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5077-3-3
5320-6 (DPSRSC)

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Distribution List (through DGPRD)

HOMOSEXUALITY AMONG FEMALE MEMBERS

Refs: A. 5077-3-3 (DPCAOR 5) 14 Nov 84
B. 1460-45-3 TD 4129 (VCDS) 30 May 84

1. The observation in para 2 of Ref A that lesbian behaviour seems more likely to occur at recruit and trades training centres is supported by the CPSO at CFTSHQ, who identified CFB St Jean and CFB Borden as particularly problematic. The observation that naive young women may be recruited into homosexuality by experienced or confirmed homosexuals was similarly supported by the CFTS CPSO, who further suggested that such "recruiting" behaviour might more appropriately be classified as a form of sexual harassment and handled in those terms.

2. Concerning the specific questions raised in para 3 of Ref A, only tentative answers based on a cursory review of the literature can be offered at this time:

- a. Incidence of homosexuality. Because of the strong organizational and social sanctions associated with homosexual behaviour, the prevalence of such behaviour may not be determinable. Questionnaire research and other surveys which have investigated homosexual behaviour have typically had low response rates, even when anonymity has been promised to respondents. Because of the fear of discovery elicited by probes into such a personal and sensitive area, the reluctance of individuals to volunteer information in these circumstances is not difficult to understand. Moreover, in the current climate of support for individual rights, some respondents would view any attempt to collect such information as an unwarranted invasion of privacy. In general, then, because of the stigma attached even to doing research on homosexuality and the possible misinterpretation of such research as a prelude to a witch hunt, any form of systematic data-collecting which addresses sexual behaviour would have to be approached

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with a great deal of caution. It is also doubtful that such research could be effectively concluded by uniformed researchers.

- b. Environmental effects. In the absence of detailed information on the characteristics (age, education, family background, socialization experiences, psychological adjustment, etc) of the individuals implicated in lesbian behaviour and particularly without any knowledge of the social/environmental circumstances which prevailed at the time these individuals were initiated into a homosexual relationship, it can only be surmised what the environmental influences may have been. Nevertheless, from what we know about human psychology and the social processes of entry training, we can deduce, with some degree of confidence, that the conditions of entry training probably play a role. For starters, we know that the first few years of service are a period of social transition as well as occupational transition, and that, upon entry into the CF a recruit must cope with his/her separation from the close communal relationships of family and friends. What the CF offers in lieu is an exaggerated version of the organized impersonality which characterizes most modern institutions. While the stresses imposed by this climate of impersonality may have some utility (as part of the general rites of initiation) in promoting the value of full membership in the service, they probably also exacerbate the feelings of homesickness and loneliness to which most recruits are prone. We know that such feelings are natural and spontaneous expressions of a pervasive human need for affiliation and emotional support. We also know that, under conditions of psychological stress, such as occurs during entry training and indoctrination, the need for social support, as a defensive or coping strategy, is likely to become more acute. In these circumstances, some young people may be especially vulnerable to homosexual experimentation. Moreover, the goal of this behaviour may not necessarily or primarily be sexual gratification. In some cases, what is taken for homosexual behaviour may be a situational response to a strongly felt need for the emotional support of a close friendship or a surrogate familial relationship. It is extremely important, therefore, that investigations of suspected homosexuality differentiate between behaviour that is transitory and behaviour that is more persistent. As for the apparently higher proportion of cases involving females, this could be due to gender differences in nurturant characteristics. On average, women tend to be more nurturant than men, and, consequently, may be less inhibited about expressing these needs or responding to them. This is particularly likely to be the

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case when women are physically isolated or psychologically isolated, as occurs in strongly male-oriented and male-dominated organizations. Alternatively, military organizations might also attract a disproportionate number of women with lesbian tendencies. A recent study of homosexuality in the U.S. forces found that while homosexual and heterosexual men were equally likely to have been in the service, lesbian women were more likely than heterosexual women. Why this might be the case probably has to do with the sex-role identity of lesbian women and the typically male roles associated with military service. More than one study of the psychological characteristics of lesbian women has concluded that, although they are no lower in positive feminine characteristics than heterosexual women, they score higher in masculinity. This finding should in no way be construed as a characteristic of servicewomen in general. Special precautions should be taken, therefore, not to cite this information out of context. This will guard against any unwarranted and irresponsible stereotyping of women in uniform.

- c. Information practices. The social behavioural science (SBS) advisor in DRS has indicated that there is no policy requiring MCCs to brief applicants on CF policy concerning homosexuality. On the other hand, DWP confirms that female recruits are specifically briefed on CF policy concerning pregnancy, abortion, sexual harassment, and homosexuality.

3. The question of what should be done begs a more fundamental question of what can be done. Under existing human rights legislation, provincial charters expressly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. While it is acknowledged that homosexuality might affect morale and discipline within a group, the only firm basis for such discrimination would be a "bona fide occupational requirement", which in CF practice translates into a security-clearance requirement. Typically, homosexuals are considered security risks because of their presumed fear of exposure and concomitant liability to blackmail and other forms of coercion. However, in cases where there is no significant security-clearance requirement for the individual or where the individual has declared homosexual status, there can be no security risk, no relevant BFOR, and hence no ground for release (CFAO 19-20). In this context, it should be noted that the U.S. policy of releasing homosexuals from the service was largely ineffective in reducing the incidence of such behaviour. From another point of view, it is worth noting that homosexuality is no longer automatically classified or interpreted as a psychological disorder. Although, homosexuality is still considered by many North Americans to be an affront to social norms, it is treated as a disorder only when such behaviour is a cause of acute distress to the individual. Some research suggests, in fact, that the positive aspects of healthy homosexual relationships should not be overlooked or summarily dismissed. Among female homosexuals in particular, several studies have found that homosexual females are better adjusted than their

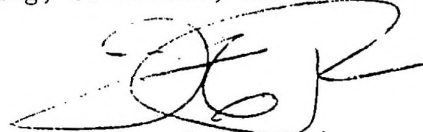
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heterosexual counterparts, have no more psychopathology than heterosexual females, enjoy stable and longlasting relationships, and are highly integrated into their companions' social circles and friendship groups. These factors should be considered, therefore, in the review of existing personnel policy directed by Ref B to ensure compatibility with Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but especially prior to the development of new policy or procedures. I have been informed that JAG has prepared a submission to the Justice Department which requests an exemption for current CF policy on homosexuality. If the exemption is approved, then the question of what should be done can be safely addressed. I expect that there would be implications for current enrolment screening procedures, counselling programs, rehabilitation programs, and possibly other kinds of intervention.

4. There appear to be two levels of action to be pursued in concert - individual career policy (DPCAOR purview), and preventive or remedial interventions which fall within the purview of CFTSHQ. The above suggestions pertain to the individual policy level; once the legal status of CF policy is settled intervention strategies need to be discussed with TSHQ, assuming, of course, that there is interest in such an approach.



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