

Discussion Please, Not Coercion

*On repealing Don't Ask,
Don't Tell*

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The repeal of the U.S. military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT)

policy on September 20, 2011, brings to the forefront many basic theoretical questions about sexuality and sexual self-definition, and how these play out within the world of the military. Because the repeal of DADT was overwhelmingly a civilian political issue rather than primarily a military one—it was a campaign promise of President Obama—many of these questions, given urgency by the differences between the military and the civilian world, have gone unappreciated. Their attendant problems are not insuperable, but until we acknowledge and discuss them, as neither the civilian nor military worlds have shown themselves ready to do, they will fester and get worse.

Practical Implications

The military is different from the civilian world it exists to serve. We cannot assume that laws or rules applicable to a liberal democracy can be transferred neatly to the military: the military is not a liberal democracy. Instead, it is more like a theocracy, a coercive structure that enforces its policies through punishment. In addition, it makes mandatory certain kinds of physical intimacy and frequently lacks a separate private sphere, a situation unlike the civilian world.

The repeal of DADT was seen by many as a vote for openness and for the ability to self-define sexuality. This it certainly was, yet it also substitutes one set of things that cannot be said for another. The fact of top-down coercion is not changed, just the things being coerced. Nor does repealing DADT do anything to loosen the myriad of military restrictions on speech and action related to gender and sexuality that are already in place, many of which are the result of the greater integration of women into all facets of the military in recent years. I offer this view as a “yes, but” corrective to the view prevalent among civilian activists that the repeal of DADT simply neutralizes

a negative and thus produces no problems of its own. This might be true in a liberal democracy, but it is not true in the coercive world of the military where the line between public and private is thin or non-existent. Rather than declaring such problems non-existent, as both the military itself and boosters of DADT repeal have tended to do, the military should be encouraging internal dialogue and discussion as the only hope of defusing them.

Because the military is a physical undertaking where the usual unit is the group, not the individual, there is no such thing as individual privacy in many military situations; physical activities are largely performed with others, and under orders. Some sub-groups of the military are equivalent to civilian offices, but many are more like athletic teams with their physicality and locker room intimacy. In general, physicality plays a larger role in the military than in most civilian organizations; for instance, the military polices the appearance of its members ruthlessly. Overweight military members can be discharged; everyone has to pass a PRT (Physical Readiness Test), and your superior can order you to get a haircut or change your earrings or take off a “showy” piece of jewelry.

What’s under the uniform counts too. Whatever the reality of warfare in this age of high-tech next-generation technology, the military’s self-image is still to a large degree based on admiration of a warrior culture of muscular force-wielders. The physical nature of the military enterprise means that servicemembers are much more aware of each others’ bodies than are co-workers in an office culture. In the Marine Corps, all the men know who can do the most pull-ups or run the fastest, and who has the biggest “guns” (biceps). Respect is given proportionate to physical strength; dress is maximized to ensure that men look “sharp” for other men. So some of the physicality of the military is what sociologists would call “homosocial” or “homoerotic.” All my students, indeed most servicemembers, love watching the glistening roided-out hulks of a movie like *300* hack each other to bits, as well as more restrained examples of homoerotic violence like the movie *Fight Club*. This sort of awareness of

other men is mission-enhancing. Typically it encourages men to try to out-perform each other, and to offer loyalty to high performers.

Part of the (paradoxical to outsiders) nature of this male locker-room-type homoeroticism is that acknowledging it destroys it: lack of articulation is its very nature, since it's a code of action rather than of words. One of the reasons DADT survived as long as it did—and why what preceded it was the rule that servicemembers could be asked about their sexual orientation and discharged for only one answer (an affirmative on homosexuality)—is arguably that the military doesn't want to acknowledge the homoeroticism implicit in its enterprise. To begin with, admitting this element is apparently difficult for many straight men, though it is at the basis of straight military worship of strong—which means muscular as well as charismatic—men. Additional points are given men in the military for known or assumed exploits with women; outsiders may disapprove of this form of bonding, but the fact is that men see other men who are sexually active with women as being worthy of admiration. If our project is to alter these attitudes, we should confront them, not just police them into silence or pretend they don't exist. I personally think it unlikely that these attitudes can be made to disappear by showering them with disapproval.

Another way that the military diverges from our civilian liberal democracy is that activities outside working hours in the military, including sexual ones, are also fair game for regulation—like any other activity by a military member that could “dishonor the uniform” or that is deemed “conduct unbecoming an officer.” The UCMJ, Uniform Code of Military Justice, used to make “sodomy” (non-vaginal penetration) a crime; this was nullified when DADT was repealed. So fans of heterosexual oral and anal sex benefited from this change too. But adultery is still an offense punishable by jail time or expulsion even if the guilty party's subordinates are not directly affected. The assumption, presumably, is that such actions by superiors will affect subordinates' morale and their willingness to follow orders.

The more specific issue for DADT was gay sexuality, but many of the military's most stringent policing policies are aimed squarely at heterosexuality and its expression. Indeed, the repeal of DADT is arguably a minor issue compared to those issues raised by the wholesale integration of women, which has created problems that remain similarly unacknowledged and unaddressed. You don't have to be a sexually deprived—much less depraved—straight male to be aware of an attractive woman working on your team, despite military uniforms' best efforts to desexualize women. The military teaches you not to react and perhaps even not to approach a woman: the control of speech and actions is just what DADT itself attempted to effect.

Current policing of what can be said stops short of forbidding, on pain of dismissal, a man from saying to someone, "I am heterosexual," whereas DADT made the comparable utterance for gays grounds for dismissal. But of course, few straight men say this; they just act on that fact, either verbally or physically. And current rules do punish almost any reference to male-female sexual attraction in the military. Sexual relations or even speech about sexuality with subordinates is "frat," fraternization; sexual relations within the same unit can be similarly policed.

Situations where sexual relations between fellow military members are allowed are narrowly circumscribed. During work hours in the military, or even outside them, depending on jobs and work relationships, a man is supposed to pretend he is not attracted to a woman even if he is; if he fails to do this he can be punished through jail time, reduction in rank, or discharge. Even being aware of the woman's femaleness and commenting on it can be perilous, in a way it is not with another man. He can compliment a male colleague's physique, large muscles, and general appearance. He cannot similarly compliment a woman's breasts or even, probably, tell her she looks good. With DADT repealed it's perhaps no longer acceptable for a man to give another a pat on the back, verbal or actual, for his workout ethic: such things might now be considered sexual in

nature, after all. Is a woman free to compliment a male colleague on his muscles if she is gay and hence giving a friendly collegial compliment rather than edging into sexual territory? Things have gotten complex.

Male-female relations in the military already were complex, even without female servicepersons present. A Navy LCDR informed faculty members of the Naval Academy attending a “Sexual Harassment Briefing” a few years ago that a sailor in an all-male squadron putting up a girlie picture that offended no one around him would still be guilty of “harassment” and of “creating a hostile work environment.” “The Navy is offended,” announced the LCDR. The coercion has changed flavor to protect women, even when absent, but that hasn’t changed the fact of coercion, which is expressed in institutional terms rather than in terms of individual freedoms.

In *Unfriendly Fire*, Nathaniel Frank looks at the militaries of five other countries and concludes that the effect of the removal of bans on out gays in the U.S. military would be minimal. Frank succinctly expresses the view I am suggesting is wrong, that the repeal of DADT is just the removal of a negative. Here’s Frank, in an interview on NPR, on December 7, 2010: “All it [repeal of DADT] really means is that you stop kicking out gay people: that you let them serve. There’s already gay people, in other words, in these militaries. It’s about whether you allow it, whether you acknowledge it and whether you allow gay and lesbian people to be honest.”¹ Gay people want to serve as gay people: now we allow it. It’s as simple as that.

But it isn’t. A question I was given, in 2011, during the question session following the video of the mandatory training at the U.S. Naval Academy—where I have been a professor for 25 years—made clear that the repeal of DADT does not in fact constitute a simple allowance of something that had hitherto been prohibited. What,

¹ “How Gay Soldiers Serve Openly Around the World,” *Fresh Air*, December 7, 2010, available at <http://www.npr.org/2010/12/07/131857684/how-gay-soldiers-serve-openly-around-the-world> (accessed October 20, 2012).

the officer who had raised his hand asked, would the Naval Academy do to accommodate midshipmen in a three- or four-bed room who were uncomfortable living with an openly gay roommate? Rooms at the Naval Academy include a shower, and roommates typically get dressed in front of each other, and the questioner suggested that for some people this would be as discomfiting as having someone of the opposite sex in a public restroom. The answer: nothing at all, since the Navy's policy now declares that sexuality is a non-issue.

Outside the military, those with this issue (leaving aside for the moment whether or not we approve of their having it) simply find a new roommate. For those in the military, this is not an option. Indeed most people I've talked to interpret the new set of rules as saying that any reference to gayness in the military is out of bounds, during work hours or off. One of my former students, now a Marine (and straight), told me he couldn't wait to "bust" the first man who made a negative comment about gays, or objected to having gay platoon mates. We might applaud my Marine for his politically correct views and his eagerness to embrace new regulations, but I think this is the wrong way to go—and there's every indication that this is the way the military is going. Instead, my Marine should call his men together and encourage them to talk it out. Have a laugh, practice ways to say "no" (or, for that matter, when it's ok to say "yes"), and encourage men with issues to speak to him. That's a far better and more productive way to go than to deny, against all rationality, that discomfort with sexual attention and situations, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is real.

Denying the problem is precisely what the military has repeatedly done. Instead of acknowledging problems created by including women and gays and of encouraging the defusion of difficulties through discussion, the military has reacted to potentially sexual situations by policing heterosexual males harder. The Navy's Sexual Assault Victim Intervention (SAVI) program has produced numerous briefs that I've sat through at the Naval Academy premised on there being a "victim" of sexual assault when an assault is claimed,

rather than an “alleged victim.” This clearly abandons the presupposition of “innocent until proven guilty.” Male midshipmen routinely tell me that they feel the assumption in these briefs is that all of them are potential and indeed probable rapists. The Annapolis *Capital Gazette* used the information obtained through a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request in 2009 to conclude that Academy justice was tilted toward women. The article, by Earl Kelly, begins: “In an apparent attempt to curb sexual abuse, the Naval Academy created a double standard that punished male midshipmen harsher than females from 2001 to 2006, according to reams of documents obtained by the *Capital*.”²

Unlike in the civilian world, close physical intimacy is not the most common way that sexuality enters into military situations. Gender, physicality, and even sexuality are fair game for bonding in the military, in a way they are not in the civilian world. And paradoxically, so is denying that this is so. Men in the military can be “counseled” and given a bad “fitrep” (fitness report) if they suggest that men will not, for example, be as likely to follow a woman—or perhaps now, a gay man—up the proverbial hill, that gender or sexual orientation play any role at all in the subjective building of bonds and the establishment of morale. Yet most military personnel would agree this plays a role. Masculine men, who not coincidentally are known as sexual powerhouses with women, typically engender greater loyalty than men considered less masculine. We might insist that women, gay men and gay women can be masculine too; still, the purpose of DADT is to allow gay men and women to be open about their sexuality, and it’s silly not to acknowledge that gay behavior, like much female behavior, is a hurdle to acceptance by many males. The same hurdle, for that matter, exists for small or slight men. Any of these particular characteristics can be compensated for by toughness, but better still, in this view, is to be large and tough—and heterosexual. It is not impossible

² Earl Kelly, “Academy Justice Was Tilted Toward Women,” *Capital Gazette*, May 17, 2009.

for a woman to inspire combat loyalty in her men, it's just exponentially more difficult.

No individual quality, certainly, need make leadership impossible, but some will clearly place leaders at a disadvantage—to an even greater degree than in the civilian world, where, as Malcolm Gladwell reports in *Blink*, a large proportion of Fortune 500 CEOs are tall men—58 percent over 6 feet, as opposed to 14.5 percent in the population as a whole.³ Fair? Probably not. But a fact. There are fewer problems with open biases in the civilian world because people can quit or leave a place that treats them unfairly, and can more openly question superiors. None of these are options in the military.

The repeal of DADT has thus produced a situation in which a powerful institution that polices internally through top-down policies is now using that force to implement a policy supported perhaps primarily and most insistently by a minority: gays and lesbians. To this, the formerly marginalized minority can react in several ways: perhaps first by noting with satisfaction that turn-about is fair play. The oppression has been reversed, and the oppressors are now paying the price. The problem with this attitude is that the minority is still the minority and unit cohesiveness is shattered if the new victors crow too loudly or grind their former oppressors' noses in the dirt.

Another possible reaction is to deny validity to any objections to the new policies. Usually a comparison between the repeal of DADT and the forced racial integration of the U.S. Armed Services, mandated by President Harry S Truman, is used as a means of dismissing any objections to the repeal. Troops may well have been uncomfortable with the effects of forced racial integration, but they had to get over it.

³ Malcolm Gladwell, "Why Do We Love Tall Men?" excerpt from *Blink*, available at http://www.gladwell.com/blink/blink_excerpt2.html (accessed October 20, 2012).

The argument implies that any reason for sexual discomfort is as baseless as that produced by differences in skin color and in racial or ethnic backgrounds. However this need not be so, as servicepersons might well be uncomfortable for a valid reason. Considering the widely divergent social backgrounds and geographical areas that contribute to the enlisted corps of the military, or the overwhelmingly conservative officer corps, there are many persons in the service who do feel discomfort at physical intimacy with people who, in theory, could be sexually attracted to them. The “closed,” or all-male, ostensibly all-straight military could simply deny the existence of sexual situations, or punish any that arose; the “open” military of mixed genders and mixed sexual orientations ignores such situations at its peril, and cannot indiscriminately wield its former demands of discipline. We can argue this is a price worth paying for a greater good; however the civilian watch-dogs of the military seem bent on arguing that there is no price to pay at all.

It’s facile to make an easy parallel of skin color and sexual orientation, though this is one of the most frequent defenses of the lifting of DADT. I hear over and over, “they resisted integration, now they’re resisting gays.” What’s common between resistance to out gays and resistance to non-whites is, however, only the fact of resistance: we can’t assume on that basis alone that the two are comparable. And indeed they are not. Sexuality is understood as the underpinning of (the precise phrase is hotly disputed) actions, whereas skin color implies nothing besides itself. Once you accept the skin color, nothing else follows. But acceptance of a certain sexuality and hence the possibility of sexual attraction does imply something further: potential actions. This is true whether the sexual attraction is gay or straight, involving women or men.

This fact is surely at the basis of our continued societal division of public places where nudity or undress is tolerated such as locker rooms and bathrooms into gender-divided spaces, while we’ve long ago given up race-divided spaces for such things. The some-

what outmoded assumption is that gender division of such spaces eliminates the possibility of sexual actions. It was never true that it eliminated them completely, but surely it was a basic first step. Now we have greater public awareness of the fact that sexual orientation is less predictable from gender than most people thought. Recent events such as those at Penn State, as well as greater public awareness of the fact that a specific gender does not imply a specific sexual orientation, would logically imply a finer tuning of the rules for such places, though this creates so many problems it's unlikely to happen.

Still, some changes in this direction have been made already. Recently I volunteered to monitor "drown-proofing" for my fifth grade son at the local pool. The boys changed behind a strung-up sheet inside the locker room, not openly, and there had to be two fathers at all times, so that one could monitor the other or defend him against charges of improper interest or behavior. (The woman running the program said, "I have two words for you: Penn State.") I don't think separate bathrooms for out gays are in the offing; however, creating them would certainly be in keeping with the impulse that created separate-sex bathrooms to begin with, as well as the logical outcome of holding that gay is something people are: if you're gay, the proclivity to seek out your own gender for sexual purposes is always there.

DADT repeal has already caused re-thinking of the rationale of closed or private spaces in the military. The regulations at USNA have changed from requiring room doors in the dormitory to be open at a 90 degree angle if anyone of the other gender ("opposite sex") is visiting to requiring open doors if anyone not a roommate is present. As my students point out, this leaves unconsidered what the roommates may be up to among themselves. But at least it's acknowledging that possible sexual attraction (which used to be assumable from gender and now no longer is) is still the basis for our policing of private spaces. No mention, of course, is made any more of skin color as a determinant factor in such USNA regulations. Sexual orientation is not identical to, or even the same type of quality as,

skin color, so the assumption that the former can be as unpoliced as the latter in the military needs to be put to rest.

The net good of repealing DADT—retention of gay service-members and radical improvement of their quality of life in the military—is greater than the negatives it entails. But we are on the track for more problems if we continue to insist that there are no negative results at all. Instead we should be open about these and encourage their controlled expression so as to make it clear that they are not insuperable. Ignored, they will produce silent grousing; if servicemembers feel they are being forced to shut up, they will lose the “can-do” attitude that powers a lot of the military’s extraordinary achievement, that subjective feeling of trust and bonding that pushes people in uniform to super-human achievements on occasion.

Theoretical Considerations

Apart from these practical implications, we should ask the larger theoretical question of why the military is so disapproving of sexuality within its ranks and so resistant to talking about it, preferring instead to try to pretend it isn’t there and forbidding all reference to it. Sexuality, as I have argued in *Sexual Ethics: Liberal vs. Conservative*, exists uncomfortably in an undefined middle realm between social and private.⁴ Sexuality is amenable to ethical considerations only to the extent that it involves someone or something else beyond the individual: other people, or a principle. Liberal ethics are typically expressed in terms of other people; conservative ethics in terms of principles. Thus a liberal will typically disapprove of sexual actions if they hurt another, a conservative if they contravene an impersonal principle. Very social organizations, such as the military, resist anything that lessens control over its members. Sex, which is tantalizingly close to the social and involves other people in indi-

⁴ Bruce Fleming, *Sexual Ethics: Liberal vs. Conservative* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), 1ff.

vidual ways, seems a provocation to highly social organizations that impose constant attention upon their members. I believe that it was the highly social nature of Freud's nineteenth-century Austria that led to his conviction, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, that all societies are fueled by sexual repression. It's not true of all groupings, just the most tightly-wound, of which the U.S. military is certainly the best current example.

Sexual relations thus construct what I call "bubbles" for social structures—these are unproblematic when they are kept transitory and occur in off-duty hours, as soldiers and sailors have known for centuries. It's not as if there was no sex for the military before the mid-twentieth century; it's just that it largely took place off stage and so did not threaten the structure. Now it's clearly there as an issue, so we have to accept talking about it as a way of dealing with it, not just referring it to more intensive policing.

The DADT policy itself was typically understood by those who opposed it as a repressive one enacted upon gay people by an institutionalized straightness that refused to tolerate Otherness. The fight for its repeal was thus seen as a salutary, if rare, success for the marginalized against a hegemonic position of the empowered—and for many of the proponents of repeal, a victory sweeter for that reason. The terms in which the fight to repeal DADT, and indeed its imposition, are usually framed are thus those of a thinker influential in articulating relationships about power and sexuality, Michel Foucault.

In numerous works including *The Birth of the Clinic*, *Discipline and Punish*, and *The Order of Things (Words and Things)*, Foucault suggested that virtually all attempts by the more powerful set of actors, however these are defined, to interact with the less powerful will be an act of domination. Most particularly for Foucault, this domination is expressed in words, in an act of naming. At his most extreme, Foucault can be understood as saying that no attention offered by the more powerful partner—say the sane to the insane—can

be merely neutral or even benevolent; it must always be an act of subjugation.

Saying is not a neutral act, as anyone caught in a socially sticky situation knows. Sexual self-identification is not a neutral act either: the act of labeling or naming changes one's relation to the world. Repealing DADT has thus meant that the military has had to alter its own labels. Namely, that homosexuality is not something people do, which can be policed, but is something people are, which cannot be. According to the Foucauldian terms of the debate, if the powerful use a term for the less powerful, it's oppression. If the less powerful use it of themselves, it's appropriating the power position, and hence a good thing. Thus the repeal of DADT lifted the ban, in Foucauldian terms, on the articulation of gayness by gays, restoring to them the power position of self-naming.

Yet this action assumes that the act of self-naming invokes a coherent and meaningful entity, here gayness or homosexuality. Thus the repeal of DADT has committed the military to a theoretical position it had not adopted before. Namely, to the position that sexuality is an essence rather than a pattern of actions.

Conservatives, who tend to be the majority in the military, continue to insist that homosexuality is a choice, a "life-style"; while it is largely a liberal response to insist that it is an essence just as real as heterosexuality, and just as good. Conservatives tend to insist that the "natural" position is desire for, or at least copulation with, the opposite sex, usually for the purpose of producing children; copulation with the same sex (as well as, usually, various non-reproductive sexual acts) are not in line with God's laws. Following Augustine, who held that evil was only the privation of good and not an essence in itself, deviation from the naturally intended form of sex is merely deviation, not an essence. And so conservatives tend to refuse to dignify homosexuality as an essence. Someone "is" not gay, he or she merely acts that way—and should stop. I have argued in my book *Why Liberals and Conservatives Clash* that conservative ethics are

always expressed in terms of right and wrong actions; liberal ethics are expressed in terms of the actors.⁵

Foucault's fundamental claim in his *History of Sexuality* is that in the late nineteenth century a classification of what people did (e.g. "sodomy") became a distinction of who people are. Homosexuals and homosexuality were thus, according to Foucault, invented, an act of naming inflicted on gays by straights. The creation of the concept of homosexuality re-draws the map of sexuality, essentializing the "Other" conceptually. Foucault's contribution to the argument was to return the compliment, to regard heterosexuality as equally possessing such an essence, turning it into an "Other" with respect to the now-essentialized homosexuality. It is difficult not to see Foucault's point: turn-about is fair play.

The theoretical position implicit to DADT was that sexual orientation was irrelevant so long as no action occurred. Indeed, DADT refused to take a position on the question of orientation by mandating that a question asked in essentialist terms (such as "are you gay?") would never be asked; it was only actions that were policed. This stance even produced the diverting spectacle of a one-strike exception, quickly baptized the "Queen for a Day" clause, that a single act of homosexual sex, if not part of a visible larger pattern, was declared an aberration and not evidence of sexual orientation.

Thus the repeal of DADT itself re-poses the theoretical question of whether homosexuality, or indeed heterosexuality, is a set of actions or an essence, an "orientation," or something either stronger than this, or weaker (a "lifestyle," as conservatives insist on calling it). Most attempts to define heterosexuality, following Foucault, do consider it an essence. Queer Theory added the final stage of reasoning. It noted that heterosexuality allows of degrees, as well as of slippages between self-identification and identification from the outside. Considerations of heterosexuality from the perspective of

⁵ Bruce Fleming, *Why Liberals and Conservatives Clash* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

gay men and women have assumed it to be an essence, but a deeply flawed one.

In *Sexual Ethics*, I argue that heterosexuality only seems an essence from the outside, not from the inside.⁶ Thus the military's repeal of DADT, inevitable as it may have been for political reasons, adopts a view of sexuality that will continue to pose problems for heterosexual (especially male) service members. I propose heterosexuality to be closer to Foucault's pre-modern series of actions that tend toward a default pattern (I am straight because I have sex with females) rather than the essentializing view that is at the heart of Queer Theory. It was never straight men who defined themselves as participating in (if this is the right phrase) an essence: instead, they essentialized gayness. This in turn essentialized straightness—only to show that, as the dominant paradigm, “straight” wasn't very good at being an essence. We can always see something as coherent more clearly when it's silhouetted against a larger thing to which it serves as an alternative.

Queer Theory, in a word, gets heterosexuality wrong. Heterosexuality seen from within is not an essence any more than homosexuality was when it was declared to be so in the nineteenth century. To be sure, it may seem to those looking on from the outside that sexuality is an essence, one, moreover, that attempts to enjoy the power position whose identification is central to any Foucauldian analysis. But this is not at all what life feels like to the straight male who spends most of his time trying to deal with the threat of his own inadequacy. From the outside he may be seen as projecting power, but to himself he seems to spend his time proving that he is worthy—of his own manhood. Sometimes he succeeds, but then he has to prove it again, and again, and again. And that means, contrary to Foucault's formulation, masculinity is not most fundamentally defined (as Eve Sedgwick and other gender theoreticians have

⁶ This is a summary of my consideration of “heterosexuality from the inside” in *Sexual Ethics*, 69ff.

assumed) by “object choice,” such as through a relationship with women.⁷ A straight male’s definition as a man, and as a heterosexual, is not only with respect to something outside himself, but also with respect to something inside it: his internalization of the views of other men.

Heterosexuality is about being a sort of man among men. And part of the understanding of men with men is also related to our understanding of how other men relate to others. Sexuality is not irrelevant, even if our relationship with other men is not itself explicitly sexual. The more intimate and physical the relationships between men are, the more relevant these considerations become.

When the military could pretend that sexuality was not an issue within its ranks—with no out gays, and with women separated from men in identifiable units like the WACS and WAVES—it could simply announce that there was to be no sex between military personnel within the same jurisdiction, and that sex, assumed to be heterosexual, could take place with no restrictions off-duty. Now, there are women alongside men in almost all units and communities, and the once-notorious bordellos that began outside the gates of many military bases overseas are shuttered as unbecoming the U.S. military. The result is a blurring of the distinctions between duty and off-duty. After the repeal of DADT, the presence of out gays means we can no longer assume, even for practical purposes, that all sexual relations are between different genders. Distinctions blur even further.

With boundaries blurred, the situation is now more complex. There’s no down time: you can’t let it all hang out with your own sex and clean up your act for the opposite one, because it’s no longer opposite and you don’t know whom you might be offending. The military has created a pressure pot that is more volatile than the old, and responded with more bands of iron around the pot. Since the military can coerce, it can ensure compliance with an unrealistic set

⁷ For a discussion of this, see *Sexual Ethics*, 59.

of demands. What it cannot ensure is willing compliance, the basis of good morale, and hence of effective performance.

In sum, the military now puts people who are likely to be sexually attracted to each other in situations far more intimate than civilian offices, and then orders them to pretend that this attraction does not exist. This is unfair to all concerned. As a society we have decided that women and out gays will serve in the military; we must be open about the problems this entails. Not talking about them only makes them worse, and produces a situation even more unfair to those in the military than it already is. Those having problems with the situation of integrated women and out gays are punished for being the problem themselves. We can emphasize the social good of integrating women and gay people into the military without, as we are currently doing, denying that there are any drawbacks to this policy.

The military must admit these issues, and point out to troops that they are the result of societal decisions and changes that cannot be reversed. Troops should be encouraged to talk and joke about these issues, not punished for doing so. Talking about what must be doesn't change it, but it does help people to understand it.