



Out in Force: Sexual Orientation and the Military (Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture)

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Can the U.S. military integrate gay personnel into its ranks and still accomplish its mission? In 1993, this question became the center of a heated debate when President Clinton attempted to lift the long-standing ban on gays in the military. This debate persists because the compromise policy "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue," faces serious legal challenges, and is likely to go to the Supreme Court before the end of the decade. Just below the surface of this debate rages a more general argument about the status of gay people in America.

Both sides base their views on assumptions about the consequences of integration. Even defenders of the ban grudgingly acknowledge that homosexuals are fully capable of serving with distinction. Few question gay service members' abilities or patriotism; justifications for the ban are now predicated on heterosexuals' negative reactions.

Out in Force refutes the notions that homosexuality is incompatible with military service and that gay personnel would undermine order and discipline. Leading social science scholars of sexual orientation and the military offer reasoned and comprehensive discussions about military organizations, human sexuality, and attitudes toward individuals and groups. They demonstrate forcefully that the debate is really about the military as an institution, and how that institution will adapt to larger social changes. The contributors show that the ban could be successfully eliminated, and set forth a program for implementation. In sorting opinion from fact, myth from reality, *Out in Force* stands as an invaluable guide for the military, lawmakers, and the courts as they continue to grapple with this question of institutional and societal change.

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