

Sexual Orientation Disclosure, Concealment, Harassment, and Military Cohesion: Perceptions of LGBT Military Veterans

Bonnie Moradi

University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

From the perspective of 445 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) U.S. military veterans, the present study examined hypothesized relations of sexual orientation disclosure, concealment, and harassment with unit social and task cohesion. Findings indicated that sexual orientation disclosure was related positively, whereas sexual orientation concealment and harassment were related negatively to social cohesion. Also, through their links with social cohesion, each of these variables was related indirectly to task cohesion. When the set of predictors was examined together, sexual orientation disclosure had a positive direct relation with social cohesion and a positive indirect relation with task cohesion, whereas sexual orientation–based harassment had a negative direct relation with social cohesion and a negative indirect relation with task cohesion. These data provide useful groundwork for evaluating military policies and practices regarding sexual orientation.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons have a history of serving in the military (Burrelli, 1994) despite military policies and practices that have barred these individuals from serving openly (Burrelli; Herek, 1993). The present military position on LGBT persons' service is expressed in a memorandum on military policy on homosexual conduct in which the Secretary of Defense asserted that "sexual orientation is considered to be a personal and private matter, and homosexual orientation is not a bar to service entry or continued service unless manifested by homosexual conduct" and "homosexuality is incompatible with military

service because it interferes with the factors critical to combat effectiveness, including unit morale, unit cohesion and individual privacy” (Secretary of Defense, 1993, p. 1). Based on this position, Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue (DADTDP) allows LGBT persons to serve in the military but requires that they conceal their sexual orientation and maintains that homosexual conduct is incompatible with military service and is therefore grounds for discharge.

Since the adoption of DADTDP, there has been debate about its utility and harm to the military and to LGBT servicemembers. Some scholars have asserted that banning LGBT servicemembers from serving openly is necessary for preserving unit cohesion (Moskos, 1994; Ray, 1993; Wells-Petry, 1993), whereas other scholars have challenged this perspective (e.g., Belkin, 2003; Herek, 1993, 1996; Terman, 2004). In a recent resolution, the APA Task Force on Sexual Orientation and Military Service (which includes representatives from APA’s Division 19) characterized DADTDP as harmful and stated that the task force “recognizes and abhors the many detrimental effects that the law has had on individual service members, the military, and American society” (Taylor, 2004, p. 12). The debate about DADTDP is particularly salient at the present time given the importance of military recruitment and retention for the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq on the one hand and reports of discharges of many LGBT servicemembers with expertise critical to these missions (e.g., Arabic language translators) on the other (United States Government Accountability Office, 2005). To inform this debate, the core assumption of DADTDP that LGBT persons serving openly will have a deleterious impact on unit cohesion must be evaluated empirically.

DADTDP, however, poses a challenge to using the perspective of heterosexual servicemembers to test the cohesion impact of LGBT persons’ concealment and disclosure of their sexual orientation. Specifically, under DADTDP, many heterosexual servicemembers may not be aware that they are serving with LGBT colleagues. Thus, perceptions of unit cohesion for heterosexual servicemembers who have and have not served with LGBT servicemembers cannot be compared. Thus, under DADTDP, LGBT servicemembers are the only personnel who have information about their own sexual orientations and can provide their perceptions of unit cohesion in the units in which they served. As such, the perceptions of LGBT servicemembers are a reasonable place to begin empirical examination of cohesion in units that include LGBT servicemembers. Therefore, the present study uses LGBT servicemembers’ perceptions to explore the relations of unit cohesion with sexual orientation concealment behaviors (required by DADTDP), sexual orientation disclosure behaviors (disallowed by DADTDP), and sexual orientation–based harassment experiences. The role of sexual orientation–based harassment, in addition to the roles of sexual orientation concealment and disclosure, is important to consider because DADTDP includes a directive explicitly banning such harassment. In fact, the Secretary of Defense proposed a 13-point Anti-Harassment Action Plan to combat sexual orientation–based harassment in the military and

equated the military's stance on sexual orientation-based harassment to its strong stance against sexual or racial harassment (Terman, 2004). Thus, it is important to examine the extent to which sexual orientation concealment, disclosure, and harassment within military units each may be linked with unit cohesion.

Although prior studies have not examined relations among sexual orientation concealment, disclosure, harassment, and work-related outcomes with LGBT military personnel, studies with nonmilitary workers provide useful groundwork for examining these relations with LGBT military personnel. Within extant literature, sexual orientation disclosure is considered to promote positive personal and job-related outcomes, whereas sexual orientation concealment and sexual orientation-based harassment are considered to be stressors that can have deleterious personal and job-related outcomes (Croteau, 1996; Croteau, Anderson, Distefano, & Kampa-Kokesch, 2000; Morgan & Brown, 1993; Ragins, Cornwell, & Miller, 2003).

Specifically, sexual orientation disclosure and concealment have been conceptualized as strategies that LGBT persons use to manage their identities in the face of cultural and organizational stigma against homosexuality (e.g., Croteau, 1996; Croteau et al., 2000; Fassinger, 1996; Griffin, 1992; Hall, 1986; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Importantly, both concealment and disclosure strategies may be used by the same individual in different contexts and with different people within the organization. Thus, concealment and disclosure strategies are not thought to be opposite ends of a continuum but rather conceptualized as two different strategies that LGBT individuals may use simultaneously within the same organization. Greater concealment and lower disclosure are thought to be stressful for the well-being and work of LGBT persons, in part because they promote social isolation, and through this social isolation, reduce work commitment and performance (e.g., Badgett, 1996; Croteau, 1996; Fassinger, 1996; Herek, 1996; Irwin, 2002; Powers, 1996). The social isolation resultant from concealment and nondisclosure of sexual orientation might be particularly deleterious in military units in which interpersonal connection, support, and trust among unit members are thought to be paramount to unit cohesion and effectiveness (e.g., J. Griffith, 2002; J. Griffith & Vaitkus, 1999; Sinclair & Tucker, 2006).

Consistent with the posited associations of concealment and nondisclosure of sexual orientation with negative work outcomes, a series of studies has linked sexual orientation concealment with lower and sexual orientation disclosure with higher job satisfaction (e.g., Button, 2001; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; K. H. Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Concealment of sexual orientation also has been linked with work-related stress and isolation (Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest, & Ketzenberger, 1996; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; K. H. Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Furthermore, additional studies have linked sexual orientation concealment and disclosure in expected directions with variables that parallel military unit cohesion such as organizational commitment, peer relationship support and satisfac-

tion, and cooperative group process (e.g., Button; Chrobot-Mason, Button, & DiClementi, 2002; Day & Schoenrade; Ellis & Riggle, 1995; Ragins & Cornwell). Thus, sexual orientation concealment may be related negatively, whereas sexual orientation disclosure may be related positively to perceived military unit cohesion.

In addition to attention to workplace sexual orientation concealment and disclosure, a number of prior studies have focused on sexual orientation-based harassment as an important workplace stressor for LGBT persons. Workplace sexual orientation-based harassment has been shown to be related to physical and psychological symptomatology of LGBT persons (Smith & Ingram, 2004; Waldo, 1999). In addition to its link with health indicators, perceived workplace sexual orientation-based harassment has been linked with lower job satisfaction and greater turnover intentions (Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Waldo). As with sexual orientation concealment and disclosure, perceived workplace sexual orientation-based harassment is also linked with variables conceptually similar to military unit cohesion, such as commitment to and perceived shared values with the organization (Button, 2001; Lyons et al.; Ragins & Cornwell). Based on these findings, perceived sexual orientation-based harassment may be related to lower military unit cohesion.

Thus, empirical data support conceptualizations of lower sexual orientation disclosure and higher sexual orientation concealment and sexual orientation-based harassment experiences as job-related stressors that are linked with deleterious work outcomes for LGBT persons. Importantly, these findings are also consistent with the posited relation of job stress with military cohesion and related constructs. Specifically, job-related stress has been posited to reduce military unit cohesion and organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., J. Griffith & Vaitkus, 1999; Sinclair & Tucker, 2006). Therefore, as work-related stressors, limiting sexual orientation disclosure, actively concealing sexual orientation, and being exposed to sexual orientation-based harassment each may be linked with lower military unit cohesion.

In examining the relations of sexual orientation concealment, disclosure, and harassment with military unit cohesion, it is important to consider the distinction between social and task cohesion. Particularly, unit social or interpersonal cohesion reflects the emotional bonds among unit members, whereas task or instrumental cohesion reflects shared commitment to and confidence in carrying out group goals (e.g., J. Griffith, 2002; J. Griffith & Vaitkus, 1999; R. MacCoun, Kier, & Belkin, 2006; R. J. MacCoun, 1996; Mullen & Copper, 1994; Oliver, Harman, Hoover, Hayes, & Pandhi, 1999; Siebold, 1999, 2006, 2007). Sexual orientation disclosure, concealment, and harassment are likely to be related directly to social cohesion given their posited impact on social aspects of unit climate (e.g., Herek, 1996; R. J. MacCoun). Nevertheless, because social and task cohesion have been found to be correlated (e.g., R. J. MacCoun; Mullen & Copper; Zaccaro, 1991;

Zaccaro & Lowe, 1988), sexual orientation disclosure, concealment, and harassment may be related indirectly to task cohesion through their association with social cohesion and the present study will explore this possibility.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The literature reviewed here suggests that sexual orientation concealment and disclosure, as well as perceived sexual orientation–based harassment experiences, each are linked with important work outcomes for LGBT employees. The literature on military cohesion suggests that these stressors are likely to be related to bonding or social aspects of cohesion, and through this link with social cohesion, they may be related indirectly to task cohesion as well. The present study explores these possibilities by testing the following hypotheses with a sample of LGBT military veterans:

1. Consistent with prior research on LGBT persons' workplace experiences, LGBT military veterans' reports of sexual orientation disclosure will be related positively, whereas reports of sexual orientation concealment and sexual orientation–based harassment will be related negatively with unit social cohesion.
2. Given prior research on the link between unit social and task cohesion, LGBT military veterans' reports of sexual orientation disclosure will be related indirectly and positively, whereas reports of sexual orientation concealment and sexual orientation–based harassment will be related indirectly and negatively with unit task cohesion through their links with unit social cohesion.

To provide a more stringent test of the hypotheses, general job satisfaction is controlled in the analyses to elucidate the unique relations among the variables of interest above and beyond potential covariations with generally positive or negative views toward the job.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 445 LGBT military veterans, approximately 35% of whom had served in the Army, 26% in the Navy, 25% in the Air Force, 6% in the Marine Corps, 2% in the Coast Guard, and 5% in other or multiple branches. In terms of their gender, about 24% of participants identified as women, 72% as men, and 3%

as transgender. Their current ages ranged from 19 to 82 years ($M = 45.99$; $Mdn = 46.00$; $SD = 13.91$). About 25% of the sample reported that they left the military in or prior to 1980, 13% left between 1981 and 1990, 26% left between 1991 and 2000, and the remaining 35% reported departure dates after 2000. Approximately 84% of the sample identified as White/Caucasian, 5% as Hispanic/Latina/o, 3% as African American/Black, 2% as Asian American/Pacific Islander, 1% as American Indian/Native American, and 4% as multiracial or other. In terms of their current socioeconomic class, about 45% identified as middle class, 30% as upper middle class, 16% as working class, 4% as upper class, and 3% as lower class. With regard to their highest level of education, approximately 28% of the sample reported having some college or technical school training, 28% reported having a college degree, 28% reported having a graduate or professional degree, 12% reported having some graduate or professional training, and 4% had a high school degree.

Instruments

Participants completed a survey that included the instruments that are described next. Questions were stated in the past tense given that participants' perceptions of past military service were being assessed. Prior to participant recruitment, feedback about the clarity and organization of the survey was solicited from U.S. military veterans. Based on this feedback, the organization and presentation of instructions were clarified and minor modifications to item wording were made to make items more applicable to servicemembers (e.g., an item asking about "wearing or displaying" LGBT-related symbols was modified to remove "wearing" given that military personnel wear uniforms).

General job satisfaction. General job satisfaction was assessed with the 5-item job satisfaction scale used by Seibold and Lindsay (2000) and two additional job satisfaction items used by Castro and Adler (2000). These items are used to assess military personnel's satisfaction with their work and job as a whole. Participants rated these items on a 5-point continuum (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) to indicate how they felt about their job when they were in the military. Item ratings were averaged to yield a mean satisfaction score, with higher scores indicating higher levels of general job satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for these items have been found to be in the high .80s and low .90s (Castro & Adler; Seibold & Lindsay). In terms of validity, job satisfaction scores based on these items have been shown to be independent from non-work-related factors such as marital status, parental status, or housing location (i.e., barracks, on-post, off-post; Seibold & Lindsay). Cronbach's alpha for job satisfaction items in the present sample was .95.

Unit social and task cohesion. J. Griffith's (2002) peer cohesion scales were used in the present study to assess respondents' perceptions of cohesion within the last units in which they served. Specifically, unit social cohesion was assessed with J. Griffith's 5 peer emotional support items and unit task cohesion was assessed with the 7 peer task support items. Participants rate these items on a 5-point continuum (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), item ratings were averaged for each scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of social and task cohesion. In a factor analysis, J. Griffith found that peer social and task cohesion items loaded on their respective factors. As additional evidence of validity, he found that soldiers' peer social and task cohesion scores were correlated positively and uniquely with their reported psychological well-being and sense of pride and belonging to their unit, above and beyond the roles of rank, level of education, racial/ethnic minority status, perceived stress, and perceptions of leader cohesion. With the present sample, Cronbach's alpha was .88 for social cohesion items and .91 for task cohesion items.

Sexual orientation concealment and disclosure. Anderson, Croteau, Chung, and DiStefano (2001) developed the Workplace Sexual Identity Management Measure (WSIM) based on conceptual literature and data about how LGBT persons manage their sexual orientation identities in work contexts. For the present study, the 8-item Covering subscale was used to assess sexual orientation concealment behaviors and the 8-item Explicitly Out subscale was used to assess sexual orientation disclosure behaviors that participants engaged in within their units. Participants rated items on a 4-point continuum (1 = *never* to 4 = *always*) to indicate the extent to which they engaged in the sexual orientation concealment and disclosure behaviors in military contexts during the time that they were in the military. Item ratings are averaged and higher scores indicate greater levels of the corresponding behaviors. Anderson et al. found 2-week test-retest reliabilities of .77 and .87 for Covering and Explicitly Out scores, respectively, and found Cronbach's alphas of .73 and .91 for Covering and Explicitly Out items, respectively. With regard to validity, Anderson et al.'s factor analysis of WSIM items supported the factor structures of the Covering and Explicitly Out items. They also found that, as expected, Covering and Explicitly Out scores were correlated negatively with one another. Also, Covering scores were correlated negatively, whereas Explicitly Out scores were correlated positively with respondents' reported satisfaction with outness at work. With the present sample, Cronbach's alpha for Covering items was .71 and for Explicitly Out items was .79.

Perceived sexual orientation-based harassment. Waldo's (1999) Workplace Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (WHEQ) was used to assess participants' perceptions of sexual orientation-based harassment within their unit. Participants rated the 22 items in terms of how frequently (0 = *never* to 4 = *most of the*

time) a military person in their unit engaged in each of the sexual orientation–based harassment behaviors during the time that they were in the military. Item ratings are averaged and higher scores indicate higher levels of perceived sexual orientation–based harassment. Cronbach’s alphas for WHEQ items across LGBT samples have been in the .90s (e.g., Lyons et al., 2005; Smith & Ingram, 2004; Waldo). In terms of validity, WHEQ scores have been linked positively with perceived job stress and perceived organizational tolerance for sexual orientation–based harassment and negatively with perceived fit with the organization (Lyons et al.; Waldo). Cronbach’s alpha for WHEQ items in the present sample was .92.

Procedures

To facilitate access to LGBT military veterans, the survey for the present study was made available on an Internet site hosted by the author’s institution, following guidelines developed for Internet research (Hewson, Laurent, & Vogel, 1996; Michalak & Szabo, 1998; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). In a comparison of Internet and traditional data collection methods, Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, and John (2004) concluded that Internet methods are as good as traditional methods and have a number of important advantages as well. More specifically, patterns of findings as well as validity and reliability coefficients obtained with samples recruited through Internet data collection have been shown to be consistent with those obtained from traditional data collection methods (Gosling et al.). Also, Internet data collection has been shown to have a number of advantages over traditional data collection methods including (a) resulting in greater demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic diversity in samples; (b) eliciting lower levels of socially desirable responding; and (c) facilitating recruitment of difficult to reach populations (Gosling et al.; Nosek et al.). Thus, Internet data collection was deemed appropriate for recruiting LGBT military veterans.

Participants for the present study were recruited through national organizations and networks as well as online groups serving LGBT servicemembers. An invitation to participate in a study about LGBT U.S. military veterans was distributed to members through groups’ message boards and listserves. The invitation provided a Web link to the survey and encouraged recipients to forward the invitation to other potentially interested participants. Upon accessing the survey link, participants received the informed consent page, clicked the “begin survey” button to indicate that they read the consent form and agreed to participate, and were then brought to the survey.

To ensure that participants were actively choosing their responses rather than responding randomly, validity questions that asked participants to mark a particular response (e.g., “please click the button for Sometimes”) appeared throughout the survey. Participants who marked an inaccurate response to more than 25% (2

out of 8) of validity items were eliminated from analyses. Prior to analysis, data were screened to eliminate (a) 1 participant with more than 25% inaccurate validity item responses, (b) 13 instances of duplicate submission (i.e., clicked submit button twice), (c) 1 ineligible participant who identified as completely heterosexual, and (d) 10 surveys missing substantial amounts of data; resulting in a final sample size of 445 LGBT U.S. military veterans.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the variables of interest are reported in Table 1. As these data indicate, participants were satisfied with their military work ($M = 4.04$; $SD = 1.03$; possible range of 1–5). Participants reported moderately high levels of active sexual orientation concealment ($M = 2.55$; $SD = 0.63$; possible range of 1–4), low levels of sexual orientation disclosure ($M = 1.24$; $SD = 0.38$; possible range of 1–4), and moderately low levels of sexual orientation–based harassment ($M = 1.10$; $SD = 0.76$; possible range of 0–4) in their units. Participants also reported a moderate level of social cohesion ($M = 2.94$; $SD = 1.12$; possible range of 1–5) and a moderately high level of task cohesion ($M = 3.78$; $SD = 0.86$; possible range of 1–5) within their units.

As indicated in Table 1, and consistent with expectation, reported sexual orientation disclosure was correlated significantly and positively, whereas reported sexual orientation concealment was correlated significantly and negatively with social cohesion; but neither concealment nor disclosure was correlated significantly

TABLE 1
Summary Statistics and Correlations Among Variables of Interest

<i>Variables</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Possible Range</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	∞
1. General job satisfaction						1–5	4.04	1.03	0.95
2. Sexual orientation concealment	.01					1–4	2.55	0.63	0.71
3. Sexual orientation disclosure	.07	–.35*				1–4	1.24	0.38	0.79
4. Sexual orientation harassment	–.02	.35*	–.04			0–4	1.10	0.76	0.92
5. Social cohesion	.28*	–.16*	.18*	–.20*		1–5	2.94	1.12	0.88
6. Task cohesion	.56*	–.06	.08	–.09*	.40*	1–5	3.78	0.86	0.91

* $p < .05$. Higher scores reflect higher levels of each construct.

with task cohesion. Reported sexual orientation–based harassment was correlated significantly and negatively with both social and task cohesion.

To examine potential indirect relations of sexual orientation disclosure, concealment, and harassment with task cohesion through social cohesion, structural equation modeling of manifest variables was conducted using Amos 5.0 (Arbuckle, 2003). Maximum likelihood estimation with the covariance matrix of the variables of interest was used as input. A separate model was tested for each of the three predictor variable of interest (i.e., concealment, disclosure, harassment); these models estimated the path between the predictor and social cohesion, and the path between social cohesion and task cohesion (see Figures 1 to 3), allowing for the test of the significance of the indirect relation between the predictor (i.e., disclosure, concealment, harassment) and task cohesion through social cohesion. Level of general job satisfaction was included as a covariate in these path models, given its significant relations with social and task cohesion (see Table 1). After testing these separate models, a more complex model that included all three predictor variables was tested to explore the unique direct and indirect relations of these variables with social and task cohesion, again controlling for general job satisfaction (see Figure 4). Model fit was evaluated based on the following recommended fit index values: goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and nonnormed fit in-

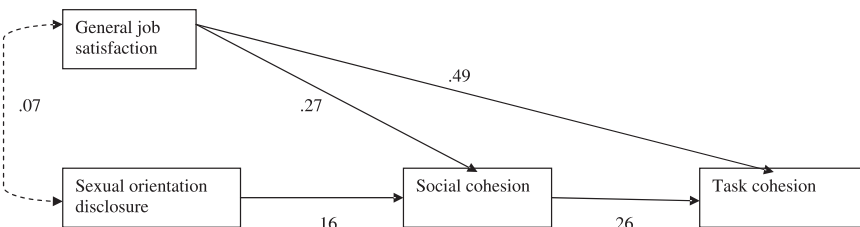


FIGURE 1 Path model for sexual orientation disclosure. Values reflect standardized coefficients. Dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths; all other paths are significant at $p < .001$.

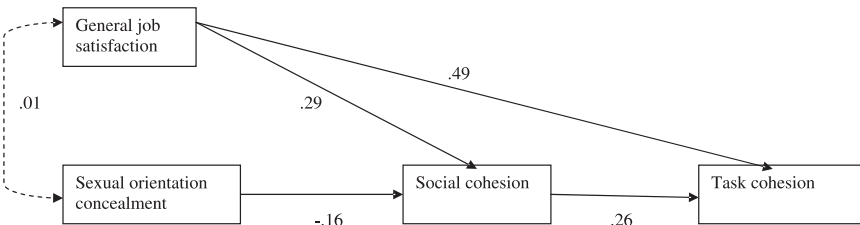


FIGURE 2 Path model for sexual orientation concealment. Values reflect standardized coefficients. Dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths; all other paths are significant at $p < .001$.

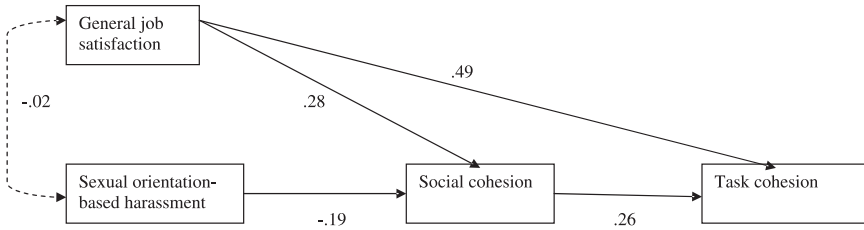


FIGURE 3 Path model for sexual orientation-based harassment. Values reflect standardized coefficients. Dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths; all other paths are significant at $p < .001$.

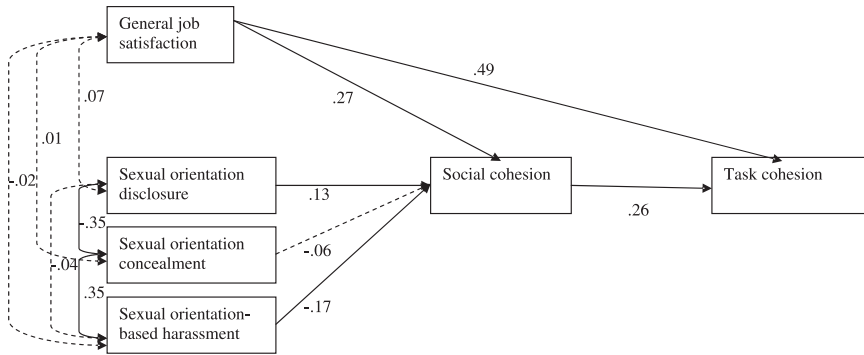


FIGURE 4 Path model for simultaneous examination of sexual orientation disclosure, concealment, and harassment. Values reflect standardized coefficients. Dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths; all other depicted paths are significant at $p < .001$.

dex (NNFI; also known as the Tucker Lewis index [TLI]) values $\geq .90$; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square values $\leq .10$ (Hu & Bentler, 1998, 1999; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004; Weston & Gore, 2006).

To test indirect effects in each model, standardized path coefficients were multiplied to compute the magnitude of indirect effects (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) and Sobel’s formula (see Baron & Kenny, 1986; Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004) was used to determine whether indirect effects were significantly different from zero. Furthermore, nested model comparisons were conducted to compare the fit of each indirect model (i.e., constrained direct predictor–task cohesion paths to 0) with that of a fully saturated model (i.e., freely estimated direct predictor–task cohesion paths). A significant change in the chi square value for the nested model comparison would indicate a poorer fit for the indirect model than for the fully saturated model and suggest that the predictors of interest are related directly to task cohesion.

Sexual orientation disclosure model. Fit index values for the indirect sexual orientation disclosure model (Figure 1) indicated a good fit and were as follows: GFI, AGFI, CFI, and TLI = 1.0; RMSEA = .00 with 90% confidence interval of .00 to .06; and SRMR = .00. All estimated paths were significant and in the expected directions (see Figure 1). Specifically, while controlling for general job satisfaction, sexual orientation disclosure was related positively to social cohesion and social cohesion was related positively to task cohesion. Sexual orientation disclosure also had a significant indirect positive relation of .04 ($.16 \times .26$; $z = 3.15$, $p < .01$) with task cohesion through social cohesion. The nested model comparison of the indirect model with the fully saturated model indicated that adding the direct path between sexual orientation disclosure and task cohesion did not result in significant improvement in model fit. The indirect model accounted for 11% of variance in social cohesion and 38% of variance in task cohesion.

Sexual orientation concealment model. Fit index values for the indirect sexual orientation concealment model (Figure 2) indicated a good fit and were as follows: GFI, AGFI, CFI, and TLI = 1.0; RMSEA = .00 with 90% confidence interval of .00 to .10; and SRMR = .01. All estimated paths were significant and in the expected directions (see Figure 2). Specifically, while controlling for general job satisfaction, sexual orientation concealment was related negatively to social cohesion and social cohesion was related positively to task cohesion. Sexual orientation disclosure also had a significant indirect negative relation of -.04 ($-.16 \times .26$; $z = -3.19$, $p < .01$) with task cohesion through social cohesion. The nested model comparison of the indirect model with the fully saturated model indicated that adding the direct path between sexual orientation disclosure and task cohesion did not result in significant improvement in model fit. The indirect model accounted for 11% of variance in social cohesion and 38% of variance in task cohesion.

Sexual orientation–based harassment model. Fit index values for the indirect sexual orientation–based harassment model (Figure 3) indicated a good fit and were as follows: AGFI = .99; GFI, CFI, and TLI = 1.0; RMSEA = .00 with 90% confidence interval of .00 to .12; and SRMR = .01. All estimated paths were significant and in the expected directions (see Figure 3). Specifically, while controlling for general job satisfaction, reported sexual orientation–based harassment was related negatively to social cohesion and social cohesion was related positively to task cohesion. Sexual orientation disclosure also had a significant indirect negative relation of -.05 ($-.19 \times .26$; $z = -3.59$, $p < .001$) with task cohesion through social cohesion. The nested model comparison of the indirect model with the fully saturated model indicated that adding the direct path between sexual orientation disclosure and task cohesion did not result in significant improvement in model fit. The indirect model accounted for 12% of variance in social cohesion and 38% of variance in task cohesion.

Model with set of three predictors. A final model was tested to examine the set of three predictors concomitantly to evaluate the unique direct relations with social cohesion and indirect relations with task cohesion. Fit index values for the indirect model (Figure 4) indicated a good fit and were as follows: GFI, AGFI, CFI, and TLI = 1.0; RMSEA = .00 with 90% confidence interval of .00 to .05; and SRMR = .01. Most estimated paths were significant and in the expected directions (see Figure 4). Specifically, while controlling for general job satisfaction, sexual orientation disclosure was related positively whereas reported sexual orientation-based harassment was related negatively to social cohesion; but sexual orientation concealment was not related significantly to social cohesion. Consistent with prior findings, social cohesion was related positively to task cohesion. Sexual orientation disclosure had a significant indirect positive relation of .03 ($.13 \times .26$; $z = 2.59, p < .01$) and reported sexual orientation-based harassment had a significant indirect negative relation of $-.04$ ($-.17 \times .26$; $z = -3.12, p < .01$) with task cohesion through social cohesion. The nested model comparison of the indirect model with the fully saturated model indicated that adding the direct paths between the predictor variables and task cohesion did not result in significant improvement in model fit. The indirect model accounted for 14% of variance in social cohesion and 38% of variance in task cohesion.

DISCUSSION

The present study is the first to examine empirically the relations of sexual orientation disclosure, concealment, and harassment with military unit social and task cohesion. Empirical data about these relations are critical to evaluating the central assumption of DADTDP, that LGBT servicemembers' openness about their sexual orientations will reduce military cohesion. The present study examined hypothesized relations from the perspective of LGBT military veterans because DADTDP disallows currently serving LGBT servicemembers to disclose their LGBT identity and disallows heterosexual servicemembers from knowing whether or not they serve with LGBT servicemembers. Thus, the present data do not reflect the perceptions of active duty servicemembers. With this caution in mind, these data provide useful groundwork for testing, rather than assuming, the relations of sexual orientation disclosure, concealment, and harassment with unit cohesion.

First, findings of this study raise questions about the assumption that disclosure of sexual orientation reduces military unit cohesion. On the contrary, LGBT military veterans' reports of sexual orientation disclosure behaviors were related positively to their perceptions of unit social cohesion. Furthermore, through this relation with social cohesion, LGBT military veterans' reported disclosure behaviors were related indirectly and positively to their perceptions of task cohesion within their units as well. These results are consistent with prior findings about the work

experiences of LGBT persons that indicate that sexual orientation disclosure is related to positive work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, peer relationship support and satisfaction, and cooperative group process (e.g., Button, 2001; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2002; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Ellis & Riggle, 1995; K. H. Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Importantly, the direct and indirect positive relations of sexual orientation disclosure with social and task cohesion in the present data were significant when they were considered along with the roles of general job satisfaction, sexual orientation concealment behaviors, and reported sexual orientation-based harassment experiences. This pattern of findings points to the potential positive role that sexual orientation disclosure can have in unit social and task cohesion.

The link of sexual orientation disclosure with higher cohesion in the present data is consistent with results from a recent Zogby poll that assessed servicemembers' views about the impact of LGBT unit members on their personal and unit morale (Rogers, 2006). Results of this poll, which was conducted with a sample of military personnel who served in Afghanistan or Iraq, indicated that the large majority of those who were certain of the presence of an LGBT person in their unit perceived the presence to have no impact or a positive impact on their personal morale (72%) and on their unit's morale (67%). Data from this poll also indicated that compared to military personnel who were not certain of the presence of an LGBT person in their unit, military personnel who were certain of such a presence were less likely to believe that the presence had a negative impact on their personal and unit morale. Specifically, 28% of military personnel who were certain of the presence of an LGBT person in their unit believed that the presence had a negative impact on their personal morale, whereas 38% of those who were not certain about the presence of an LGBT person in their unit believed that such a presence would have a negative impact on their personal morale. Bigger differences emerged with regard to unit morale; 27% of military personnel who were certain of the presence of an LGBT person in their unit believed that the presence had a negative impact on their unit morale, whereas 58% of those who were not certain about the presence of an LGBT person in their unit believed that such a presence would have a negative impact on their unit morale. Morale has been linked conceptually and empirically with indicators of cohesion (e.g., Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Britt & Dickinson, 2006; J. Griffith, 2002; J. Griffith & Vaitkus, 1999; Seibold, 1996). Thus, the Zogby data are consistent with the perceptions of LGBT military veterans in the present study, that disclosure of sexual orientation that would promote unit members' certainty about the presence of LGBT persons is likely to be better for cohesion than is concealment of sexual orientation, which would promote uncertainty about the presence of LGBT persons in the unit.

A second pattern of important findings in the present study is that LGBT military veterans' reported sexual orientation-based harassment experiences were related negatively to their perceptions of social cohesion and indirectly and nega-

tively to their perceptions of task cohesion in their units. These results are consistent with prior findings that workplace sexual orientation–based harassment is related to greater turnover intentions and to lower job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceived shared values with the organization (Button, 2001; Lyons et al., 2005; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Waldo, 1999). Given that workplace sexual orientation–based harassment has been conceived of as an important workplace stressor for LGBT persons (Croteau, 1996; Croteau et al., 2000; Morgan & Brown, 1993; Ragins et al., 2003), these findings are also consistent with conceptualizations within the military literature that work-related stress can reduce military cohesion and related outcomes (e.g., J. Griffith & Vaitkus, 1999; Sinclair & Tucker, 2006).

Finally, the role of concealment behaviors paralleled that of reported sexual orientation–based harassment and was opposite to that of disclosure behaviors. Specifically, LGBT military veterans' reports of sexual orientation concealment behaviors were related negatively to their perceptions of social cohesion and indirectly and negatively to their perceptions of task cohesion. Again, these results are consistent with prior findings that sexual orientation concealment is related to greater work-related stress and isolation (Boatwright et al., 1996; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; K. H. Griffith & Hebl, 2002) and lower job satisfaction, organizational commitment, peer relationship support and satisfaction, and cooperative group process (e.g., Button, 2001; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2002; Ellis & Riggle, 1995; K. H. Griffith & Hebl). However, additional results indicated that when sexual orientation concealment, disclosure, and harassment were considered together, sexual orientation disclosure and sexual orientation–based harassment each had significant direct links with social cohesion and significant indirect links with task cohesion; but the direct relation of sexual orientation concealment with social cohesion and its indirect relation with task cohesion were no longer significant. This pattern of results suggests that the negative direct and indirect relations of sexual orientation concealment with social and task cohesion may be subsumed by the roles of sexual orientation disclosure and sexual orientation–based harassment.

Taken together, the results of the present study suggest that sexual orientation disclosure may have a positive role, whereas sexual orientation–based harassment may have a negative role in military unit cohesion. The present findings are also consistent with prior conceptualizations that if the presence of openly serving LGBT persons has any impact on unit cohesion, it is likely to impact social rather than task cohesion (e.g., R. J. MacCoun, 1996). Indeed, the current results indicate that sexual orientation disclosure and harassment were linked directly with social cohesion and only indirectly and modestly with task cohesion. This is an important distinction because task cohesion has been associated more consistently with performance outcomes than has social cohesion (e.g., R. J. MacCoun et al., 2006; Mullen & Copper, 1994; Oliver et al., 1999; Zaccaro, 1991; Zaccaro & Lowe, 1988). Future research is needed to examine directly the relations of the variables

examined in the present study with performance outcomes. Nevertheless, social cohesion and its relations with sexual orientation disclosure and harassment remain important to attend to because social cohesion is linked with unit task cohesion and servicemembers' personal and work well-being (e.g., J. Griffith, 2002; R. J. MacCoun, 1996; Mullen & Copper; Zaccaro; Zaccaro & Lowe).

The present study begins to address the paucity of empirical data about the impact and experiences of LGBT personnel within the U.S. military. Nevertheless, it is important to consider this study's findings in light of a number of limitations. First, as with many survey data, the present findings may reflect retrospective bias. With regard to LGBT issues in the military, however, gathering retrospective accounts rather than data based on current experiences is necessitated by DADTDP's ban on asking about or reporting sexual orientation-related information. Still, the present findings need to be interpreted with the retrospective nature of the data and potential role of selective or inaccurate recall in mind. Relatedly, bias associated with potential halo effect in recalling military experience may have been controlled in the analyses by accounting for generally positive or negative job perceptions.

Given that cohesion, harassment, and identity management by definition involve some subjectivity, assessing self-reported perceptions of these constructs is a valid point of inquiry. Indeed, assessing self-reported perceptions of unit cohesion is routine within the military literature as is assessing self-reported perceptions of sexual orientation-based harassment and identity management behaviors within the LGBT vocational behavior literature. But, the present data differ from some prior data in that they reflect LGBT military veterans' perceptions of their past experiences and behaviors, rather than the perceptions of current servicemembers or employees. Research that aims to understand individual differences and contextual variables that may shape persons' perceptions of cohesion and harassment remains important. Similarly, studies that assess observable indicators of cohesion and sexual orientation disclosure and harassment would be useful; but, such research would require identifying and linking LGBT servicemembers with the units about which observable indicators are gathered, and DADTDP is a barrier to such research at the present time.

An additional limitation of the present study is that the data are cross-sectional in nature. Therefore, interpretations about direction of causality among the variables of interest cannot be made. Again, DADTDP precludes the possibility of gathering identifying information about LGBT servicemembers or those who have served with them. Thus, tracking participants over time to gather longitudinal data that allow examination of predictive relations among the variables of interest becomes impossible. A related and important direction for future research is to supplement individual servicemembers' self-reports about cohesion with unit-level perceptions and objective data about cohesion. To conduct such research, LGBT servicemembers must be allowed and feel comfortable to disclose their sexual ori-

entation, so that their experiences, the experiences of their colleagues, and objective data about their units can be examined.

Another methodological consideration is that LGBT military veterans who are connected with organizations, groups, and online resources for LGBT servicemembers might have a greater sense of collective identity and stigma consciousness than do LGBT military veterans who are not connected with LGBT communities. If this is the case, participants' current levels of collective identity and stigma consciousness may have elevated recall of past experiences of stigma, heterosexism, and identity management behaviors. It is important to highlight, however, that the current participants' reports of sexual orientation disclosure and harassment were near the floor of possible scores and reports of sexual orientation concealment were above the midpoint of possible scores. Thus, the data did not suggest elevated perceptions of disclosure or harassment or depressed perceptions of concealment.

Despite the limitations that need to be considered in interpreting the present data, the pattern of findings provides useful information for military policy and practice. Specifically, these data provide support for some aspects of military policy and begin to raise questions about other aspects. First, the relations of sexual orientation-based harassment with lower perceived social and task cohesion provide empirical support for the importance of the Don't Harass directive and the 13-point Anti-Harassment Action Plan. The present data highlight the importance of strategies to effectively implement these policies and reduce sexual orientation-based harassment. Specifically, emerging data point to the need to improve training about the military's stance against sexual orientation-based harassment (Office of the Inspector General Department of Defense, 2000; Terman, 2004), punish violations of the Don't Harass directive (Terman), and ensure that senior personnel are reinforcing rather than actively or passively violating this directive (Moradi, 2006). Such a strong stance against sexual orientation-based harassment, however, is complicated by DADTDP and the chilling impact it may have on reporting sexual orientation-based harassment.

Though the present findings, based upon the perspective of LGBT military veterans, support the importance of the Don't Harass directive, they raise questions about the assumption of DADTDP that sexual orientation disclosure would reduce unit cohesion. In the present data, all significant relations involving disclosure and concealment of sexual orientation were in the direction opposite that of what would be expected based upon the rationale for DADTDP. Specifically, disclosure was related to greater social and task cohesion and concealment was related (when significant) to lower social and task cohesion. Thus, these findings suggest potential benefits of sexual orientation disclosure and harm of sexual orientation concealment for military cohesion. As such, the present findings point to the need to revisit the rationale for DADTDP and also raise questions about its potential deleterious implications for unit cohesion.

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