deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). This participant had a high school diploma and identified himself as Catholic.

Participant 10 (P10) was a White, 31-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 2006 and had served for eight years in the Air Force. At the time of the interview, this participant had reached the rank of Master Sergeant (MSgt/E7). He had worked his entire military career in the supply field. He communicated that he spent the majority of his time in strategic air command units. He had deployed twice in support in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This participant had completed three years of college and identified himself as Catholic.

Participant 11 (P11) was a White, 32-year-old, self-identified gay male. He joined the military in 2007 and had served eight years in the Army. At the time of the interview, this participant had reached the rank of Captain (Captain/O3). He had worked in various combat units serving mostly in the mechanized infantry. He had deployed once in the support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This participant had a Bachelor's Degree and considered himself a member of the Catholic Church.

Description of Group Demographics

Because this study was conducted as a phenomenological one, the goal was to describe the lived experiences of the group, in this case, gay men and their experiences serving before and after the repeal of DADT. By breaking down the demographics of the participants and analyzing the data, the researcher was able to explore additional patterns. Per social identity theory, internal and external factors affect an individual's social behavior and intergroup behavior (Bilewicz & Koffa, 2011). Hence, these factors contribute to an individual's view of himself (Madera et al., 2013) as a gay man serving within the armed forces. An individual's behavior will be compromised of interpersonal and intergroup behavior. While each participant shares the commonality of being a gay man that served during the DADT era and after the repeal of DADT, there were additional factors present that may account for differences in perspectives. While no two participants will have the same exact experiences, the goal of this study was to capture the shared experiences of this group in order to give the reader an essence of what it means to be a gay man serving in the U.S. military. By collecting demographic data from participants, similarities and differences of the group as well as subcultures, could be more thoroughly identified. Drawing from the social identity theory, many personal and professional aspects of each participant's life were taken into consideration, collected, and analyzed as pertinent demographic data. Below, these important demographic factors are discussed in greater detail.

Age and Generation

An individual's age may have an effect on his perspective regarding sexual orientation due to the major happenings or concerns present in society during a person's life. For example, in the early 1980s, there was an AIDS scare in the United States which was commonly referred to as the gay man's disease. Individuals that lived through this era, may have a different perspective than those not subject to this concern (Bouton et al., 1987). Table 3 more thoroughly breaks down participants by their age.

Table 3

Age of Participants

Age	Number of Participants	Percentage
17-24	3	27.27
25-29	2	18.18
30-33	2	18.18
34-39	3	27.27
40+	1	9.09
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Additionally, what occurs in one's generation has been shown to have an effect on a person. Extensive research has been completed on generational theory regarding attributes, perspectives, and attitudes individuals have due to their generation (Ahlrichs,

2007; Bernstein, Alexander, & Alexander, 2008; Davis, Pawlowski, & Houston, 2006; Giancola, 2006; Hofstede, 1998; Kim et al., 2003; Meier, Crocker & Austin, 2010; Taylor, Encel, & Oka, 2002).

Within this study, there were two generational groups present: Generation X and Generation Y. Participants that fell into Generation X were born 1965-1980 and were ages 34-49. When this study was conducted, there were a total of four participants that fit into this category for a total of 36.36% of the sample population. Participants a part of Generation Y were born 1981-2000. In this study, there was a total seven Generation Y participants, for a total of 63.63% of the subject population. The Generation Y participants were ages 17-33. Table 4 shows a breakdown of participants by generation.

Table 4

Generation of Participants

Generation	Number of Participants	Percentage
Generation X (1965-1980)	4	36.36
Generation Y (1981-2000)	7	63.63
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Military Time-in-Service and Military Rank

There were two reasons military time-in-service and rank were considered important demographics to explore. First, because the U.S. military offers retirement after 20 years of service, individuals with more time-in-service are considered career service members and have more to lose if they are discharged due to their sexual orientation. Second, for the most part, time-in-service coincides with rank, meaning those who have served longer are more likely to be higher ranking individuals. Those with more rank would also have more to lose than lower ranking individuals. Similarly, an individual may feel more pressured to conform to the organization's culture based on his military rank and time-in-service.

Table 5 and Table 6 break down the participants' time-in-service and military rank. In this study, over half of the participants, 63.63% had served 10 years or less in the military. Junior personnel and junior leadership made up 45.45% of the participants. The remaining 54.54% were serving in senior leadership positions. Of the senior leadership, there were two participants with 5-10 years of service and the remaining 36.36% reported having 16 or more years of service.

Table 5

Military Time in Service

Time in Military	Number of Participants	Percentage
> 5 Years	1	9.09
5-10 Years	6	54.54
11-15 Years	0	0
16-20 Years	4	36.36
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Table 6

Military Rank

Military Rank	Number of Participants	Percentage
Junior Personnel	3	27.27
Junior Leadership	2	18.18
Senior Leadership	6	54.54
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Military Branches, Military Units, and Deployments

Within the military there are different branches. As previously discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, different branches of the military have been less accepting of homosexuality than others. In addition, those serving in male dominated branches and combat units have been found to be less accepting of gays, which is thought to be due to the lack of women present in these organizations coupled with the more masculine atmosphere (Allsep Jr., 2013; Belkin & Bateman, 2003; Department of Defense, 2010; Estrada & Laurence, 2009; Moradi & Miller, 2010; Rodgers, 2006). This may account for differences in reported sexual orientation discrimination among participants. Table 7 breaks down the study's participants by branch of service.

Table 7

Branch of Service

Branch	Number of Participants	Percentage
Army	5	45.45
Air Force	2	18.18
Army National Guard	3	27.27
Army Reserve	1	9.09
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Additionally, each participant was asked to identify the type of unit he served with during the majority of his service. It was thought that different types of units may present different levels of acceptance or hostility, as Participant 11 noted, "Infantry soldiers are probably the most sexist group." Each participant's unit of assignment is listed in the individual descriptions above. In this study, six of the participants reported working the majority of their career in a combat unit. The other five participants did not work in combat units. Table 8 breaks down these percentages. Each individual's military unit is also identified above, under their individual descriptions.

Table 8

Military Unit

Branch	Number of Participants	Percentage
Combat Unit	6	54.54
Non-Combat Unit	5	45.45
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Another factor which may have led to differences in experiences is whether the participant served in the active duty military or in the National Guard or Reserves. Serving full-time in comparison to, one weekend a month and two weeks a year, may be communicated as two totally different experiences as gay men. This information can also be found above in each participant's descriptions. A breakdown of all participants'

branch of service can be found in Table 7. Within this study, there were a total of seven participants that served in the active Army and Air Force. Four of the participants reported working in the National Guard or Reserve. Missing from this population were servicemen from the Coast Guard, Navy, and Marines.

The increase in recent deployments has also created different environments for gay servicemen. Table 9 shows the deployment status of the sample population. Individual deployments can be found in each individual description above. Within this study over 70% of participants had been deployed at least one. All of the three participants that had not been deployed had served in the military for six or less years.

Table 9

Deployments

Deployment Status	Number of Participants	Percentage
Deployed	8	72.72
Not Deployed	3	27.27
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Education

Some members of the military receive all training from within the military organization. Those that choose to receive education outside of the military may have different views than the military organization they belong to. Table 10 provides an

overview of participants' education levels. In this study there was a wide range of education completion. All three of the participants that had Bachelor's degrees were serving in senior leadership roles. Two were commissioned officers. The participant with a Master's degree was an officer. Civilian education is a requirement for commissioned officers. Additional individual education information can be found above in the individual descriptions.

Table 10

Education

Education Level	Number of Participants	Percentage
High School	2	18.18
Some College	2	18.18
Associate's Degree	3	27.27
Bachelor's Degree	3	27.27
Master's Degree	1	9.09
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Religion

Various religious groups feel differently about sexual orientation. Some believe that homosexuality is wrong, while others are more accepting. If a participant is a member of a religious group that views homosexuality in a negative light, this could influence the participants' perception. For this reason, each participant was asked to provide their religious preference. Table 11 provides a list of the religious groups represented in this study. All of the participants that identified a religious preference were Christian, for a total of 72.72% of the population. The remaining 27.27% of the population said they had no religious affiliation.

Table 11

Religion

Religion	Number of Participants	Percentage
Catholic	5	45.45
Lutheran	2	18.18
Baptist	1	9.09
No Affiliation	3	27.27
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Race

Race was taken into account as some ethic groups are less accepting of homosexuality (Lewis, 2003; Monteith, Deneen, & Toman, 1996; Sherkat, Mattias de Vries, & Creek, 2010). Past research suggests that White and Latino males tend to show less tolerance to homosexual males (Estrada et al., 2013). Thus one's race could have an effect on their outlook on homosexuality. Table 12 provides the percentage of each race present in this study. Over eighty percent of the participants were White. There was one African American and one Hispanic participant. An individual breakdown can be found above in each participant's personal description.

Table 12

Race

Race	Number of Participants	Percentage
White	9	81.18
Black	1	9.09
Hispanic	1	9.09
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis

The intention of this study was to understand the lived experiences of gay men in the U.S. military, before and after the repeal of DADT. In order to understand what these individuals have experienced and lived through, phenomenology was chosen for data analysis. Transcendental phenomenology requires that collected information be looked at undisturbed (Moustakas, 1994), which allowed the participants to describe the phenomenon in their own words.

The first step in the transcendental phenomenological data analysis process was for the researcher to address any preconceived notions or biases related to the study. Earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 3 the researcher discussed these more thoroughly. After this was done, the researcher was able to approach data analysis with an open mind, ensuring all collected data was from the participant and in no way persuaded by the researcher. Because the interviews for this study were conducted online via e-mail, the interviews did not have to be transcribed. However, because there was no face-to-face meeting or verbal contact with the participants, there was additional room for error regarding text misinterpretation. When unclear about a statement, the researcher used member checking to verify her conclusions.

Each participant's individual interview was studied by the researcher to better understand his experiences as a gay serviceman before and after the repeal of DADT. The data was manually coded and analyzed. As a transcendental phenomenological study, it was important for the researcher to read and become familiar with each participant's transcript (Moustakas, 1994). By intensely studying each participant's transcripts, the researcher was able to more intimately understand the data (Creswell,

2007). Next data was analyzed by reducing the interviews into significant statements and combining these statements into themes (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher then developed and organized clusters of meaning with a focus on the gay serviceman's perspective, before and after the repeal of DADT. This was independently complete with each participant's individual transcript.

Lastly, the researcher looked for common themes and key points among the individual participants and synthesized supporting statements into one collective voice. Redundant or irrelevant statements were then eliminated. Building on Moustakas approach, the researcher utilized verbatim narratives from the participants to record the phenomenon. By using Moustakas approach of selecting quotes from participants, the researcher ensured the results of the study paralleled the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). At the conclusion of this chapter, the reader should understand the phenomenon of being a gay serviceman in the U.S. military, before and after the repeal of DADT.

Presentation of Data and Results: Active Duty versus Guardsmen and Reservist

Prior to the individual presentation of data and results, it is important to note while there were clear themes present from the participants, there was also a clear division between the responses of active duty servicemen and that of guardsmen and reservist. Guardsmen and reservist seemed to have an outlet not present to the active duty servicemen, due to the fact both guardsmen and reservist only served one weekend a month and two weeks a year, unless deployed. When deployed, they discussed many of

the same issues as the active duty servicemen. With the guardsmen and reservists, individuals had what many of them referred to as: their normal life and their military life.

There was a clear separation between how they were treated inside and outside the military because of their sexual orientation. Participant one noted "in my normal life I am who I am, that is it. But in the guard, I remember having to kind of be someone else." Participant five found that it was easier to hide the fact he was gay from the military because of the geographical division between where he lived and worked every day and where he drilled one weekend a month. "I live four hours from my reserve unit so I can separate my lifestyle from my military career." While all participants noted a need to keep their sexual orientation a secret prior to the repeal of DADT, the guardsmen and reservists found relief in only having to hide their identity for two days of the month and two weeks of the year. As participant two noted, "It's one weekend a month after the initial training. I think I can keep my mouth shut…for one weekend a month."

Presentation of Data and Results: Themes present during the DADT Era

The major theme which emerged from the participants during the DADT era was that discrimination due to the DADT policy had led these gay servicemen to have a negative experience in the workplace. The participants discussed the unfairness of the policy and how it affected them as individuals and employees. They also voiced how the policy affected their personal relationships. All participants reported a sense of alienation because of their sexual orientation and 10 out of 11 participants reported being subject to sexual orientation discrimination leading to a reduction of job satisfaction and

participation. Eight of the 11 participants noted how the DADT policy negatively affected their relationships with their families and significant others. Table 13 presents the major themes as reported by the participants during the DADT era.

Table 13

Themes Present in Research during DADT Era

Theme	Participants Reported	Percentage
Family Issues	8	72.72
DADT Unfair/ Bias Policy	8	72.72
Sense of Alienation	11	100
Sexual Orientation Discrimination	10	90.90
Hostile Work Environment	10	90.90
Reduction of Job Satisfaction and or Participation	10	90.90

Theme One: Family Issues

To the U.S. military, family is very important. Families play a very vital role in supporting their loved ones, both in times of peace and conflict. However, not all families were recognized by the military during the DADT era. Because it was against military regulation to be open about one's homosexuality, gay men with significant others were unable to include their partners in military activities. They had to also hide their relationships from the military. Participants noted emotional distress due to the fact

their significant others were not accepted or afforded the same privileges of straight men. Participant one noted "I do feel we missed out on stuff that other couples got to do." Participant four mentioned:

> It would have been nice to bring him [my significant other] to company functions but I knew this wasn't allowed because I would be outing myself. I mean bringing my significant other to an event is no different than someone bringing their wife and kids. Family is family and I guess DADT made it so my family couldn't be part of the Army family.

Participants expressed an increased difficultly related to family issues while deployed. Participant one noted "when I was deployed it was really hard. I pretended he was my brother so I wouldn't get harassed about it." Participant four said "When I was deployed during Desert Storm, there was a family readiness group that was updated about things that were happening and my SO [significant other] couldn't show up as a spouse so he wasn't able to have that support the other spouses did." Participant ten stated, "I have been on numerous deployments and it's hard especially around the holidays when guys are getting videos and presents from their spouses and kids and I was always wondering if the letter my boyfriend sent would be found and I would be kicked out."

Theme Two: Fairness of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy

Over 70% of the participants spoke of how DADT was an unfair or bias policy. Participant five noted that when DADT was enacted "I thought it reinforced the fact that the military recognized the issue but didn't want to address it. It goes against the stereotypical macho image of the U.S. military." Participant one spoke of specific issues regarding the unfairness of the policy stating:

> It pissed me off that I couldn't be at the Christmas party with my significant other of many years, but it was fine for a bunch of the married guys to go to the local strip club, get lap dances and even hook up with girls.

He went on to note "I saw a lot of sexually perverse stuff in the military but as long as it was straight sex, people didn't care." Eight participants mentioned the unfairness of the policy and its effects on their family members. Participant four said: "DADT made it so my family couldn't be a part of the Army family like everyone else."

The general consensus was that it was unfair to target individuals due to their sexual orientation. As participant ten noted he just wanted to be treated the same as everyone else. "I was really angry why I was treated so differently." While eight of the participants who noted the unfairness of the policy, one of the participants made a suggestion for policy change, which he felt would be fairer to all individuals serving in the military. Participant four suggested "I thought that it might be better instead of DADT for homosexuals, there should be a DADT rule about sex because there is so much sexual harassment in the military."

Themes Three, Four, Five, and Six:

Sexual Harassment, Hostile Work Environment, Sense of Alienation, and Reduction in Job Satisfaction

Themes three through six are presented together as they were all interconnected. The sexual harassment gay servicemen experienced created a hostile work environment which led to a sense of alienation among participants along with a reduction in overall job satisfaction. Participants communicated that they felt they had to hide their sexuality

and if discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, there was nothing they could do to stop the discrimination. Participant four remembers thinking: "my god this is like a witch hunt. We lost some good soldiers...forced out for nothing more than their sexual orientation." Participant five shared that he had "seen gay soldiers kicked out because they were taunted and provoked until finally they admitted they were gay." And participant nine said his "FLL [first-line leader] warned us about keeping this secret and that senior leaders were watching us."

Because of the fear instilled in gay servicemen regarding their sexual orientation, many had no choice but to tolerate the discrimination. Participant eight noted that during the DADT era he was aware that "others talk and joke about me [because of my sexuality], but I am used to it in the Army." Participant 10 noted "I had to hide my sexuality during the don't ask don't tell period." Participant 11 admitted "it was hard to hide my sexuality." And participant three noted "I didn't think it would be that hard, but sometimes I felt singled out because people thought I might be gay."

In addition to hiding their sexual orientation because of military regulations, the participants noted harassment they felt they received due to the DADT policy. They felt the policy silenced the gay servicemen and gay military alliances.

Participant one noted:

> There seemed to be a lot of inappropriate joking about gays and sex going on between members of my unit and I didn't like it but what was I going to do? I didn't want to out myself and chance losing everything. So I just pulled away.

Participant six concurred that he suffered harassment but because of DADT, there was nowhere to go for help. “There was a lot of hostility from a lot of the straight guys about DADT and I always had to hide my true feelings and go along with the group.” Participant 10 said he “was made fun of a lot. It was hard not to respond back to the harassment.”

The hostile environment wore on many of the participants and decreased overall job satisfaction and job performance. Participant one admitted:

> The guard is my part-time job so I honestly don’t put as much effort into it as I do my real job. I wonder if my lack of concern has been because of it only being part-time or if it was because an organization I put so much effort into had unfair policies and so much hate towards me.

Participant 10 noted on several occasions the harassment he experienced during the DADT period because of his sexual orientation. This harassment led to behavioral and disciplinary issues. As he noted “I got in a lot of fights and got in trouble for drinking many times.” In addition to problems in the workplace, the participants noted they internally struggled with doing the right thing regarding their beliefs and the military regulation. Participant six noted a particularly challenging experience he had because of the DADT policy, which made him question his integrity as well as his membership in the military:

> During DADT I got promoted to E6 and had to discharge a soldier because he told me he was gay in front of my 1SG [First Sergeant]. It was difficult and still bothers me. I felt like such a fraud. I didn’t want to end my career because I liked my job and I didn’t know what else I would do.

Participant seven thought about leaving the military because of the enormous strain DADT placed upon him, stating: “there were many times that I wanted to talk to my platoon sergeant and get discharged. Before the repeal I carried the secret around

with me." There was a consensus that gay men were singled out for discrimination which alienated them from their organization. Participant three confided that he "didn't think it would be that hard, but sometimes I felt like I was singled out because people thought I might be gay…I couldn't be the person I am normally." And participant one summed up how the policy had affected him explaining: "I think the policy made me feel like I wasn't really or totally part of the guard family."

After the Repeal: Out of the Closet?

As seen in Table 14 nearly half of the participants have decided to come out after the repeal of DADT. These participants mentioned a sense of relief in not having to hide their sexual orientation from their work and co-workers. Participant three noted he came out because "it was easier not to hide." Participant seven noted it was nice "I could be a little more open." And participant two said "I don't have to hide who I am. I didn't plan to be like hey everyone, I'm gay, but now I didn't have to worry about slipping either." Although there was some sense of relief in not having to worry about someone exposing them for their sexual orientation and ending their career, not all participants felt the change in policy would give them the equality they first believed it would. As participant three confirmed "coming out has given me some freedom, but not the same treatment as the rest of the soldiers in my unit."

Of the five participants that did not report being out of the closet, three said that they didn't hide their sexual orientation but they didn't feel the need to tell people either. Participant four said "I haven't ever mentioned my sexual orientation but I don't hide

who I am." Finally, three of the participants chose not to come out of the closet. When asked why they made this decision, all of them mentioned they were untrusting of the military and its service members. With over 20 years of service, participant six felt he had too much to lose by disclosing his sexual orientation. He mentioned, "I have always had to hide a part of myself since I joined the Army" and he would keep it this way, in order to be safe. Similarly, participant five confessed, "I have never been out of the closet simply because I don't want to risk my career. I am afraid the military may kick me out." At the time of this statement, participant five had 16 years of service. In conclusion, participant 11 confirmed "there are still soldiers in my unit who are afraid to come out because they are afraid it will hurt their careers."

Table 14

Participants In or Out of the Closet

In or Out of Closet	Number of Participants	Percentage
In	3	27.27
Out	5	45.45
Don't talk about it but don't hide it	3	27.27
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

How Safe are We Now?

Participants were asked if they perceived themselves to be more or less safe, now versus the DADT era. As seen in Table 15, seven of the participants said they felt the same amount of safety during both periods. Participant three said "I don't really feel anymore safe than I did in the past." As participant seven noted, "I feel about the same. I feel a little more protected because I am not hiding my sexuality."

The participants noted that they felt they were safer because the military could no longer discharge them for their sexual orientation. While participants were now safe from the military's discriminatory regulation, the participants noted the sexual orientation discrimination was still present in the military. Participant eight stated "I know the policy has changed but the harassment is still there." With the shift in policy, so was the shift with safety concerns. Participant two said "I guess I feel safe from the Army, but not the people in the Army." Participant nine feared being punished for his sexual orientation by his leadership, stating "the fear of getting caught under DADT has changed to a fear of retaliation from the leadership."

Table 15

Participants' Sense of Safety after the Repeal of DADT

Sense of Safety	Number of Participants	Percentage
More Safe	4	36.36
Less Safe	0	0
Same	7	63.63
Total	11	100.00

Note: Total percentage is rounded from 99.99% to 100.00%.

Some participants' fears were due to the fact that they felt they could not trust the military. Participant six said "some of my gay soldiers think that the repeal might be changed" and participant five agreed expressing "there is a fear that the policy may change again and we will be targeted." Participant 11 also displayed similar concern stating "there is fear that the policy may get reversed" and gay servicemen will be discharged.

Four or 36.36% of the participants, noted that they felt safer since the repeal of DADT. Participant one mentioned that there are also gay allies that are willing to stand up for those being discriminated against, stating "I have a lot of people around me that are not afraid to stand up for me, if they need to because now they are backed by the military." Because of the lift of the DADT policy, service members were now allowed to stand up for those being discriminated against instead of being mandated to report them for a homosexuality violation of the regulation.

While theses participants felt safer, they did not forget their previous history as gay servicemen in the military. Participant ten said "I guess there is less fear in my life, I just wish it would have come sooner." Because all of these men worked in an environment that condoned discrimination based on sexual orientation, they felt there was a lasting effect on them as well as the military culture as a whole. Participant one explained:

> I'm glad DADT is gone, but there are lasting scars that all military members have from an organization that allowed hatred and discrimination of its own people for so long. The bigots who hate, they hate gays, women, some hate Hispanics that speak Spanish. They are still in the military and it seems that their hate grew stronger when the gays were simply granted equal rights.

Participant six mentioned because of the change in policy, gay service members were now able to receive religious and counseling services without having to hide their sexual orientation. He went on to explain "I have gone to some counseling that has helped me and I tell my gay friends that there is help out there if they want it."

Presentation of Data and Results: Themes present after the Repeal of DADT

After the initial responses from the participants regarding their experiences during DADT, the participants addressed how they felt about the repeal and their lives as gay servicemen following the repeal of DADT. There were four major themes present in the participants' responses. These themes are outlined in Table 16.

Table 16

Themes Present in Research after the Repeal of DADT

Theme	Participants Reported	Percentage
Ongoing Family Issues	6	54.54
Forced Culture Change	9	81.81
Continuing Discrimination	11	100
Future Concerns	8	72.72

Theme One: Ongoing Family Issues

After the repeal of DADT, there was a decrease in participants that reported family difficulties regarding their sexual orientation in the military. Referring back to Table 14, prior to the repeal, eight participants reported family difficulties directly related to the DADT policy and in Table 17, after the repeal, six participants reported ongoing family difficulties related to their sexual orientation and the military culture or military policy.

Because of the past discrimination against gays in the military, when the ban was lifted, some family members had trouble trusting the military. Participant four noted that his significant other "was pretty worried that things might turn bad for me so he has decided to not participate in military functions." However, other participants noted that their families joyfully embraced the change. Participant eight said that the gay guys in his unit were "happy they could bring their significant others around." Many of the

participants that mentioned ongoing family concerns noted it was because of the unwelcoming and sometimes hostile environment they were still subject to. Participant three noted that when he brought his significant other to military events, "I could see people whispering about me. He [my significant other] feels very uncomfortable around the military and soldiers because his work is much more open and understanding." Participant nine said he felt uncomfortable bringing his boyfriend to military events after he overheard members of his unit talking about gay airmen bringing their boyfriends to the unit events, saying, "They are pushing the limits of the repeal."

Four of the participants did not report ongoing family issues because they were not in serious relationships when the interviews were conducted. Another participant, participant two, did not report ongoing family problems because he communicated that he wanted to continue to keep his military and personal life separate. He said he feared repercussions, stating "I have never been out of the closet simply because I don't want to risk my career."

Theme Two: Forced Cultural Change

Over 80% of the participants interviewed mentioned that they felt the transition from the DADT era, to now allowing gays to openly serve, was more forced than openly accepted. Additionally, they noted the culture was slow to change and some mentioned that not much changed after the repeal. Participant one said "I knew things wouldn't change much because change takes time and the anti-gay attitude has been fused into the military way of life." The anti-gay policies in the U.S. military date back over two

centuries (Marshall, 2010). Participants mentioned the anti-gay military attitude was woven into the military's culture just like any other practice. As participant five noted "the military has so much tradition that change seems to be an overwhelming thing."

Some participants were understanding when it came to the slow culture shift. Compared to the DADT era, participant 11 said that "this policy change is quite new so it will take some time before the kinks are worked out." And participant one noted:

> After the repeal of DADT I noticed that there was a shift in military policy and also culture. Of course military culture wasn't going to change overnight, but I noticed that that it was no longer okay to joke about or put down gays as much as before.

Because this was the first time gay men had ever been able to openly serve in the U.S. military, training was completed to thoroughly communicate the new policy. Participant 11, who shared he had been through various briefings regarding regulation or policy changes, commented that the training received on the repeal "put more emphasis on the changes affecting the majority than on the gay minority." And while the training given was to focus on the military's changes regarding gays and their open service, multiple participants reported that their leadership did not fully support the changes. Although participant eight noted "I think the repeal of DADT has been a help for the gay soldiers" he also commented that "the leadership doesn't seem to think it is a good thing." Participant four, who works in a leadership position mentioned "there have been some leadership, I've personally had to talk to about being appropriate and supporting the regulations and military laws like they always have, whether or not they like them."

Additionally, participants noted that leadership seemed unsure of how to handle the fact that gay servicemen were able to openly serve. Participant 11 noted "it seems like most leaders are nervous to discipline a gay soldier making it appear they are fearful of being seen as homophobic." Some participants also mentioned that the new policy had created or highlighted a separation within their military unit. In one example, participant five said "after the repeal of DADT, the unit seemed to be more segregated like when some of the gay soldiers that are openly gay bring their boyfriends or girlfriends around company parties and functions." Despite the reports of confusion among the policy, participants did report that the repeal provided some protection from the discrimination they were previously denied. Participant two reported "if people are going to harass you because you're gay, they're going to get in trouble."

Theme Three: Continuing Discrimination

All participants in this study reported continuing discrimination and hostility related to their sexual orientation after the repeal of DADT. Although the policy no longer allowed for the exclusion of gays in the military, many reported that they have continued to face discriminatory treatment from both their leadership as well as their peers and subordinates. Participant seven said "the jokes about not liking girls, be careful bending over, derogative remarks and name calling are still tolerated."

Prior to the repeal of DADT, military members were not allowed to discuss whether or not they were gay, meaning others may be suspicious but per the DADT policy they were not allowed to ask a person whether or not he was gay. Individuals

were also not allowed to divulge their sexual orientation. After the repeal and once individuals were free to disclose this information, participants mentioned an increase in harassment directly related to their sexual orientation. Participant six mentioned "some are still quietly serving so they don't have to deal with the harassment." Multiple participants mentioned that since people now know that they are gay, they are subject to more harassment than before the repeal. Just as participant nine noted "I was really happy when the repeal came into policy. At first I felt I could be who I really was but that isn't how I feel today."

Much of the discrimination or harassment presented was based on stereotypical homosexual prejudices. For example, participant seven and eight both mentioned similar changes they noticed once people found out they were gay. Participant eight confessed "it seemed strange when I went to the shower everyone seemed to leave or wait until I was done" and participant seven shared a parallel account, noting "everyone else waits until I am done before they shower." Participant seven went on to mention hostility present in his everyday job noting "if I bust my knuckles working on a tank there is always an AIDS scare." Participants also reported hostility in the workplace due to simple prejudices against gays. While he earlier reported that people would be reprimanded for discriminating against a gay service member, participant two also pointed out "if they don't like gays, they find a way to get a jab in, they just hide it from the people that will get them in trouble."

Equally disturbing were the reports of unfair or unjust treatment against the gay population in order to keep them from advancing their military careers. While the end of

DADT was meant to create equality for the GLB population, many reported additional discrimination. Participant eight said "some of my straight friends have warned me about some of the leaders and things they said." Participant six mentioned "I feel like I don't get the same respect as my straight counterparts." And participant nine concurred "I feel that I always had to prove myself." Participant nine went on to say that "many gay nurses have been shifted out of the hospitals and assigned to small squadrons. This seems like it happens to most of the gay nurses while the straight medics get to stay on at the hospital." Other participants, such as participant seven suspected that revealing his sexual orientation cost him job advancements, noting:

> I know I'm not the best soldier but I was passed over four times when there was E5 [Sergeant] mechanic jobs open. I spoke to the EEO [Equal Opportunity Officer] about it and she said to keep applying and try to better myself. The next board I got selected but I'm not sure if it's because I complained.

Participant three had similar fears, stating:

> I know there are a lot of senior leaders that would keep me back or would not say it directly but not score me as well as others on my evaluations and for promotion. I don't feel that they would have the same respect for me.

Participant six confirmed sexual orientation discrimination in the promotion process, remarking "I have been on promotion boards with other companies in my BN [battalion] and hear a lot of remarks [regarding gays] during the selection process from the other board members because they don't know I'm gay.

Theme Four: The Future of Gay Rights in the U.S. Military

While the researcher did not ask about their hopes for the future, a total of eight participants or 72.72% mentioned change they would like to see in the U.S. military regarding the treatment of gay service members. What they mentioned was that while they knew the change was slow and culture could not be changed overnight, they hoped the repeal of DADT was the first of many steps in the right direction regarding gays in the military. Participant 11 noted "I hope things continue to get easier with military policies to allow more integration." Participant four agreed saying "I hope that the military can continue to improve on its diversity efforts for the future and participant five said "I am hoping that future soldiers are less fixated on gender, race, and sexual orientation and more for unit cohesiveness and building unit readiness." The participants revealed that above everything, they just wanted to be treated fair and equally. As participant six noted "all gay soldiers want is a level playing field and a chance to prove themselves and be treated as equals."

Chapter Summary

This research study asked 11 gay servicemen to share their views of life in the military as gay servicemen, before and after the repeal of DADT. Within this chapter, a total of 10 themes were presented in accordance with their perceptions. Six major themes emerged from the participants' statements regarding their lived experiences during the DADT period. Additionally, four themes emerged from the participants' statements after the repeal of DADT.

Based on information collected from the in-depth interviews regarding perceptions during the DADT era, participants communicated: (a) they felt the policy was bias or unfair, (b) had caused family issues, (c) participants to feel a sense of alienation, (d) participants to be subject to sexual orientation discrimination and (e) a hostile work environment which (f) ultimately led to a reduction in job satisfaction and participation.

After the repeal of DADT participants communicated (a) ongoing family issues and (b) continuing discrimination based on the forced culture change. While the policy changed, the participants expressed the (c) culture was slow to change with it. The participants additionally expressed (d) future concerns regarding their treatment in the military. Some of the participants chose to not reveal their sexual orientation after the repeal because they still had concerns about harassment and other repercussions which may occur. There were additional reports from those who came out of the closet, that they had experienced harassment from peers and leadership. Finally, the participants communicated future desires in the advancement of sexual orientation equality. The next and final chapter of this dissertation, chapter five, will discuss this study's results as well as its implications. The chapter will examine the study's limitations and finally provide recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout history, the U.S. military has struggled with the integration of minority groups into its ranks. For the most part, the military and its ranks have been controlled by men. The culture has not only attempted to exclude women from serving but also displayed hostility to anyone or anything that did not preserve the military's masculine identity (Spitko, 2012). The notion of the male warrior has continued to dominate the U.S. military's culture, with the allowable discrimination of women and homosexuals (Allsep, 2013).

Homosexuals have served in the U.S. military since it was formed and from the beginning they have been subject to harassment and discrimination from their organization for nothing more than their sexual orientation. Regardless of their abilities or quality of service, gay men have been unwelcomed in the military (Estrada et al., 2013). While it is known that this population has experienced discrimination, there is a lack of empirical data focused on the lived experiences of gays in the military (Levy & Parco, 2013). Prior to the repeal of DADT, gay servicemen were silenced by a policy that punished gay service members who disclosed their sexual orientation (Gullickson, 2011). Because of this discriminatory ban, there has been a lack of empirical research on gays in the military both before and after the repeal of DADT (Dichter & True, 2014).

Empirical research on this subject is very limited and consistently focused on: (a) the acceptance of gay service members by the majority of the military population; (b) the compatibility of homosexuals with the military's culture and values; and (c) the impact

gay service members may have on unit cohesion, effectiveness and overall readiness (Estrada et al. 2013). A critical component missing from this field of study is the perspectives of the gay servicemen themselves (Allsep, 2013). In an attempt to fill the gap in literature, this qualitative study explored the perspectives of gay servicemen through the use of phenomenology. Through their lived experiences, participants portrayed what it was like to be a gay man serving in the U.S. Armed Forces before and after the repeal of DADT. In this study, data was collected from 11 self-identified gay servicemen through the use of semi-structured, online interviews, which were asked in an open-ended manner. Participants were asked separately about their experiences before and after the repeal of DADT in order to accurately capture both time periods. Following is a synopsis of the contents of this study found in this chapter.

The purpose of the final chapter of this dissertation was to analyze and interpret the results of this study and provide recommendations for additional research. First, this chapter provides a summary of the results, followed by a discussion of the results and their implications. Next, the study's limitations are reflected on, leading into recommendations for future research. Finally, the chapter and dissertation conclude by reviewing events which led to the need for this research, reviewing the study and its findings, then providing future recommendations to further the field of study.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of gay men who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the DADT era and continued to serve after the repeal of DADT, through today. The study's research

question asked: "how do gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment before and after the repeal of the DADT policy?" By researching this phenomenon, this study provided a missing piece of data regarding gays in the military.

To capture the lived experiences of gay servicemen, the study was designed to be conducted online through multiple iteration interviews. Online interviewing was deemed the best method for this study as it increased the geographical population for the study and also allowed the participants to choose the environment in which they wished to complete the interview process. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic being studied, the online design of this study allowed participants to complete the interview in a location of their choosing. This allowed participants to more freely share their experiences compared to being interviewed face-to-face in an unfamiliar environment (Salmons, 2010).

The online interviews were conducted individually through e-mail with questions being asked to the subjects in a semi-structured approach. This approach started with a broad opening question followed by more in-depth questions. The interview questions were also asked in an open-ended manner, which allowed the participants to describe what they had experienced in the military as gay men. Interviews concluded after the researcher and participant felt the interview questions had been sufficiently answered. Member checking was completed whenever a participant's answers or writing were not clear to the researcher (Webb, 2003).

Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology guided this study and was chosen as it allowed the data to be looked at undisturbed and through the participants' eyes (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher completed epoché, the process of bracketing out

personal view points and biases, in order to approach data analysis with an open mind and to ensure the data represented the participants' views and not the researchers. After bracketing out any of the researcher's biases, information was collected from the participants and analyzed.

The process of data analysis commenced with the review of each participant's transcript. Each transcript was manually coded and analyzed in accordance with transcendental phenomenology. It was important for the researcher to first become familiar with each participant's transcript (Moustakas, 1994). After individually studying each transcript, the researcher reviewed the data, focusing on the phenomenon of being a gay man serving in the military before and after the repeal of DADT. The interviews were reduced into significant statements and combined into themes (Moustakas, 1994). Lastly, the researcher synthesized each participant's statements into a collective voice, to capture the true essence of the phenomenon (Pringle, Hendry, & McLafferty, 2011) of being a gay man in the U.S. military. Commonalities among participants were noted and the study's themes were presented in order to communicate the phenomenon of being a gay service member before and after the repeal of DADT.

Significance of the Study

For nearly 240 years, the military openly discriminated against the homosexual population (Marshall, 2010). Although policies changed regarding discrimination, it was not until 2011 when there was a considerable shift in discriminatory practices regarding gays in the military (Obama, 2010). The repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) was the largest change in military history regarding gays and their ability to serve. After

discriminating against homosexuals serving in the military for over two centuries it was essential to study the considerable shift in military policy as well as the culture.

The U.S. military has struggled with the integration of minority groups into its organization throughout history. Homosexuality, in particular, has been something the U.S. military has not openly accepted. Instead, members of the gay population have been discriminated against regardless of their ability or quality of service (Estrada et al., 2013). While it is known that this population has experienced discrimination, there is a lack of empirical data, which focuses on the lived experiences of gays in the military.

Studies which have been conducted on gays in the military most often concentrate on the majority's opinion of the minority population. There is a consistent missing component: the viewpoints of the gay service members themselves (Allsep, 2013; Belkin, 2008; Estrada et al., 2013). With the change in policy regarding gay military members being able to openly serve, but a lack of information regarding the affected minority's point of view, there was a need to conduct research in order to provide an understanding of gay service members within the U.S. military.

This research and the study's results give a voice to the gay servicemen who have previously been silenced (Murphy, 2013). Many service members may not understand the struggles, challenges, and experiences unique to the gay population. This study is essential in creating a universal understanding of what gay servicemen experience as a minority group in the armed forces. Additionally, this study could influence the military culture and positively contribute to the overall effectiveness and readiness of the military as a whole. In comparison to ignoring differences, understanding a minority group can lead to an increased acceptance, which in turn increases overall group cohesion and

organizational effectiveness (Cundiff et al., 2009). By contributing to the understanding of gay service members in the U.S. military, this study may contribute to larger scale diversity efforts, within the military as well as outside the military. Additionally, this study contributes to scholarly research in order to advance the field of business management and organizational knowledge by providing insight to a diversity group within today's modern workforce.

Relevant Literature Summary

Seminal research on gays in the military exposed that the majority of studies were not conducted to understand this minority group but instead to support the exclusion of gays in the military. Of these studies, most were conducted internally by members of the military to support sexual orientation discrimination (Parco & Levy, 2010). The studies' findings conveyed that homosexuality was a: (a) mental disorder, (b) behavioral risk, (c) security risk, (d) risk to NATO and (e) risk to unit cohesion (Knapp, 2008). These research efforts provided no insight into the gay military service members' perspective (Frank, 2009). Instead these internal studies were conducted and used in support of excluding homosexuals from joining their organization and serving their country (Belkin, 2008).

Just prior to the implementation of DADT in 1993, a study conducted by a team of 75 researchers from the National Defense Research Institute concluded that sexual orientation should not be the sole identifier in keeping an individual from serving (National Defense Research Institute, 1993). This 500-page study took much into consideration such things as: (a) institutional change, (b) leadership theory, (c) foreign

military experiences with the homosexual population, and (d) the history of racial integration into the military (Frank, 2009).

During the DADT years, studies were completed and polls were taken in regards to the policy and the future of gays in the military. These opinion polls and studies all address the affected homosexuals serving in the military had on the heterosexual population. Even with the military's best efforts, they were not able to produce a complete study because the DADT policy forbid them from interviewing the military's homosexual population. Facing strong opposition to the DADT policy, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates compiled a team to assess the impact the repeal of DADT would have on the military and to address how it may affect the military's overall effectiveness. In the study, his team interviewed close to 400,000 service members and 150,000 military spouses. Additionally, this study did take into account the gay perspective (Department of Defense, 2010). However, Secretary Gates' team was only able to interview former gay military members due to the DADT policy. This study provided a large amount of information from those interviewed, however missing again were the viewpoints of perhaps the most critically affected group of individuals, gay service members.

When analyzing current studies on gays in the military, Allsep (2013) noted that the research on gays in the military is excessively narrow, focusing on: (a) military readiness, (b) cohesion, and (c) overall military effectiveness, neglecting the viewpoints of gays serving in the military (p. 391). Gay service members have been silenced by the very organization which has targeted them for unfair treatment (Murphy, 2013). The military has continuously failed to interview the minority group in which their

organization discriminated against in their studies. When the military expressed concerns about allowing women to serve, opinions were based on the majority's stereotypical prejudices, rather than studies of the minority population (Dichter & True, 2014). Most recently, with the repeal of DADT, the gay service member's voice is also unaccounted for (Allsep, 2013; Belkin, 2008; Estrada et al., 2013). Despite the repeal which allows service members to openly serve, studies have focused on the majority's opinion and forgot about the gay population.

Study's Results

This phenomenological study asked 11 gay servicemen to share their perspectives as gay men serving in the military before and after the repeal of DADT. When analyzing the data, a total of 10 themes were identified. Six of the major themes emerged from the period prior to the repeal of DADT and four themes emerged from the period after the repeal of DADT. During the DADT era, participants communicated their frustration with the DADT policy, explaining how it was bias and unfair. They additionally noted that because of the DADT policy, they were exposed to sexual orientation discrimination and a hostile environment which led to a reduction in their overall job satisfaction and participation.

Because the DADT policy not only allowed for the discrimination of gays, but also silenced the gay population, participants reported they felt a sense of alienation. Although they did not want to suffer through the discrimination, if they said anything they risked exposing their sexual orientation, which meant ending their careers. Many of the participants also mentioned family issues relating to not being allowed to include

their significant other in military functions. Because family is a very vital part of the military, these participants felt they were being robbed of the family support and experience, so many heterosexual service members took for granted.

After the repeal of DADT, participants communicated they continued to experience ongoing family issues and discrimination based on the forced culture change. Some participants chose not to reveal their sexual orientation after the repeal because there were still concerns about harassment, unfair treatment, and other repercussions which might have occurred. Some were not at all trusting of the new policy, because as they mentioned, the policy changed, but the people didn't. Those that chose to come out of the closet reported experiencing harassment from peers and leadership. While the sexual orientation policy had changed, the participants expressed that the military culture was slow to change with it. Although not asked about their future in the military, many participants expressed concerns about their future in the military and their desires for equal treatment. A major concern for the future was that they and their significant others and families receive equal treatment afforded to the heterosexual families.

Discussion and Implications of the Study's Results

This study intended to explore how gay servicemen experienced the U.S. military's organizational environment before and after the repeal of the DADT policy. The research question was broken down into two significant parts: (a) how did gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment during the DADT era? and (b) How do gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment after the repeal of DADT? The research was guided by social identity

theory, which in this study addressed the gay serviceman's self-perception and his perceived acceptance in the military (Miles & Kivlighan Jr., 2012). Social identity theory states that an individual's social behavior is determined by the relationship between interpersonal behavior and intergroup behavior (Bilewicz & Koffa, 2011). As seen in Figure 2, this study analyzed the balance between the gay serviceman's self-perception and interpersonal behavior with military intergroup behavior and culture.

Individual behavior is driven by a compromise of interpersonal and intergroup behavior. However, when an individual is not able to find a balance because of extreme differences, such as a gay man serving in the U.S. military during the DADT era, it may be difficult to maintain a positive self-concept and fit into a certain social group (Madera et al., 2013). It has been shown that minority groups within the U.S. military have difficulties in maintaining a positive self-concept in conjunction with being able to socially identify with the majority (Bilewicz & Koffa, 2011).

Specifically related to this study, gays have not been able to successfully serve in the military without compromising their self-identity. Gay men wishing to serve during the DADT era were forced to hide their self-identity in order to fit into the majority's social group and to be accepted in the military ranks. Burks (2011) noted the military's message to gays in regards to DADT was to stay in the closet (p. 605). This policy allowed for gays to silently serve in the military, but "not without costs to the individual's identity and sense of human value" (Burks, 2011, p. 605). Throughout the discussion and implications of this study's results, social identity theory is more thoroughly discussed as gay servicemen relate their personal struggles, finding balance between their self-

perception as gay men, and the military culture in which they belong. Figure 2 provides a flowchart of the study's results.

Figure 2 Perceptual Theory Model

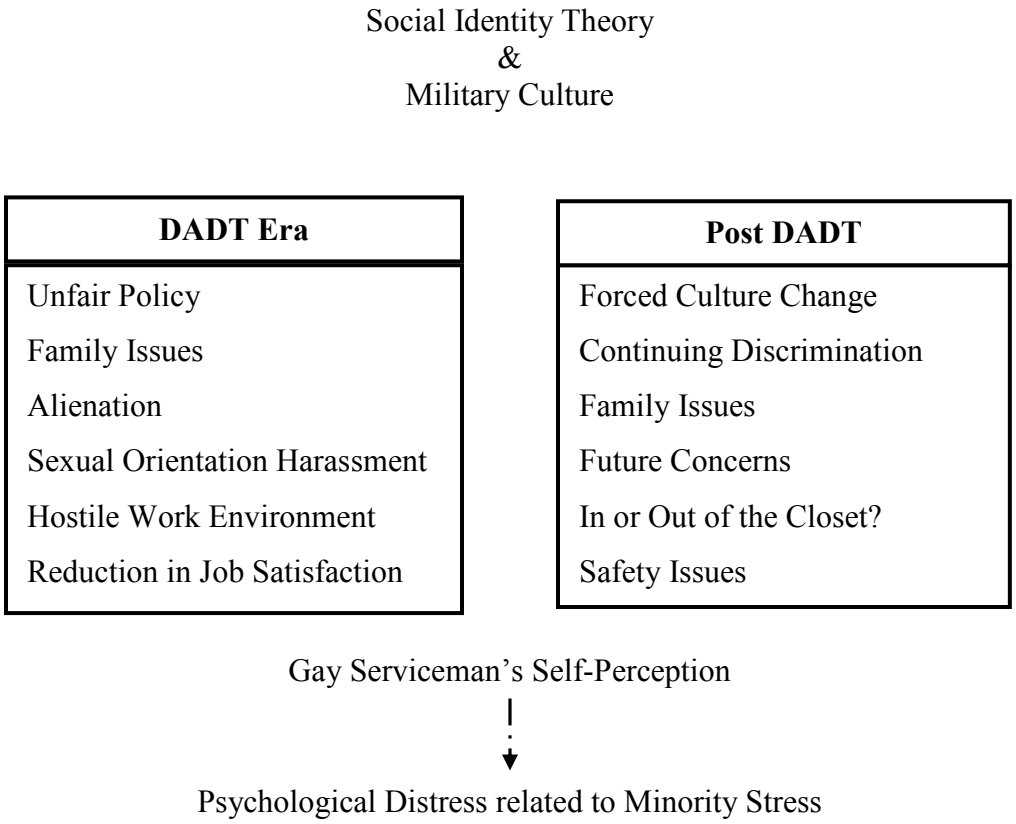

Figure 2. The balance between participant's self-perception and perceived acceptance in the military, as per social identity theory, led to the gay serviceman's view of military culture as well as individual self-perception. The extreme difference in military culture and self-perception as gay servicemen led to psychological distress related to minority stress.

The Don't Ask, Don't Tell Era

Participants were first asked about their experiences prior to the repeal of DADT. Once they had completed these questions, the participants were asked about their experiences after the repeal of DADT. It was important that the participants be asked these questions separately so the researcher could determine similarities and differences in experiences during the various periods in review.

From the first section of the research question: how did gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment during the DADT era, six major themes emerged. The major themes present during the DADT era included: (a) family issues, (b) DADT is an unfair or bias policy, (c) a sense of alienation, (d) sexual orientation discrimination, (e) a hostile work environment, and (f) a reduction of job satisfaction and participation. The individual statistics on these themes can be located in Table 14 of Chapter 4.

U.S. military families play a vital role in supporting their loved ones in both times of peace and conflict. Studies have shown that family can have a tremendous impact on a service member's psychological well-being (Dursun & Sudom, 2009; Skomorovsky, 2014). Additional research found that support from a significant other was more directly associated with a person's well-being, than any other source of support (Antonucci, Lansford, & Akiyama, 2001). But during the DADT era, gay service members were not allowed to include their significant others in military events or functions as doing so would be in direct violation of DADT and grounds for administrative dismissal. Eight of the 11 participants or 72.72% mentioned family concerns directly related to their sexual orientation. The three participants that did not mention family issues were all in their

early twenties and not in what they considered to be serious relationships. This conveys that every participant that was in a serious relationship did report family issues directly related to their sexual orientation.

Also mentioned was an increase in difficulty when deployed away from their significant others. With the additional hardships of war, participants noted they were not able to have the same support from their significant others because they had to hide their relationships. U.S. military policy states that all correspondence, such as e-mails and phone calls are subject to be monitored. This along with the burden of having to lie to their fellow service members added additional stress to gay servicemen trying to communicate with their significant other back at home (Hornick, 2009). With limited ability to receive social support from their significant others, gay servicemen were subject to higher depression rates (Southwick, Vythilingam, & Charney, 2005) as well as higher rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Fontana & Rosenheck, 1994).

All 11 of the participants reported a sense of alienation directly related to the DADT policy. Participants reported that they had to hide their sexual orientation and if they faced discrimination, they felt there was nothing that could be done because speaking up would jeopardize their military careers. This policy forcibly silenced the people targeted for the discrimination and unfair treatment (Murphy, 2013). Gay military members were isolated because of their sexual orientation, as DADT supported the notion that being gay was something that should be hidden and if gay service members chose to be open about their sexuality they should be punished and segregated from their heterosexual counterparts (Spitko, 2012).

The Don't Tell portion of DADT meant that despite their feelings, hardships, or troubles, if related to their sexual orientation, service members could not speak to anyone within the military to include chaplains. And while the American Psychological Association (APA) had clear guidelines on dealing with homosexuals and the Ethics Code mandated that psychologists act in the patients best interest (Johnson, 2008), military psychologists struggled with balancing these laws with that of DADT. If a service member's sexual orientation was documented, he would be administratively separated (Johnson & Buhrke, 2006). Not being able to talk to peers, family members (over military communication lines), and religious personnel or receive psychological treatment without risking their military careers, alienated gay servicemen.

Along with feeling alienated, 10 out of 11 participants reported directly experiencing sexual orientation discrimination and working in a hostile environment. Because of the military's stance on sexual orientation throughout history, a clear separation has been created within the organization. The culture which was formed over the years supported and enforced discriminatory policies against homosexuals. For this study, all participants served during the DADT period, which was in effect for nearly two decades, from 1994-2011 (Gullickson, 2011). Spitko (2012) noted that this policy "taught by example that gay people are inferior, and that heterosexual people are justified in feeling uncomfortable around gay people…and in discriminating against them" (p. 208).

Although over 90% of the participants reported sexual orientation discrimination and serving in a hostile work environment, just over 70% of participants reported they felt DADT was an unfair or bias policy. Perhaps the reasoning for only eight of the

eleven participants mentioning that DADT was an unfair or bias policy was that these individuals have been subject to sexual orientation discrimination for most of their lives so they see it as normal treatment. Meyer (2013) notes that like any other minority group, gay men learn to anticipate and expect negative treatment from the dominant culture (p. 9). All three of the participants who did not mention the unfairness of DADT reported that they were serving in the active duty military. Unlike those who served in the National Guard and Reserve, these individuals did not have other jobs outside the military. Some of the National Guardsmen and Reservists noted better treatment in their civilian jobs and less hostility towards their sexual orientation than they experienced in the military. Because these servicemen had other jobs to compare their military work to, they were able to observe differences that active duty servicemen were not.

All of the themes present during the DADT era lead participants to report a reduction in job satisfaction and participation. Over 90% of the participants reported they didn't feel free to be who they were in the organization and in pretending to be someone they weren't, they pulled away from the military. The DADT policy forced gay servicemen to hide their self-identity in order to serve their country (Gullickson, 2011). The military's discriminatory policy and treatment of homosexuals had created a negative and sometimes unbearable relationship between the participants' self-identity as gay men and their membership in the U.S. military.

Following the Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell

From the second section of the research question: how do gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment after the repeal of DADT, four

major themes emerged. The major themes present after the repeal of DADT era included: (a) forced culture change, (b) continuing discrimination, (c) ongoing family issues, and (d) future concerns. The individual statistics on these themes can be found in Table 17. Individuals were additionally asked if they chose to come out of the closet after the repeal of DADT and how they viewed their safety following the policy change.

The first thing that was reported after the repeal of DADT was that the participants felt the military's change was slow and forced. As with any major organizational change, it could be expected that this change would take time and would require persistence (Allsep, 2013). The military is a large organization and mass change, especially cultural change, would not happen immediately. Additionally, the military operates differently than a private organization in that it lacks the same willingness to adapt and change (Deavel, 1998). In order for transformation in military culture to occur, its leaders and personnel need to be open to change (Driessnack, 2003).

The sexual orientation discrimination which was prevalent in military culture for close to 240 years would not and could not change as quickly as some participants had hoped. However, the majority of participants expressed they did not expect the change to happen overnight. What participants did note was that the culture change related to the repeal of DADT seemed forced. Participants gave narrative that some of their military leadership was not accepting of the new policy and took the minimalist approach in supporting the change. Previous studies confirm that predominant attitudes of military leaders as well as service members have been unreceptive to change (Dunivin, 1997). Additionally, the change in supporting equality and accepting the homosexual service members into dominant masculine-warrior military culture had caused conflict (Dunivin,

1994). Other studies reveal that the U.S. military culture has little concern for their employees as compared to private industry. Servicemen employed in the private sector outside of the military may have observed this in the civilian workforce, leading them to question the slow changing and often unaccepting military culture. However slow, the military seems to be attempting to become a more tolerant culture, with concern for its individual members (Tinoco & Amaud, 2013). Participants in this study expressed their hope for a better military culture which was more tolerant and more accepting of gays in the military.

With the slow and sometimes forced culture change, gay servicemen did report continuing discrimination directly related to sexual orientation. Over 80% of the participants mentioned sexual orientation discrimination after the repeal of DADT. What participants communicated was that the regulation had changed but that didn't mean the people within the military had changed. Those that did not like homosexuals still harassed gay service members but did so around people that felt the same way or would not report them. Leadership was not exempt from this behavior. Senior leaders reported occasions when they had to talk to others about accepting the new regulation and treating all service members with respect, whether or not they agreed with their lifestyle. Others reported direct discrimination from leadership regarding their sexual orientation in regards to being denied military advancements. For a few of the participants, the ongoing harassment has been so challenging that they have considered leaving the military in the near future.

The discrimination that these participants faced was a direct result of the military's culture carried forward from generations before. Despite the fact the U.S.

military had created and fostered a hostile environment for homosexuals, Allsep (2013) noted that the military's purpose in policy change was not to change individual's beliefs regarding homosexuality (p.391). He went on to note that while everyone was to be treated with dignity and respect, the policy change, which was briefed to leadership, did not address the shift in cultural values, leaving "service members who still believed what the military culture had long taught…with no option but to take their anti-gay beliefs and values underground" (Allsep, 2013, p. 392). Without addressing the fundamental question of what it means to be gay in the military, heterosexual leadership and personnel were not able to fully grasp the environment gay service members were forced to deal with throughout their military careers (Allsep, 2013).

As compared to before the repeal of DADT, two less participants mentioned ongoing family issues related to their sexual orientation and the military culture. Still, with those who reported being in a serious relationship, this meant 75% of participants experienced ongoing issues. Participants mentioned that although the new policy allowed for their significant other to be a part of military functions, their partners were not trusting of the military and some didn't want to be part of it. Some partners worried about retaliation their loved ones might experience if they chose to accompany their military spouse to an event. Other servicemen continued to experience discrimination when their significant others did come to military events. However there were two participants who did not report ongoing family issues,

Although not asked directly, many participants chose to speak about their hopes for a better future for gays in the military. The general consensus was that these participants wanted equal, not special, treatment. They wanted to be judged on their

abilities and not their sexual orientation. Some expressed fears for the future because, based on their past experiences in the military, they were unsure of how supportive the military would actually be in years to come.

To more thoroughly understand the participants' environment, each was asked about their sense of safety before and after the repeal of DADT. Referring back to Table 16, 7 of the 11 participants said they felt safer since the repeal of DADT, four said they felt the same and no participant felt less safe. All of the participants who claimed they felt the same sense of safety before and after the repeal of DADT held senior leadership positions in the military, had completed at least three years of college, and were White. It was thought that perhaps these individuals felt relatively safe before DADT because they held positions of authority, which would subject them to less harassment from the junior workforce and were part of the ethnic majority. It must be also noted that two of the senior leaders in this study did report feeling safer after the repeal.

When collecting the demographic data from participants, questions were chosen because the specific demographics which were thought to be important aspects that could help distinguish reasoning behind certain perspectives or develop patterns in the data. The demographic data collected included the participant's: (a) age and (b) generation, (c) military rank and (d) military time-in-service, (e) military job, (f) military unit, (g) deployment status, (h) education level, (i) religion, and (j) race. Chapter 4 thoroughly explains the reasoning for choosing these demographic factors and Tables 4-13 provide the statistical results from this study.

After meticulously examining the themes present in this study and comparing them to the participants' demographic data, results showed a lack of empirical evidence

that many of the participants' demographic factors were directly related to their perspectives as gay servicemen. While age and generational theory were originally thought to have a great deal of impact on a participant's perspective, the results were inconclusive. This was most evident in the participants' choice of coming out of the closet after the repeal of DADT. Of the 11 participants, three, ages 22, 39, and 47 all chose to stay in the closet; five of the participants, ages 24, 26, 28, 32, and 36 chose to come out of the closet, and three participants, ages 20, 31, and 38 said they didn't hide their sexual orientation but they didn't share it either. Both Generation X and Generation Y were present in this study and when analyzed separately, their perspectives did not seem to follow generational theory. Individuals from both generational groups had very similar outlooks on many issues discussed.

Education level in this study was quite sporadic. This combined with the small sample group made it almost impossible to draw conclusions on whether or not educational background influenced participants' perceptions. Religion was another factor explored. All participants identified themselves as non-denominational or Christian. Of the Christian population, all but two identified themselves as Catholic. There was one Lutheran and one Baptist in this study. Here it was difficult to compare a participants' individual perspectives with that of his religion. The opinions of Catholic participants did not systematically determine the perspectives of this group of individuals.

The same can be said for the group of individuals who self-identified as non-denominational and because there was only one participant who identified himself as Lutheran and one participant who identified himself as Baptist, there were no other participants in which to compare their perspectives based solely on religious preferences.

Much like the religious statistics in this study, race was difficult to compare. There were only three races present in this study: Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic. Nine of the eleven participants were Caucasian, one participant was African American, and one participant was Hispanic which meant cross comparison could not be done in this study.

The final block of demographic factors studied were directly related to the participants' military service. This included their (a) military rank, (b) military time-in-service, (c) military job, (d) military branch of service, (e) military unit, and (f) deployment status. The military demographic factors did weigh slightly more on a participant's perspective than did their age and generation and were less problematic than educational status, religion, and race.

The most notable connection in military service had to do with participants' military branch of service and deployment status. There was a distinct separation in the in responses from active duty servicemen and that of guardsmen and reservists in regards to the time they spent working their military jobs. Guardsmen and reservist communicated they had an outlet away from their military work as they only worked for the military on a part-time basis. Multiple participants used the terms military life and regular life to describe the separation in their lifestyles. While these individuals still experienced stress, they were not subject to the same discrimination and hostile work environment on a daily basis, like those serving full-time. However, when guardsmen and reservist were deployed their responses became strikingly similar to the active duty servicemen.

Minority Stress Theory

The information gathered from the participants' lived experiences led the research in a new direction, which was not originally considered. In the process of analyzing the results and researching theoretical implications and meanings of the study, results indicated that this group of individuals were subject to minority stress. Minority stress is categorized as additional stress which members of stigmatized social group are subject to because of their social, often minority position (Meyer, 2013). Gay servicemen face many additional stressors to include: (a) harassment, (b) workplace discrimination, (c) alienation, (d) career risks, (e) depression, and (f) anxiety (Johnson & Buhrke, 2006). Workplace related discrimination and harassment has been related to an increase in psychological distress, health related problems, and a decrease in overall job satisfaction (Waldo, 1999). When compared to heterosexuals, gay men are at a greater risk for mental stress and disorders because of the additional stressors they face (Meyer, 2013). This study's findings supported earlier findings that a hostile work environment did lead to an increase in stress and a decrease in job commitment and satisfaction (Johnson & Buhrke, 2006; Meyer, 2013).

In alignment with social identity theory, minority stress theory communicates when an individual who is part of a minority experiences dissonance with the majority culture, internal struggles occur (Meyer, 2013). Referred to as internalized heterosexism, gay individuals who struggle with societal attitudes towards homosexuals, experience internal psychological conflict and a decrease in self-regard, as a result of inward directing societal beliefs (Carter II, Mollen, & Smith, 2014).

Previous literature supported the concept of minority stress of gay service members in the U.S. military. Previous research presented data on the environment in which gay service members worked, most notably the majority's acceptance of gay service members, through the use of polls and secondary research such as reports indicating the number of service members discharged due to homosexuality (Johnson & Buhrke, 2006). The previous studies did not include personal accounts from members of the minority group, thus this study will help to better define minority stress related to gay servicemen in the U.S. military.

Limitations

This qualitative research which was performed as a phenomenological study and explored the lived experiences of gay servicemen before and after the repeal of DADT had limitations; however these limitations did not affect or skew the data which was collected, analyzed, and presented in this study. Because this research was conducted as a qualitative study, the information, while analyzed could not be generalized to a larger population.

When recruiting for the study, the researcher used an online website dedicated to helping gays, lesbians, and bisexuals fight for equality within the military. Because not all gay servicemen may have been subscribers to this website, it did not allow all gay servicemen an opportunity to participate in the study. However, it was not feasible to recruit from a military website as it was believed participants would feel safer working with an ally than they would truthfully answering difficult questions about their sexual orientation in the workplace through their employer's monitored e-mail system.

The smaller sample size for the qualitative study was appropriate for the phenomenological research, however, because the sample size was small and collected through the process of non-representative sampling, there were many demographics which were absent from the study. Of the demographics collected, this study's population did not include members from every branch of service and consisted mostly of Caucasian Christians serving in the U.S. Army.

While this study sought to understand gay servicemen in the military as a minority in the workplace, it became clear that the study could have benefited from additional psychological contributions, which was outside the scope of the study. Nonetheless, the study did touch on psychological stresses present for gay servicemen in the military, but did not provide an in-depth psychological analysis, which could supply additional insight on gays serving in the military.

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of gay servicemen before and after the repeal of DADT. Through the use of phenomenology, this study was able to make a contribution to the field of organization and management as it focused on understanding a specific minority in the workplace. Previous research on gay service members with the U.S. military was very limited. It was also very narrowly focused on the majority's acceptance of gays in the military and unit cohesion (Estrada et al., 2013) and it did not explore what it meant to be a gay service member serving in the military (Allsep, 2013). This study has made progress in understanding an underrepresented,

unaccounted for minority population in the workplace. However, there are many more opportunities to increase the understanding of this minority population.

While this research explored the lived experiences of gay men in the U.S. military, there is a need to study the lesbian and bisexual military populations as well. This research could also be conducted as a larger quantitative study. Because this study has provided key concerns of gay servicemen, another researcher could build on this, expand the sampling population and ask questions in a quantitative manner. Doing so would provide information which could be compared and generalized to a larger population.

Conducting this study by individual military branches may be helpful as well. In much of the literature reviewed, it was communicated that some branches, such as the Marine Corp, were less accepting of openly gay service members than other branches of the military (Spitko, 2012). This means a Marine may have a very different experience as a gay man in the military than those serving in different branches.

Finally, there are many psychological aspects that could be explored when dealing with the mistreatment of a minority group in the workplace. As previously mentioned, this study was guided toward minority stress theory as it related to the participants' individual accounts. There is much to be explored regarding the effects of the military on its gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) service members. Because of the lack in empirical data on this subject, from the minority group, there are many directions that could be taken to better understand GLBs in the military and to broaden this field of study.

Conclusion

In addition to fighting for their country, gay service members have had to suffer through the hostile work environment created by their organization. While homosexuals have honorably served in the armed forces since the Revolutionary War, this minority group has still been targeted for unfair treatment by the U.S. military. For close to 240 years, the military has harnessed an anti-gay culture communicating that homosexuals were not welcome in the armed forces (Parco & Levy, 2010). From conducting studies to uncover gay men serving in the military to banning men from serving that presented effeminate traits, the U.S. military culture has excluded men based solely on their sexual orientation. Many internal military studies conducted throughout history supported the notion that allowing gay men to serve in the military would be detrimental to the organization's ability to function by decreasing unit cohesion, posing a security risk, and creating behavioral risk (Knapp, 2008).

Many similar arguments were made about women wishing to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. The fact is the U.S. military has struggled with the acceptance and integration of minorities into their organization throughout history. Research outside the military has shown the reasoning behind this inability to accept minorities to be the masculine warrior culture which has been created and enforced over centuries (Allsep, 2013). After years of turmoil regarding policy focused on gay service members in the military, in 1993 the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell was established, only allowing this minority group to serve if they hid their homosexual identity. Nearly two decades later, in 2011 this policy was repealed, allowing a gay service member for the first time, to openly serve in the U.S. Armed Forces (Spitko, 2012).

With the long history of discrimination in the military, there was a need to understand the military culture from the gay service member's perspective. While research has been completed both before and after the repeal of DADT, it does not present data from the gay service member. Instead, data has been presented on how the majority feels about the minority population or from secondary research (Johnson & Buhrke, 2006). All of this history, along with the fact gay servicemen have been silenced by the very organization which has targeted them for unfair treatment (Murphy, 2013), is why there was a need for phenomenological research to be completed.

This qualitative study entitled: "Out of the closet, onto the battlefield: Life for gay servicemen before and after the repeal of don't ask, don't tell" explored the perspectives of gay men serving in the U.S. military before and after the repeal of DADT. The results of this phenomenological research indicated, as per social identity theory, participants struggled with being gay in the U.S. military. Based on the in-depth interviews to understand the perceptions of gay servicemen prior to the repeal of DADT, participants communicated a sense of unfairness which was created by the DADT policy. They felt the (a) unfair policy had caused (b) family issues, (c) participants to feel a sense of alienation, (d) participants to be subject to sexual orientation discrimination and (e) a hostile work environment which ultimately led to (f) a reduction in job participation and overall job satisfaction.

After the repeal of DADT participants communicated they experienced (a) ongoing family issues and (b) continuing discrimination based on the (c) slow and forced culture change, (d) which caused these servicemen future concerns. Following the repeal, which allowed gay servicemen to openly serve, only some of the participants

chose to reveal their sexual orientation. Others still had concerns of harassment and repercussions they may face for outing themselves. Some who came out of the closet reported they had experienced harassment and discrimination from their peers and leadership. The participants additionally expressed concerns regarding their future treatment in the military. Finally they communicated future desires in the advancement of sexual orientation equality.

Overall, because of the discrimination and harassment these gay servicemen experienced in the U.S. military, it was clear participants were suffering from minority stress, which is categorized as additional stress members of stigmatized social groups are subject to because of their social, often minority position (Meyer, 2013). This research was built on other theories and studies in order to explore the lived experiences of gay men serving in the U.S. military before and after the repeal of DADT. This is only a start. There is much more research that needs to be completed to understand this minority group in the U.S. military. It's hoped this study will lead others to expand research in this area to better the lives of minorities in the workplace and overall organizational culture for all.

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APPENDIX A. FIELD TEST

Members Chosen for Field-Testing

Member	Reason Chosen
Doctor with expertise in the fields of qualitative research and HR research.	Expert in areas of HR and qualitative studies; Mentor to many PhD students in qualitative studies; military background; familiar with military organizational environment
Doctor with extensive experience in online research methodology	Expert in online interviewing
Gay Service Member	Gay Service member's perspective
Gay Male	Gay man's perspective for sensitivity to gay issues
Heterosexual Service Member	Suggested by gay service member: chose a heterosexual service member with extensive military history and experience with gay service members in the military

When identifying individual comments below, the board members will be identified as follows:

A. Expert in qualitative studies
B. Expert in online research
C. Gay Service Member
D. Gay Male (not in military)
E. Heterosexual Military Male

Research Question Guiding the Study

How do gay servicemen experience the U.S. military's organizational environment before and after the repeal of the DADT policy?

Field Test Panel Questions

1. Validity: Does the intended population (gay service members) seem like an appropriate population to answer the research question?

2. Logical coherence: Is the research question a reasonable question to ask gay service members?

3. Readability: Is the research question stated in a way that is understandable to gay service members?

4. Overall appropriateness of instrument and individual items: Does the use of individual online interviews seem like an appropriate way to engage this population in the study?

Additional Instructions:

Please add any suggestions that you feel will add to the betterment of this study.

Below are the introducing questions to the study along with possible follow-up and closing questions. Each individual who field tested this document was given the same information and asked the same questions.

Introducing Questions **(Kvale. 1996)**	**Possible follow-up questions** **Questioning and Guiding Salmons (2012)***	**Suggestions (What suggestions do you have for this line of questioning?)**
1. Can you describe your experience as a gay service member in the U.S. Army during the DADT era?	Remembering back, what were your thoughts and feelings regarding the DADT policy as you served in the military, under this policy? During the DADT period, did you feel that DADT positively, negatively or did not affect your overall performance as a service member in the military?	B. One thought is: do you want to ask about their experience coming into this military context? They knew about DADT but joined anyway—what did they expect? B. Did you know other gay service members? Did you discuss your experiences? What kinds of issues did you hear from other gay

	Please explain. If you had a significant other during the DADT period, did this policy have an effect on your relationship? How so? Please elaborate. Are there specific events, occurrences, or happenings related to the DADT policy that sticks out in your mind that you would like to share?	service members? C. Instead of significant other use boyfriend partner husband or other significant relationship. C. Add the question: Do you perceive yourself to be more or less safe during the DADT era than now?
2. Can you describe your experience as a gay service member in the U.S. Army after the repeal of DADT through today?	Do you remember when the repeal was signed into law? What were your feelings? What is your current view regarding the repeal of DADT? Has the repeal made military life: easier, harder, or not changed your overall experience in the military? Why? Please explain. Have you chosen to come out of the closet after the	A. Add question: Has the repeal of DADT influenced or changed your behavior? Please explain. C. Add the question: Do you perceive yourself to be more or less safe after the repeal?

	repeal of DADT? Why or why not? What have been the consequences of your choices? (If so, where did this happen, where were you during that time, who else was involved,, how did this come about?) If you did choose to come out, have you noticed any difference in your treatment? Please explain.	
	Do you have a significant other? If so, have you chosen to include him in military/family events? Why or why not? How do you feel about the choices you've made regarding this? If you did bring your significant other to a military event, what was the outcome? How do you feel the two of you were treated? Please elaborate.	C. Instead of significant other use boyfriend partner husband or other significant relationship. E. Maybe ask if they have a military or civilian significant other.
	What if anything, has remained the same following the repeal of DADT? Examples?	E. Do you belong to any organizations outside the military and if so....
	What organizations do you belong to outside the	

	military and do you feel you act differently at these places regarding your sexual orientation than in the Army? Why or why not? Examples?	
3. If applicable, can you describe your experience as a gay service member in the U.S. Army prior to the implementation of DADT?	What was the policy regarding sexual orientation before DADT, as you remember it? What were your feelings regarding sexual orientation policy in the military prior to the implementation of DADT? What changed for you as a gay service member when DADT went into effect? How did this change the military organizational environment for gays in the military? Do you have any personal stories that you would like to share? Would you say that DADT made it easier for you, harder for you, or did not change your life as a gay service member? Why? Do you have examples or	B. Should this come before the questions about the post-DADT era?

	stories to support your feelings? Did your behavior change after the implementation of DADT? If yes, how so? Examples? If you had a significant other prior to the implementation of DADT, how did the military policy affect your personal relationship?
Closing the Interview: **Is there anything you feel you would like to add to this interview that would give the researcher a better perspective of how it is for you as a gay service member in the U.S. Army during varying periods of sexual orientation policy? If so, please elaborate.**	

***Note: possible follow-up questions, while outlined in advance, will be refined as needed by the researcher during the interview process**

APPENDIX B. RATIONALE FOR DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Demographic Questions

1. Are you currently serving in the U.S. military?
2. What years did you serve in the U.S. military?
3. Did you serve during the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" period in the U.S. military?
4. What do you consider to be your sexual orientation?
5. What is your gender?
6. What is your age?
7. What is your race?
8. What is your highest military rank achieved?
9. What is the highest level of civilian education achieved?
10. Do you have a religious preference? If so, please list.
11. Which branch of service are you currently serving? If you have served in multiple branches please include this information as well. (example: Air Force, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve)
12. What MOSes (military occupational skills) do you hold? Please write in one of the following formats: IN, infantry, 11B.
13. What best describes the unit you've spent most of your military time working in? (Example, Headquarters element, Infantry Battalion, etc.) If more than one, please list along with time periods.

Rationale for Demographic Questions

Demographics	Selection Rationale	Theory Support
Age	The age of a person could change their perspective on sexual orientation due to what they experienced as part of their generation.	Generational Theory (Ahlrichs, 2007) (Bernstein, Alexander, & Alexander, 2008) (Davis et al., 2006) (Giancola, 2006) (Hofstede, 1998) (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003) (Meier et al., 2010) (Taylor et al., 2002)
Race	Different cultures are statistically more accepting of homosexuality than others.	Race and Homosexuality (Ellison, Acevedo, & Ramos-Wada, 2011) (Lewis, 2003) (Monteith et al., 1996) (Sherkat et al., 2010)
Civilian Education	Some members of the military receive all training from within the organization. Those that choose to receive education outside of the military, may have different views than the organization they are a part of.	Education and Attitudes towards homosexuality (Brenner, Lyons, & Fassinger, 2010)
Religious Preference	Different religious groups feel differently about sexual orientation. Some believe that homosexuality is wrong. If a participant is a member of a religious group that views homosexuality in a negative light, this could influence the participants' perception.	Religion and Homosexuality (Ellison, et al., 2011) (Helmiriak, 2008) (Hodge, 2005) (Hofstede, 1998) (Sherkat et al., 2010) (Stychin, 2009)
Years of Military Service	Depending on when a participant served, they were subject to a different	Job occupation and views of homosexuality (Brenner et al., 2010)

	homosexuality policy. This different environment may have affected a participant views.	(Burks, 2011) (Department of Defense, 2010) (Hofstede, 1998) (Knapp, 2008)
Highest Military Rank	Depending on military rank, an individual may feel more pressured to conform to the organization's culture.	Job occupation and views of homosexuality (Brenner et al., 2010) (Burks, 2011) (Department of Defense, 2010) (Hofstede, 1998) (Knapp, 2008)
Military Occupational Skills	There are many different MOSes within the Army. Some are only open to men and may have different attitude towards homosexuality in the military.	Job occupation and views of homosexuality (Brenner et al., 2010) (Burks, 2011) (Department of Defense, 2010) (Hofstede, 1998) (Knapp, 2008)
Military Branch/ Unit	Units that are only open to men may have different attitudes towards homosexuality.	Job occupation and views of homosexuality (Brenner et al., 2010) (Burks, 2011) (Department of Defense, 2010) (Hofstede, 1998) (Knapp, 2008)

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Introducing Questions	Possible follow-up questions: Questioning and Guiding*
1. Can you describe your experience as a gay service member in the U.S. military during the DADT era?	What was the policy regarding gays in the military when you joined? What was your experience coming into the military under those conditions? Did you know about the military regulation regarding gays in the military, and if so what did you expect joining this organization? Did you know you were gay when you joined the military? If so, what made you want to join an organization that had such hostile policies regarding your self-identity? Did you previously know any other gay service members that were in the military and did they share with you their experiences as gay soldiers? Remembering back, what were your thoughts and feelings regarding the DADT policy as you served in the military, under this policy? During the DADT period, did you feel that the DADT policy positively, negatively or did not affect your overall performance as a service member in the military? Please explain. If you had a significant other (boyfriend, partner, husband or other significant relationship)? During the DADT period, did this policy have an effect on your relationship? How so? Please elaborate. Did you know other gay service members? Did you discuss your experiences? What kinds of issues did you hear from other gay soldiers? Are there specific events, occurrences, or happenings related to the DADT policy that sticks out in your mind that you would like to share?
2. Can you describe your experience as a gay service member in the U.S. military	Do you remember when the repeal was signed into law? What were your feelings?

after the repeal of DADT through today?	What is your current view regarding the repeal of DADT? Has the repeal made military life: easier, harder, or not changed your overall experience in the Army? Why? Please explain. Do you feel you have experienced any sort of discrimination based on your sexual orientation before or after the policy change? Have you chosen to come out of the closet after the repeal of DADT? Why or why not? What have been the consequences of your choices? (If so, where did this happen, where were you during that time, who else was involved, how did this come about?) If you did chose to come out, have you noticed any difference in your treatment? Please explain. Do you have a significant other (boyfriend, partner, husband or other significant relationship)? Is this person also a member of the U.S. military? If so, have you chosen to include him in military/family events? Why or why not? How do you feel about the choices you've made regarding this? If you did bring your significant other to a military event, what was the outcome? How do you feel the two of you were treated? Please elaborate. What if anything, has remained the same following the repeal of DADT? Examples? Do you belong to any organizations outside the military and if so do you feel you act differently at these places regarding your sexual orientation than in the Army? Why or why not? Examples? Do you perceive yourself to be more or less safe during the DADT era than now?
3. If applicable, can you describe your experience as a gay service member in the U.S. military prior to the implementation of DADT?	What was the policy regarding sexual orientation before DADT, as you remember it? Where you aware of the sexual orientation policy before you joined the military? If so, did this at all affect your choice to join? Why or why not?

	What were your feelings regarding sexual orientation policy in the military prior to the implementation of DADT? What changed for you as a gay service member when DADT went into effect? How did this change the military organizational environment for gays in the military? Do you have any personal stories that you would like to share? Would you say that DADT made it easier for you, harder for you, or did not change your life as a gay service member? Why? Do you have examples or stories to support your feelings? Did your behavior change after the implementation of DADT? If yes, how so? Examples? If you had a significant other (boyfriend, partner, husband or other significant relationship)? Prior to the implementation of DADT, how did the military policy affect your personal relationship?
Closing the Interview: Is there anything you feel you would like to add to this interview that would give the researcher a better perspective of how it is for you as a gay service member in the U.S. military during varying periods of sexual orientation policy? If so, please elaborate.	

*Note: possible follow-up questions, while outlined in advance, will be refined as needed by the researcher during the interview process