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DPPS RESEARCH SUMMARY

ISSUE: STABILITY OF ATTITUDES

1. It has been suggested that if the attitudes of CF members towards homosexuals were to improve, then a relaxation of the CF stance, as well as greater tolerance for homosexuals, might be expected. Hence, the issue which must be addressed is the likelihood, or unlikelihood, that such an amelioration in attitudes towards homosexuals will take place. The CF position is, based on the available literature, an improvement in attitudes towards homosexuals is not likely to occur. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of compliance with the behavioural requirements of a more liberal policy.

BACKGROUND

2. The fact that our behaviour towards others is determined in part by the impressions and expectations we hold about them has been well documented (Fazio and Zanna, 1981). The manner in which these attitudes are formed has also received considerable attention. As already discussed in the DPPS Research Summary on the privacy issue (1456-2-2 (DPPS 5) 30 Oct 89), attitudes have been studied in the context of the functions they serve (Herek,

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1987; Katz, 1960; Shaver, 1987). The five major functions performed by attitudes are: a knowledge function (indicating an individual's need to categorize the world in a meaningful and consistent fashion); an instrumental function (reflecting an attempt to maximize rewards and minimize punishments, as expressed in behaviouristic learning theory approaches); an ego-defensive function (for coping with anxieties generated by intrapsychic conflict, or providing protection against acknowledging basic truths about oneself); a value-expressive function (indicating an expression of values which are important to one's self-concept, or attitudes which are appropriate to one's personal values); and a social adjustment function (used to mediate one's interpersonal relations). Katz (1960) states quite simply that "the functional approach is the attempt to understand the reasons people hold the attitudes they do. The reasons, however, are at the level of psychological motivations and not of the accidents of external events and circumstances" (p. 170).

3. Other researchers have focused on attitude formation as a developmental process resulting from either direct behavioural experience with the attitude object or, alternatively, without the benefit of such direct behavioural experience (e.g., Fazio & Zanna, 1978; Fazio & Zanna, 1981; Fazio, Zanna & Cooper, 1978; Regan & Fazio, 1977; Wu & Shaffer, 1987). Empirical findings

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suggest: that attitudes produced through direct behavioural experience are more clearly, confidently, and stably maintained than attitudes resulting from more indirect means; but greater attitude-behaviour consistency is demonstrated by subjects with direct prior experience with the attitude object; and that attitudes formed without personal experience with an attitude object appear to be fundamentally different from those formed as a result of direct experience (Regan & Fazio, 1977).

4. Research results which indicate that attitudes formed through direct behavioural experience are held more confidently than attitudes formed through indirect experience are explained in two possible ways by Fazio and Zanna (1978). They suggest that, first, more information might be available for those with direct experience, or second, an information processing difference may exist between direct and indirect experience. Fazio et. al. (1978) investigated these alternate explanations by presenting two groups of subjects with the same amount of information (a videotape of a person solving problems), but manipulated the salience of the behavioural information by instructing the experimental group to empathize with the person in the videotape. The results supported the hypothesis that direct behavioural experience affects the attitude formation process by altering the manner in which the available information

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is processed. Evidence is also available which suggests that attitudes based on direct behavioural experience are more persistent over time than those based on indirect experience and the more committed an individual is to a given attitudinal position, the more resistant to influence that attitude will be, even when he/she is exposed to a later countercommunication (Fazio & Zanna, 1981).

5. Empirical studies have also examined the relationship between attitude importance and the resistance of attitudes to change. Explanations as to why attitudes which are considered important to people are more resistant to change include: first, important attitudes are associated with other attitudes, beliefs and values, and these elements exert a stabilizing force; second, important attitudes are normally accompanied by large stores of relevant knowledge which can be used to counter-argue discrepant information; third, people tend to be attracted to, and to associate with, others with similar important attitudes, hence these attitudes are reinforced by social norms; lastly, people are more likely to commit themselves in public to attitudes they consider important, which increases their resistance to change (Krosnick, 1988). The hypothesis that important attitudes are less likely to change over time than unimportant attitudes has been supported by recent research findings (Krosnick, 1988).

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Furthermore, Krosnick (1988) points out that the demonstrated stability of important attitudes has interesting implications with regard to the manner in which people resolve attitude inconsistencies. He states that because "important attitudes are unlikely to change, inconsistency between an important attitude and an unimportant one is likely to be resolved by bringing the latter in line with the former" (p. 252). In other words, attitude change follows the line of least resistance.

EVIDENCE/ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING CF POSITION

6. The evidence, presented earlier in this paper, with respect to attitude formation through direct behavioural experience (e.g., Fazio & Zanna, 1978; 1981) argues convincingly for the stability of attitudes which have developed through contact with a distinct social group. The Charter Task Force (CTF) survey (Zuliani, 1986) determined that, of those responding: 60% of the exclusively heterosexual male respondents reported knowing or having known male homosexuals; and 42% of the heterosexual males as well as 65% of the heterosexual females reported knowing homosexual females. Hence, the majority of those surveyed have had previous contact with homosexuals. Although the CTF survey showed that the attitudes of heterosexual CF members toward female homosexuals was generally neutral, and

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female heterosexual respondents were mostly neutral in their attitudes towards male homosexuals, male heterosexuals held predominantly negative attitudes towards male homosexuals.

7. This is important because, despite new regulations regarding the equal employment of females, the CF is still composed of primarily male members. Because a majority of heterosexual males in the CF has had contact with homosexuals, and attitudes formed through direct behavioural experience with a group are more clearly, confidently, and stably maintained than attitudes formed through indirect means (Regan & Fazio, 1977; Fazio & Zanna, 1978), it can be concluded that the attitudes held by CF heterosexual males towards homosexual males may not be easily altered.

8. The functional theory of attitudes was presented in the DPPS Research Summary on the privacy issue (1456-2-2 (DPPS 5) 30 Oct 89) as a defence of the unlikelihood of ameliorative attitude change. This stance will be reviewed briefly, followed by more substantial coverage of the conditions required for attitude change under a functional approach. Attitudes are not functionally alike, and the ability to change an attitude depends largely upon the function the attitude serves (Shaver, 1987). Results of the CTF survey showed that heterosexual male

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respondents had moderately negative attitudes on the Equal Rights and Mental Disorders measures, and the strongest negative attitudes were related to the Personal Anxiety and Moral Reprobation scales. The privacy issue paper (1456-2-2 (DPPS 5) 30 Oct 89) argued that these findings were likely indicative of social adjustment, knowledge, ego-defensive, and value-expressive functions respectively.

9. Attitudes towards homosexuals as measured on the Equal Rights and Mental Disorders scales were just moderately negative, hence they will only receive cursory treatment here with respect to attitude change. Knowledge-based attitudes can best be altered by correcting one's knowledge deficiencies, but this will only be effective if the new information is from a source deemed credible by the attitude holder and the information is believed by the recipient. Attitudes arising from social adjustment functions will improve only if the attitude holder is convinced that the attitude object belongs to a group that is deserving of equal status and treatment by society.

10. When attitudes are based upon ego-defensive needs, then a threatened individual will either avoid an unpleasant situation, or exhibit hostility (Katz, 1960). Katz (1960) states that the "usual procedures for changing attitudes and behavior have little

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positive effect upon attitudes geared into our ego defenses. In fact they may have a boomerang effect of making the individual cling more tenaciously to his emotionally held beliefs. . . . punishment is threatening to the ego-defensive person and the increase of threat is the very condition which will feed ego-defensive behavior" (p. 182).

11. Katz (1960) does offer (albeit the advice is offered to therapists) three factors that may be instrumental in changing ego-defensive attitudes. First, a necessary condition is the removal of threat; second, an opportunity for catharsis or the ventilation of feelings is required; third, the individual must acquire insight into his own mechanisms of defence. In a military setting satisfying any one of these conditions would not be an easy task.

12. While ego-defensive attitudes serve to prevent people from revealing their true nature to either themselves or others, value-expressive attitudes serve the function of providing positive expression to one's central values and to the type of person one conceives oneself to be (Katz, 1960). Katz (1960) offers two conditions as being relevant to changing value-expressive attitudes. First, some degree of dissatisfaction with one's self-concept or its associated values can lead to

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fundamental changes; and second, dissatisfaction with old attitudes as being inappropriate to one's values can also give rise to attitude change. These conditions sound similar, but there are conceptual differences. In the first case, the change originates in a shift in one's value system; in the second condition, a change does not occur in the value system, rather the attitudes held are assessed as being inconsistent with the existing value system.

13. Once again the possibility of bringing these conditions into play in a military setting is very slim. Katz (1960) illustrates one method of actively transforming value systems by describing the brain washing techniques of Chinese Communists in Korea. A crack in an individual's belief system must be found, then it is exploited by using appropriately directed influences. Value self-confrontation has also been employed to effect changes in behaviour. The conceptual basis for this approach rests in the theory that a person's value system is organized in a hierarchy from most important as a guiding principle (i.e., cognitions about one's competence and morality) to least important (Pleban, Dyer, Fenigstein & Hilligoss, 1983; Schwartz & Inbar-Sabin, 1988). The self-confrontation technique involves confronting individuals with objective feedback concerning inconsistencies between their own values and those held by a

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significant, positive, reference group. Results using this procedure have been mixed, with self-confrontation demonstrating some success as an aid to weight loss (Schwartz & Inbar-Sabin, 1988), but ineffectiveness as a tool to change the values and behaviours of infantry officers (Pleban et. al., 1983). Furthermore, Schwartz and Inbar-Sabin (1988) point out that, of the 16 published applications of which they were aware, only half have resulted in significant behaviour changes; of these, only two studies addressed (inconclusively) whether the changes in behaviour were in fact associated with corresponding changes in value priorities. Based on these findings it can be concluded that a change in values by CF members is very unlikely. In fact, people are more likely to find that their attitudes are inappropriate (inconsistent with current values) than they are to change their value systems.

14. The attitude importance literature (Krosnick, 1988) also provides a strong case for the unlikelihood of ameliorative attitude change. For reasons already presented, attitudes which are considered to be important are less likely to change than less important attitudes. Because evidence exists suggesting that the negative attitudes towards male homosexuals held by male heterosexual CF members are ego- and value-based, then it would not be improbable to assume that these attitudes would be

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considered important ones. Furthermore, these attitudes are apt to be reinforced by their peers, and in all likelihood members are publicly committing themselves to this stance. Hence, the negative attitudes are likely to persist over time, despite any counter-arguments that may be offered.

15. A final argument in favour of the unlikelihood in an improvement in attitudes towards homosexuals can be found in the consistency over time of polls. Published polls and research surveys on attitudes towards homosexuals have been both across populations (Cameron, Cameron & Proctor, 1988; Zuliani, 1986) and over time. De Boer (1978) reports that the results of the public opinion polls conducted in the United States demonstrated "hardly any change in attitudes toward homosexuals in the period from 1970 to 1977." Furthermore, polls conducted two years apart (1977, 1979) by the Weekend Magazine showed that attitudes towards homosexuals employed as elementary school teachers were very similar despite a measured increase in the level of acceptance of homosexuals. There is no empirical reason to expect this consistent trend to change in any measurable fashion in the near future.

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EVIDENCE/ARGUMENTS REFUTING THE CF POSITION

16. The first argument that could be used to refute the CF position has its basis in the contact hypothesis (Amir, 1969). It has been argued that increased contact with members of an outgroup will result in an improved understanding of the group and, hence, greater tolerance. However, Amir (1969) also cautions that attitude change following intergroup contact may not be in the anticipated direction. Favourable conditions may lead to an improvement in attitudes, but unfavourable conditions might actually increase negative attitudes. Additionally, any changes produced by contact may not be a change in direction of attitude, but may be a change in the intensity of the attitude.

17. Amir (1969) presents some of the favourable conditions that tend to reduce prejudice as being: first, equal status between the members of the contact groups; second, contact is with higher status members of the minority group; third, an "authority" and/or the social climate are in favour of and promote the intergroup contact; fourth, the contact is of an intimate rather than casual nature; fifth, the intergroup contact is pleasant or rewarding; and sixth, the members of both groups in the contact situation interact in functionally important activities or develop common goals that are that are higher in

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ranking in importance than the group individual goals. On the surface these conditions look promising for CF members because equal status is likely, a change in policy would indicate an "authority" in favour of the contact, the contact will quite possibly be intimate, and the groups will be pursuing common goals. However, Amir (1969) also presents the unfavourable conditions that tend to strengthen negative attitudes. These are: first, the contact situation produces competition between the groups; second the contact is unpleasant, involuntary or tension laden; third, the prestige or status of one group is lowered as a result of the contact situation; fourth, the members of a group or the group as a whole are in a state of frustration (may lead to scapegoating); fifth, the groups in contact have moral standards which are objectionable to one another; and sixth, when the contact is between a majority and minority group and the members of the minority group are of a lower status, or are lower in any relevant characteristic than the members of the majority group. These conditions do not bode well for a military setting where the employment of homosexuals is imposed. The contact might produce competition; will be involuntary; is likely to be considered unpleasant, tension laden, and frustrating; and the moral standards of the two groups are definitely antithetical. Whether conditions in the CF will be more favourable than unfavourable as a contact setting for homosexuals

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and heterosexuals is impossible to determine with any certainty.

18. The weaknesses in the contact hypothesis as a predictive tool for ameliorative attitude change can also be demonstrated by the mixed results of racial-integration experiments, as well as the results of recent research. For example, Aronson and Bridgeman (1979) point out that "the desegregated classroom has not produced many of the positive results initially expected by social scientists some 25 years ago" (p. 438). Rothbart and John (1985) argue that changing stereotypic beliefs through intergroup contact depends upon first, the susceptibility of those beliefs to disconfirming information (and the degree to which the contact situation allows for disconfirming events) and second, the degree to which the events are generalized from the specific group members to the outgroup. Furthermore, contact as a tool to improve intergroup relations must be strongly qualified by individual and situational factors (Amir & Ben-Ari, 1985), and an individual's improved attitude towards contact-group members will not necessarily generalize to the entire group (Cook, 1978). Outgroup members who are eventually accepted are perceived as exceptions to the group from which they come. The failure of the contact hypothesis with regard to generating more positive attitudes towards homosexuals has also been demonstrated in the results of the Charter Task Force survey. Despite the fact that

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60% of the exclusively heterosexual male respondents reported knowing or having known male homosexuals, their reactions to these contacts were decidedly negative (i. e., 45% negative versus 20% positive).

19. A second criticism that might be used against the CF position stems from work done in the areas of group conflict and, more importantly, group cooperation (e. g., Hamner & Organ, 1978; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif, 1961). Social psychologists usually differentiate between "in-groups", a social unit that we either belong to or identify with, and "out-groups", a social group that we either do not belong to or do not identify with (Vander Zanden, 1977). In a similar fashion, heterosexuals and homosexuals can be categorized as an in-group and an out-group depending upon the group to which one belongs. Competition and conflict between groups is normal and expected because of the differing group norms and perceptions held by members of a group towards members in other groups. The term "ethnocentrism" has been used to label the progression from perceived competition among groups to perceived hostility. Some of the facets of the syndrome of ethnocentrism are: members of an in-group viewing themselves as being virtuous and superior; a tendency to cooperate with other in-group members; an imposition of sanctions against violations of in-group norms; and, a willingness to fight

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for the in-group. Conversely, in-group members tend to: view out-groups as being contemptible and inferior, and perhaps immoral; maintain a social distance from out-groups; approve hatred of out-groups; and, distrust and fear out-groups (Hamner & Organ, 1978).

20. Conflict between groups is normal, but it has been demonstrated that, with the introduction of superordinate (common) goals, cooperation is promoted (Sherif et. al., 1961). This ties in nicely with one of the favourable condition required to foster a reduction in prejudice in contact groups (Amir, 1969). Specifically, the development of common goals that are higher in ranking than individual goals. With cooperation between groups there tends to be a concomitant reduction in hostility and conflict between groups. Because common goals are the norm in a military organization, one might assume that a decrease in negative attitudes by heterosexuals towards homosexuals will occur. However, this stance must be tempered by the fact that, depending upon the circumstances, intergroup relationships do sometimes result in increased negative attitudes. Furthermore, if the conflict between the groups have progressed to a point of ethnocentricity, and the CTF survey results suggest that this might be the case, then even the pursuit of superordinate goals may not result in an ameliorative

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attitude change.

21. A third possible criticism of the CF position lies in the assumption that, if we educate people, then prejudice will disappear. In terms of racial bigotry, Vander Zanden (1977) points out that the opinion of most specialist in race relations is that, despite over 50 years of research into factual instruction, the only conclusion is that it tends to mitigate some of the more extreme expressions of prejudice. However, researchers investigating the improvement in attitudes towards homosexuals through educational programs have had some success. For example, Cerny and Polyson (1984) demonstrated that college students who completed a human sexuality course showed an improvement in homonegative attitudes while students who did not complete the human sexuality course had no significant change in homonegativism. Similarly, Serdahely and Ziemba (1984) examined homophobic attitudes by comparing college students who either did or did not attend a human sexuality course that contained a homosexuality unit. They also found that completion of a sexuality course resulted in improved attitudes towards homosexuals, but this finding applied only to those subjects who were initially above the median (more pronounced negative attitudes) score for homophobia. For those below the median there was no significant difference in homophobic scores at the

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end of the course.

22. There are weaknesses in the arguments in favour of education to improve attitudes towards homosexuals. First, in a study of attitude change through the use of audiovisual programs (Goldberg, 1982), differences between groups (undergraduate students) were found immediately following the viewing of videotapes, but a follow-up assessment five weeks later showed no significant differences. This suggests that improvements in attitudes as a result of education may only be short term. Second, the studies that have looked at education as a method of improving attitudes towards homosexuals have invariably used college students as subjects. The possibility that these findings would be generalizable to a military population is tenuous at best. Finally, it has been demonstrated that those who hold strong opinions on complex social issues are more likely to be biased when examining relevant empirical evidence. Confirming evidence will be accepted at face value, while disconfirming information will be subjected to critical evaluation (Lord, Ross & Lepper, 1979). Lord et. al. (1979) illustrated this fact by presenting two purported, and opposing, studies regarding the deterrent efficacy of the death penalty to subjects either supporting or opposing capital punishment. The effect of this treatment was to increase attitude polarization.

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The studies into the effects of education on attitudes towards homosexuals were based on prior theories concerning the outcome of such instruction. Although there is no effective method of determining if this is the case, if the social issue involved is one on which researchers hold strong opinions, then the research itself would be biased and the actual significance of the results could not adequately determined.

23. A fourth potential criticism of the CF position has its roots in the theory of cognitive consistency and dissonance developed by Festinger (1957). In short, this theory argues that one of the most powerful motives in human life is the drive for cognitive consistency. When two cognitions are in conflict then the individual experiences the opposite of cognitive consistency, namely cognitive dissonance (Calhoun & Acocella, 1978). The reaction to dissonance (discomfort, tension) is to immediately attempt to resolve the dissonance by altering one cognition to fit the other. An example of this kind of behaviour can be found in the habitual use of artificial sweeteners. When faced with evidence that the sweeteners may cause cancer, the reaction might be to rationalize that not enough of the product is consumed for this to be a real threat, or one might argue that they would rather die of cancer than obesity. In either case, the information that is inconsistent, or dissonant with the current

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behaviour would be resisted.

24. Dissonance also occurs when there is a psychological inconsistency between internal attitudes and overt behaviour (Hamner & Organ, 1978). Hence, in practice, one attempts to change attitudes by concentrating on behaviour change. Applying cognitive dissonance theory to the issue at hand, it might be argued that there is no need to change attitudes towards homosexuals, only a need to change behaviour towards homosexuals. Where this overt behaviour is inconsistent with internal attitudes, the result will be dissonance and the resolution of the dissonance may well be a change in attitudes towards homosexuals.

25. However there are fundamental weaknesses in this argument as well. Individuals will only experience dissonance if their behaviour cannot be explained by reference to demands external to oneself. Conversely, as stated by Hamner and Organ (1978), when a behaviour "is fully justified by external circumstances (for example, the avoidance of pain or the acquisition of rewards), little or no dissonance is aroused by inconsistency between that behavior and the person's attitude" (p. 115). Cooper and Fazio (1984) refer to this personal or internal attribution of causation as the assumption of "personal responsibility"; a

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necessary link leading to cognitive dissonance. They add that dissonance is typically avoided in one of two ways. Firstly, a person can deny responsibility for the unwanted event; and secondly, the unwanted outcome is assessed as being an unforeseeable consequence of their behaviour.

26. The cognitive dissonance implications for the CF involve the necessary actions which would be required to implement a policy change with respect to the employment of homosexuals. The new policy would become a regulation which must be adhered to, with non-compliance resulting in some form of punitive consequence. This would allow justification for counter-attitudinal behaviours to be attributed to an external source, rather than to voluntary behaviour. This would also relieve CF members of personal responsibility for their behaviour towards homosexuals. As a result, little or no cognitive dissonance would be generated and, there would be little likelihood of ameliorative attitude change. In other words, it may be possible to obtain behavioural compliance, but without a corresponding acceptance of more positive attitudes.

27. This possibility obliges us to consider a final criticism which could be made of a defence based on the intractability of CF member attitudes. It could be readily argued that behaviour

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is only partly determined by attitudes, values, and other intrapersonal attributes. Individual behaviour is also influenced and regulated by social norms and other factors constituting one's psychological environment. Generally speaking, social norms typically involve some form of social sanction for members of a group who violate an accepted norm, and rewards for those who comply (Levine, 1980). However, conflicting norms are possible, especially when one is participating in more than one reference group. This is particularly evident within an organizational setting where the norms defined by the hierarchy may not be in agreement with peer norms. Homans (1974) argues that "a member is more likely to conform, the more valuable to him are the rewards he receives from other conforming members, relative to those he receives from alternative actions" (p. 103). For example, someone who conforms to a management norm, despite the fact that he does not believe in the norm, described as a "skeptical conformer" (Homans, 1974). This has relevance for the CF position because the behaviour of military members may actually be guided more by the external implementation and enforcement of regulations than by their intrinsic attitudes towards homosexuals.

28. Although the internalization of more positive attitudes toward homosexuals might be preferable to mere compliance as the

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outcome of a social influence attempt through policy or similar action, it could be argued that compliance is a sufficient achievement. Admittedly, there are additional organizational costs associated with behavioural change achieved through a compliance paradigm (Kelman, 1961), the principal ones being the requirements for continual behavioural surveillance and consistent policy enforcement (i.e., consistent punishment for non-compliance). Nevertheless, behavioural regulation of this kind is quite common in the military and is, after all, central to the operation of the code of service discipline.

CONCLUSION

29. In summary, because the attitudes of CF members towards homosexuals are the result (for the majority) of, or at least partly attributable to, direct experience, and these attitudes are likely to be considered important by the members, the likelihood of ameliorative attitude change is slim. Most criticisms of this stance are themselves open to counter-arguments. Because of the conditions required to effect a change in functional attitudes, a change in attitudes based upon the functional approach is not likely. Contact with out-groups may just as easily lead to increased negative attitudes, and the pursuit of superordinate goals may not make a measurable

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difference. The education argument is weak because of the lack of generalizability of studies using college students and, in any case, the positive effects may only be short term. Because a change in CF policy will result in forced compliance, cognitive dissonance is not likely to be generated and positive attitude change is unlikely to result.

30. Although the evidence is fairly strong that attitudes will not change significantly as a result of policy change, behavioural compliance is achievable, provided the conditions for compliance are met. In short, these are:

- OK a. an unequivocal policy statement on the consequences of harassment of homosexuals by heterosexuals (this could be embedded in a general policy statement on harassment);
- IMPOSSIBLE b. continual surveillance of behaviour (this will be difficult in some situations);
- VERY HARD c. strict enforcement of this policy;
- d. internalized support for the policy among superiors at all levels.

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