Homosexuals in the U.S. Military

Open Integration and Combat Effectiveness

During the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton pledged to lift the ban on homosexuals in the U.S. armed services. Once in office, he met with enormous resistance from the U.S. military and its congressional allies, and by the summer of 1993, the original policy proposal was dead. Instead, Congress enacted the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue” policy: gays and lesbians can now serve in the military, but they must keep their sexual orientation private. Opponents of the open integration of gays and lesbians have discarded many of the standard justifications for excluding homosexuals from military service. For example, the Pentagon and its allies no longer argue that gays and lesbians are security risks because of the threat of blackmail. As early as 1957, a study commissioned by the U.S. Navy was unable to uncover any evidence that homosexuals were security risks.1 Thirty years later, another Department of Defense (DoD)–commissioned report repeated this finding: “Since [1957] no new data have been presented that would refute the conclusion that homosexuals are not greater security risks than heterosexuals.”2 Nor do opponents of allowing homosexu-

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als to serve openly argue that gays and lesbians are poor soldiers. For example, although both the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell and the renowned military sociologist Charles Moskos oppose the open integration of homosexuals in the military, they acknowledge that gays and lesbians are effective soldiers.\textsuperscript{3} Discharge proceedings against homosexuals are filled with testimony of many of these individuals' outstanding records, dependability, and dedication to their jobs.\textsuperscript{4}

The issue is not whether gays and lesbians are good soldiers as individuals, but instead, the effect of these individuals on the group. Opponents of lifting all restrictions on homosexual service argue that the open integration of gays and lesbians would block the development of primary group cohesion, which they say is critical to military effectiveness.\textsuperscript{5} During the 1993 congressional hearings on homosexuality in the military, both Senate and House testimony focused on the issue of unit cohesion. In July 1993, for example, then Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, asked each of the six joint chiefs of staff to discuss unit cohesion and its significance in developing combat capability.\textsuperscript{6} Army Chief of Staff General Gordon R. Sullivan responded that "cohesion is enhanced by uniformity, by adherence to a common sense of values and behavior. The introduction into any small unit


\textsuperscript{5} A “primary group” is a small group characterized by intimate face-to-face relations. Charles H. Cooley first used the term in 1909 in Social Organization: A Study of the Larger Mind (New York: C. Scribner’s, 1909). In 1950 Leon Festinger and his colleagues at the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the University of Michigan developed the most widely used definition of cohesion: “The resultant of all the forces acting on all the members to remain in the group.” Laurel W. Oliver, Cohesion Research: Conceptual and Methodological Issues, Research Note 90-133 (Alexandria, Va.: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences [ARI], September 1990), p. 2. Although “primary group cohesion” and “esprit de corps” are both group concepts, “primary group cohesion” refers to the cohesion within a small group, whereas “esprit de corps” is a sense of group identity or pride in a larger collectivity such as a regiment. In contrast, “morale” is an individual-level phenomenon and refers to an individual’s well-being or self-satisfaction. Larry H. Ingraham and Frederick J. Manning, “Cohesion—Who Needs It, What Is It, and How Do We Get It to Them?” Military Review, Vol. 61, No. 6 (1981), pp. 6–7.

of a person whose open orientation and self-definition is diametrically opposed to the rest of the group will cause tension and disruption.”

Senior U.S. military officers worried that the open integration of homosexuals would hinder the development of cohesion within small groups. “Those who engage in conduct that is inconsistent with those of the group are not trusted or respected,” explained Powell and Admiral David Jeremiah, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and “in an atmosphere of distrust, orders may not be carried out and commonplace friendly gestures that promote camaraderie—everyday youthful horseplay and rough-housing, a pat on the back or an arm around the shoulder—become suspect, arouse fear or aversion, and destroy group cohesion.” Powell explained that “to win wars, we create cohesive teams of warriors who will bond so tightly that they are prepared to go into battle and give their lives if necessary. . . . We cannot allow anything to happen which would disrupt that feeling of cohesion within the force.” Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill McPeak put it most bluntly: “Open homosexuals would paralyze a unit, and degrade unit cohesion and erode combat effectiveness.” In his opening statement during the 1993 Senate hearings, Senator Nunn claimed that U.S. national security was at stake: “When the interests of some individuals bear upon the cohesion and effectiveness of an institution upon which our national security depends, we must, in my view, move very cautiously.”

Much of the debate about homosexuals in the military starts with the premise that U.S. policy must represent some balance or compromise between two competing ideals: guaranteeing civil rights and maintaining military effectiveness. I argue that no such compromise is necessary. Senator Nunn’s caution was understandable, but misplaced. American policymakers are not facing a trade-off between national defense and civil rights: the open integration of gays and lesbians would not disrupt unit cohesion or undermine military performance. The argument about unit cohesion is based on two propositions: (1) that primary group cohesion enhances military effectiveness, and (2) that openly gay and lesbian personnel would disrupt unit cohesion and thus military performance. These propositions are wrong. They do not reflect what social science research and experience have demonstrated about the rela-

7. Ibid., p. 762.
8. Ibid., p. 761.
9. Ibid., p. 708.
10. Ibid., p. 762.
tionship between cohesion and performance and the effect of integrating previously excluded groups on primary group cohesion. Abolishing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the U.S. armed forces would advance civil rights and military readiness.

I begin this article with an overview of the sources of military effectiveness and the U.S. Army's policies and attitudes toward unit cohesion. I then focus on the two theoretical puzzles that are central to the rationale for the current U.S. military policy toward homosexuals. First, I draw on an extensive body of research in the social sciences that challenges the proposition that unit cohesion is critical to military effectiveness. Quantitative, experimental, historical, and sociological studies have not found a causal link leading from cohesion to performance. Indeed, group cohesion can diminish an organization's performance. Second, I address the claim that the open integration of homosexuals would undermine primary group cohesion. Again, social science provides little support for this proposition. Cohesion develops easily and is primarily a function of situational and structural factors—not the characteristics of individual members of the group. To the extent that shared attitudes and beliefs contribute to cohesion, they encourage the development of the type of cohesion—social cohesion, or a sense of cohesion based on interpersonal attraction—that is least likely to enhance performance. These social scientific findings about the sources of unit cohesion and its relationship to performance correspond to findings from practical experiences. I provide evidence from studies of racial and gender integration in the U.S. military as well as the integration of homosexuals in foreign military organizations and organizations similar to the military. This evidence demonstrates that previously segregated groups can be integrated into military organizations without disrupting unit cohesion and military effectiveness. Indeed, it appears that open integration of homosexuals would increase military readiness. I conclude with a set of policy implications that follow from this analysis.

Military Effectiveness

Primary group cohesion is only one of many factors that may influence a military's performance. Political, strategic, operational, and tactical factors such as the quality of training, intelligence, and supply capabilities, as well as the military's objectives and strategy, contribute to battlefield effectiveness. In addition, many other factors besides primary group cohesion affect an individual's combat motivation. Leadership is one of the most important.
logical and social psychological studies of combat during World War II found that leaders were critical in fostering motivation: surveys of enlisted men in the Pacific found that those with favorable attitudes toward their commanding officers were more likely to be ready for further combat than those who expressed consistently negative beliefs. Contemporary studies continue to stress leadership as a key factor in inspiring soldiers in combat and ensuring that primary groups’ goals correspond with those of the larger organization. Some analysts, for example, attribute the U.S. Army’s disintegration in Vietnam to failures of leadership. Lessons from the Vietnam War, and to a lesser extent the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, have encouraged analysts to revisit the role of ideology, patriotism, and a belief in the legitimacy of the war in motivating soldiers in combat. This can range from an explicit ideological commitment, as discussed in James McPherson’s work on the American Civil War, to what Moskos termed “latent ideology,” or an underlying commitment to the purpose of the war. Still other analysts discuss the roles of religion and hate as helping to sustain soldiers in combat and to link primary groups to the goals of the formal organization.

Although the rationale for excluding open homosexuals from the U.S. armed forces is based on their purported negative effect on primary group cohesion, the U.S. military does not devote much attention to the development of unit cohesion. In fact, some of the fundamental components of its personnel policies are not designed to enhance unit cohesion. For example, unlike the British system in which soldiers remain in the same regiment for their entire career,

the U.S. Army trains, assigns, and deploys its soldiers as individuals. Small units have high personnel turnover rates: indeed, some units have as much as 45 percent turnover annually. Cohesion develops, but it is largely unregulated by higher authorities. During World War II, for example, recruits were trained in the United States, sent overseas, and then parceled out as individuals according to the needs of units in the field. Soldiers could become casualties before other men in the unit knew their names, and upon recovery, wounded soldiers were often not returned to the unit where they had previously served and developed ties. This personnel system, often referred to as an “assembly parts approach,” is periodically critiqued for undermining unit cohesion. The U.S. Army has experimented with more unit-based systems, but it has not changed its personnel policy. It continues to emphasize the material components of military performance such as industrial power and superior technology while downplaying the more social aspects such as primary group cohesion. In comparing the American system with other Western armies, a report from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) explained that “the American army placed increased emphasis on the individual and on managerial efficiency rather than on unit cohesion. . . . Easily measurable, strength could be affected by sound management while, as an intangible, unit cohesion was forgotten.”

Despite the Pentagon’s continual reference to unit cohesion in debates about homosexuals in the military, during day-to-day operations U.S. military officers’ attitudes and behavior do not reflect a concern with the development of primary group cohesion. In the early 1980s, for example, the U.S. Army experimented with a unit rotation system called COHORT in which company- and later battalion-sized units were recruited, trained, and assigned as units for their first three-year tour. WRAIR monitored and evaluated the program and conducted extensive surveys and interviews of participants; it found that cohesion increased in the stabilized units, but it also found that battalion staff and company-level leaders did not value unit cohesion. According to WRAIR, “Military cohesion has not been valued as a combat multiplier in the U.S.

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Army." WRAIR’s interviews and observations revealed “very little appreciation . . . regarding the importance of capitalizing on buddy knowledge to enhance unit cohesion.” Commanders ignored the possibilities that COHORT provided: “Virtually every small-unit leader reported that if the assignment of replacements were up to him, he would assign replacements as individuals rather than in pairs or groups. The leaders contended that replacements could not and should not be assigned in order to build cohesion, but rather to the squad that had the greatest numerical need.”

In explaining why high-ranking officers appeared unconcerned about the central reason for the development of COHORT units, one of WRAIR’s final technical reports explained that in the U.S. Army, “cohesion is presumed to be a by-product, not a core goal leaders need be trained to create and maintain.” There is,” WRAIR explained, “no commitment in the Army to building and maintaining group cohesion.”

Because unit cohesion is only one of many factors that may contribute to military effectiveness, and because U.S. Army officers and personnel policy are indifferent to the development of primary group cohesion, there are reasons to doubt its importance. This raises the issue of exactly what the relationship between unit cohesion and military performance is.

Unit Cohesion and Military Effectiveness

Studies of World War II established the conventional wisdom that primary group cohesion is the main factor motivating soldiers in combat. Reacting against the belief that devotion to National Socialism explained the German soldier’s determined resistance, Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz’s classic study concluded that solidarity with one’s comrades, not belief in a cause, motivated the German soldier. “As long as [the German soldier] felt himself to be a member of his primary group,” they explained, “his soldierly achievement was likely to be good.” This lesson was also taken away from studies of the U.S. Army in World War II. The four-volume work edited by Samuel

Stouffer, The American Soldier, underscored the central importance of camaraderie in small combat groups: “The men get close-knit together,” an infantryman explained. “They depend on each other—wouldn’t do anything to let the rest of them down. They’d rather be killed than do that.”25 Samuel Marshall’s Men against Fire echoed this view, and the French combat officer and military theorist Colonel Ardant du Picq had eloquently expressed a similar opinion in his discussion of the role of unit cohesion a century ago.26

CORRELATION OR CAUSATION?
The results from more than five decades of research in group dynamics, organizational behavior, small-group research, sports psychology, social psychology, military history, and military sociology challenge the proposition that primary group unit cohesion enhances military performance.27 This conclusion has three parts. First, despite an enormous amount of research on both military and nonmilitary groups, researchers disagree about whether a correlation exists between cohesion and performance. In 1972 a well-known literature review asked, “How can one continue to believe that productivity and cohesiveness are positively related when the results of competent research indicate that in many cases the opposite is true?”28 Two decades later, little has changed: a 1996 review stated that the “topic of cohesiveness is still very much an unsettled concern in the literature.”29 At best, several recent meta-analyses provide evidence for a modest positive correlation between cohesion and performance.30

30. A meta-analysis is a statistical technique that integrates many different studies by converting research results from a set of studies into a common metric that can then be combined across studies to derive generalizations about the entire sample of studies. For discussion, see John E. Hunter, Frank L. Schmidt, and Gregg B. Jackson, Meta-analysis: Cumulating Research Findings across
Second, even those studies that have uncovered a correlation between cohesion and performance have not determined the causal relationship. Most of the quantitative and experimental studies are not designed to establish the direction of causality; a recent meta-analysis that found a positive relationship between cohesion and performance referred to the issue of causality as “a looming question.” However, the more the experimental and quantitative studies take timing into consideration, the more support there is for the hypothesis that the causal direction runs from success to cohesion, not from cohesion to success: studies of the influence of performance on cohesion have yielded consistently strong positive relationships. As an analyst who studied ROTC rifle teams put it, “It is relatively simple for people to be friendly and happy when the situation is rewarding.”

Historical and sociological studies of military units have replicated this finding. A study of unit cohesion in the German Army during World War II, for example, found no evidence that cohesion led to military effectiveness: it was the German Army’s superior military performance (military skill and exceptional organization and training) that led to cohesion, not the other way around.

Third, scholars working outside of the quantitative and experimental literature have also cast doubt on the proposition that primary group cohesion increases military effectiveness. For example, Charles Moskos explained that “the very ubiquity of primary groups in military organizations . . . leaves unanswered the question of why various armies—indeed of training and equipment—perform differently in times of war.” A later article that Moskos coauthored with a colonel in the U.S. Army suggested that primary groups were becoming even less important in explaining combat performance in the all-volunteer force.


about the role of primary group cohesion in combat motivation. Omer Bartov, for example, in his study of German soldiers on the eastern front in World War II, reached conclusions very different from that of Shils and Janowitz. Bartov argued that primary groups cannot explain German soldiers' motivation because, given the devastating losses sustained by the German forces, there were no primary groups. With casualty figures in some units averaging 98 percent for enlisted men and 194 percent for officers, “raw recruits . . . suffered heavy losses . . . without ever having an opportunity to get to know their comrades.” Yet they kept on fighting. 36 Echoing Moskos’s earlier comment, a historical analysis of the Confederate armies in the Civil War argued that the exaggerated importance given to group cohesion makes it difficult to explain variation in combat performance. As this historian put it, “In its blunter popular forms, the stress on ‘not letting your buddies down’ is a virtual caricature.” 37

This skepticism about the importance of primary group cohesion accords with the views of some of the first scholars to study combat motivation in World War II. On the fortieth anniversary of the publication of The American Soldier, Robin Williams, a principal contributor to the chapter on combat motivation, stressed that subsequent analyses have given “disproportionate attention” to primary groups. Williams pointed out that the volume on combat also dealt at length with other sources of combat motivation such as the role of leadership, ideology, self-interest, and institutional rewards and penalties. 38 Indeed, the original volume warned against placing too much emphasis on unit cohesion. In a section that begins “It is important to avoid any one-sided interpretation of the social forces that kept men in combat,” the researchers stressed—that enormous casualty figures often minimized the importance of primary group cohesion. In the data itself, “solidarity with the group” is not as important as often assumed. When enlisted infantrymen in a veteran division were asked what was most important in keeping them going, 39 percent responded “ending the task”; 14 percent “solidarity with the group”; 10 percent “by thoughts of home”; and 9 percent out of “a sense of duty and self respect.” These surveys were conducted after

the fact and may reflect what soldiers would like to believe was the reason for their actions: that loyalty to others, not fear of punishment, motivated their actions. In addition, the surveys of individuals' attitudes were only occasionally related to indirect observations of group performance. The American Soldier provides little evidence that cohesive groups actually fought better than less cohesive ones.

GROUP COHESION AND DYSFUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR
Research on the relationship between cohesion and performance provides at least two reasons why primary group cohesion may be as likely to undermine performance as enhance it. First, group cohesion can check the effectiveness of the larger organization of which the group is a part. Second, group cohesion can hinder the task performance of the group itself.

PRIMARY GROUP OPPOSITION TO ORGANIZATIONAL NORMS. Group cohesion can limit organizational performance when it encourages the primary group to pursue goals that are at odds with those of the formal organization. Students of industrial relations have often pointed to this phenomenon: employers fear that individuals in highly cohesive work groups will feel compelled to produce at a group norm that limits productivity. One analyst called this the "dark side of cohesion," and it can take on especially ominous forms in the military. Fragging is an extreme example. Dubbed "fragging" during the Vietnam War because of the frequent use of fragmentation grenades, these violent assaults on U.S. military officers were occasionally carried out by individual soldiers pursuing a personal vendetta, but over 80 percent of the fraggings in Vietnam were part of a carefully planned group activity. Individuals talked to one another, providing support and encouragement, and collected bounties of cash donations. A chilling ritual often accompanied this group activity: the target would be warned what to expect if he did not change his behavior. First, a smoke grenade would be rolled into his sleeping or working area; then, a tear-gas grenade; and finally, a fragmentation grenade. In the words of one psychiatrist, "The prevalence and openness with which the assault of a superior

40. Similarly, Marshall's data showed that primary group relations were important to soldiers in combat—not that soldiers to whom it was important fought better. Marshall's data were not as systematically collected as he implied. See Roger J. Spiller, "S.L.A. Marshall and the Ratio of Fire," Royal United Services Institute Journal, Vol. 133, No. 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 65–71.
was discussed by the troops provides an atmosphere that approached positive sanction for such actions. As Moskos explained, "It is an irony of sorts that the primary group processes that appeared to sustain combat soldiers in World War II are close cousins to the social processes that underlaid the vast majority of fraggings in Vietnam." 

Group cohesion can also encourage an active drug subculture, antiwar activities, and collective acts of indiscipline. "Drug use is a social activity," explained an analyst of the Vietnam War, "and it was drug use which formed the basis of solidarity in many cases for some small groups in the army." Shils and Janowitz also discussed this "darker side of cohesion" and, in particular, the role that it played in large-scale desertion. Many Wehrmacht soldiers, for example, claimed that they were able to desert because they had discussed it with their comrades and had received some form of support. Indeed, during the last stages of World War II, the Allies were able to use soldiers who had been "good comrades" to encourage group surrenders; after being captured, these soldiers were sent back to the German line to convince their fellow soldiers to desert. A study of desertion in the Confederate Army during the American Civil War uncovered a similar phenomenon. During the second half of the conflict, desertion rates were highest in those companies recruited on a local basis; homogeneity and cohesion encouraged desertion—not devotion to the Southern cause. These actions hurt combat performance, and they occurred because primary groups did not share the goals of the larger organization—not because of the absence of primary groups.

These examples underscore the indeterminacy of group cohesion. Primary group cohesion can undermine organizational effectiveness if the group does not share the goals of the larger organization. Several analysts argue that during the last few years of the Vietnam War, unit cohesion was more likely to reinforce dissent rather than commitment to the goals of the U.S. military. Groups developed their own normative systems that challenged those of the

larger organization; as one military analyst explained, these alternative values and goals made "certain acts of resistance feasible that would not have been possible when the non-obligated individual was still isolated."  

SOCIAL VERSUS TASK COHESION. The distinction between task cohesion and social cohesion helps explain how cohesion can limit a group's performance. Social cohesion, or affective bonding, refers to interpersonal attraction or "the nature and quality of emotional bonds of friendship, liking, caring, and closeness among group members." Groups are socially cohesive to the extent that members enjoy one another's company and share an emotional closeness. Task cohesion, or instrumental bonding, refers to a "shared commitment among members to achieving a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group."  

Unlike the inconclusive results from studies of the relationship between cohesion and performance, researchers are finding consistently positive relationships between task cohesion and performance, but not between social cohesion and performance. Both individual studies of military groups and meta-analyses confirm this finding. For example, a recent meta-analysis of more than two hundred studies reported that the relationship between cohesion and performance is the result of a commitment to the goals of the group, not interpersonal attraction.

Soldiers understand this distinction. A survey of the U.S. Army found that although soldiers believe cohesion is important in combat, they do not equate it with friendship. "I don't like Smedley, and Smedley doesn't like me," one private explained. "But we know what each other can do, and we'd rather go to war together than with some hotshot we don't know." Organizational theorists have long warned managers not to assume that cohesive groups improve productivity. In socially cohesive groups, individuals often devote their energies to maintaining interpersonal relations rather than achieving the group's tasks; the most efficient groups are often ones that indulge in the least social activity. Patterns of interpersonal communication, for example, differ in socially cohesive and task-cohesive groups: discussion is frequent in socially cohesive groups, whereas conversation in task-cohesive groups is limited to

49. For an extensive review of the research on social and task cohesion, see ibid., pp. 290–293.
what is necessary to achieve the group's goals. Indeed, a report prepared for the DoD warned against "too much affective cohesion [because it] might interfere with the critical appraisal of performance that is needed to maintain quality output, as members become concerned with supporting each other and raising group morale instead of concentrating on the task at hand." Members of socially cohesive groups may also hesitate to correct the actions of group members or may become overconfident in the group's abilities. Tests of crew performance found that "battle-rostering" (assigning aviation crews to work together for extended periods of time) often leads to overconfident crews. The best way to improve performance, these researchers found, is through increased standardized training—not team familiarity. In addition, although group cohesiveness can hinder quality decisionmaking, this effect is most likely when social cohesion, or interpersonal attraction, is strong; in contrast, poor decisionmaking is less likely when task cohesion is high.

To summarize, fifty years of research in several disciplines has failed to uncover persuasive evidence for the first proposition used to defend the discriminatory policy toward homosexuals in the U.S. armed forces: that there is a causal relationship leading from primary group cohesion to military effectiveness. Recent meta-analyses have found a modest correlation between task cohesion and performance, but they have not established causality. Cohesion may be unrelated to performance; it may increase performance; it may be a product of performance; or it may undermine performance. This evidence alone, coupled with the U.S. Army's indifference to developing unit cohesion, raises serious doubts about the rationale for barring openly gay and lesbian personnel from military service. If cohesive groups do not enhance military performance, then we need not worry if the presence of homosexuals affects group cohesion. However, because the evidence is ambiguous and some ana-

lysts do argue that unit cohesion enhances military effectiveness, the next section examines the second part of the rationale for the Pentagon’s discriminatory policy toward homosexuals: that openly gay and lesbian personnel would degrade unit cohesion and undermine military performance.

_Gays and Lesbians, and Unit Cohesion_

Social science research on the sources of primary group cohesion challenges the proposition that the open integration of gays and lesbians (or as General Sullivan put it, the presence of others with apparently different values and behavior) would disrupt unit cohesion. Dissimilar values and attitudes do not hinder the formation of the type of cohesion that may contribute to performance, and cohesion develops easily regardless of the characteristics of individual members. In addition, the experiences of African Americans, women, and homosexuals show that organizations, including the U.S. military, can effectively integrate previously excluded or segregated groups without undermining unit cohesion.

**SOCIAL COHESION VERSUS TASK COHESION AND PERFORMANCE**

Quantitative and experimental studies of the relationship between performance and task cohesion and social cohesion suggest that the open integration of gays and lesbians would not degrade military effectiveness. Researchers have discovered that social cohesion has a negative, or no, relationship to performance, whereas task cohesion is correlated with performance. This finding means that the type of cohesion that may be related to performance (task cohesion) is also the type of cohesion that the introduction of individuals with different values and attitudes would not disrupt. The sense of group cohesion based on “teamwork” has little to do with whether the members enjoy one another’s company, share an emotional bond, or feel part of some “brotherhood of soldiers.” It is only the sense of group cohesion based on mutual friendship, or social cohesion, that relates to the need for similar values and attitudes among members. In other words, it is the component of cohesion based on interpersonal attraction that is both most likely to arise within a homogeneous group and least likely to contribute to military effectiveness. Indeed, to the extent that social cohesion has any effect, it is more likely to undermine a group’s effectiveness. The implications are clear: selecting group members on the basis of expected interpersonal compatibility will not enhance performance and may undermine it.
GROUP COHESION AS A DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Social science research on the conditions that foster group cohesion also suggests that the open integration of gays and lesbians would not disrupt unit cohesion. Scholars have identified at least ten factors that enhance group cohesion. These include structural factors such as stability of membership, group size, and the frequency and duration of contact. The more time people spend together, the more likely they will experience or invent commonalities, and the stronger group cohesion will be. For example, regimental systems and technical aspects of weapons systems that keep soldiers together in groups for long periods affect opportunities for interaction and thus unit cohesion. Situational factors, such as a sense of tradition or equity within the group or the group’s recent experience, are also important for the formation of group cohesion. The more successful groups tend to be more cohesive, and the presence of a threat or intergroup competition increases a group’s cohesion. Finally, the characteristics of individual members are also important: the more members of a group share attitudes and values, the more cohesive the group. For example, similar backgrounds, such as social class, regional origin, age, or ethnic identity, contribute to group cohesion (defined as interpersonal attraction).

Only the last factor—similarity/homogeneity—is potentially relevant to a discussion of whether openly gay and lesbian personnel would disrupt unit cohesion. Shared attitudes, however, are not intrinsic characteristics; straight men may be more likely to share values and attitudes with straight men, but shared values and attitudes can be created among disparate members. Take, for example, two Marine recruits at Parris Island, an African American and a Southern skinhead, who overcame their differences and bonded against another out-group: “We both agreed that the Jews owned the first slave ships.” This example, however distasteful, illustrates how easy it is to create a sense of group cohesion—even among individuals who appear to have little in common. The longer and more intense the interaction, the less important individual characteristics become. A study of the effect of internal disagree-

ment on group cohesion concluded that "social interaction ... is such a powerful determination of in-group attraction that it overrides the possible negative effects of the dissimilarity in belief systems." But even this is not necessary: social psychologists have discovered that merely being placed in a group—however random or arbitrary—creates positive attitudes toward other group members even when there is no social interaction between or within groups. In fact, group membership leads to in-group favoritism even where members of the group dislike one another. In other words, it is not interpersonal attraction (or shared values and attitudes) that leads to a group identity, but group membership that leads to interpersonal attraction. As a leading social psychologist put it, individuals "seem to like the people in their group just because they are in-group members rather than like the in-group because of the specific individuals who are members."

Studies of cohesion in the military have replicated these findings: situational and structural factors—not individual characteristics—are the important determinants of primary group cohesion. Leadership style and functional interdependence are more important, for example, than similarity of social status for explaining variation in group solidarity. Shils and Janowitz stressed situational and structural factors—leadership, spatial proximity, and common experiences—as the critical sources of primary group cohesion, and Moskos's study of the U.S. Army in Vietnam led him to view primary groups as pragmatic responses to situational incentives. Experiments with group replacement systems in the U.S. Army underscore the importance of interaction in the development of unit cohesion. Indeed, few modern armies attempt to create

homogeneous groups on the basis of common ethnicity, race, class, regional origin, age, personality traits, or upbringing. To the contrary, an objective of basic training is to eliminate individuality. Militaries take pride in bringing together disparate individuals, submerging individual identities, and creating a group identity. Some of the more cohesive groups in the U.S. armed forces—special forces, for example—build strong cohesion by emphasizing the frequency and duration of contact—not by stressing individual characteristics.

Similarity of values and attitudes is least important as a source of group solidarity at the time when military effectiveness is most important: in combat. Studies of racially integrated units in the U.S. Army in World War II found that the closer to combat, the better the relations between black and white soldiers. Two military psychiatrists observed a similar pattern in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II: "Friendships are easily made by those who might never have been compatible at home, and are cemented under fire. So sweeping is this trend that the usual prejudices and divergences of background and outlook, which produce social distinction and dissension in civil life, have little meaning to the group in combat. Religious, racial, class, schooling, or sectional [regional] differences lose their power to divide the men. . . . Such powerful forces as anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, or differences between Northerners and Southerners are not likely to disturb interpersonal relationships in a combat crew." Mutual aid in the face of an enemy attack brought these airmen together: "The emotional attitudes the fliers take toward each other have less to do with the accident of their individual personalities than with the circumstances of their association."

THE INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND WOMEN, AND UNIT COHESION

Another powerful source of evidence regarding the effect of openly gay and lesbian personnel on unit cohesion comes from experiences in similar types of situations, and in particular, with the integration of African Americans and women in the U.S. armed services. In both cases, military representatives warned that integration would disrupt unit cohesion. Yet in both cases, integration did not undermine primary group cohesion. These findings correspond with social science research on how easily group cohesion develops and the relatively small role that individual characteristics play in the formation of

group cohesion. Nevertheless, these results are important: they provide strong evidence of how wrong opponents of integration have been.

African Americans, women, and homosexuals are different, but the issue is whether these differences are relevant to the question of the effect of integration on unit cohesion and military performance. In some ways, the integration of homosexuals may be easier than racial integration: there is greater public support for homosexuals than there was for racial integration, and homosexuals do not suffer from the educational handicaps that racism inflicted on blacks. Indeed, the analogy with African Americans may be dangerous because it exaggerates the potential problems with the open integration of gays and lesbians. Racial integration demanded fundamental changes in the structure of the armed services; the open integration of homosexuals would not require the military to disband whole units or reorganize working, living, and recreation facilities. Nor would open integration have to battle prejudicial attitudes about the inherent inferiority of the previously excluded or segregated group. Whereas many senior officers claimed in the 1930s and 1940s that blacks could not master complex military tasks or fight on the offensive, the Pentagon readily admits that homosexuals are good soldiers.

The open integration of homosexuals may, however, raise other issues that racial integration did not: stereotypes of homosexuals tend to challenge traditional notions of masculinity, and the potential for sex among members of the group can arise. But here the analogy with women becomes instructive: traditional notions of femininity also challenge warrior images, and the problem of sexual relations again occurs. These analogies have limitations, but they are useful: they point to problems that may occur with the full integration of homosexuals. They also provide lessons about the U.S. military’s ability to integrate previously excluded or segregated groups.

Racial integration. During the 1930s and 1940s, the U.S. armed services argued that racial integration would undermine unit cohesion. In 1942 the U.S. Navy explained its support for segregation: “The necessity for the highest possible degree of unity and esprit de corps—the requirement of morale—all
these demand that nothing be done which may adversely affect the situation. Past experience has shown irrefutably that the enlistment of Negroes (other than for mess attendants) leads to disruptive and undermining conditions.” Foreshadowing Senator Nunn’s 1993 field hearings on homosexuals in the military in the tightly packed environment of Navy submarines, Navy officials stressed that “men on board ships live in particularly close association; in their messes, one man sits beside another; their hammocks or bunks are close together; in their common task they work side by side; and in particular tasks such as those of a gun’s crew, they form a closely knit, highly coordinated team.” The U.S. Army also claimed that segregation was necessary to maintain confidence and trust in military units. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall explained that “to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organization . . . would inevitably have a highly destructive effect on morale—meaning military efficiency.” According to senior officers, the military was designed to defend the nation, not solve its social ills. If the issue of integrating African Americans were forced, cohesion, teamwork, and discipline would suffer.

The issue was forced, and the segregationists were wrong. During World War II, two important experiences in the U.S. Army challenged military assumptions about racially integrated units. First, the Army integrated officer candidate training; blacks and whites successfully lived and trained together. Second, and far more important in refuting the official Army position on racial integration, black infantry replacements were used during the Allied advance in Western Europe in the spring and summer of 1945. Responding to manpower shortages, General Dwight D. Eisenhower issued a call for black volunteers; over 2,500 black soldiers were assembled for infantry conversion training, organized into fifty-three platoons, and sent to the field to serve within previously all-white companies.

67. See, for example, the statements by Kenneth C. Royal, the secretary of the army, and General Omar N. Bradley, Department of the Army, reproduced in MacGregor and Nalty, Blacks in the United States Armed Services, Vol. 9, The Fahy Committee, pp. 505–506, 633.
68. In a letter to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., September 27, 1940, reproduced in MacGregor and Nalty, Blacks in the United States Armed Services, Vol. 5, Black Soldiers in World War II, p. 28.
Shortly after the Allies declared victory in Europe, a team of researchers studied this bold experiment: they interviewed more than 350 company-grade officers and platoon sergeants, and collected questionnaires from more than 1,700 white enlisted men. The integration of black troops had not created social dissension or disrupted unit cohesion. Most officers and enlisted men had supported segregation, but service in integrated units altered their views: 77 percent claimed that they had become more favorable. As one platoon sergeant put it: “When I heard about it, I said I’d be damned if I’d wear the same shoulder patch they did. After that first day when we saw how they fought, I changed my mind. They’re just like any of the other boys to us.” Indeed, 96 percent of the officers reported that relations within the integrated units were much better than anticipated. When questioned about whether white and black soldiers had gotten “along together amicably,” 93 percent of the officers and 60 percent of the enlisted men said “very well”; everyone else said “fairly well.” A company commander explained that “our platoons got so small that we had to put a white squad in the colored platoon. You might think that wouldn’t work well, but it did. The white squad didn’t want to leave the platoon. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

This experiment also showed that integrated units fought well together. Within a month of the deployment of black platoons, positive evaluations came pouring in. The 104th Division reported that “the combat record has been outstanding. They have without exception proven themselves to be good soldiers.” Interviews and surveys conducted by civilian scientists reported similar results: more than 80 percent of the commissioned and noncommissioned officers felt that the black troops had performed “very well” in combat. General Eisenhower agreed: “I decided to infiltrate them as individuals, into units already in the front lines. Some of the commanders, one of whom was [General] George Patton, strongly objected on the ground that some of our units were from the South and trouble would result. Our experience was just the opposite. There was not a single objection brought to my attention. On the contrary, from all sides there came heartwarming reports of the success of the experiment, including from George.”

Experiences with integrated units during the Korean War repeated the World War II example: racial integration did not undermine unit cohesion, and integrated units fought effectively. Faced with surpluses in black troops and high
battle losses in white units, commanders began assigning black soldiers to previously all-white units; by December 1951, the composition of African Americans in some units equaled their proportion of the national population. Once again, the integration was carefully analyzed. A team of social scientists from the Operations Research Office at Johns Hopkins University directed a large-scale investigation comparing the integrated and segregated units. This project, entitled Project Clear, consisted of two major troop opinion surveys and numerous interviews. The results were unambiguous: the researchers concluded that “integration has proceeded smoothly and without friction or conflict. No major problems have arisen and each group accepts the presence of the other.” Extracts from interviews with enlisted men illustrate that their reactions contrasted sharply with those anticipated by opponents of racial integration: “Far as I’m concerned it worked pretty good. . . . When it comes to life or death, race does not mean any difference. . . . It’s like one big family. . . . Got a colored guy on our machine gun crew—after a while I wouldn’t do without him. . . . Concerning combat, what I’ve seen an American is an American. When we have to do something we’re all the same. . . . Each guy is like your own brother. . . . We [an integrated squad] had something great in common, sleeping, guarding each other—sometimes body against body as we slept in the bunker.” The integrated units also performed effectively. Although noting the difficulty in obtaining accurate measures of performance, Project Clear reported that “no indication has been found, in a careful examination of the available data, that the presence of a proportion of Negroes is in any way related to the efficiency of the units as rated by its commanding officer.”


gender integration. Opponents of increasing the participation of women in the U.S. armed services often argue that the integration of women will disrupt unit cohesion. For example, 41 percent of servicemembers surveyed in the early 1990s believed that putting women in combat units would hinder the development of unit cohesion. A former Army officer explained his reasoning: “Most skills in the military, especially combat skills, are learnable by anyone within six to eight weeks. But military unit effectiveness and cohesion are far more the result of socio-psychological bonding—anthropologically,
male bonding—among soldiers within combat groups.” However, studies of basic training, extended exercises, and day-to-day operations show that gender integration does not disrupt unit cohesion or decrease military performance.

In the early 1990s, the U.S. Navy conducted pilot programs with gender-integrated companies in basic training. Survey data on twenty-two companies (nine all-male; four all-female; and nine integrated) found that members of integrated companies perceived that unit cohesion in their companies was higher than in segregated ones. Structured interviews also revealed the development of cohesion within gender-integrated units. As one female put it, “At first I didn’t like the idea [of integrated units], but now after working with the males I think it is probably a lot better. We are more like brothers and sisters trying to help each other through this. . . . We don’t see it as male and female, we see it as a team.”

During the same period, the U.S. Army also experimented with gender-integrated basic training. The first phase of the program began in 1991, and after tracking its performance, a group of researchers from the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) reported that there were “no significant trends” associated with gender integration. The Army chief of staff decided to integrate basic training at the squad level for combat support and combat service support units. The next phase of the Army’s program began in 1993, and ARI conducted a large study that allowed for comparisons between integrated and segregated companies as well as changes in gender-integrated companies over time. The second phase was equally successful, and the third and final phase was conducted in 1995 at two installations in which all of the companies were gender integrated. To the extent that gender integration had any effect on unit cohesion, it improved it. For example, ARI reported that “soldierization” (as measured by self-reported levels of pride and commitment, individual improvement during basic training, individual and platoon morale, and teamwork and cohesion) of female soldiers in a gender-

80. Quoted in ibid., p. 4.
81. Three battalions were gender integrated: one to the squad level; the other two to the platoon level. Jacqueline A. Mottern, David A. Foster, Elizabeth J. Brady, and Joanne Marshall-Mies, 1995 Gender Integration of Basic Combat Training Study, ARI Study Report 97-01 (Alexandria, Va.: U.S. ARI, 1997), p. 4.
integrated environment was much higher than that of women in all-female units. Male soldiers in gender-integrated companies had the same or higher levels of soldierization as men in all-male companies. Discussions in focus groups reinforced the survey results. One female trainee commented: “At first, they try to help you do something just because you’re female, not because you are a soldier. Now everybody is helping everybody, not because of gender, but because they need help.” Another female explained that “there was some initial flirtation between the sexes, but that was quickly moved to the back burner as the trainees realized that teamwork was essential if everybody wanted to graduate.”

Studies of extended field exercises have also shown that the inclusion of women has not disrupted unit cohesion. One female soldier remarked that “a new set of norms was beginning to emerge—a sort of ‘we’re all in this together’ and there was a push toward equality and interdependence.” Another commented on the segregated sleeping arrangements, explaining that she “didn’t want to be in a tent with females she didn’t know [but would] rather be with a group that [she] worked with.” As the military sociologist David Segal explained, “The stress of military operations itself fosters cohesion. . . . field training exercises suggest that it is the commonality of experience of the soldiers involved, rather than their gender, that produces cohesion.”

The finding that the integration of women does not disrupt unit cohesion has been repeated in studies of day-to-day operations in the military: a recent RAND report on the assignment of women since April 1993 into previously closed military occupations concluded that “gender integration is perceived to have a relatively small effect on readiness, cohesion, and morale.” In fact, gender integration was seen as having positive effects on cohesion: professional standards in the workplace were raised because the presence of women hindered the development of the excessive social bonding that encourages activities that interfere with good discipline and behavior.

82. Ibid., pp. v, viii, ix, 27, 30.
Gender-integrated units also perform effectively. In 1996 the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that gender-integrated basic training "does not negatively affect the performance of trainees."87 Studies of basic training have found that soldiers, especially women, perform better on several basic tests in gender-integrated companies.88 In addition, gender-integrated field exercises have not decreased military effectiveness. In 1975 the U.S. Army conducted exercises based on the assumption that if increasing numbers of women were added to units, a point would be reached at which their integration would degrade unit effectiveness. However, ARI data showed that gender integration (up to 35 percent) did not degrade performance. Two years later, the Army studied the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's annual REFORGER exercise in which stateside combat divisions are redeployed to Europe to participate in its defense. Again, the integration of women did not significantly affect operational capabilities.89

THE INTEGRATION OF GAYS AND LESBIANS, AND UNIT COHESION
The final set of evidence that suggests that the open integration of homosexuals would not disrupt unit cohesion and military performance comes from experiences with gays and lesbians themselves. This evidence comes from three sources: other organizations, such as police and fire departments; foreign military organizations; and the U.S. armed services themselves.

POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS. Since the 1970s, many police and fire departments in the United States have openly integrated homosexuals. These organizations differ from the military in an important way: they are not asking their members to kill others. They do, however, share characteristics that are often cited as barriers to the open integration of gays and lesbians in the U.S. military. Individuals work in teams, often use the same rest rooms, and sometimes sleep in close proximity. More important, the stakes can be life or death, and morale, cohesion, and trust are all seen as important to the successful performance of their missions. These experiences provide indirect evidence that the open integration of gays and lesbians would not disrupt unit cohesion

89. Segal, Recruiting for Uncle Sam, pp. 122–123.
or undermine military performance. For example, an early study of the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department program to integrate gays and lesbians found that sexual orientation was not relevant to the performance of professional duties. This finding has been repeated around the country. In 1992 the GAO visited eight police and fire departments; all of the departmental officials reported that the open integration of gays and lesbians had not led to serious problems or degraded performance. The next year, a team of researchers from RAND studied police and fire departments in six large American cities; the cases were carefully chosen to provide the best approximation of the U.S. military. They avoided cities such as San Francisco or Key West that would be unrepresentative samples because of their large homosexual populations and tolerant attitudes toward sexual orientation. They also chose to study large urban areas because the departments would have paramilitary structures for command and control. Given their size, these police and fire departments were also likely to contain homosexuals serving openly. The researchers visited Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Diego, and Seattle. They concluded that despite negative and hostile attitudes toward homosexuality within most of the police and fire departments, when the leadership signals that integration is important, the open presence of gays and lesbians does not compromise performance.

FOREIGN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS. The experience of foreign military organizations provides direct evidence that the open integration of gays and lesbians does not destroy unit cohesion or degrade military effectiveness. Although the regulations differ, at least fourteen countries allow gays and lesbians to serve openly. In the early 1990s, the GAO examined many of these foreign forces and concluded that “the presence of homosexuals in the military is not an issue and has not created problems in the functioning of military units.” The GAO’s assessment was based on a general overview and in-depth studies of four countries with over 50,000 active military personnel whose forces had been involved recently in regional conflicts or United Nations peacekeeping missions. Perhaps least surprising were the assessments the

91. GAO, DOD’s Policy on Homosexuality, pp. 6, 15, 41.
GAO received from Swedish officials. In 1987 Sweden prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the military, and the new policy resulted in few, if any, problems. Most Swedish officials agree with the policy, and although they have not conducted any studies specifically designed to address this issue, Swedish officials report that the participation of homosexuals has not hurt unit readiness, effectiveness, cohesion, or morale. In 1992 the Canadian courts ruled that the armed services must remove all restrictions based on sexual orientation. The Canadian experience may be more relevant to U.S. policy because the military actively resisted the change; the decision was controversial; and many analysts warned of impending problems such as mass resignations, lower recruitment, problems with cohesion and morale, and attacks against gay servicemen. These problems have yet to materialize.94

Some of the most compelling evidence that the open integration of gays and lesbians does not undermine unit cohesion and military effectiveness comes from the experiences of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). In the spring of 1993, the IDF adopted a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in recruitment, assignment, and promotion. Previously, homosexuals were prohibited from serving in intelligence positions requiring top security clearances and were required to undergo psychological examinations to determine their eligibility for service. These policies were never formally implemented; officials reported to GAO researchers that the IDF had effectively integrated homosexuals since 1948, and they could think of few problems that their presence had caused. IDF officials explained that homosexuals performed as well as heterosexuals and that their inclusion had not hindered readiness, effectiveness, cohesion, or morale.95 The Israeli military psychologist Reuven Gal also reported that Israeli military commanders have historically given a lot of latitude to homosexual soldiers: if soldiers were well regarded, they would be allowed to continue to serve in that unit.96

U.S. ARMED FORCES. Because American policy prohibits gays and lesbians from openly serving in the armed services, there are few studies of the effect of homosexuals on unit cohesion and military effectiveness. However, two

95. GAO, Homosexuals in the Military, pp. 38-43.
DoD-commissioned reports have reached conclusions at odds with the Pentagon's policy toward gays and lesbians: the 1957 Crittenden report and the 1988 PERSEREC report. Neither report was commissioned to study the suitability of gay and lesbian service in the armed forces. The Crittenden report was commissioned to evaluate the procedures for processing homosexuals out of the Navy, and the PERSEREC report was asked to study the correlation between homosexuality and security-risk violations. However, both went beyond their original mandates, and both raised questions about the rationale for DoD's exclusionary policy. The PERSEREC report put it most boldly: “Studies of homosexual veterans make clear that having a same gender or an opposite gender orientation is unrelated to job performance in the same way as is being left- or right-handed.” The pattern of homosexual discharges in the U.S. military also raises questions about whether gays and lesbians are a threat to combat effectiveness: relatively more homosexuals are discharged in peacetime than in war. During combat the Pentagon often allows homosexuals who divulge their homosexuality to continue to serve. Indeed, discharges for homosexuality in the U.S. military dropped during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, while some of the larger purges of gays and lesbians occurred during peacetime.

There is also anecdotal evidence of gays and lesbians serving openly in the U.S. military. One of the most well known cases is that of Margarethe Cammermeyer, the National Guard nurse discharged for being a lesbian, whose experience was popularized in the television movie *Serving in Silence*. Colonel Cammermeyer disclosed her status during a security background check in 1989 and continued to work until her discharge three years later. Those in her unit knew she was a lesbian. Her final evaluation in 1991 could not have been more positive: both as an individual—“This officer is exemplary in her dedication”—and as the leader of a group—“Her strong leadership has been a key element in improving medical readiness of the unit.” Similarly, Perry Watkins was drafted into the Army in 1968 and served openly both in combat and in peacetime. During discharge proceedings in 1975, the Army board stated that “there is no evidence suggesting that his behavior has had either a degrading effect upon unit performance, morale, or discipline, or upon his own job performance.” Indeed, Watkins’s performance as a female impersonator at

Army events earned him commendation from one of his commanding officers: "Where comradeship is evident, so is high morale and good discipline which are the signs of a great unit. The [event] could not have been a success without your full support, enthusiasm, initiative, and imagination."[101]

Whereas there is theoretical and empirical evidence that the open integration of gays and lesbians would not disrupt unit cohesion or military performance, there is no comparable evidence to support the Pentagon's discriminatory policy. GAO reported that DoD's "policy is not based on scientific or empirical data, but rather on the considered judgment of military professionals . . . [and] that such judgment is primarily anecdotal."[102] Other analysts agree with this assessment. Lawrence Korb, former assistant secretary of defense for manpower, reserve affairs, and logistics during the Reagan administration, stated in court that the justification for the ban on homosexuals serving in the military is "without factual foundation." Indeed, DoD admits that it cannot provide scientific evidence in support of its argument. In 1993 General John Otjen, a member of the military working group that studied the issue of homosexuals in the military, and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Edwin Dorn stated that they had no facts—defined as statistics, scientific studies, and reports rather than opinions and anecdotes—supporting the rationale for the military's discriminatory policy toward gays and lesbians.[103] The lack of evidence supporting the Pentagon's policy toward homosexuals is not surprising: DoD has never attempted to document its argument about the negative effect of homosexuals on unit cohesion or operational effectiveness. In 1988 the PERSEREC report recommended that future research examine the claim that the presence of gays and lesbians is a barrier to the development of group cohesion and morale, but DoD never followed up on this advice.[104]

Instead of attempting to provide support for its arguments, the Pentagon has responded by ignoring or dismissing theoretical or empirical evidence that challenges the rationale for its discriminatory policy. For example, DoD argued

102. GAO, Homosexuals in the Military, p. 68.
103. Both cited in Zilly, "Cammermeyer v. Aspin," p. 924. Such confidence in the professional judgment of military officers despite the lack of evidence is not new. In 1942 a memo from the War Department explained that "the utilization of colored units is a problem that defies rigorous analysis because of the intangible nature of such factors as racial prejudice, social implications, combat efficiency, and international relations." Reproduced in MacGregor and Nalty, Blacks in the United States Armed Services, Vol. 5, p. 157.
104. Sarbin and Karols, Nonconforming Sexual Orientation, pp. 25, 33; and GAO, Homosexuals in the Military, p. 27.
that the GAO “erred” in stating that the Crittenden and PERSEREC reports did not support its policy toward gays and lesbians. In raising this objection, DoD was not arguing that the GAO incorrectly represented the conclusions in these reports; instead, GAO “erred” because it paid attention to conclusions to questions that the reports had not been commissioned to address.105 Similarly, in testimony before the Senate, the general counsel for DoD, Jamie Gorelick, stated that the military working group did not consider the Crittenden report “a material resource, but rather a historical background docket.” She also stated that the PERSEREC report was a “draft that was never completed” and that it had not done what it was tasked to do.106 Indeed, DoD did not accept the initial PERSEREC report. According to Korb, when the draft PERSEREC report was issued in 1988, the Pentagon reacted angrily, and officials in the office of the secretary of defense labeled it a draft so that it would not have to be released to the public. They then directed the authors of the study to rewrite the report, omitting the section on suitability. The report was not finalized until September 1991, and the revised report dropped many of the offending sections, including the statement that sexual orientation was as relevant to military service as being left- or right-handed.107 In addition, senior military officers have dismissed lessons from the open integration of gays and lesbians in foreign military organizations as not applicable to the American situation. For example, Admiral Jeremiah and General Powell argued before the Senate that the American “cultural heritage and legal framework,” as well as the worldwide deployment of U.S. forces, limit any parallels to other countries’ policies toward gays and lesbians in the military.108

This willingness to explain away or ignore evidence that challenges military policy beliefs is hauntingly familiar. After World War II, the U.S. Army ignored findings from *The American Soldier* that challenged numerous preconceptions about racial integration; two major Army reports, the Gillem report in 1945 and the Chamberlin report in 1950, adamantly opposed racial integration. Senior military officers also attempted to prevent the public release of evidence that racial integration had been successful. General Brehon B. Somervell, commanding general of the Army Service Forces, argued that the experiments with racial integration in 1945 were inconclusive and that organizations such as the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People might use the data to exert pressure for further racial integration. Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall agreed that the surveys should not be made public because “the conditions under which the [black] platoons were organized and employed were most unusual.” General Omar Bradley expressed similar concerns while also claiming that the successful experiences with racial integration in the Air Force were not applicable because soldiers were more dependent on one another in the Army.

Advancing Military Readiness and Civil Rights

While military officers’ professional judgment about the open integration of homosexuals should be carefully considered, the Pentagon should not base policy on assumptions that have little theoretical or empirical support. One advantage of social science is that it can challenge policy that is based on myth and prejudice. It can also be used to question policy that hurts military readiness. Racial segregation of the U.S. armed services was costly and inefficient, and lowered combat effectiveness. It required the creation of separate units and facilities, and segregated units often performed poorly. Separate was not equal: black units suffered from low morale and were poorly equipped, trained, and led. Racial integration of the U.S. armed forces was a victory for civil rights and national defense.

The debate about homosexuals in the U.S. military focuses on the question of whether a change in policy will degrade military effectiveness. By examining the two parts of the rationale for the Pentagon’s policy toward homosexuals, this article challenges the argument that openly gay and lesbian personnel would disrupt unit cohesion and military performance. We should also ask, however, whether the current policy of excluding openly gay and lesbian personnel itself hurts military readiness. Are there reasons to think that, as in the case of racial integration, a change in policy would lead to an increase in military effectiveness? In other words, would lifting the ban on openly gay and lesbian personnel be a gain for civil rights and military effectiveness? We do not know. There are few studies of foreign military organizations that have

109. Quoted in MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, pp. 54–55.
111. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, pp. 3–57.
lifted the ban on homosexual military service, and the Pentagon has not asked this question.

There are, however, some indications of the inefficiencies of the current policy of barring open homosexuals from the U.S. military. First, investigating and discharging homosexual servicemembers costs time and money: for example, the U.S. armed forces discharged 16,692 enlisted personnel and 227 officers during the 1980s. According to GAO estimates, the recruiting and initial training costs of replacing each enlisted troop were $28,226, and every officer $120,772; these sums do not include court costs. Second, just as racial and gender segregation hurt the morale of African Americans and women, working in an anti-homosexual environment presumably hurts the morale of gay and lesbian personnel. Third, gay and straight women in the military are now subject to the practice of "lesbian baiting," in which women are often accused of being lesbians when they rebuff men's sexual advances or report sexual abuse. Instead of investigating and disciplining the individuals accused of harassment, commanders often respond by investigating and sometimes discharging the target of the harassment. Allowing lesbians to serve openly would not abolish sexual harassment, but it would curtail the lesbian baiting that discourages women from reporting sexual harassment and destroys the careers of dedicated personnel. Finally, research has shown that soldiers who perceive that the Army is supportive of their families are more likely to be committed and satisfied, and thus to reenlist. This finding suggests that the lack of such support for the families of gay and lesbian personnel has a negative effect on homosexual servicemembers; the military cannot support the families of homosexuals if they cannot serve openly.

Although there may be additional reasons why the current policy hurts military effectiveness, future research is likely to show that racial segregation was relatively more inefficient than DoD's policy of barring open homosexuals from the U.S. armed forces. Inefficiencies were certainly more evident: unlike blacks, homosexuals are not segregated into costly, separate, and unequal units that become obviously malfunctioning parts of the military. Proponents of lifting the ban on openly gay and lesbian personnel may find this conclusion

112. GAO, Homosexuals in the Military, pp. 4, 25, 31–32.
114. Mady Wechsler Segal and Jesse J. Harris, What We Know about Army Families (Alexandria, Va.: U.S. ARI, 1993).
discouraging: the less costly the current policy, the less likely a change. It is important to remember, however, that racial segregation did not become costly and inefficient in 1948—it had always hindered military effectiveness. President Harry Truman’s executive order in 1948 forbidding racial discrimination in the U.S. armed forces cannot be understood as simply a response to inefficiencies. It was a political decision to address a costly policy that violated the civil rights of American citizens. Although discrimination toward homosexuals is probably not as dysfunctional as racial segregation, it is just as much a violation of civil rights. And just as racial desegregation did not compromise national defense, removing the current ban on openly gay and lesbian personnel in the U.S. military would not require making trade-offs between the needs of national security and the rights of American citizens.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Opponents of the open integration of gays and lesbians in the U.S. military often present unit cohesion as the critical reason for maintaining the current policy because it relates most directly to combat effectiveness. But it is not the only objection raised to lifting all restrictions on homosexuals in the U.S. armed forces. Concerns about privacy and violence against homosexuals must also be addressed. Some openly gay and lesbian personnel have successfully served in the U.S. armed services, but homosexual servicemembers are also verbally abused, physically attacked, and sometimes killed. Simply lifting the ban on open homosexuals in the military may not be sufficient to protect the rights of gays and lesbians or to ensure that military performance does not suffer. After all, the abuse of homosexual servicemembers hurts military readiness. Anti-homosexual behavior would be less likely if gays and lesbians were allowed to serve openly; this abuse now occurs in a context in which the victims have no guarantees that reporting harassment will not lead to their own investigation and discharge. However, even if homosexuals were allowed to serve openly, anti-homosexual behavior may not disappear from the U.S. military. Indeed, changing the policy in peacetime may be more difficult: experience suggests that the further from combat and the less dependent individuals are on one another, the more likely it is that prejudice and conflict will surface. It

was in the rear areas, for example, where much of the racial tension that exploded in the U.S. military in the 1970s occurred.

A commitment to uphold the policy’s intent, especially among the leadership of the armed services, must accompany a change in policy to abolish discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the U.S. military. The experiences of foreign military organizations and other organizations that have openly integrated gays and lesbians show the importance of leadership in overcoming implementation problems. If this commitment is weak, civilian oversight can play an important role in encouraging compliance. In 1948 Truman created the Fahy Committee to oversee the implementation of his executive order calling for racial equality in the armed services. This civilian advisory committee to the president challenged many of the arguments justifying racial segregation, kept the momentum for integration on track, and helped clarify the administration’s policy to the military. Indeed, those branches of the armed services to which the Fahy Committee devoted less attention, such as the Marine Corps, made the least progress in implementing racial equality.\(^\text{116}\) The process of racial integration of the U.S. armed services also provides examples of the critical role of senior officers in the implementation process; civilian and military leadership must work together to ensure that the necessary commitment exists.\(^\text{117}\)

The U.S. military should take two further steps to implement a change in policy to openly integrate gays and lesbians. First, the military must clearly specify acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Officers should understand the implications of the new policy, and these expectations must be communicated to all members of the organization. All should know what is expected of them. Second, a change in policy must be supported with an enforcement system that monitors and controls behavior. Policy statements about “zero tolerance” toward sexual harassment in the U.S. military have not been successful, in part because they have not been reinforced by an appropriate system of rewards and punishments. A recent survey revealed that most servicewomen keep their complaints to themselves because they do not think that their accusations will be taken seriously.\(^\text{118}\) New policy statements have little value without sanctions to enforce them. The military must create mechanisms for registering and


\(^{117}\) Ibid., pp. 219, 228–229, 261, 308, 312–315, 322–333.

investigating violations, and officers must discipline violators of the new policy. The military should reward officers who uncover violations of the policy under their command.

The U.S. military has shown a remarkable ability to implement wide-ranging institutional change. When Truman issued his executive order in 1948, the U.S. armed services was a traditional, conservative, and overwhelmingly Southern institution; even blood supplies were segregated during World War II. The U.S. military is now considered a model for race relations. The services initially resisted racial integration, it took several decades for the process to unfold, and there is still racism in the military. But the integration of African Americans demonstrates the power of the military to implement radical change. The military is a hierarchical, formal, and rule-driven institution. It is one of the most “total institutions” in terms of its control over the socialization process of its members and its ability to use carrots and sticks to ensure compliance with organizational goals. As the civil rights movement understood, it can command where civilian institutions can only persuade.\textsuperscript{119} The open integration of gays and lesbians in the military would not proceed without problems or be accomplished overnight. Experience has shown, however, that the U.S. armed services has the ability to be at the leading edge of civil rights, and that by doing so, it can enhance military effectiveness.

\textsuperscript{119} MacGregor, \textit{Integration of the Armed Forces}, p. 17.