

# Unit Cohesion and the Impact of DADT

*Gary Schaub Jr.*

“THIS YEAR, I will work with Congress and our military to finally repeal the law that denies gay Americans the right to serve the country they love because of who they are.”<sup>1</sup> So said president of the United States and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Barack Obama, before a joint session of Congress on 27 January 2010. The president referred to the 1993 law and associated policy commonly known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT), that codified homosexual conduct, including declarations of sexual orientation that indicate a propensity to engage in homosexual acts, as grounds for discharge from the military.<sup>2</sup>

The following week, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ADM Michael Mullen testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee. “No matter how I look at the issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens,” said Admiral Mullen, who further stated that it was his personal belief that “allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would be the right thing to do.”<sup>3</sup> Secretary Gates announced that his office was undertaking a study “to thoroughly, objectively, and methodically examine all aspects of this question and produce its finding and recommendations in the form of an implementation plan by the end of this calendar year,” that he had contracted the RAND Corporation to update a 1993 study on the issue,<sup>4</sup> and that his office would seek ways to implement the policy “in a fairer manner” in the interim—changes that have since been implemented.<sup>5</sup> The policy preferences enunciated suggest that it is a question not of *if* homosexuals will be permitted to serve openly in the military, but *when*.<sup>6</sup>

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Gary Schaub Jr., PhD, is an assistant professor in the Leadership and Strategy Department, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Alabama. He previously taught at the USAF School of Advanced Air & Space Studies, the University of Pittsburgh, and Chatham College. Dr. Schaub has published in the journals *Parameters*, *International Studies Review*, *Political Psychology*, and *Refuge* and book chapters in volumes published by Oxford University Press and St. Martin’s Press. He has written on military coercion, nuclear weapons issues, European security, and research methodology.

The issue of cohesion is at the center of most debates about repealing DADT. Hence, I focus on the impact this change in policy may have on the cohesion of military units. The arguments underlying Title 10, § 654's prohibition on openly homosexual members in the military, the concerns of Secretary Gates and the JCS, and the views of many military personnel rest on the premise that their presence would undermine the cohesion of military units, thereby making service more difficult and performance less effective.<sup>7</sup> Critics discount these concerns. Aaron Belkin and Melissa Embser-Herbert argued in 2002 that a "growing body of scholarly evidence has undermined the validity of the unit cohesion rationale . . . [and] show that whether a unit's members like each other has no impact on its performance."<sup>8</sup> In 2010, Bonnie Moradi and Laura Miller found in an analysis of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans that knowing that a member of a unit is gay or lesbian had no effect on their judgments of unit cohesion.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the argument hinges on whether repealing DADT will negatively impact unit cohesion.

I argue the critics are wrong. Whether members of a unit cohere socially does matter and has an independent effect on performance. The latest literature on the cohesion-effectiveness link indicates that both task and social cohesion affect performance and outcomes. Evidence shows that liking one's teammates affects cohesion and performance almost as much as devotion to getting the job done. Policies that discount social cohesion will underestimate the degradation in performance that will occur if it is diminished by repealing DADT. Social cohesion depends heavily upon shared values and attitudes, and if a significant proportion of members opposes the presence of gays and lesbians in their unit, then social cohesion will suffer tremendously. Available evidence suggests that attitudes of US service members vary toward homosexuals, both in general and in the context of DADT. They vary more by service, sex, race, and party identification than by unit type (combat, combat support, and combat service support) or rank. These characteristics are not isolated, so disruption is likely to occur in some units more than others.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, changing the policy with regard to gays and lesbians serving openly in the military will unevenly affect unit performance—at least until attitudes shift. It is therefore important that ongoing studies include measures of social cohesion and that they be applied to the force on a regular basis so any shifts can be tracked and their implications managed effectively.

## **Cohesion**

There is strong belief that cohesion is related to performance in the military and more generally in small groups and organizations. Title 10, § 654 argues that “[o]ne of the most critical elements in combat capability is unit cohesion, that is, the bonds of trust among individual service members that make the combat effectiveness of a military unit greater than the sum of the combat effectiveness of the individual unit members.” These beliefs within the military are largely based upon studies dating from World War II<sup>11</sup> and anecdotal evidence, but substantial literature exists on the nature of cohesion and its relationship to performance. Cohesion is defined as “the resultant forces which are acting on the members to stay in a group.”<sup>12</sup> Guy Siebold asserts that “the essence of strong primary group cohesion . . . is trust among group members (e.g., to watch each other’s back) together with the capacity for teamwork (e.g., pulling together to get the task or job done).”<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the impact of cohesion on “pulling together to get the task or job done” has been one of the primary motivators in this study. How does group cohesion affect group performance? “Presumably,” write Daniel Beal et al., “when cohesion is strong, the group is motivated to perform well and is better able to coordinate activities for successful performance.”<sup>14</sup> In essence, the literature posits that cohesion is causally linked to performance in two ways. First, it induces individuals in the group to value group-produced outcomes more than the cost of their relative level of effort.<sup>15</sup> Second, it reduces the transaction costs associated with the cooperation and coordination required in any group effort.<sup>16</sup> The degree of communication and coordination necessary to achieve the group’s goal would be mediated by the pattern of their work flow. Outputs that are merely pooled individual efforts require little cooperation, coordination, or cohesion to be effective, while those that were produced in a sequential or reciprocal process would require more, and those that require collaboration would require the most. These theoretical conceptions of how group cohesion affects performance help us to understand the logic behind the persistent belief that the two are positively related—particularly in a military setting.<sup>17</sup>

The social psychological literature on cohesion focuses on its motivators and distinguishes between two types: social and task. Social cohesion has been defined as “the nature and quality of the emotional bonds of friendship, liking, caring, and closeness among group members. A group

is socially cohesive to the extent that its members like each other, prefer to spend their social time together, enjoy each other's company, and feel emotionally close to one another."<sup>18</sup> Task cohesion is described as "the shared commitment among members to achieve a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group. A group with high task cohesion is composed of members who share a common goal and who are motivated to coordinate their efforts as a team to achieve that goal."<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, these two forms of cohesion are related but distinct. A group that is socially cohesive is more likely to have task cohesion, but this need not be the case. Indeed, the literature on small-group decision making suggests that building and maintaining high social cohesion may undermine the group's ability to perform tasks, such as making sound decisions, if maintaining cohesion displaces the group's instrumental purpose.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, social cohesion is not necessary for task cohesion; people who do not like one another may work well together nonetheless. Yet both forms of cohesion are related, and both affect unit performance and quality of life for service members. Or do they?

There has been a consensus in the literature that task cohesion is related to performance but social cohesion is not. This consensus is primarily based upon the analysis of 49 studies of group cohesion by Brian Mullen and Carolyn Copper.<sup>21</sup> Mullen and Copper aggregated measures used in these previous studies into two measures of social cohesion—interpersonal attraction and group pride—and one measure of task cohesion: task commitment. They then determined the average independent relationship that each had to group task outcomes.<sup>22</sup> They concluded that the measures of social cohesion were not independently related to measures of performance; task commitment, however, was.<sup>23</sup> "The results of these analyses demonstrate commitment to the task to be the most important component of cohesiveness in the cohesiveness-performance effect . . . Practically, these results indicate that efforts to enhance group performance by fostering interpersonal attraction or 'pumping up' group pride are not likely to be effective."<sup>24</sup>

This finding was accepted in the study of military cohesion because it not only reflected a sound empirical conclusion but it was also consonant with the military's inculcation of a group identity over that of the individual,<sup>25</sup> its honing of (nearly) arbitrarily assigned individuals into task-oriented teams,<sup>26</sup> and its meritocratic culture that focused on job performance as opposed to personalities.<sup>27</sup> Thus it should not be surprising that

arguments that attempt to gauge the effect of allowing homosexuals to openly serve in the military have emphasized the importance of task cohesion over social cohesion. Robert MacCoun, who oversaw the cohesion section of the 1993 RAND study on the issue, argued that

the established principles of cohesion suggest that the presence of acknowledged homosexuals has an effect, [and] it is most likely to involve social cohesion rather than task cohesion . . . [S]imilarity of social attitudes and beliefs is not associated with task cohesion, although it is sometimes associated with social cohesion. Task cohesion involves . . . a commitment to the group's purposes and objectives. There seems little reason to expect acknowledged homosexuality to influence this commitment . . . [Indeed], Commitment to these values seems particularly likely, given that homosexuals in the military are a self-selected group and enlist despite numerous obstacles and personal and professional risks.<sup>28</sup>

Col Om Prakash, USAF, echoed this argument in his award-winning essay in *Joint Force Quarterly*: the “integration of open homosexuals might degrade social cohesion because of the lack of homogeneity; however, the effects can be mitigated with leadership and will further dissipate with familiarity. More importantly, task cohesion should not be affected and is in fact the determinant in group success.”<sup>29</sup> RAND sociologist Laura Miller and Loyola University professor CAPT John Williams, USNR, retired, wrote that “these literature reviews argue that social homogeneity is inconsequential for the work outcomes, and that achieving specific goals creates commonality among otherwise different people and forges productive social bonds.”<sup>30</sup> Finally, Bonnie Moradi and Laura Miller analyzed the views of 545 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans to determine the effect on unit cohesion of knowing that a unit member was gay or lesbian, defined in terms of task cohesion, and after controlling for the effects of NCO and officer leadership, equipment quality, and unit training, found “near 0 percent” effect.<sup>31</sup> This is consistent with the previous literature, which found that social attitudes had no effect on task cohesion but says little about social cohesion.

The problem is that Mullen and Copper's work is no longer the most recent or authoritative integration of the empirical research on cohesion and performance.<sup>32</sup> Beal et al. reconsidered the literature and conclusions reached by Mullen and Copper and expanded upon their work by including more-recent literature.<sup>33</sup> Beal et al. advanced what is known about cohesion by differentiating between outcomes and performance behaviors, between effectiveness and efficiency, accounting for different types of group work flows, and improving upon Mullen and Copper's coding of studies and statistical

procedures.<sup>34</sup> They hypothesized that cohesion would be more important to determining the quality of performance rather than the achievement of outcomes, that it would affect efficiency more than effectiveness, and that cohesion would increase as the collaborative nature of the flow of work within the group increased.

Their findings suggest that the two primary components of social cohesion—interpersonal attraction and group pride—are positively related to group performance, albeit slightly less so than commitment to the task.<sup>35</sup> Still, social cohesion matters to performance, however measured. This is contrary to the previous findings of Mullen and Copper. The data indicate that a one-unit increase in interpersonal attraction is related to an increase in overall performance of almost 20 percent, compared to a 26-percent increase for group pride and a 28-percent increase for task commitment. These relationships are independent of one another. They also differ across the type of performance considered—commitment to task had a stronger relationship than interpersonal attraction when it came to outcomes (27 vs. 14 percent increases, respectively), effectiveness<sup>36</sup> (23 vs. 15 percent), and even efficiency (34 vs. 28 percent). But interpersonal attraction was related to performance behaviors within the group more than task cohesion (31.5 vs. 30 percent). Thus, while commitment to task has a larger relationship than interpersonal attraction and group pride to most measures of performance, the important point is that measures of social cohesion have a large and positive relationship to performance independently of commitment to task.

This new set of conclusions means that social cohesion matters to performance and cannot be ignored in favor of measures of task cohesion when considering changes in personnel policy. To do so would underestimate the negative effects that disruptions to social cohesion can cause as well as underestimate the positive performance effects of efforts to enhance social cohesion.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, most of what constitutes the scholarly consensus on the likely effect of repealing DADT on unit cohesion is outdated and underestimates the probable disruptive impact.

## **Bringing Social Cohesion Back In**

These conclusions bring social cohesion and its determinants back into relevance, in particular those that affect interpersonal attraction and group pride. Beyond the generic effects of propinquity (i.e., mere membership in

a group), group size, quality of leadership, shared threats, and shared successful experiences that should remain constant in the event that DADT is repealed, the determinants of cohesion that have been considered are demographics (sex, race, ethnicity), and homogeneity of attitudes, values, and interests.

Broader studies of demographic diversity and organizational dynamics have found that “the preponderance of the empirical literature suggests that diversity is most likely to impede group functioning.”<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, the military sociology literature suggests that racial and ethnic differences do not affect unit cohesion today (although they may have in the past),<sup>39</sup> while gender differences have been found to affect unit cohesion marginally, with effects far smaller than those of rank, work group, generation, or leadership.<sup>40</sup> Still, a recent study of Soldiers’ views of civilian contractors (yet another distinctive group) associated with their unit found that “Soldiers’ social comparisons with civilian contractors have a significant total effect on cohesion” based upon a perception of relative deprivation.<sup>41</sup>

Given these studies, it is argued that although “superficial” homogeneity based upon racial, ethnic, or gender similarity facilitates initial cohesion, it is underlying values, attitudes, and interests that motivate social cohesion over the long term.<sup>42</sup> These can be shaped by the institution itself.<sup>43</sup> But what values, attitudes, and interests? It is commonly argued that the attitudes, values, and interests of military personnel are more homogenous and circumscribed than those of the American public.<sup>44</sup> Morris Janowitz, for instance, argued that “military ideology has maintained a disapproval of the lack of order and respect for authority which it feels characterizes civilian society. The military believe that the materialism and hedonism of American culture is blocking the essential military virtues of patriotism, duty, and self-sacrifice.”<sup>45</sup> The massive influx of conscripts during and after World War II moderated these views by continually introducing citizen-soldiers into the professional and social realm of career military members and providing for more diversity of thought.<sup>46</sup> Janowitz wrote in 1960 that “the social values of the military are probably less at variance with civilian society than they have been at any period of American history.”<sup>47</sup>

With the end of conscription, the all-volunteer force has become a self-selected population whose political and social values have become increasingly differentiated from American society as a whole.<sup>48</sup> The work of Ole Hosti, Peter Feaver, and Richard Kohn bear this trend out. Party

identification among military elites shifted from 33 to 64 percent Republican and 12 to 8 percent Democrat from 1976 to 1999, while among civilian elites the shifts were 25 to 30 percent and 42 to 43 percent, respectively.<sup>49</sup> Ideological identification shifted from 16.0 to 4.4 percent liberal and from 61.0 to 66.6 percent conservative among military elites, while among civilian elites the comparable shifts were from 42.0 to 37.5 percent liberal and 30.0 to 31.5 percent conservative from 1976 to 1999.<sup>50</sup> The “gap” between military and civilian views has spawned a large literature analyzing its implications.<sup>51</sup>

### **Attitude Homogeneity about Homosexuality?**

Perhaps what matters most is not the gap in political views but rather views about sexual orientation. Tarak Barkawi and Christopher Dandeker argue that militaries necessarily inculcate “a definite set of values that can be understood in ideal terms as ‘warrior masculinity’ . . . a specifically masculine and heterosexist soldierly identity . . . [that is] crucial to the competitiveness, the aggressiveness, and the willingness to kill and die required of effective combat formations.”<sup>52</sup> The identity encompassed in these attitudes is part of what separates military culture from that of the society at large, they argue. Yet, as they wrote in 1999, only 41.2 percent of military elites agreed that “even though women can serve in the military, the military should remain basically masculine, dominated by male values and characteristics,” and only 5.3 percent of military elites indicated that it “greatly hurts” if “the military becom[es] less male-dominated.”<sup>53</sup> It would seem that even as they wrote, only a minority of the elite officers that shape the military’s culture agreed with Barkawi and Dandeker.

Perhaps these broad conceptual questions about masculinity did not tap the attitudes of military officers with regard to homosexuality in the way that the researchers had hoped. Perhaps it is best to directly address the issue: what is known about the attitudes of military members with regard to homosexuality and its relationship to unit cohesion in particular?

Such data are difficult to acquire. Efforts by the author to survey military personnel on this subject have been repeatedly denied. The best data available are those in a poll conducted by Zogby International of 545 US military personnel who had served in Iraq, Afghanistan, or in combat support roles for personnel in those theaters.<sup>54</sup> The poll was conducted in



October 2006, and its respondents were “fully representative of the US and military population.”<sup>55</sup>

The poll asked respondents about their views of homosexuals as well as various performance indicators of their current (or, in the case of veterans, last) unit. The following table presents a summary of the sample’s characteristics and breaks out the percentage of agreement/disagreement with the proposition where these data were indicated in the Zogby report, which is when it deviated significantly from the overall sample’s response. This average response is indicated by (x) in this table for comparison.<sup>56</sup>

Responses to the question “Do you agree or disagree with allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military?” were as follows: 26 percent agreed, 37 percent disagreed, and 32 percent were neutral.<sup>57</sup> The level of opposition to allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in different subgroups of the sample, as shown in the table, are 39 percent of active duty, 40 percent of Air Force, 37 percent of Army, 33 percent of Navy, and 32 percent of Marines oppose repealing DADT. Differences also appear when the force is broken down according to sex and race: 40 percent of males, 27 percent of females, 43 percent of Whites, 28 percent of Blacks, and 17 percent of Hispanics oppose repealing DADT. Perhaps predictable as well, differences in opposition also correspond to party identification; 28 percent of Democrats, 41 percent of Republicans, and 45 percent of independents oppose repeal. Views across other sample characteristics, such as rank and unit type, did not deviate substantially from the group average of 37 percent in opposition.<sup>58</sup> This is substantial opposition, yet in no subset of the sample does a majority oppose changing the policy, topping out at 45 percent among self-identified political independents. Still, the opposition outweighs those that agree with lifting the ban. This is true for every subset of the sample—except for females (44 percent vs. 27) and self-identified Democrats (35 percent vs. 28).

Two less-formal measures of acceptance of gays and lesbians in the military tapped by the poll were level of comfort “in the presence of gays and lesbians” generally and whether they were known to be serving in the unit of the respondent. Although 45 percent of respondents indicated that they “suspected” that a member of their unit was gay or a lesbian, only 23 percent indicated that they knew “for certain,” and among those respondents 59 percent knew because they were told by the individual. Given the sample’s size of 545, that is 125 military members who knew and 74 who were told—in clear violation of DADT. Furthermore, 55 percent of

### The Zogby sample and selected responses

Characteristic	Sample #	Sample %	% Agree Allow	% Disagree Allow	% Comfortable	% Uncomfortable	% Know
<b>Overall responses</b>			26	37	73	19	23
<b>Duty Status</b>							
Active duty	353	65	23	39	70	(19)	(23)
Reserve/Guard activated	35	6	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
Reserve/Guard not activated	69	13	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
Veteran	88	16	35	(37)	81	(19)	(23)
<b>Service</b>							
Air Force	160	29	29	40	73	23	13
Army	251	46	23	37	69	(19)	25
Marines	35	7	25	32	82	(19)	26
Navy	92	17	31	33	79	(19)	31
Coast Guard	5	1	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
<b>Rank</b>							
Enlisted	—	66	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	27
Officer	—	31	23	(37)	(73)	(19)	12
Warrant	—	3	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
<b>Unit Type</b>							
Combat	—	29	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
Combat support	—	32	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
Combat service support	—	18	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
Other/Unsure	—	21	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
<b>Sex</b>							
Male	451	85	24	40	71	22	22
Female	80	15	44	27	88	6	29
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>							
White	375	73	26	43	(73)	(19)	(23)
Black	62	12	37	28	71	(19)	(23)
Hispanic	47	9	26	17	(73)	(19)	(23)
Asian	13	3	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
Native American	5	1	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5	1	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
Other	10	2	(26)	(37)	(73)	(19)	(23)
No response	20	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Party ID</b>							
Democrat	101	21	35	28	73	(19)	(23)
Republican	241	51	22	41	72	24	(23)
Independent	103	22	36	45	81	(19)	(23)
Not sure	100	7	—	—	—	—	—
No answer	68	—	—	—	—	—	—

Demographic information from Rodgers, *Opinions of Military Personnel*, 3–4. “Veterans” had left the service within the previous five years (p. 9, question 3). “Rank” and “Unit Type” from p. 10. Percentages indicate those that responded, not for the sample as a whole. Reported data reflect this. Response to the allowing service question from pp. 14–15.

all respondents indicated that “the presence of gays or lesbians in the unit [was] well-known by others.”<sup>59</sup> Although it is possible that all of these instances were acted upon, it seems unlikely. Perhaps this is because a large majority of respondents (73 percent) reported that they were comfortable in the presence of gays and lesbians, while only 19 percent reported that they were uncomfortable.<sup>60</sup>

The Zogby poll also asked about the effect that the presence of gays and lesbians could have, and has had, on unit morale. When asked about the strongest argument against repealing DADT, 40 percent of respondents indicated that “open gays and lesbians would undermine unit cohesion,” and this was the most popular response.<sup>61</sup> This suggests that many respondents were aware of the basis for the DADT policy. Turning to unit morale, the analysis provided by Rodgers differentiated between those who were not certain that their unit had homosexual members and those who knew. For those who were not certain, 58 percent estimated that their presence would negatively impact unit morale, 2 percent thought it would increase morale, and 26 percent forecast no impact. When considering only the respondents who indicated that they were certain that their unit had gay or lesbian members, 27 percent said that this presence negatively affected morale, 3 percent said that it was positive, and 64 percent indicated that it had no impact.<sup>62</sup> It is striking that the knowledge of a gay or lesbian unit member reduced those indicating a negative impact from 58 to 27 percent and increased those indicating no impact from 26 to 64 percent.

It is also clear that some hypothesized concerns may not be borne out. For instance, it has been argued that the members of units more likely to be deployed to Spartan positions where amenities and privacy are scarce would be less likely to accept homosexuals in their midst. The data suggest that the views of personnel in combat units, combat support units, and combat service support units do not differ appreciably from each other or the overall sample, however. Nor is the hypothesis that enlisted members are less likely to be comfortable around homosexuals than officers borne out—indeed they are slightly more accepting of repealing DADT. The data also suggest that members of minority groups, Blacks and women in particular, are less opposed and more willing to repeal DADT.

What does this data reveal about the likely effects of repealing DADT on social cohesion within military units? Clearly, more members oppose changing the policy than favor doing so. Responses to individual questions by the sample and certain subsets are informative as well, in particular the

difference in estimated and actual impact on morale of having a known lesbian or gay unit member. The overall conclusion to be drawn is that military members do not necessarily all share the same attitudes, values, and interests when it comes to DADT. While substantial subsets of the military share general attitudes toward homosexuals and homosexual conduct—negative, as well as tolerant, if not accepting—the attitudes of the entire force are not homogeneous. This suggests there may be difficulties as substantial minorities of military members disagree on the issue.<sup>63</sup> The impact on social cohesion within units will be mixed because the characteristics that most likely define those who disagree are not isolated to particular types of units. Where disruption is likely to occur cannot be determined with the data currently available. We can conclude, however, that changing the policy with regard to gays and lesbians serving openly in the military will negatively if unevenly affect unit performance—at least until attitudes within the force shift sufficiently across the board.<sup>64</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Will social cohesion, and therefore military effectiveness, suffer if DADT is repealed? The Zogby poll of attitudes of US service members toward homosexuals, both generally and in the military, suggests that there is a substantial minority opposed to allowing homosexuals to serve openly in the military, and views on the issue are far from homogenous. The lack of homogeneity in views suggests that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly may provide a basis for these disagreements to become salient. Given this situation, repealing DADT is likely to have a negative impact on the social cohesion of many units. For these units, social cohesion will likely decrease and have a negative effect on unit performance.

This is an unsatisfying answer for those engaged in the heat of the debate over DADT today, since the size of the disruption and where it is most likely to appear cannot be predicted with what is currently known. Data will soon be available to evaluate, monitor, and forecast the effect that allowing homosexuals to serve openly in the armed forces will have on all components of unit cohesion: commitment to task, interpersonal attraction, and group pride. The 2010 DoD Comprehensive Review Survey of Uniformed Active Duty and Reserve Service Members currently underway includes questions that tap all three forms of cohesion.<sup>65</sup> The original RAND study developed a conceptual position within the context

of DADT that discounted social cohesion and so shaped the subsequent debate. If the update to the RAND study also discounts social cohesion, it is likely to miss a key determinant of unit cohesion and underestimate negative impacts.

Those who are making assessments must take social cohesion into account. Contrary to almost all previous studies of unit cohesion considered in the DADT debate, commitment to task is not the only determinant of cohesion; whether service members like their coworkers matters and whether they have pride in their unit matters. These forms of cohesion are independently and significantly related to performance. Policies that undermine the social cohesion of units in the mistaken belief that only commitment to the task matters will have larger negative effects than anticipated. Formal measurements of unit cohesion should be initiated and continued as a gauge to readiness of the force. In the end, ongoing studies that will determine the policy of the United States with regard to who can serve in the military must take social cohesion into account. **SSQ**

## Notes

1. Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address," 27 January 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>.
2. See David F. Burelli, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." *The Law and Military Policy on Same-Sex Behavior*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 25 March 2010), 1–7.
3. Elisabeth Bumiller, "Top Defense Officials Seek to End 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" *New York Times*, 3 February 2010, A-1, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/03/us/politics/03military.html>.
4. Bernard D. Rostker and Scott A. Harris (study directors), *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment*, MR-323-OSD (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1993).
5. Quoted in Bumiller, "Top Defense Officials." See Craig Whitlock, "Pentagon Restricts Evidence that can be Used against Gays," *Washington Post*, 26 March 2010, 3, for details of the policy shift.
6. The individual service chiefs supported Secretary Gates' plan to study the issue but expressed trepidation, if not opposition, about changing the policy. See Thom Shanker, "2 Generals Wary About Repealing Gay Policy," *New York Times*, 24 February 2010; and Shanker, "More Calls for Review of Gay Policy," *New York Times*, 25 February 2010.
7. Specifically, Title 10, § 654 asserts, in part, that:
  - (6) Success in combat requires military units that are characterized by high morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion.
  - (7) One of the most critical elements in combat capability is unit cohesion, that is, the bonds of trust among individual service members that make the combat effectiveness of a military unit greater than the sum of the combat effectiveness of the individual unit members. . . .
- (14) The armed forces must maintain personnel policies that exclude persons whose presence in the armed forces would create an unacceptable risk to the armed forces' high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability.

- (15) The presence in the armed forces of persons who demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts would create an unacceptable risk to the high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability.
8. Aaron Belkin and Melissa Sheridan Embser-Herbert, "A Modest Proposal: Privacy as a Flawed Rationale for the Exclusion of Gays and Lesbians from the U.S. Military," *International Security* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2002).
9. Bonnie Moradi and Laura Miller, "Attitudes of Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans toward Gay and Lesbian Service Members," *Armed Forces & Society* 36, no. 3 (April 2010): 412.
10. The survey of 400,000 military personnel (1 in 5) being conducted by Westat on behalf of the OSD will provide excellent data to make such assessments. See Andrea Stone, "Pollsters: Pentagon's Policy Survey May be 'Overkill,'" *AOL News*, 13 July 2010, <http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e201100714763584.html>.
11. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1947); Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier, Volume 2, Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949); and Edward A. Shils and Morris O. Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1948).
12. Leon Festinger, "Informal Social Communication," *Psychological Review* 57, no. 5 (September 1950): 274.
13. Guy L. Siebold, "The Essence of Military Group Cohesion," *Armed Forces & Society* 33, no. 2 (January 2007): 288.
14. Daniel J. Beal et al., "Cohesion and Performance in Groups: A Meta-Analytic Clarification of Construct Relations," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88, no. 6 (December 2003): 989. See also Dorwin Cartwright, "The Nature of Group Cohesiveness," in Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander, eds., *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*, 3d ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1968); and James H. Davis, *Group Performance* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1969).
15. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).
16. Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization*, 3d ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1945, 1976), 160–64.
17. Contrary to the argument of Kier, who oddly claimed that "[q]uantitative, 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." Elizabeth Kier, "Homosexuals in the U.S. Military: Open Integration and Combat Effectiveness," *International Security* 2, no. 23 (Fall 1998): 8. If there is no link, then cohesion should have no impact on performance, good or ill.
18. Robert MacCoun, Andrew Cornell, and John D. Winkler, "Unit Cohesion and Performance," in Rostker and Harris, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy*, 291.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982); and Marlene E. Turner and Anthony R. Pratkanis, "Theoretical Perspectives on Groupthink: A Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Appraisal," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 73, no. 2/3 (February/March 1998). Whether these effects "may be as likely to undermine performance as enhance it," as claimed by Kier ("Homosexuals in the U.S. Military," 15), is an empirical question that has yet to be addressed.
21. Brian Mullen and Carolyn Copper, "The Relation between Group Cohesiveness and Performance: An Integration," *Psychological Bulletin* 115, no. 2 (March 1994).
22. These factors follow Festinger's seminal formulation. Leon Festinger, "Informal Social Communication," *Psychological Review* 57, no. 5 (September 1950).

23. Accounting for almost 20 percent of the variance in performance in the nonexperimental studies analyzed. Mullen and Copper, "The Relation between Group Cohesiveness and Performance," 222.

24. *Ibid.*, 224.

25. Roy R. Grinker and J. P. Spiegel, *Men Under Stress* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1945); Shils and Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II"; Michael A. Hogg, *The Social Psychology of Group Cohesiveness: From Attraction to Social Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); and Michael A. Hogg and Sarah C. Haines, "Intergroup Relations and Group Solidarity: Effects of Group Identification and Social Beliefs on Depersonalized Attraction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 2 (February 1996).

26. As Siebold and Lindsay put it, "A central tenet of current [1999] personnel policy is that the Army can recruit 17-to-21-year-old men (who are capable of meeting certain educational, aptitude, and character standards) from different demographic backgrounds, train them, and assign them to groups with leaders, who also have different demographic backgrounds, to form cohesive, motivated, and competent combat units." Guy L. Siebold and Twila J. Lindsay, "The Relation between Demographic Descriptors and Soldier-Perceived Cohesion and Motivation," *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (March 1999): 110.

27. See James Griffith and Mark Vaitkus, "Relating Cohesion to Stress, Strain, Disintegration, and Performance: An Organizing Framework," *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (1999); James Griffith, "Multi-level Analysis of Cohesion's Relation to Stress, Well-Being, Identification, Disintegration, and Perceived Combat Readiness," *Military Psychology* 14, no. 3 (2002); Robert J. MacCoun, Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin, "Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat? An Old Question with an Old Answer," *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 4 (July 2006); Anthony King, "The Existence of Group Cohesion in the Armed Forces: A Response to Guy Siebold," *Armed Forces & Society* 33, no. 4 (July 2007); Arni Ahronson and James E. Cameron, "The Nature and Consequences of Group Cohesion in a Military Sample," *Military Psychology* 19, no. 1 (2007); and Martha McCally, "Women in Combat: Is the Current Policy Obsolete?" *Duke Journal of Gender Policy and Law* 14 (2007): 1035. For an alternative view that disputes the relevance of the distinction between social and task cohesion for "Army policy," see Leonard Wong, Thomas A. Kolditz, Raymond A. Millen, and Terrence M. Potter, *Why They Fight: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, July 2003).

28. Robert J. MacCoun, "Sexual Orientation and Military Cohesion," in Gregory M. Herek, Jared B. Jobe, and Ralph M. Carney, eds., *Out in Force: Sexual Orientation and the Military* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 166.

29. Om Prakash, "The Efficacy of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" *Joint Force Quarterly* 55 (4th Quarter, 2009): 91.

30. Laura L. Miller and John Allen Williams, "Do Military Policies on Gender and Sexuality Undermine Combat Effectiveness?" in Peter D. Feaver and Richard Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 394.

31. The question that operationalized cohesion in the questionnaire was, "There is a lot of teamwork and cooperation in my unit." See Moradi and Miller, "Attitudes of Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans," 412–13, table 6.

32. James Griffith, "Further Considerations Concerning the Cohesion-Performance Relation in Military Setting," *Armed Forces & Society* 34, no. 1 (October 2007): 143.

33. Beal et al., "Cohesion and Performance in Groups."

34. Differentiating task outcomes in terms of performance and achievement allowed them to analyze studies in which external factors could affect the group's performance from those in which they could not. Differentiating between measures of effectiveness and efficiency allowed them to analyze studies in which the level of effort necessary to achieve outcomes was accounted for and those in which it was not.

35. Presenting the mean corrected correlations from table 2, page 997. All studies that examined the effect of group pride on outcomes utilized measures of effectiveness rather than efficiency and outcome rather than performance; therefore, its corrected mean correlation does not vary across these categories.

**Mean corrected correlations between cohesion type and performance**

Factor \ Cohesion	Overall Performance	Performance Behavior	Outcome	Efficiency	Effectiveness
Interpersonal Attraction	.199	.315	.139	.284	.148
Group Pride	.261	—	.261	—	.261
Task Commitment	.278	.302	.273	.343	.232

36. Effectiveness measures outcomes without regard to inputs.

37. Contrary to the conclusion of Mullen and Copper, “The Relation between Group Cohesiveness and Performance,” 224.

38. Katherine Y. Williams and Charles A. O’Reilly III, “Demography and Diversity in Organizations: A Review of 40 Years of Research,” *Research in Organizational Behavior* 20 (1998): 120; and David A. Harrison, Kenneth H. Price, and Myrtle P. Bell, “Beyond Relational Demography: Time and the Effects of Surface- and Deep-Level Diversity on Work Group Cohesion,” *Academy of Management Journal* 41, no. 1 (February 1998).

39. Siebold and Lindsay, “The Relation between Demographic Descriptors.” For analyses of the racial integration prior to and during its implementation, see Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1966); Leo Bogart, ed., *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army* (Chicago: Markham, 1969); Morris J. MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940–1965* (Washington: Center of Military History, 1981); and Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

40. Indeed, “[p]eople whose unit cohesion appeared to be low were most likely to mention gender as an issue, although gender was only one of several characteristics that separated people—and was often not the primary rift. Moreover, gender separations were often attributed to or thought to have been reinforced by structural components or leadership practices.” Margaret C. Harrell and Laura L. Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women: Effects upon Readiness, Cohesion, and Morale*, MR-896 (Santa Monica: RAND, 1997), 61. Also see Leora N. Rosen et al., “Gender Composition and Group Cohesion in U.S. Army Units: A Comparison across Five Studies,” *Armed Forces & Society* 25, no. 3 (April 1999).

41. Ryan Keltz, “Citizen Soldiers and Civilian Contractors: Soldiers’ Unit Cohesion and Retention Attitudes in the ‘Total Force,’” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 37, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 147.

42. Miller and Williams, “Do Military Policies on Gender and Sexuality Undermine Combat Effectiveness?” 392.

43. Omer Bartov, *Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

44. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957); Feaver and Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians*; and Adam B. Lowther, “The Post-9/11 American Serviceman,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 58 (July 2010).

45. Morris O. Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: Free Press, 1960), 248.



46. Ibid., 242, 249.
47. Ibid., 249.
48. As feared by Janowitz, *ibid.*, iii.
49. 1976 figures from Ole R. Holsti, "A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society? Some Evidence, 1976–96," *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99): 11, table 1. 1999 figures from Ole R. Holsti, "Of Chasms and Convergences: Attitudes and Beliefs of Civilians and Military Elites at the Start of a New Millennium," in Feaver and Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians*, 28, table 1.3, utilizing the figure for civilian nonveteran leaders.
50. 1976 figures from Holsti, "A Widening Gap," 13, table 2.
51. Including Jason K. Dempsey, *Our Army: Soldiers, Politics, and American Civil-Military Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer, *AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America's Upper Classes from Military Service—and How it Hurts Our Country* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).
52. Tarak Barkawi and Christopher Dandeker, "Rights and Fights: Sexual Orientation and Military Effectiveness," *International Security* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 184.
53. Holsti, "Of Chasms and Convergences," 76, table 1.24; 78, table 1.25.
54. Sam Rodgers, *Opinions of Military Personnel on Sexual Minorities in the Military* (New York: Zogby International, December 2006). This is the data analyzed by Moradi and Miller, "Attitudes of Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans."
55. Rodgers, *Opinions of Military Personnel*, 2. For further details on the sample, see Moradi and Miller, "Attitudes of Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans," 402.
56. The margin of error for these estimates when generalizing to the population of US military members is  $\pm 4.3$  percent.
57. Only the overall neutral response was indicated in Rodgers, *Opinions of Military Personnel*. Therefore, it is not included for the subsets in this table.
58. In addition, 41 percent of Baptists opposed allowing homosexuals to serve in the military—the only religious group meriting mention in the report. Rodgers, *Opinions of Military Personnel*, 14.
59. Ibid., 15–18.
60. Interestingly, USAF members were less comfortable than the average, and fewer "certainly" knew of the presence of homosexuals in their unit than the average. Among the religious subset, Catholics displayed the highest comfort rate (78 percent) and Baptists the highest rate of discomfort (26 percent).
61. Rodgers, *Opinions of Military Personnel*, 24.
62. Ibid., 18–19.
63. On the impact that diversity of attitudes has on social cohesion, see Elizabeth Mannix and Margaret A. Neale, "What Differences Make a Difference? The Promise and Reality of Diverse Teams in Organizations," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 6, no. 2 (October 2005).
64. Attitudinal shift can occur in two ways: through changes within individuals and through attrition. Attitudes of individuals within groups tend to become more positive as initial differences are shaped through interaction over time. See Harrison, Price, and Bell, "Beyond Relational Demography." With regard to attrition, surveys of the American public, from which the military recruits personnel, suggest a substantial shift in views with regard to homosexuals and homosexuality. These views, however, "tend to be relatively stable [amongst individuals], implying that changes in public opinion largely result from generational differences—i.e., as older generations are replaced with younger generations." Robert Andersen and Tina Fetner, "Cohort Differences in Tolerance of Homosexuality: Attitudinal Change in Canada and the United States, 1981–2000," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 314. Also see Chelsea E. Schafer and Greg M. Shaw, "The Polls—Trends: Tolerance in the United States," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (Summer 2009).
65. The survey was available at <https://dad.t.csd.disa.mil/> (accessed 16 July 2010).