

Running head: THE ARMY'S ETHICAL DILEMMA

The Army's Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation

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Table of Contents

- I. Abstract
- II. Background of the Army values and policies
 - a. Army Values
 - b. Characteristics
 - c. "Don't Ask Don't Tell" Policy
- III. Heterosexuality
 - a. Military offers double standards
 - b. Heterosexual and the right to privacy
 - c. Mission consideration
 - d. Bisexuality as a personal sexual orientation
- IV. Dominating Population Within The Military
 - a. Revamping a Generating a Co-Ed society
 - b. Changing of a cultural society with mainstream society
 - c. A Hidden Cultural Military Within
- V. Possible Solutions to "The Army's Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation"
 - a. Risks and a Career at stake
 - b. Resolution
- VI. Conclusion

Abstract

My ethics paper on “The Army’s Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation” will force leaders to put aside their differences and think about what direction the Army is headed regarding this subject matter. This paper will attempt to encourage leaders and policy makers to put this dilemma in some form of perspective. The areas I will explore are: the background of the Army values and policies, heterosexuality, dominating population within the military and possible solutions to “The Army’s Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation”. A discussion of this dilemma will also enable leaders and policy makers the opportunity to think more rationally after acknowledging all the variables that are involved in resolving this ethical dilemma.

The Army's Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation

It is with my honor and pleasure to express my professional opinion and views reference "The Army's Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation". It is an issue that has yet to be dealt with, but rather placed on the back burner while being driven by guidelines, Army Regulations (AR), and existing policies that are without substance. Before I introduce you to these per se empty regulations and policies, I must inform you of the existence of the Army Values.

The Army seven values as noted in Field Manual (FM) 6-22, Page 4-3, paragraph 4-7 are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. The Army Values have been a part of America's armed forces for many years. Through it lies the foundation for which our force stands. Through our Army Values, we profit from the wealth of developing well disciplined Soldiers. According to FM 6-22, Page 4-2, paragraph 4-5, the ". . . Army Values consist of the principles, Standards, and qualities that are considered essential for successful Army leaders." Our leaders must always set a positive example for our Soldiers to follow and if they live by the Army Values, it will enhance and support the overall objective of our Army. How well we as Soldiers and leaders mold or groom our character, will reflect on how committed we are to living by the Army Values.

When civilians enter the Army in a trainee status, they bring along with them their personal beliefs, their home values that were instilled in them, and their own way of life that may not be conducive to the Army's way of life or life in the military. When a civilian enters a recruiting station and is interviewed, it is believed that recruiters are restricted as to how deep they can inquire about a person's personal character or sexual orientation. Being that this paper is

about "The Army's Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation", I would like to make mention that the recruiters not being able to inquire about a person's sexual orientation, is not the only way we allow Soldiers who practice a specific sexual orientation that is believed to be out of the norm to enter the military. A person's sexual orientation out of the norm, reference those who are considered to be homosexual or bisexual. Some Soldiers practice the aforementioned behavior prior to entering the military or after being in the military for awhile. Regardless of the how, it is still a character behavior that must be dealt with. I believe that the Army put a band-aid on an increasing dilemma to satisfy a changing military society. This band-aid was put in place by implementing "The Don't Ask Don't Tell Policy".

The policy regarding Homosexual Conduct can be found in AR 600-20, Page 27, and paragraph 4-19. "The Don't Ask Don't Tell Policy", according to gaylife.about.com states that:

"The don't ask, don't tell policy, signed in 1993 by former president Bill Clinton, was implemented as a compromise with legislature which opposed a complete repeal of the prior ban on gays in the military . . . Established under the premise of privacy, discretion and protection, the policy bans gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people from serving in the military and prevents military officials from asking probing questions or pursuing investigations of soldiers suspected of being homosexuals . . ."

While protecting the rights of those that are practicing their sexual orientation in nonverbal ways, what about the rights of those who are heterosexual? What about their rights to privacy? The Military appears to comfort double standards without regards to all Soldiers. It was easier decades ago, because AR 600-443, 'Separation of Homosexuals', Page 1, paragraph 2, stated that, "Separation mandatory. – True, confirmed, or habitual homosexual personnel,

irrespective of sex, will not be permitted to serve in the Army in any capacity and prompt separation of known homosexuals from the Army is mandatory". This regulation was clear, concise, and direct, but nowadays, we have added stipulations. "The Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass" policy according to hrc.org, tell us that this policy:

"Requires gay, lesbian and bisexual service members to keep their sexual orientation secret and refrain from same-sex sexual conduct. . . . Under the current policy, service members may be investigated and administrative discharged if they: make a statement that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual; engage in physical contact with someone of the same sex for the purposes of sexual gratification; or marry, or attempt to marry, someone of the same sex".

Yes, I do agree that a person's orientation is his/her own preference, but respect goes both ways. For instances, if you are a male heterosexual and you are taking a shower in an open shower at an on post facility, and all of a sudden another male Soldier enters to take his shower, and you know that this male Soldier has homosexual tendencies, I do believe you would feel violated. Do you believe heterosexual females wants to shower with a lesbian or a heterosexual male with a homosexual male? No, and that's just my point. Not only that, but what about the close proximity of a working relationship.

It is hard to believe that a Soldiers' sexual orientation (homosexual), is conducive to a health lifestyle and working environment, and will contribute to mission accomplishment. It is hard to believe that a sexual orientation out of the norm is in keeping with the Army Values and promotes unit cohesion. I say this because some Soldiers are not ready to accept homosexuals as the Army's way of life. But the rules are what they are, vague and confusing. The Army has

placed a temporary fix in place to suffice the moment. But what is more confusing than adding fuel to the fire. What do we do with the ones who are bisexual, why not put them all in one category? After awhile, if not already, heterosexuals will make up the minority and sexual orientation out of the norm will make up the majority. If we were to make this an all male Army by releasing all the females, our Army would be dysfunctional. What if we released all personnel who practice their preferred sexual orientation? The fallout would have the same effect as if we released all the females. Until we redefine "The Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Harass, Don't Pursue" policy. We will always be faced with the question of equality as regards to all Soldiers. The Army must give consideration to the changing of American society because we will inherit what our society has produced. A taboo of decades before is not necessarily a taboo today. The culture of the Army is changing drastically but the rules or polices are not.

We must have systems in place that will accommodate all by implementing a military society that is tolerable towards all regardless of their sexual orientation. If we revamp the conditions for a coed society and put measures in place that will be suitable to all, this could lead to a permanent solution. Once again, it is imperative that our leaders and policy makers consider living conditions and really analyze the issue of sexual orientation for the following reasons: 1) they must be aware of how our military is affected by the existing policies referencing sexual orientation, 2) this ethical dilemma could have if not already, an adverse affect on our mission whether deployed or not, 3) it contributes to sex crimes against another, 4) unless we identify a set standard, it will affect our military culture and spread like a cancerous, 5) and finally, while reaching a resolution for this dilemma, leaders and policy makers should bear in mind that in the end-state, not everyone will agree.

Not agreeing has more to do with mainstream society. It does not matter if you are rich or poor or even middle class. You are what you are, and you are what you decide to be. Mainstream society is moving at a fast and rapid pace and along with it comes new modern rules. For instances, when you were a young adult, you played by the traditional norms of your society at the time. Now, decades later, there are a new set of rules for our current young adults. When these young adults enter into our military, they bring with them a modern culture. This is why it is important for us to change our policies to meet a changing military culture. Until we resolve this dilemma, we will be operating under the pretense of a hidden culture from within the military.

We ask, think what could be hidden from within. Let us say it's a separate military culture that is hidden. We know it's there but we seem to just turn a blind-eye because we don't want to deal with the dilemma or the shame that was bought upon the unit. We don't want to embarrassed or bring hardship upon the family. So once again, it is easy to turn a blind-eye rather than take the hard right over the easy wrong. Almost everyone knows but no one will speak up. This allows me to reflect on what was previously mentioned referencing the clarity and concise guidelines that are listed in AR 600-443. If we are not clear on what the "Don't Ask Don't Tell Policy" wants us to enforce, then we will never be able to come to a consensus or reach a solution.

There are numerous solutions that can be entertained. However, who is willing to take the risks and who is willing to disrupt theirs or someone else's promising career. In most cases, when enough evidence is not substantiated, that person's character, and reputation becomes stigmatized. It may have nothing to do with whether you are or are not homosexual or lesbian. It

may tarnish your career due to unfounded allegations. So the ethical dilemma for the Army is doing the reasonably right thing. What is that, the reasonably right thing? I would say to find a concrete solution to the problem that is workable. The real solution is to rewrite and implement a solid regulation that will either support gays in the military so they may remove their outer shell, or write a new policy so that gay personnel will not be allowed to enter the military under any circumstances. At a minimum, changing the policies to read, 'sexual orientation is acceptable as long as the behavior is not imposed on others', or change the existing regulation AR 600-20 to supersede others, and implement and enforce new standards and guidelines. I do not foresee an immediate resolution to "The Army's Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation".

I have discussed a variety of subjects regarding "The Army's Ethical Dilemma Regarding Sexual Orientation", based on my professional opinion. Simply put, it is important that we respect everyone regardless of their sexual orientation that may be considered out of the norm. You never know, it could be someone who is close to you. The Army's main objective is to establish a healthy and safe working environment, and to accomplish its objective by being prepared to fight and win wars.

References

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