

AWARD NUMBER: W81XWH-18-2-0027

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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CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION: Wright State University

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# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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| <b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b><br><br>Dr. Jeffrey Cigrang<br><br>E-Mail: jeffrey.cigrang@wright.edu                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                        |                                         |                                                       |                                      | <b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>                            |  |
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| <b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b><br><br>Wright State University<br>School of Professional Psychology<br>9 N. Edwin C. Moses Blvd.<br>Dayton, Ohio 45402-6837                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                        |                                         |                                                       |                                      | <b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>      |  |
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| <b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                        |                                         |                                                       |                                      |                                                      |  |
| <b>14. ABSTRACT</b><br>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. |                                        |                                         |                                                       |                                      |                                                      |  |
| <b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b><br>military, couples, LGB, relationship, health, readiness                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                        |                                         |                                                       |                                      |                                                      |  |
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| <b>a. REPORT</b><br><br>Unclassified                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>b. ABSTRACT</b><br><br>Unclassified | <b>c. THIS PAGE</b><br><br>Unclassified |                                                       |                                      | <b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b>     |  |

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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?

|                                                                                                                                                       | Timeline |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
|                                                                                                                                                       | Months   | % complete |
| <b>Major Task 1: Complete all preparatory work for project start.</b>                                                                                 |          |            |
| <b>Major Task 1: Complete all preparatory work for project start.</b>                                                                                 |          |            |
| 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      | 80%        |
| <i>Milestone Achieved: IRB/HRPO/OASD study approval obtained</i>                                                                                      | 8        | 80%        |
| <i>Milestone Achieved: LGB couple recruitment strategies approved by Air Force</i>                                                                    | 8        | 100%       |

1) Major Activities

- a. Finalize our readiness to conduct qualitative and quantitative assessments of sexual minority couples in the Air Force.
- b. Respond to multiple push-backs and slow downs in process of routing waiver request to USD (P&R).

2) Specific Objectives

- a. Achieve waiver approval from USD (P&R) for asking about sexual orientation.

3) Significant Results

- a. After achieving Air Force Survey Office approval of our study measures in July 2019 we were faced with the below routing requirement for our waiver request to ask Airmen about sexual orientation:

-----COORDINATION-----

| Office      | Action  | Last Name/Rank/Date |
|-------------|---------|---------------------|
| 88 MDG/CD   | COORD   |                     |
| 88 MDG/CC   | APPROVE |                     |
| 88 ABW/CCM  | COORD   |                     |
| 88 ABW/DV   | COORD   |                     |
| 88 ABW/CV   | COORD   |                     |
| 88 ABW/CC   | APPROVE |                     |
| AFMC/SG     | COORD   |                     |
| AFMRA/SGE-C | COORD   |                     |
| AFMRA/CC    | COORD   |                     |
| AF/DSG      | COORD   |                     |
| AF/SG       | COORD   |                     |
| SAF/MR      | COORD   |                     |
| USD (P&R)   | SIGN    |                     |

-----STAFF SUMMARY-----

(Major Activities Continued)

- b. The waiver request package was approved by 88 ABW/CC on 17 September 19. Required two months to route from MDG to ABW at Wright Patterson AFB.
- c. During October to December 2019 the research team responded to multiple requests for additional information and clarification on waiver package. Waiver package ultimately routed successfully through AFMC, AFMRA, and Air Force SG Office. Forwarded to Secretary Air Force office in early February 2020. This process required a total of four months.
- d. In February Secretary Air Force General Counsel Office requested additional legal review and copies of any prior legal review regarding waiver package.
- e. Secretary Air Force office forwarded waiver package to USD (P&R) on 19 March 2020. Thus, routing package through SAF required 1.5 months
- f. One the waiver package arrived at USD (P&R) it was reviewed by OASD(HA), HSPO (Dr. Shell) who returned the package with a series of questions concerning the research methodology and relevance. The research team prepared written responses to each question.
- g. On May 8 2020 the research team met with Dr.Shell at OASD(HA) and discussed our responses to his inquires about the waiver package. Our responses were judged to satisfactorily address the concerns. A revised package was forwarded from Health Affairs to USD (P&R) on 2 June 2020. Time from when SAF forwarded waiver package to leaving OASD(HA) was 2.5 months.
- h. The waiver package was then reviewed by OASD General Council Office (GCO) and returned without action. The GCO raised a number of legal objections to the waiver package. The GCO agreed to a teleconference with the research team to discuss objections. A teleconference was held on 22 July 2020. The OGC accepted our responses to their objections and agreed verbally that a revised package could be approved by their office to move forward to OAS (P&R) for signature. Time required to move waiver through OASD OGC was 1.75 months.
- i. As of today (1 Aug 2020), we've heard no further on the status of our waiver request package.
- j. Our research team accomplished a detailed manual for conducting the couple interviews and safely/ securely capturing and storing the interview data. We are presently recruiting non-research volunteer couples to help us practice the semi-structed interviews.
- j. Our research team has met in teleconference twice monthly over the past year.

4) Other Achievements

- a. We persisted.

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

- 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 of 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 now subject matter experts.

**c. How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?**

- Nothing to Report.

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

- We have believed on multiple occasions that we were only a few short weeks to achieving OASD (P&R) final signature on our waiver approval request yet each time we were wrong. Clearly, we are much closer today than we were 12 months ago. Once approval is given we are ready to recruit and enroll participants.

**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 AFSSO 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 AFSSO approval process.

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

- Give the unprecedented length of the OAD (P&R) approval process, we clearly will need at least a 1-year NCE to accomplish the study aims and deliverables.
- We also would like to forecast the possibility of submitting a request for additional funding. If needed, the request would be to provide for Graduate Research Assistant funds to extend this key resource into the NCEs

**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.                 |
| 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?**

- **None**

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