

## *Repealing “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell”: The Impact of Stereotypes on Attitudes toward Homosexuals in the Military*

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On December 22, 2010, President Barack Obama signed the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act of 2010. This decision appears to coincide with public opinion as a December 2010 Gallup Poll reports that 67 percent of respondents would support openly gay or lesbian individuals serving in the military. Nevertheless, many Republican Congressmen and presidential candidates continue to express support of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” To that end, this research investigates media priming, stereotypes of gays and lesbians, and other factors that may impact support for gay men and lesbians in the military. We use a survey-based experiment drawn from a mid-sized regional university in the southeast where the collection of attitudes toward gays and lesbians preceded the collection of attitudes toward homosexuals in the military. Our research points to the media’s ability to prime evaluations of gays in the military and suggests that stereotypes of homosexuals are powerful predictors of attitudes toward homosexuals serving in the military. We also find that personal familiarity with gay men/lesbians is related to support for homosexuals serving in the military.

In 1950 President Harry Truman set into motion an intolerance of homosexuals in military service by signing the Uniform Code of Military Justice. More than thirty years later President Ronald Reagan followed suit in a defense directive stating “homosexuality is incompatible with military service” (DODD 1332.14). The ban on homosexual service was not limited to the military, however. In fact, openly gay men and women were also prohibited from employment in civil service jobs until 1975 due to their perceived threat to national security (Lewis 1997). The favored explanation for the military ban was the perceived effect openly gay servicemen and service-women would have on unit cohesion and/or morale. This long history of intolerance was finally challenged when a campaigning Bill Clinton promised to end the ban on homosexuals serving in the military. In spite of this campaign promise, Clinton was ultimately unable to secure the rights of homosexuals serving in the U.S. military. He was, however, able to strike a compromise—“Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” (DADT). This policy, which allowed closeted homosexuals to serve in the military while banning openly gay and lesbian servicemen and servicewomen from doing the same, stood for seventeen years.

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On December 22, 2010, President Obama signed the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010, which established a process for formally ending the DADT policy. Under the Act, the president, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were required to certify in writing that they had reviewed the Pentagon's report on the effects of the DADT repeal; that the appropriate regulations had been reviewed and drafted; and that implementation of repeal regulations "is consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention of the Armed Forces" (Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010). Once certification was given, the DADT policy would be lifted after a 60-day waiting period. While waiting for certification, a federal appeals court barred further enforcement of the U.S. military's ban on openly homosexual service members in July 2011. President Obama, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, and Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent the certification required by the Repeal Act to Congress on July 22, 2011, thus setting the date for DADT to officially end on September 20, 2011 (Gienger and Krause-Jackson 2011).

On September 20, 2011, the law repealing DADT was finally implemented. But, did repealing DADT signal an attitude change at the mass level? Gallup Poll data does support the notion that Americans have become more willing to support allowing openly homosexual men and women to serve in the military, and recent research suggests that Americans are becoming more accepting of homosexuals in general (see for example Bowman 2006; Brewer 2003). Nevertheless, research also suggests that many Americans still hold negative stereotypes of gay men and lesbians (Bailey 2011; Golebiowska 2001; Golebiowska and Thomsen 1999). To that end, this research investigates the impact of negative stereotypes of homosexuals resulting in biased evaluations of gays in the military and the media's ability to prime evaluations of homosexuals in military service through the presentation of a homosexual target.

In order to investigate potential media priming effects and to determine the impact of negative stereotypes of homosexuals on evaluations of gays in the military, we utilize a survey-based experiment to find that stereotypes of homosexuals do in fact impact support of gay men and lesbians serving in the military. We also find evidence of priming effects as well as support for the notion that personal connectedness to homosexuals impacts evaluations of gays in the military.

### **Politics and Sexual Orientation**

The debate concerning the rights of homosexuals has been on-going for decades and encompasses multiple policies. The salience of "Don't Ask,

Don’t Tell”, the Defense of Marriage Act, and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act has altered public opinion by spurring debate regarding homosexuals (Haeberle 1999). Moreover, gays and lesbians are also becoming more prominent in mainstream music and popular culture (Wilcox and Norrander 2002). This increased attention to gay men and lesbians has challenged Americans to develop more tolerant attitudes regarding homosexual rights, e.g. allowing homosexuals to teach, to adopt, to serve in the military, and to ban discrimination in hiring and firing (Brewer 2003; Lewis and Rogers 1999; Sherrill and Yang 2000; Wilcox and Norrander 2002; Wilcox and Wolpert 2000). Nevertheless, many Americans still embrace negative attitudes toward homosexuals and many lawmakers intend to challenge any legislation they see as benefitting homosexuals or embracing homosexual culture.

While national trends may signal to elites that Americans are becoming more tolerant of gay men and lesbians, there may be a very personal explanation for this trend. Many people are finding that they have friends, family members, and acquaintances that are homosexual (Lewis 2011; Overby and Barth 2002; Wilcox and Wolpert 2000). This personal connection to gay men and lesbians provides an example of contact theory, which indicates that intergroup exposure reduces prejudice (see Alport 1954). For example, Barth et al. (2009) find that, even when controlling for a variety of demographic conditions and attitudinal predispositions, knowing gays and lesbians has a statistically significant impact on support for same-sex marriage. Thus, increasing contact with gay men and/or lesbians may result in more of a willingness to be supportive of homosexuals because individuals have a lens other than sexuality through which to evaluate gay men and lesbians. Golebiowska (2003) suggests this is the case as she finds that gay candidates are better served by waiting to disclose their sexuality until after voters have information unrelated to sexuality on which to evaluate them.

While contact theory provides an explanation for the increasing tolerance toward homosexual rights, there are additional explanations. Such explanations focus on the impact that demographic factors such as gender and race have upon attitudes toward homosexuality. For example, Doan and Haider-Markel (2010) study how people employ multiple stereotypes about gender and sexual orientation when evaluating the issue competency and personal traits of political candidates (a phenomenon they refer to as “intersectional stereotyping”). They find that though women hold more liberalized attitudes toward gay men and lesbians in general, women are just as likely as men to attribute negative characteristics to gay male candidates than lesbian candidates. This finding is consistent with previous research illustrating that heterosexual women are more supportive of homosexual rights than are heterosexual men, and gay men are evaluated more negatively than lesbians

in general (see Herek 2002). Thus, research shows that gender plays an important role when it comes to the evaluation of gay and lesbian political candidates.

Another explanation for the increasing tolerance toward homosexual rights focuses on racial/ethnic minorities. Roughly one-third of the opinion shift has been attributed to the significant growth of the African-American and Latino populations over the last twenty years (Loftus 2001). While minority groups tend to embrace more traditional values and still tend to see homosexuality as morally wrong, they are more likely to overlook moral objections in order to preserve the civil rights and civil liberties of others (Loftus 2001). For example, many studies have found that though African-Americans are more likely than whites to display homophobic attitudes (even when controlling for church attendance, education, age, and gender), African-Americans are still more likely than whites to support civil rights and liberties for homosexuals (see Lewis 2003; see also Negy and Eisenman 2005). The overall support for homosexual rights in America is consistent with the growing minority population; this shift in demographics greatly contributes to the steady rise in opinion regarding the civil liberties of homosexuals (Bowman 2006; Lewis 2003; Loftus 2001).

Minority support for gay rights is further demonstrated by the response to President Barack Obama's pronouncement in favor of gay marriage in a recent May 9, 2012 television interview. Ten days after Obama's interview, the NAACP Board of Directors voted to support same-sex marriage, releasing a statement that "civil marriage is a civil right and a matter of civil law" and citing the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as a reason for backing marriage equality (Taylor 2012). In an *ABC News/Washington Post* poll following President Obama's announcement of his support for same-sex marriage, 54 percent of African-Americans agreed with him. But in similar polls in mid-2011 and early 2012, 41 percent of African-Americans took the same stance (Taylor 2012). Just as the relationship between gender and support for homosexual rights has become salient, the relationship between race and support for homosexual rights is emerging as an important association in need of further study.

### **Evaluations of Gays in the Military**

The support of homosexuals in the military has steadily risen since the early 1970s (Herek 2009; Torres-Reyna and Shapiro 2002), and 2010 survey data indicates that 67 percent of Americans are supportive of homosexuals serving openly in the military (Morales 2010). Support for homosexuals in the military has even shifted among former members of the military. In a 2006 survey of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, respondents showed

declining support for the DADT policy (from approximately 73% support in 1993 to 40% support in the 2006 survey) (Moradi and Miller 2009). Among the demographic and military experience variables analyzed, comfort level with lesbian and gay people was the strongest correlate of attitudes toward the ban. The strongest argument advanced by those opposing the ban was that sexual orientation was unrelated to job performance; the strongest argument among veterans for the ban was the projected negative impact on unit cohesion. Interestingly, knowing a gay or lesbian unit member was not uniquely associated with cohesion or readiness; instead, veterans saw the largest factors impacting cohesion and readiness to be the quality of leaders, quality of equipment, and the quality of training. Perhaps most telling is the fact that enforcement of DADT went dramatically down during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, where discharges dropped from peak rates of 1,241 and 1,273 in 2000 and 2001, respectively, to 612 in 2006. Such reduced enforcements of the policy during wartime “calls into question whether military commanders agree with the policy that the impact of lesbian and gay service members outweighs the contributions those service members make to their units’ mission” (Moradi and Miller 2009, 3).

Today we no longer hear of public officials employing the same homophobic sentiment as Reagan and others with regard to gays in the military, but what accounts for the change? Some scholars attribute the changing attitudes to a general ambivalence regarding homosexuality and civil liberties for gay men and lesbians. Americans have moved beyond viewing gay and lesbian rights as simply right or wrong and have begun to look at issues involving homosexuals in terms of equality (Craig et al. 2005). The changing face of homosexuality is forcing people to reassess their core values, leaving them conflicted regarding equal rights for homosexuals.

### **Media Impact and the Activation of Homosexual Stereotypes**

The ambivalence surrounding gay men and lesbians in the military may also be attributed to the growth of various media outlets, as research shows that media diets impact attitudes toward homosexuality, especially prime time television where more homosexual roles are regularly being cast, e.g. *Glee*, *Modern Family*, and *Mad Men* (Calzo and Ward 2009). Further, research suggests that media impacts political attitudes and activates stereotypes which can lead to biased political evaluations (Fridken et al. 2009; Murphy 1998; Peffley and Hurwitz 2002; Valentino 1999). For example, negative stereotypes of gays and lesbians via the media have been shown to impact Americans’ perceptions of homosexual political candidates (Bailey 2011). If negative group stereotypes are activated then individuals will be inclined to rely on those stereotypes if little is known about the target

(Golebiowska 2000, 2001; Golebiowska and Thomsen 1999). The media, therefore, have the ability to play a pivotal role in the evaluation of gay men and lesbians serving in the military without even directly addressing the issue through their ability to prime audiences and activate stereotypes.

Even though public opinion now seems to be more supportive of gay and lesbian rights, research suggests that we should not be too quick to dismiss the potential impact of the negative stereotypes of homosexuals (Bailey 2011; Golebiowska 2003). Research suggests that stereotypes of homosexuals reverse gender roles ascribing feminine characteristics to gay men and masculine characteristics to lesbians (e.g., Kite and Deaux 1987; Kite and Whitley 1996). When negative stereotypes, such as promiscuity and unassertiveness, are activated the result may be a decrease in support for the candidate and/or policies s/he is seen as supporting (see for example Bailey 2011). Since gay and lesbian politicians are often seen to be primarily concerned with issues affecting the homosexual community, e.g., homosexual marriage and military service, it follows that negative attitudes toward the candidate will result in more negative attitudes toward the policy (Herrick and Thomas 1999). That is, the presentation of a homosexual politician in a news account may prime evaluations of policies seen as benefitting homosexuals. Given that research suggests that negative perceptions of gay men and lesbians still impact political evaluations, the increased tolerance toward homosexuals in the recent past should not be confused with a blanket acceptance of the rights of homosexuals on the part of all Americans.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the foregoing, we conclude that personal contact with homosexuals and minority group status (in terms of race/ethnicity) are likely to result in greater support for gay men and lesbians serving in the military. Further as Doan and Haider-Markel (2010) suggest, we expect women to be more supportive of homosexuals serving in the military. However, we also see that in spite of increased support for homosexuals in the military, negative perceptions of gay men and lesbians still impact political evaluations. Therefore, we believe that women, those having personal contact with gay men and lesbians, and members of racial/ethnic minority groups are likely to be more supportive of openly homosexual men and women in military service. At the same time, we understand that the media serve as powerful socializing agents capable of activating negative stereotypes of homosexuals and priming audiences thus biasing evaluations of gay men and lesbians in the military. We, therefore, reach the following testable hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 1:*** Exposure to gay men and/or lesbians via the media is likely to activate negative stereotypes of homosexuals biasing evaluations of gays/lesbians in the military.

***Hypothesis 2:*** Non-white respondents are more likely to support gays/lesbians in the military than are white respondents even when exposed to homosexual targets via the media.

***Hypothesis 3:*** Women are more likely to support gays/lesbians in the military than are men even when exposed to homosexual targets via the media.

***Hypothesis 4:*** Respondents reporting having homosexual friends, family members, or acquaintances are more likely to support gays/lesbians in the military regardless of exposure to homosexual targets via the media.

### **Data and Methodology**

We test the above hypotheses by utilizing a survey administered to students at a mid-sized regional university in the southeast in the fall of 2010. This survey, used in a previous study (Bailey 2011), includes a media manipulation (a contrived newspaper article introducing the reader to a candidate), which varies the gender, sexual orientation, and partisanship of a fictional out-of-state congressional candidate. There are a total of eight treatments including gay male Democrat, gay male Republican, heterosexual male Democrat, heterosexual male Republican, lesbian Democrat, lesbian Republican, heterosexual female Democrat, and heterosexual female Republican. Subjects received one of these eight treatments based on random assignment. However, due to noncompletion by members of the student sample, the number of usable surveys varies from a high of 45 to a low of 22 among the treatment groups. The survey manipulation does not overtly address gay or lesbian stereotypes but rather presents the candidate both textually and in an accompanying photograph as being married or in a partnered relationship for 15 years. The homosexual treatments state that the candidate hopes to become the state’s first openly gay Congressman. Otherwise, care was taken to eliminate policy and ideological cues in the manipulation.

The survey employs a pre-test/post-test design by asking questions related to stereotypes prior to the application of the stimulus (specifically, the presentation of the manipulated newspaper article). Moreover, respondents were asked to provide the same information about various other groups

in addition to homosexuals (specifically black people, white people, people living in cities, and people living in rural areas) in an attempt to reduce any priming effects that could be activated by the stereotype questions while still allowing the subjects receiving the homosexual treatments to be primed by the stimulus.

## **Sample**

The sample is drawn from students enrolled in multiple sections of an introductory political science course required of all students regardless of major. There are 268 respondents in this study. More than half of the sample (approximately 60%) are women and are white (56%). The large African-American segment of the sample (36%) approximates the African-American population of the university in general. There are a total of 117 non-White respondents and 97 of these respondents are African-American. The non-heterosexual segment of this sample is notably small with only two respondents identifying as homosexual and only 11 respondents identifying as bisexual.

Much like there is little variation with sexual orientation in the sample, there is also little variation with age and with region. There are few (only 15) non-South respondents, and only 15 respondents were born prior to 1990 (the overwhelming majority of the sample reported being born between 1990 and 1992). Therefore, while we would reasonably suspect sexual orientation, age, and region to impact the dependent variable noted below, there is insufficient variation to include them as controls in this analysis.

With regard to the experimental manipulations, of the 268 respondents in the sample, 127 received manipulations featuring homosexual candidates. Specifically, 64 respondents received a manipulation featuring a gay male candidate (compared to 67 respondents receiving a manipulation featuring a heterosexual male candidate) and 63 respondents received a manipulation featuring a lesbian candidate (compared to 74 respondents receiving a manipulation featuring a heterosexual female candidate).

## **Dependent Variable**

Our study ultimately seeks to answer the question, “Do negative stereotypes of homosexuals activated via the media impact support for homosexuals serving in the military?” To that end, we consider models based on subjects’ responses to the following prompt, “Gays and lesbians should be permitted to serve in the military without disclosing their sexual orientation.” Responses range from Disagree Strongly (1) to Agree Strongly (7). The use of this question allows us to gauge a general tolerance of homo-



sexuals in the military. Approximately 21 percent of subjects reported varying levels of opposition to gays in the military via this measure while nearly 66 percent of subjects reported varying levels of support for gay men and lesbians serving in the military.

### **Independent Variables**

The key independent variables in this study capture negative attitudes toward homosexuals and mirror those used in a previous study (Bailey 2011). They are represented in three measures: Anti-Gay Stereotype; Anti-Lesbian Stereotype; and Anti-Homosexual Stereotype. Use of each of these measures depends upon the treatments considered in the analyses below. Specifically, when considering only male candidates we use the Anti-Gay Stereotype measure; when considering only female candidates we use the Anti-Lesbian Stereotype measure; and when looking at the full model we use the Anti-Homosexual stereotype measure.

The creation of these stereotype measures is based on questions ascertaining respondents’ opinions about gay men as well as lesbians prior to their exposure to the media manipulation. Specifically, we utilize semantic differentials that range from more negative qualities (loose morals, not honest, not religious, and a measure of strength) to more positive qualities (strong morals, honest, religious, and a measure of strength). Our measure of strength depends upon whether we are considering gay men or lesbians—strength may be considered a negative quality of lesbians as it is related to masculinity. Thus, our Anti-Gay and Anti-Lesbian Stereotype measures can be summarized as:

Anti-Gay /Anti-Lesbian Stereotype = Evaluation of Morality +  
Evaluation of Honesty + Evaluation of jReligiosity + Evaluation  
of Strength,

where each component is assessed on a 7-point ordinal scale ranging from what are considered more negative traits to what are considered more positive traits. We reversed the scale, however, in order for greater values to represent more negative perceptions of homosexuals.

The Anti-Homosexual stereotype measure is simply the combination of the Anti-Gay and Anti-Lesbian stereotype measures, or:

Anti-Homosexual Stereotype = Anti-Gay Male Stereotype + Anti-  
Lesbian Stereotype,

where higher values represent more negative assessments of homosexuals.

Contact theory is an important consideration in our analysis. As noted above, it is reasonable to assume that those individuals that have personal connections to gay men and/or lesbians would be more tolerant of policies impacting homosexuals. Therefore, we employ a measure to capture this connection to the homosexual community. This question asks respondents, “Do you have a family member, friend or acquaintance that is gay or lesbian?” Responses for this question are dichotomous, simply No (0) or Yes (1). The variable is referred to as “Knows Gays” below.

In addition to our stereotype measures and our measure of contact theory, we utilize three more key variables that are represented in the hypotheses above. First, given that we expect women to be more supportive of homosexuals in the military, we include the dichotomous gender control (Male=1). Second, respondent race is important to our theory as we expect racial/ethnic minorities to be more supportive of homosexuals in the military. This variable, represented as White, is a dummy variable that distinguishes between white and non-White respondents. As indicated above, this sample has a relatively large proportion of (approximately 44%) non-White respondents. Third, we take priming effects into consideration by including a dichotomous variable that addresses whether subjects received a treatment featuring a heterosexual candidate or a homosexual candidate (Homosexual Treatment=1).

We also control for respondent ideology and view of biblical literalism. Ideology is measured on a 7-point ordinal scale ranging from very liberal to very conservative and is used in lieu of partisanship as many respondents failed to indicate their partisanship. The biblical literalism measure we use is based on a 3-point scale ranging from “Word of God” to be taken literally (0) to a “book of fables” recorded by men (2). We reverse the coding so that higher values represent a more literal interpretation of the bible. We would reasonably expect more conservative respondents and those respondents with more literal interpretations of the bible to be less tolerant of homosexuals in the military.

Evaluations of homosexuals serving in the military reflect the following:

Homosexual Treatment + Stereotype Measure + Knows Gays +  
White + Male + Ideology + Biblical Literalism.

Where necessary, we also control for the partisanship (Democratic Treatment=1) and gender (Female Treatment=1) of the candidate depicted in the experimental manipulation.

## **Findings**

We now turn to the results of our ordered logit analyses, which reveal mixed support for the testable hypotheses specified above. We begin by estimating the full model (all subjects), a model confined to only those subjects receiving treatments featuring male candidates, and another model considering only those subjects receiving treatments featuring female candidates. We then further restrict our analysis to models addressing the following: 1) Subjects receiving the Democratic male treatments; 2) Subjects receiving the Republican male treatments; 3) Subjects receiving the Democratic female treatments; and 4) Subjects receiving the Republican female treatments. Results of our analyses provide varying support of priming effects, contact theory, and negative stereotypes of homosexuals impacting respondents’ evaluations of homosexuals serving in the military.

### **Pooled Model**

We see evidence of priming effects in the pooled model as Homosexual Treatment is positively related to the dependent variable. This relationship suggests that subjects receiving treatments featuring homosexual candidates were more likely to support gays in the military. This finding is comparably weak, however. We find a very strong inverse relationship between our Anti-Homosexual Stereotype measure and the dependent variable indicating that respondents with more negative perceptions of gay men and lesbians are more likely to oppose homosexuals serving in the military. We find a similarly strong relationship between our measure of contact theory (Knows Gays) and the dependent variable which illustrates that, as expected, those individuals with personal connections to gay men and/or lesbians are more likely to be supportive of homosexuals serving in the military. Finally, we fail to find support for the notions that racial/ethnic minorities and women are more supportive of homosexual rights in this model.

### **Male Candidate Treatments**

We find further support for priming effects when the model is confined to only subjects receiving treatments featuring male candidates. Again, Homosexual Treatment is significantly related to the dependent variable suggesting that respondents that were exposed to the gay male treatments were more likely to be supportive of gays in the military. This relationship is stronger here, however, than it is in the pooled model achieving significance at the .05 level. We also find knowing gay men or lesbians personally to be positively related to the support for gays in the military. Biblical literalism is significantly related to the dependent variable in the expected direction.

**Table 1. Evaluations of Gays in the Military**

Independent Variables	All Subjects	Subjects Receiving Manipulations with Male Candidates	Subjects Receiving Manipulations with Female Candidates
Homosexual Treatment	.42* (.24)	.79** (.36)	-.23 (.33)
Anti-Homosexual	-.06*** (.01)	—	—
Anti-Gay Stereotype	—	-.13*** (.04)	—
Anti-Lesbian Stereotype	—	—	-.07* (.04)
Knows Gays	1.01*** (.29)	.87* (.45)	1.18*** (.40)
White	-.21 (.25)	-.90** (.37)	.44 (.36)
Male	-.18 (.25)	-.32 (.36)	-.27 (.35)
Ideology	-.23 (.10)	-.07 (.13)	-.55*** (.17)
Biblical Literalism	-.34* (.21)	-.79** (.31)	.11 (.30)
Female Treatment	.09 (.23)	—	—
Democratic Treatment	.16 (.24)	.07 (.36)	.27 (.33)
	N=259	N=127	N=132

Coefficients are ordered logit coefficients.  
Standard errors are in parentheses.  
Results are based on two-tailed tests.

Because this model is confined to subjects receiving treatments featuring male candidates, we employ our Anti-Gay Stereotype measure rather than the Anti-Homosexual Stereotype measure used in the pool model. Anti-Gay Stereotype is significantly (.01) related to support for gays in the military. Thus, those subjects with greater negative attitudes toward gay men are more likely to oppose gays in the military.

We also find support for the hypothesis that racial/ethnic minorities are more likely to be supportive of homosexuals in military service in this

model. Therefore, we find support for priming, the impact of stereotypes, contact theory, and racial/ethnic minorities’ support of gays in the military in this model. We do not find evidence that women are more supportive of homosexuals in military service than are men, however.

### **Female Candidate Treatments**

When we confine our analysis to those subjects receiving only female candidates we find further support for contact theory as well as support for negative stereotypes of lesbians impacting evaluations of gays in the military. However, we fail to find evidence of priming or of women and racial/ethnic minorities being more supportive of gays in the military than men and whites respectively.

### **Partisanship and Gender**

We further restrict our analysis by separating those subjects receiving treatments featuring male Democratic candidates from those subjects receiving treatments featuring male Republican candidates and by separating those subjects receiving female treatments in the same fashion. Table 2 then illustrates four models based on the following: 1) Subjects receiving manipulations with Democratic male candidates; 2) Subjects receiving manipulations with Republican male candidates; 3) Subjects receiving manipulations with Democratic female candidates; and 4) Subjects receiving manipulations with Republican female candidates. Thus the only variation in the stimulus is sexual orientation (unlike in the previous models where there was a need to control for gender and/or partisanship).

The only evidence of priming effects we see across these models is with subjects receiving Republican male candidates. Specifically, respondents exposed to the gay male Republican treatment were more likely than respondents exposed to the heterosexual male Republican treatment to support gays in the military. While this relationship only reaches statistical significance at .1, it is consistent with our previous findings that subjects exposed to the homosexuals treatments are more likely to be supportive of gays in the military.

We find evidence of the relevant stereotype measures impacting evaluations of homosexuals in military service in three of the four models. We do not find evidence of Anti-Lesbian Stereotype impacting evaluations of gays in the military for those subjects receiving treatments featuring Republican women.

We find additional support for contact theory among those respondents receiving Democratic treatments (both male and female). We do not find

**Table 2. Evaluations of Gays in the Military,  
by Gender and Partisan Treatments**

Independent Variables	Subjects Receiving Manipulations with Democratic Male Candidates	Subjects Receiving Manipulations with Republican Male Candidates	Subjects Receiving Manipulations with Democratic Female Candidates	Subjects Receiving Manipulations with Republican Female Candidates
Homosexual Treatment	.63 (.49)	1.11* (.59)	-.35 (.55)	.05 (.44)
Anti-Gay Stereotype	-.09* (.05)	-.18*** (.06)	—	—
Anti-Lesbian Stereotype	—	—	-.17*** (.06)	-.01 (.05)
Knows Gays	1.53** (.62)	-.07 (.72)	2.78*** (.81)	.72 (.50)
White	-.96** (.49)	-.72 (.51)	.27 (.63)	.54 (.47)
Male	-.53 (.50)	-.57 (.60)	-.01 (.65)	-.11 (.40)
Ideology	.01 (.18)	-.16 (.20)	-.26 (.29)	-.71*** (.22)
Biblical Literalism	-.90 (.40)	-.72** (.51)	.33 (.53)	-.05 (.40)
	N=69	N=58	N=57	N=75

Coefficients are ordered logit coefficients.

Standard errors are in parentheses.

Results are based on two-tailed tests.

this support for those respondents encountering Republican treatments (both male and female). We also find greater support for racial/ethnic minorities being more supportive of gays in the military than whites. This finding is confined to those subjects receiving manipulations featuring Democratic Male Candidates, however.

We do not find any support for our hypothesis that women are more likely to support gays in the military than are men in any of these four models.

## **Conclusion**

We have endeavored to investigate the role of stereotypes via the news media in evaluations of homosexuals serving in the military. While little prior research has investigated this relationship, extant research does point to the media's ability to prime audiences and negative stereotypes of homosexuals, biasing evaluations of both gay and lesbian political candidates and policies aimed at homosexuals.

We are cautious about our results for a few reasons, however. First, we could have potentially primed respondents' political attitudes simply by presenting an article introducing readers to a political candidate. In other words, we may be priming political predispositions in general rather than just attitudes toward homosexuals. Future research may benefit from a less politically charged stimulus acknowledging that there are both advantages and disadvantages of this approach. Second, our sample was also limited to essentially one state in the southeast leaving us unable to control for regional effects. Third, there is theoretical evidence pointing to the relationship between race/ethnicity and attitudes toward homosexual rights and similar evidence pointing to the relationship between gender and these attitudes. We were unable to provide consistent reliable results regarding the relationship between race/ethnicity and attitudes toward gays in the military and we found no evidence of a relationship between gender and these attitudes.

Nevertheless, there are important findings in our study that point to the media's ability to prime attitudes toward gays in the military, the powerful predictive ability of homosexual stereotypes, and support of contact theory. For instance, it is important to note the correlation between contact with homosexuals and the subsequent support for policies that benefit gays and lesbians. It may be worth considering the impact of social media, e.g. blogs, online news sources, online advertisement, and social networks, in the contact equation. We may find that respondents are being provided with more exposure to gay men and lesbians, even though the nature of the exposure is not necessarily personal.

Further, our findings point to the presentation of a homosexual candidate priming a positive evaluation of gays in the military. While this finding may be antithetical to expectations, it does suggest that the presentation of a gay target does not necessarily result in a negative evaluation of policies seen as benefitting gays and lesbians.

The debate surrounding homosexuals in the military continues among members of Congress and presidential candidates as we seek to understand the underlying causes of growing support. In turn, this study may prove useful as the debate continues and we seek to better understand how the media's activation of negative stereotypes may have implications regarding other policies affecting homosexuals.

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