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Introduction

On July 3, 1999, Private Calvin Glover challenged Private First Class Barry Winchell to a fistfight in front of their barracks at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Glover lost, and two days later, on July 5, he took his revenge after ceaseless taunting about having had "his ass kicked by a faggot." Glover borrowed a baseball bat from his friend Justin Fisher and then beat Winchell to death while he slept in the barracks. There is widespread agreement across the political spectrum as to the tragic nature of Winchell's murder. How could anyone, after all, endorse the senseless, brutal beating of a service member whose life was cut short at age twenty-one? Despite consensus about the tragic dimensions of Winchell's death, however, there is almost no agreement about its lessons or wider meaning.

On one side of the issue, proponents of gays in the military point to a lack of leadership at Fort Campbell, where Winchell was stationed. They gathered evidence of widespread antigay harassment at the base, including senior leaders' failure to discipline numerous reported instances of homophobic abuse. According to this point of view, Winchell's murder was the predictable result of a pattern of blatant antigay harassment that leaders chose to ignore. For example, Fort Campbell's inspector general took no disciplinary action after learning that Winchell's sergeant called him a "faggot" on a repeated basis. Even after Winchell was murdered, soldiers at Fort Campbell sang the following cadence during group runs: "Faggot, faggot down the street. Shot him, shot him, till he retreats." Proponents of gays in the military argue that the commander of Fort Campbell, Major General Robert T. Clark, could have prevented Winchell's death by refusing to tolerate antigay abuse. They suggest that known gays can serve effectively in the armed forces as long as leaders insist on tolerance and set an example by punishing service members who refuse to obey.

On the other side, however, opponents of gays in the military cite the very same evidence from the Winchell case to confirm their point that known homosexuals cannot serve in uniform. According to this perspective, the military is not a gay-friendly environment, and it never will be a safe space for gay and lesbian personnel. As much as leaders might try, there is nothing they can do to prevent other soldiers from being harassed or even beaten to death if their peers perceive them to be gay. In addition, opponents focus on the possibility that Justin Fisher, the soldier who taunted Calvin Glover for having "his ass kicked by a faggot" and who provided Glover with the baseball bat he used to kill Winchell, was romantically or sexually attracted to his victim. To the extent that Fisher may have been sexually attracted to men, opponents of gays in the military interpret the murder as a case of gay-on-gay violence that illustrates how allowing known gays into the military would introduce a destructive potential for jealousy and subsequent violence in every unit.

As the reactions to the Winchell murder suggest, the issue of gays in the military is one of the most contentious, hot-button topics in the U.S. culture war. The authors of a recent study, titled "Women, Men, and Media," identified 1,021 news stories about military personnel that were aired by the three major networks during the 1990s, and found that "gays in the military was the single most-heavily covered peacetime Pentagon story of the decade." In addition to extensive media coverage of the issue, powerful networks of activists, scholars, and grassroots organizations have lined up on both sides of the debate. Descriptions of the behind-the-scenes mobilizing that occurred when President Bill Clinton attempted to lift the gay ban at the beginning of his first administration, for example, show that gay rights as well as family-values organizations used the issue to orchestrate massive fund-raising and membership drives.

People who believe that open gays and lesbians should not serve in the armed forces advance a variety of arguments to justify their positions. Some justifications concern military necessity while others seem to be grounded in personal values. Positions grounded in military necessity argue that gays and lesbians undermine unit cohesion and that combat performance would decline if open homosexuals were allowed to serve in the U.S. armed forces. A position grounded more in prejudice claims that gay soldiers are "perverts in uniform" who should not be allowed to serve *even if* they do not undermine military performance. According to this perspective, homosexuality is so inconsistent with the norms of loyalty, honor, and patriotism that gays and lesbians have no place in the armed forces.

On the other side of the issue, of course, many people believe that gays and lesbians should be allowed to serve in uniform. Similar to the opponents of gays in the military, some supporters also justify their

positions in terms of military effectiveness by claiming that military performance would improve if gays and lesbians were allowed to serve openly. At the same time, other supporters of gays in the military seem to prioritize gay rights over a concern for military capability, and they claim that known gays should be allowed to serve in uniform *even if* they undermine the military.

The positions presented above are brief summations of very rich arguments, many of which appear in this volume. While these arguments do represent the authentic views of many participants in the conversation about gays and lesbians in the military, we suggest that the intensity of the political debate has had very little to do with whether or not lifting the gay ban would undermine combat effectiveness. Rather, we attribute the passion of the debate to other factors that are addressed only rarely in public. What factors actually motivate participants in the debate over gays in the military, and why can participants not express these factors in polite company?

On one side of the issue, gay-rights advocates see access to the military as a metaphor for full citizenship rights. In addition to the right to marry, own property, and enter into contracts, military service has been a fundamental marker of citizenship throughout history. According to gay-rights advocates, gays and lesbians will not be able to lock in their hard-won citizenship rights in other realms until they obtain the right to serve in the military. It is certainly true that gay-rights advocates are concerned about antigay harassment in the military as well as the principles of workplace nondiscrimination and fairness. At the same time, however, we suggest that they are equally, if not more, motivated by the symbolic stakes of the debate. The military is the largest employer in the country and roughly a quarter of all men in the United States today are veterans. Gay-rights advocates believe that when the largest employer in the country goes out of its way to fire people who say that they are gay, this sends a terrible message to the civilian sector. While gay-rights advocates believe passionately in the symbolic effects of the military ban, however, they often hesitate to raise this issue in public, because they do not want to appear to press for a narrow, parochial, self-interested agenda that could undermine the effectiveness of the military.

On the other side of the issue, opponents of gays in the military sometimes are likewise motivated by unstated factors. For example, they may recall how President Harry Truman's 1948 decision to integrate African Americans into the armed forces on an equal basis set an important racial precedent that helped shatter the separate-but-equal standard in civilian settings. We suggest that President Clinton's attempt to lift the gay ban served as a powerful fund-raising vehicle for the

religious right, not because of concerns about unit cohesion and combat performance, but because family-values groups believed that the open acceptance of gays and lesbians in the military would lead to the progress of gay rights in other realms. Leaders of family-values groups, however, often refrain from articulating this perspective because they do not want to appear homophobic, and because they can cloak the real reason for their opposition to allowing gays in the military under the mantle of attempting to preserve combat effectiveness.

The issue of gays in the military is complicated in part by the mixture of facts and values that people on both sides invoke to support their positions. It occupies a sort of middle zone between more purely social-scientific debates (such as the question of whether poverty causes crime) and more purely moral debates (such as the question of whether an unborn fetus should be considered a person entitled to full human rights). Both social-scientific as well as moral debates, of course, include facts and values. But the standards for adjudicating such arguments are perhaps more clear than is the case with claims concerning gays in the military. For example, there are very few facts that could convince the average U.S. citizen to switch his or her position on abortion because most positions in the abortion debate are driven by personal values. Conversely, social-scientific arguments (such as the claim that poverty is a cause of crime) are at least in theory subject to falsification depending on the quality of evidence for and against any particular position.

Like arguments in other social-scientific realms, claims about gays in the military may sometimes be subject to falsification. For example, the argument that gays undermine the military can be at least partially empirically tested by studying military units that have included gay and lesbian soldiers, or by polling service members to probe their attitudes toward gays and lesbians. Or, to take another example, the claim that gays and lesbians undermine privacy in the shower may be subject to confirmation or falsification by studying the experiences of heterosexual service members who have served in units with known homosexual peers. On the other hand, some arguments in the gays-in-the-military debate may not be subject to testing. To take an extreme example, how could one confirm or falsify the argument that gay soldiers are "perverts in uniform" who do not belong in the military?

Further complicating the issue is the tortured political history of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. When President Clinton attempted to force the military to allow known gays and lesbians to serve at the beginning of his administration, Congress and the Pentagon reacted by adopting a compromise policy known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." According to

the policy, the military is not allowed to ask new recruits if they are gay, but service members who reveal a homosexual identity must be fired from the armed forces. Many people on both the left and the right would agree that the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was perhaps the greatest blunder of the Clinton administration. According to proponents of gays in the military, the policy is even worse than the previous, outright ban because it has been implemented unfairly and because even more soldiers currently are discharged for homosexuality than was the case prior to its adoption. According to some opponents of gays in the military, however, even closeted homosexuals who do not reveal their sexual orientation should not be allowed into the military. Hence, some people believe that the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy goes too far while others believe that it does not go far enough. A third group believes that the policy is a fair compromise that has given the military time to adjust to society's increasing tolerance of gay and lesbian people.

Our view is that advocates on both sides of the debate may bear special burdens as they advance their arguments. On the one hand, experts who favor allowing known gays and lesbians to serve in the armed forces should always keep in mind the importance of safety in combat. Given that service members can be asked to risk their lives, Pentagon leaders understandably shy away from changes that are imposed on them by civilians who may not understand military operations, and that may undermine soldiers' safety during combat. On the other hand, given the abhorrence of discrimination, experts who oppose allowing known gays and lesbians to serve in the armed forces should, in our opinion, take special care to show why lifting the gay ban would undermine military effectiveness. Rather than relying on anecdotes or attitudinal surveys, opponents would be well served by basing their arguments on studies of what actually happens when militaries lift their gay bans.

Our discussions in this book are structured in terms of a cost-benefit framework. In order to provide an answer to the guiding question behind the project—Is the gay ban based on military necessity or prejudice?—it is important to determine whether the ban's benefits outweigh its costs. If they do not, this may suggest that the policy is based more on prejudice than on military necessity.

Chapter 2 of the book provides a historical context to the issue of gays and lesbians in the armed forces by explaining how and why the military has changed the way it defines homosexuality and manages and regulates gay people. Written by Timothy Haggerty of Carnegie Mellon University, the chapter shows that the issue is not new, and that military regulations concerning same-sex sex date back to World War I. In addition, Haggerty

provides a historical overview of the military's own internal studies concerning homosexuality.

Chapter 3 asks whether the gay ban preserves soldiers' privacy. Like the subsequent chapters, it is presented as an edited transcript of one of the sessions at the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" conference. According to some supporters of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the gay ban preserves heterosexual soldiers' privacy by preventing open homosexuals from serving in the U.S. armed forces. As a result, the policy benefits heterosexual soldiers by preserving their privacy in the showers. Critics argue, however, that there are large numbers of open gays and lesbians currently serving in the military and that lifting the ban would have no implication for privacy. In this chapter, scholars use the most recent scholarly evidence to discuss whether the ban preserves heterosexual privacy in the showers and the barracks, and whether lifting the ban would have implications for privacy.

In Chapter 4, the participants consider whether the gay ban preserves unit cohesion. Supporters of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" have argued that heterosexual soldiers do not like gays and lesbians, and that as a result the presence of open homosexuals in the armed forces would undermine unit performance and cohesion. In other words, the ban preserves unit cohesion and lifting it would undermine combat performance. Some critics have responded that whether or not group members like each other has no impact on organizational performance. Even if heterosexuals dislike gays and lesbians, in other words, lifting the ban would not undermine military performance. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of the latest scholarly evidence on the relationship between dislike, cohesion, and performance.

Chapter 5 discusses whether the experiences of foreign militaries that have lifted their gay bans are relevant to the U.S. case. Opponents of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" claim that when foreign militaries lift their gay bans, unit cohesion and performance do not suffer. Some advocates of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" have responded that the experiences of foreign militaries are not relevant to the United States because of cultural differences, because few if any foreign militaries extend full rights to homosexuals in practice, and because few gays and lesbians come out of the closet even after foreign militaries lift their bans. The participants consider scholarly data on the topic.

Shifting away from the issue of benefits, Chapter 6 concentrates on the possible costs of the gay ban. According to some gay and lesbian advocates, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is a financially expensive policy that leads to loss of talent and to violence against women. Others respond that the gay ban does not lead to violence and if the ban were lifted, gay bashing would increase. This chapter is devoted to the academic evidence on the costs of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Chapter 7 consists of testimony from two gay service members who have served openly in the U.S. Army and in the Royal Navy: former Arizona state representative and U.S. Army reservist Steve May, and British submariner Rob Nunn. The volume concludes with a summary and discussion of various areas of agreement and disagreement among opponents and proponents of gays in the military and suggestions for future areas of research and investigation.