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TITLE: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Couples in the Military: A Post-DADT Examination of Relationship Health, Perceived Community Acceptance, and Mission Readiness

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14. ABSTRACT The purpose of our study is to deliver a current, evidence-based understanding of the functioning of LGB couples in the Air Force community to U.S. military and civilian leadership. We anticipate that improved understanding will help focus efforts, make improvements, and ultimately contribute to a more effective armed forces. In terms of scope, we will use a two-stage, mixed methods design. Stage 1 will be a qualitative study of 50 LGB Air Force using semi-structured phone or video. Stage 2 will be a quantitative study testing hypotheses regarding risk and protective factors (at multiple ecological levels) predicting relationship and individual outcomes. To date, we have completed preparation of the qualitative and quantitative measures, finalized our participant recruitment strategies, achieved IRB approval of our research protocol, and achieved Air Force Survey Office approval of our research questionnaires. A request for a waiver to ask questions about sexual orientation has been submitted to the Air Force the review and routing process toward getting ultimate approval from the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD/P&R).						
15. SUBJECT TERMS military, couples, LGB, relationship, health, readiness						
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1. INTRODUCTION:

Military readiness has been characterized as a three-legged stool built on training, equipment, and family; when one leg weakens, the entire stool is compromised. Although research is in its infancy, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) service members and their partners may be at greater risk for relationship distress and occupational impairment than are heterosexual couples (Oswald & Sternberg, 2014). However, the absence of research severely hinders any firm conclusions concerning risk and protective factors for LGB couples in the military. The objectives of the proposed study are to (1) Complete semi-structured phone or video interviews with a sample of Air Force LGB couples and conduct qualitative analyses of interview responses. (2) Complete a quantitative survey of a sample of Air Force LGB couples using a broad range of general and LGB-specific measures of community, workplace, relationship, and individual risk and protective factors. (3) Complete a similar quantitative survey of a sample of heterosexual Air Force couples that are matched to the LGB couple on demographic variables. (4) Develop and test a multi-level, community model of health and functioning for Air Force couples that compares heterosexual and LGB participants and identifies key predictors and mediators of occupational functioning.

2. KEYWORDS: military, couples, LGB, relationship, health, readiness

3. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

a. What were the major goals of the project?

Major Task 1: Complete all preparatory work for project start.	Timeline	
	Months	% complete
Complete qualitative assessment measure for LGB phone interviews	1-3	100%
Finalize strategies for reaching LGB couples with study recruitment effort	1-3	100%
Obtain necessary Air Force approvals for recruitment advertisements	1-3	50%
Develop strategy for accurately linking partner to partner responses	1-3	100%
Complete regulatory documentation for IRB/HRPO submission	1-3	100%
Develop on-line consenting and survey administration procedures	4-6	100%
Establish process for conducting participant incentive payments	4-6	100%
Complete near-final quantitative (on-line) survey for LGB couples	4-6	100%
Obtain review by Air Force Survey Office (AFSO) and judgment that project does not fall under AFSO authority, i.e., not an attitudinal/opinion survey	4-6	100%
Obtain final IRB, HRPO, and OASD/HA (if needed) approval for study implementation	6-8	33%
<i>Milestone Achieved: IRB/HRPO/OASD study approval obtained</i>	8	33%
<i>Milestone Achieved: LGB couple recruitment strategies approved by Air Force</i>	8	100%

b. What was accomplished under these goals?

1) Major Activities

- a. Establish IRB oversight for study
- b. Prepare a detailed draft of research protocol
- c. Gain understanding of all required approval processes.
- d. Prepare research questionnaires for review by Air Force Survey Office (AFSO).
- e. Work with Air Force sponsor to develop LGB couple recruitment strategies.
- e. Submit research protocol for IRB review.
- f. Submit research questionnaires for AFSO review.
- g. Extensive back and forth with AFSO to negotiate final version of research questionnaires.
- g. Prepare a request for waiver for asking about sexual orientation for submission to the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness).
- h. Submit waiver request to USD (P&R).

2) Specific Objectives

- a. Finalize research procedures, recruitment strategies, quantitative and qualitative measures, data management, and participant protections sufficient for IRB review.
- b. Establish IRB of record; understand procedures for seeking other required approvals to include HRPO, AF Survey Office, and waiver for asking sexual orientation.
- c. Finalize LGB couple recruitment strategies approved by Air Force.
- c. Obtain IRB approval of protocol.
- d. Obtain approval of research questionnaires from AFSO.
- e. Obtain Air Force HRPO approval of research protocol
- e. Obtain for waiver from USD (P&R) for asking about sexual orientation.

3) Significant Results

- a. An IRB protocol was prepared and submitted to the Air Force IRB (88 MDG, Wright-Patterson AFB) on June 24 2018
- b. DoD Institutional Agreements for IRB Review (IAIR) between 88 MDG IRB and each investigator's University were completed and signed
- c. Final LGB couple recruitment strategies written into IRB protocol.
- d. An IRB protocol was approved by the Air Force IRB (88 MDG, Wright-Patterson AFB) on Monday, 5 November 2018.
- e. Request for review of research questionnaires submitted to AFSO on 5 September 2018.
- f. Final AFSO approval of revised research questionnaires received on 8 July 2019.
- g. Request for a waiver of questions about sexual orientation was prepared and submitted to AFMSA/SGE-C on 11 July 2019 to start the USD (P&R) review process.

4) Other Achievements

- a. We persisted.

c. What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

- o The project has provided unique training experiences for investigators motivated to conduct research on the topic of sexual orientation in the military. There are only a handful or such studies funded by CDMRP and our project is the first to be conducted in the Air Force. Neither the

investigators nor the military agencies involved had practical experience with the regulatory approval process. We are becoming subject matter experts.

d. How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?

- Nothing to Report.

e. What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

- With AFSO approval in-hand, we will now prepare and submit an amendment to IRB to add final version of research questionnaires to the protocol.
- Once IRB protocol amendment is approved, we will seek Air Force HRPO approval of protocol.
- A waiver to ask questions about sexual orientation has been submitted to the review process. We will be tracking this and assisting as needed.

4. IMPACT:

a. What was the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?

Nothing to Report.

b. What was the impact on other disciplines?

Nothing to Report.

c. What was the impact on technology transfer?

Nothing to Report.

d. What was the impact on society beyond science and technology?

Nothing to Report.

5. CHANGES/PROBLEMS:

a. Changes in approach and reasons for change.

Our original research proposal intended to enroll committed romantic partners of at least six-months duration. This included non-married civilian partners of active duty. We learned as part of our engagement with AFSO that inclusion of non-married partners required approval from the DoD Survey Office. After discussion with our research team, consultation with our Science Officer and funding agency, we decided to exclude non-married civilian partners from our study. We will still include as participants the active duty partner of the non-married romantic relationship. We reluctantly made this change based on the expectation that seeking DoD Survey Office approval would require a longer period of time than the AFSO approval process.

b. Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them

- Our SOW indicates that we should have completed all preparatory work for study start in the first 8 months of the period of performance. We are currently at 13 months and the final USD (P&R) review and approval process has just started. While this is unfortunate, we believe we have surmounted significant, unanticipated regulatory barriers in the past year.
- The AFSO initially accepted Col Chris Robinson/HQ A1Z as study sponsor. After further consultation with the Office of People Analytics (OPA), AFSO changed their mind and insisted that the sponsor must be a General Officer. They attributed the change to their application of the “Washington Post Test” (see below). Efforts to obtain GO-level sponsor for the study, though ultimately successful, required additional time.
 - From AFSO email:
 - “OPA and AFSO typically use the "Washington Post" test when considering approval of studies or survey items -- How would this look on the front page of the Washington Post if the results were FOIA'd...or in this case, presented in a journal?”
- We are now embarking on the USD (P&R) review and approval process. AFMSA/SGE-C is the Air Force office that packages and submits waiver requests to USD (P&R).
- Despite these challenges, we feel confident that a 1-year NCE will provide sufficient additional time to accomplish the study aims and deliverables.

c. Changes that had a significant impact on expenditures

Nothing to report

d. Significant changes in use or care of human subjects, vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents

Nothing to report

e. Significant changes in use or care of human subjects

Nothing to report

f. Significant changes in use or care of vertebrate animals.

Nothing to report

g. Significant changes in use of biohazards and/or select agents

Nothing to report

6. PRODUCTS:

a. Publications, conference papers, and presentations

Nothing to report

b. Journal publications

Nothing to report

c. Books or other non-periodical, one-time publications.

Nothing to report

d. Other publications, conference papers, and presentations.

Nothing to report

e. Website(s) or other Internet site(s)

Nothing to report

f. Technologies or techniques

Nothing to report

g. Inventions, patent applications, and/or licenses

Nothing to report

h. Other Products

Nothing to report

7. PARTICIPANTS & OTHER COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS**a. What individuals have worked on the project?**

Name	Project Role	Nearest person month worked	Contribution to Project
Dr. Jeffrey A. Cigrang	PI	1	Served as the Principal Investigator for the project. Led effort to prepare, submit, & obtain IRB approval for protocol. Coordinated all regulatory aspects of study with Air Force and other higher headquarters.
Dr. Michael Anne Glotfelter	Co-PI	1	Served as primary Air Force PI. Provided advice and guidance on Air Force culture and procedures. Assisted with IRB submission
Maj Jordan Simonson	Co-I	1	Air Force co-PI. Our POC at the study sponsoring agency – HQ USAF/A1Z. Responsible for developing the Air Force-approved plan for study advertisement. Responsible for all communications with Air Force Survey Office and HQ A1Z.

Dr. Amy Slep	Co-I	1	Senior investigator at partnering University (NYU). Assisted with all aspects of developing IRB protocol.
Dr. Rick Heyman	Co-I	1	Senior investigator at partnering University (NYU). Assisted with all aspects of developing IRB protocol.
Dr. Danielle Mitnick	Co-I	1	Junior investigator at partnering University (NYU). Helped write the method and data management section for IRB protocol.
Dr. Kristin Lindahl	Co-I	1	Senior Investigator at partnering University (MU). Led selection of LGB-specific measures for quantitative survey and qualitative interviews.
Dr. Christina Balderrama-Durbin	Co-I	1	Junior investigator at partnering University (BU-SUNY). Consultant for selection of LGB-specific measures for quantitative survey and qualitative interviews.
Ms. Kelsey Lorko	Graduate Research Assistant	1	Served as GRA for Dr. Cigrang at WSU. Coordinated team meetings, dictated meeting minutes, helped edit portions of research questionnaires.

b. Has there been a change in the active other support of the PD/PI(s) or senior/key personnel since the last reporting period?

- Amy Slep

Active support ending during current reporting period: n/a

New support beginning during current reporting period:

2016-MU-MU-K074 NIJ/Westat 1/1/19-12/31/20 5.32% FTE
 Longitudinal Cohort Study of Interpersonal Violence Among College-Aged Women and Men: Planning Phase

- Rick Heyman

Active support ending during current reporting period: n/a

New support beginning during current reporting period:

2016-MU-MU-K074 NIJ/Westat 1/1/19-12/31/20 5.32% FTE
 Longitudinal Cohort Study of Interpersonal Violence Among College-Aged Women and Men: Planning Phase

- c. **What other organizations were involved as partners?**
- Organization Name: NYU
Location of Organization: New York City, NY
Partner's contribution to the project:
Collaboration: NYU staff contributed to IRB protocol development.
 - Organization Name: BU-SUNY
Location of Organization: Binghamton, NY
Partner's contribution to the project:
Collaboration: Assisted in the selection and development of quantitative and qualitative measures in preparation for IRB approval.

8. SPECIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- **QUAD CHART attached**

9. APPENDICES:

- Quad chart

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Couples in the Military: A Post-DADT Examination of Relationship Health, Perceived Community Acceptance, and Mission Readiness.

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Award No: W81XWH1820027

PI: Jeffrey A. Cigrang, Ph.D.

Org: Wright State University Award Amount: \$1,053,094

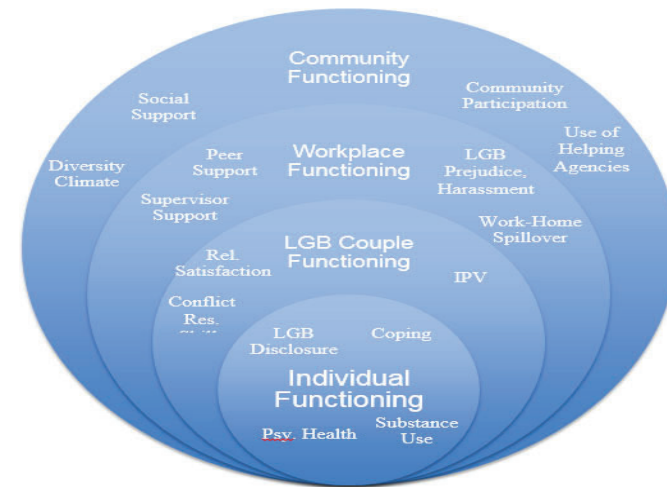


Study/Product Aim(s)

- Complete qualitative and quantitative surveys of a sample of AF LGB couples using a broad range of measures of community, workplace, relationship, and individual risk and protective factors.
- Complete a similar survey of a sample of heterosexual AF couples that are matched to the LGB couple on key variables.
- Test a multi-level, community model of health and functioning for AF couples that compares heterosexual and LGB participants and identifies key predictors of occupational functioning.

Approach

We will use a two-stage, mixed methods design. Stage 1 will be a qualitative study of 50 LGB Air Force couples using semi-structured interviews. Stage 2 will be a quantitative study testing hypotheses regarding risk and protective factors ((ns = 250 couples) predicting relationship and individual outcomes.



Accomplishments: (1) IRB approval of study protocol (2) Obtained General Officer study sponsor, (3) Air Force Survey Office approval of research questionnaire, (4) waiver application submitted to USD (P&R) for questions about sexual orientation.

Timeline and Cost

Activities	CY	18	19	20	21
Study preparatory work		■			
Complete LGB interviews			■		
Complete quantitative surveys				■	
Complete data analysis/report					■
Estimated Budget (\$K)		149959	337570	376588	188977

Updated: 22 July 2019

Goals/Milestones

CY18 Goal – Study start-up

- ✓ Obtain final IRB/HRPO approval for study protocol
- ✓ Prepare, submit other regulatory approval requests

CY19 Goals – Complete all approvals; begin data collection

- Obtain USD (P&R) waiver for sexual orientation questions
- Complete qualitative interviews of LGB couples
- Initiate on-line survey for LGB couples

CY20 Goal – Complete data collection

- Complete on-line data collection for LGB couples
- Obtain matched group of heterosexual couples.
- Recruit, survey heterosexual sample

Comments/Challenges/Issues/Concerns

- Study requires a high level of multiple approvals before start

Budget Expenditure to Date

Projected Expenditure: \$1,053,094
Actual Expenditure: \$184,756

Kim S Owens, CPA Digitally signed by Kim S Owens, CPA
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