Workplace Bullying in Military Organizations

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Contents
1 Introduction ........................................... 2
2 Military Organizations in the Twenty-First Century ........................................... 4
  2.1 The Post-Modern Military Era ........................................... 4
  2.2 Women, Ethnic Minorities and LGBTQ in the Military Then and Now ................. 5
3 Structural and Cultural Risk Factors for Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Military Organizations ........................................... 7
  3.1 Misuse of Hierarchical and Bureaucratic Structures ........................................... 7
  3.2 Socialization Processes and Training Rituals in the Unit ........................................... 8
  3.3 Predominance of (Hyper-)Masculine Values ........................................... 11
4 Prevalence Studies of Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Military Organizations ........................................... 14
  4.1 Workplace Bullying in National Armies ........................................... 14
  4.2 Sexual Harassment and Assaults in National Armies ........................................... 16
5 Tackling Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Military Organizations ........................................... 18
  5.1 Empirical Evidence on Reactions to Workplace Bullying ........................................... 18
  5.2 Recommendations for Prevention and Intervention in National Armies ................. 19
6 Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research ........................................... 22
7 Cross-Reference ........................................... 24
References ........................................... 24

Abstract
Notwithstanding an increase in civilian tasks and peace missions, (western) armies are considered prone to workplace bullying and sexual harassment inside their ranks. An analysis of military culture reveals the persistence of three intertwined organizational factors, which increase homogeneity, but are also a breeding ground for systematic misconduct: (i) The misuse of power and

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© Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2018
P.D' Cruz et al. (eds.), Special topics and particular occupations, professions and sectors, Handbooks of Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment 4, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5154-8_18-1
bureaucratical regulations in hierarchical structures; (ii) socialization processes 
with humiliating hazing rituals and demanding trainings which create in- and 
outsiders; and (iii) the persistent salience of hypermasculine values including 
physical dominance. The existing empirical studies on workplace bullying and 
sexual harassment in national armies reveal high above-average victimization 
rates, especially for female and young soldiers. Results indicate that misconduct 
is related to a (sexually) hostile work environment in subunits of traditional 
branches and academies. Overt hazing rituals, but also covert behaviours like 
spreading rumours have been reported. Victims often do not report the incidences 
in fear of retaliation or trivialization, or are unsatisfied with the actions taken. 
Preventive measures include a departure from traditional performance criteria and 
the mere focus on physical endurance and social cohesion. Moreover, written 
materials and leadership trainings, which create awareness for diverse types of 
misconduct and (gender) differences in perception, are crucial. A range of contact 
points and official chains of intervention are suggested including external con-
sultants as well as internal “persons of trust”. Authors recommend more research 
on effective prevention and intervention, and more comparable cross-cultural 
studies on awareness and severity of bullying behaviours and sexual harassment 
in military organizations.

1 Introduction

**Master Chief John Urgayle**: Pain is your friend, your ally, it will tell you when you are 
seriously injured, it will keep you awake and angry, and remind you to finish the job and get 
the hell home. But you know the best thing about pain?

**Lt. Jordan O’Neil**: Don’t know!

**Master Chief John Urgayle**: It lets you know you’re not dead yet. Quote from the Movie GI 
Jane (1997)

Military organizations are substantially closed and isolated from the public eye. 
Nevertheless, most of us conceive military life from the popular discourse: War 
movies like *GI Jane, Full Metal Jacket* and *Jarhead* depict hazing rituals of 
newcomers and outsiders, physical drill during training, and abusive behaviour 
from superiors within elite units in military organizations. Eventually, the targets 
endure all the hardships and become war heroes. Moreover, in most countries, stories 
from duty service are passed on between generations and often include themes like 
solemn watch duties and long marches, authoritarian supervisors and bonding 
experiences with fellow soldiers.

Because of these popular associations with the military we may reason that 
pronounced authority, peer loyalty and physical dominance are necessary ingredi-
ents for military effectiveness and success. As organizational researchers, we often 
use the military as a textbook example for an organizational culture, where violence 
is normalized and initiation or punishment rituals blur with perceptions of workplace 
bullying and harassment (e.g. Salin & Hoel, 2011).
However, the public at large is frequently shocked by widely published cases, which go beyond harsh training methods and institutionalized rituals. A simple google search on bullying in military organizations 2017 yields various scandals from Western armies. For example, in the US, secret filming of female marines became public in March 2017. Nude photos and videos of the women were shared by thousands of Marine soldiers via Facebook. Marine general Robert Neller referred to this case as a phenomenon in a defective subculture rather than a general dysfunctional “Marine Culture” (Starr & Cohen, 2017). In April 2017, sadistic training rituals and assaults by instructors of the combat paramedics of the German Armed Forces against young paramedics were revealed. Management had been informed of the wrongdoing before (Gebauer, 2017).

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on why military organizations are particularly prone to such severe and collective forms of workplace bullying and harassment, and to provide recent evidence on prevalence, prevention and intervention.

To do so, we first review the common organizational tasks, goals and social structure of national armies in the twenty-first century. We will show why there is still an overarching “military culture”—notwithstanding distinct functions, branches and goals of peace-making and peacekeeping armies. In this section, we will also present facts and figures on the participation of women and LGBTQ in national forces.

In the second section, we present three structural and cultural organizational features which are believed necessary for homogeneity and military effectiveness, but whose over- or misuse lays the ground for workplace bullying and harassment: hierarchical and bureaucratic structures; harsh socialization processes and training rituals; and hypermasculine values.

We point out how these characteristics can increase frustration and aggression, group dynamics against outsiders and feelings of injustice and privilege. These are all features, which are regarded as causes or triggers for workplace bullying in the literature (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2005; Neuman & Baron, 2011; Salin & Hoel, 2011). Importantly, the analysis also gives insight why violence or misconduct by soldiers is rarely reported or even regarded as such.

In the third section, we present empirical data on the prevalence of workplace bullying and harassment from different national armies. For clarity, we treat workplace bullying and sexual/gender harassment as overlapping, yet separate phenomena. Since most of the literature on military culture and/or bullying and (sexual) harassment stems from the NATO member countries (especially Canada, Norway, UK and USA) and NATO partner countries, allies and dialogue partners (i.e. Austria, Australia, Israel, South Korea, Sweden, cf. NATO-Website, 2015), our review has a focus on these national armies. Empirical studies from military forces such as Brazil, the Philippines, Russia and South Africa will round out the literature review.

The fourth section deals with the prevention of bullying and harassment in the military context. Based on the preceding analyses and reviews, we present challenges and key starting points to tackle bullying and harassment in military organizations. Also, best practices on prevention and intervention tools are presented in this section.
In the last section we conclude our analysis. We present an outlook and implications for future research and the measurement of bullying behaviours and hazing rituals in a military context. We also discuss cross-cultural differences and future challenges for research in both peacekeeping and peace-making armies.

2 Military Organizations in the Twenty-First Century

Traditional military systems have often been characterized as total institutions much the same as monasteries, prisons and asylums (cf. Goffman, 1968). Traditionally, such organizations are enclosed and “greedy”: Total institutions take possession of the whole life of their inhabitants. Uniforms underline the clear distinction between the inside and the outside civilian world. However, there is a clear visible distinction between staff, who can have access to the outside world, and inmates, who are kept separate from civilian life and values and work, and eat and sleep in the military barracks. Staff controls body and personal life of the inmates through discipline, physical drill and constant monitoring of daily routines (Davies, 1989; Goffman, 1968; Hearn & Parkin, 2001).

2.1 The Post-Modern Military Era

Military organizations have undergone change over time and opened up to the external world: After the end of the Cold War, the former mass armies in industrialized countries became smaller (Carreiras, 2006). For example, in the German Armed Forces, the troop strength was reduced by 60% in the last 25 years—from approximately 465,000 to 180,000 soldiers. By 2016, the US army had 475,000 soldiers on active duty and about 548,000 as reserve soldiers who can be called into duty. This total number is the lowest level since before the Second World War (Tice, 2016). In this so-called post-modern military era (Moskos, Williams, & Segal, 2000), ties with the nation state loosen and volunteer missions such as deployment on foreign military engagements as well as on different peacekeeping/peace-making missions increased (Carreiras, 2006, cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014). Also, the art of combat and warfare changed: The miniaturization of weapons as well as the increase in airpower and nuclear weapons reduced the need of individual physical strength (Segal, 1995). Due to these changes, the need for support personnel increased and many soldiers became specialized in civilian tasks like information technology or communications, engaged in different missions on short-term contracts and became less affiliated to only one military unit (Gabbert, 2007; Segal, 1995). With the new assignments, also the interaction with civil society increased (cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014; Nuciari, 2006; Segal, 1995).

All these changes were also believed to change military culture and the professional ideals of the soldiers (Moskos et al., as cited in Carreiras, 2006; Segal, 1995; Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006). However, empirical research shows that among soldiers, a so-called “institutional orientation” is more prevalent than in “normal”
business organizations (Soeters, 1997; cf. Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006). Institutional orientation implies a focus on communal life and internal career tracks, an elevated level of intrinsic motivation and role commitment—e.g. to serve the state or the king/queen, or to save civilians in life-threatening situations (Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006; cf. Zedlacher, 2013). Military researchers suggest that especially in labour-intensive support units, combat units, elite academies and at senior command levels, we are most likely to observe the characteristics and rituals of closed total institutions and a high institutional orientation. In support-oriented functions like logistics, medical care and transportation the interaction with civil society is high, and the culture will be similar to “normal” business cultures (Carreiras, 2006; Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014; Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006).

Another influence on the social structure of post-modern military organizations is the respective civil-military relationship and the political situation of a country (Segal, 1995). Generally speaking, political and societal influence on the Western postmodern military is increasing: This is visible, for example, through plebiscites on conscription versus professional, all-volunteer armies (Nuciarri, 2006). In view of the new tasks for soldiers and the very different political and military situation in many countries, the primary goals of national armies today are diverse. These goals range from helping civilians, natural disaster management and border patrolling to ensuring peace and/or preparing for and conducting war (Dandeker & Gow, 1999). However, there is still an overarching military culture (cf. Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006): All military organizations prepare for life-threatening situations and have the mandate to execute violence to protect civilians (Basham, 2009; Nuciarri, 2006). National armies often follow the ideal of a Prussian Corps including rigid structures and high discipline (Ben-Ari & Elron, 2001, in Tomforde, 2010, p. 200). Basis trainings and socialization into the military life are important in all military organizations (Tomforde, 2010). Even within peacekeeping armies, military training focuses essentially on preparation for a combat emergency, i.e. high-intensity fighting (Basham, 2009; Dandeker & Gow, 1999; Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014; Zedlacher, 2013). Tomforde (2010) found in her analysis of the German Armed Forces, that within multinational deployments like the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), identification with the own national army often increases. However, regulations and symbols of the traditional military culture like uniforms, ceremonies and specific vocabulary are often adapted or less rigidly applied.

2.2 Women, Ethnic Minorities and LGBTQ in the Military Then and Now

Women, ethnic minorities and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people) have held an exposed minority status in national armies worldwide throughout history. In pre-modern times, women were officially excluded from military institutions. This was because sexuality and emotions were ascribed to women as a defining attribute; the inclusion of a female body and the increase of individual sexual desires would thus threaten the collective organizational interest
and soldiers’ discipline (Burrell, 1992; Gabbert, 2007; cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014). Paradoxically, while the expression of sexuality and femininity have been tabooed and feared, the closed nature of total institutions increases the risk of (homo)sexual relationship between inmates (cf. Rastetter, 1999; Zedlacher, 2013). While soldiers should work together closely, overt homoerotic behaviour is not tolerated (e.g. Winslow, 1999).

The situation of minority nationals in armies is also shaped by the changes in warfare and the socio-political situation of a country. Throughout history, women have unofficially participated in warfare and have often served as reserve soldiers in many national armies (for an overview see Segal, 1993). After the Cold War and with the introduction of all-volunteer armies and the need for more support personnel, official participation of women in national armies increased (Segal, 1995; Sinclair, 2009). For example, the German Armed Forces opened all ranks to female soldiers in 2001. In 2011 an all-volunteer army was introduced. Since 2001 their share rose from 1.5% to 12.8%, i.e. roughly 20,000 female soldiers in 2016 (“Frauen in der Bundeswehr”, 2017). As of 2015, the rate of active female duty members in all NATO-member and partner countries is approximately 10.8% (NATO-summary of the national reports, 2015). Only in Latvia, New Zealand, Australia and the US is the proportion of female soldiers slightly higher than 15% (NATO summary, 2015).

Most female soldiers work in support and medical functions. An examination of national armies of large nations depicts the high horizontal gender segregation. For example, women make up roughly 35% of all medical personnel in the German Armed Forces, whereas in the Army, Air Force and Navy the share of female soldiers is only approximately 7.2% (“So weiblich ist die Bundeswehr”, 2016). In the Israeli Defence Forces with conscription service for men and women, only 5.7% of combat positions were occupied by women by 2016. About 10% of military jobs—among them submarine positions—are still closed to women (“By the numbers”, 2017). Also in the all-volunteer US army, close combat positions had been closed to women until 2016 when the Obama administration allowed female soldiers to serve in infantry, armour, field artillery and Special Forces (Kimmons, 2016).

Comparable to the situation of women, restricting, barring or discharging homosexuals and ethnic minorities from service has also been dependent on the respective need of personnel for warfare (Sinclair, 2009). For example, non-whites had only restricted access to the British military up to the 1970s. Until the year 2000 “sexual minorities” were routinely prohibited from service (Basham, 2009). In the US, especially during the Second World War homosexuality was viewed as a mental illness; psychiatric screening procedures with background checks determined if the recruit was homosexual, and, thus, unfit for service (Sinclair, 2009). After the Second World War homosexuals were officially banned from the US military. President Clinton introduced the Don’t ask, don’t tell policy in 1992 to grant official participation to homosexuals in the military by interdicting disclosing or asking about their sexual orientation. This policy was abolished in 2011. In general, political pressures for the inclusion of LGBTQ people increased in the last decades (cf. Nuciari, 2006; Sinclair, 2009). For example, during the Obama administration,
the ban against the participation of transgender individuals in the US military was repealed. However, in 2017, President Trump directed the military not to move forwards with the plan (Diamond, 2017).

Summing up, the socio-political situation of a country impacts the core tasks of the military and the integration of minorities. However, despite national differences, military organizations worldwide still share common characteristics due to the ongoing salience of combat-readiness. In the following literature review we focus on three related characteristics, which taken together we deem most relevant for the normalization of bullying and harassment in a military environment: Hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, harsh socialization processes and training rituals, and hypermasculine values in subunits.

3 Structural and Cultural Risk Factors for Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Military Organizations

3.1 Misuse of Hierarchical and Bureaucratic Structures

Military systems worldwide reflect features, which Max Weber associated with ideal bureaucracies: Overall, they have a strict top-down chain of command with one single authority, written pre-defined procedures, rules and clear control mechanisms (Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014; Zedlacher, 2013). Soldiers of one cohort are subject to the same tasks and performance criteria. Excessive rules and regulations foster self-control and conformity (cf. Davies, 1989). These structural characteristics should create a disciplined and homogeneous unit, which will operate effectively in warfare (cf. Titunik, 2000). Moreover, there is a clear formal and informal power distance between the different ranks or service grades. Uniforms display the differences to the outside world and the differences within the ranks. Usually military careers and pay levels are fixed and embedded in a clear system of service grades. To reach a higher service grade and thus, pay, specific formal qualifications for each position must be obtained. However, as Weber noted, such bureaucratic features and the communal character of the military stand in contrast to the wish of single individuals to stand out as war heroes (Titunik, 2000; cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014).

Empirical research shows that formal power as well as bureaucratic rules and procedures are often misused. For example, Kimmel (2000) revealed that supervisors and second-year cadets in the US Virginia military institute used seemingly random and unnecessary orders for subordination of the freshmen. Pershing (2001, 2002, 2003, 2006) observed organizational misconduct at the elite US Naval academy, where midshipmen are trained to become Naval officers after graduation. Most midshipmen reported unrealistic time constraints, close monitoring and excessively regulated schedules imposed by supervisors, as the following quote demonstrates:

We were issued book bags to carry to classes because we had to carry all our books to classes every day. I had to walk about a quarter of a mile to class, so I used the shoulder strap that
was attached to the bag. However, it was against the regulations to walk using our shoulder straps because it looks unprofessional. I can’t tell you how many times I was stopped by officers who asked: ‘What are you doing using these shoulder straps. Don’t you know it’s against the regulations? You’re here to obey orders. It’s in the rules.’ Technically I would have been fried (charged with a violation), and lost 10 days of liberty (permission to leave the Academy grounds). (graduate of US Naval academy, as cited in Pershing, 2002, p. 163)

Especially in non-operational times and on peacekeeping missions, a very formalistic organizational design can be perceived as dysfunctional and coercive (Archer, 1999; Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006). In such situations, lack of opportunity to demonstrate strength, skill and dominance, or dissatisfaction with seemingly meaningless role assignments and monitoring can increase frustration and aggression among soldiers (Archer, 1999; cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014; Zedlacher, 2013).

Hierarchical structures promote the striving of individuals to gain power over their subordinates. In (tall) hierarchies, the exercise of power and control, and the associated feelings of dominance and subordination, become routine and normalized (Hearn & Parkin, 2001; Robinson, 1994). Hierarchical structures can induce the so-called moral disentanglement, i.e. cognitive processes, which make members act unethically without feeling distress (Moore, Detert, Trevino, Baker, & Mayer, 2012). For example, members may displace the responsibility for their actions to authority figures or to the peers who have tacitly or explicitly granted permission for the behaviour (Moore, Detert, Trevino, Baker, & Mayer, 2012). Vice versa having many hierarchical levels in an organization makes the management prone to be strategically ignorant to bullying and harassment in subunits (cf. Ashforth & Anand, 2003). Moreover, being a member of an organization, department, workgroup or function automatically creates and fosters insider and outsider status (Moore, Detert, Trevino, Baker, & Mayer, 2012).

In total institutions like the military the consequences of such an organizational structure are more pronounced. While cadets lack a personal life, and lead an "enclosed formally administered round of life" (Goffman, 1968, as cited in Davies, 1989, p. 11), staff members can punish them by using diverse types of sanctions for whatever staff deems deviant behaviour. As a form of nonjudicial punishment, supervisors can even imprison soldiers. Such discretionary powers of staff members can be a breeding ground for workplace bullying and harassment. Likewise, supervisors can grant rewards and privilege to individual soldiers for obedience and discipline, e.g. by allowing them to break the curfew. By doing so, staff recognizes and fosters adherence to military values (cf. Davies, 1989; Zedlacher, 2013).

### 3.2 Socialization Processes and Training Rituals in the Unit

Values and norms of a military culture and taught to new members during their first days and months in the military or a new unit. In this socialization phase, recruits’ personal life is heavily restricted in order to crush their old identities and to
indoctrinate the new military values (cf. King, 2006; Morris, 1991). Also, recruits
learn that they must earn their status as soldiers. For entry in elite units, individuals
undergo severe physical and psychological admission tests and training phases
(e.g. Kimmel, 2000; Pershing, 2002). This usually happens in a company of a
large batch with one authority (Davies, 1989). The application of violence and
harassment during military training and fitness is regarded as instrumental in
non-operational times as a preparation for dehumanizing the enemy. Lukowiak
(2000) provides an account of outdoor training for entry into the Parachute Regi-
ment in the British Armed Forces.

If I had one major problem during basic training—that is, besides the physical exercise and
the weather conditions and the food you could never get enough of and the lack of sleep and
the mornings before dawn and the late nights, oh, and the drill and the discipline and the
constant cleaning and scrubbing, not to mention the persistent shouting—then I guess it was
my aggression. Or should I say my lack of it? If I was to become one of our nation’s elite
killers, then this was obviously something they were going to have to change in me, and
change it they did. (Lukowiak, 2000, as cited in Woodward, 2003, p. 48)

The soldier further recounts being bullied by his supervisor during a long march
in a chilly morning, pushed into a canal and laughed at. But he, enraged and full of
aggression, managed to get back to the barrack. There he was applauded by the
supervisor, and, now proud, he eventually felt belonging (Lukowiak, 2000; in

However, while soldiers need to strive for individual (physical) dominance,
emotional control and endurance, they must at the same time learn to protect the
fellow soldier and regulate physical aggression; to be selfless, trustworthy and loyal
(cf. Johnson, 1990). Even after the Cold War, these features of social cohesion
between peers and between supervisors and peers were regarded as essential for
military effectiveness and combat morale. Social cohesion has been considered a
prerequisite for task cohesion, i.e. cohesion achieved through a common goal and
coordination of efforts (cf. Basham, 2009; MacCoun, Kier, & Belkin, 2005, Nuciari,
2006; Siebold, 2007). Women, ethnic minorities and homosexuals have been banned
from military service mainly on the grounds of social cohesion. They were consid-
ered a threat to the homogeneity and combat morale of military units—and conse-
quently, heterosexuality was equalled with operational effectiveness, regardless of
actual ability (Basham, 2008).

Social cohesion, or male bonding, is learned behaviour. To foster the separation
from civilian values, recruits are taught values like honour, duty, assertiveness and
fairness (e.g. Franke, 2000; Winslow, 1999). Especially honour is a recurring theme
and often referred to official brochures, speeches and programmes (e.g. Cotter, 2016,
Military Academy, that the term honour is often used by officers and supervisors to
indoctrinate or reaffirm values like subordination, control and machismo.

Those members, who are either new and must prove themselves, or who are not fit
enough and do not conform, are denigrated and punished.
They teach you about comradeship and sticking together and stuff; and suddenly they tell you in preparation class (for military academy) that if one lies on the ground, then let him lie there. We said, we need to go there, I mean I can’t (...)’ ‘No, leave him there, he’s just too weak.’ Like this it went all the time (...). (Fanny, Austrian Soldier, as cited in Zedlacher, 2013, p. 170; translated by authors)

Hazing rituals by supervisors and peers are common in socialization processes. In the Bahia Military Police Academy in Brazil, aggressive physical behaviours and also embarrassing tasks like having to eat the dessert before the main plate with the mouths wide open are an institutionalized part of the first week (Albuquerque & Paes-Machado, 2004). Another example is the Canadian Airborne Regiment, where group cohesion is considered especially important because members must rely on each other for the appropriate preparation of their equipment before the jump (Winslow, 1999). All soldiers participate in a formal initiation program, where they are indoctrinated into a sense of duty and history of the Canadian Airborne and undergo an intensive training program. When they are finally granted group membership, they receive a coin denoting their new status. Apart from that, there is also an informal initiation rite. In the so-called separation phase, new soldiers are first denigrated and levelled by seniors, i.e. they are all made look alike (e.g. by shaving their heads, having them dig through the mud, by covering black soldiers in white powder), while the seniors stay clean (Winslow, 1999). This phase teaches recruits that before they can rise, they must separate from their old identities and become just like everyone else (Albuquerque & Paes-Machado, 2004). Afterwards they are forced to stand in a row and urinate or vomit on a piece of bread, which they then must chew. In this “liminal phase” they are not yet part of the airborne, but also no more civilians. In this stage, established social norms and taboos are often suspended and behaviours like ridiculing the only black soldier or performing homoerotic dances are performed. Finally, in the re-integration phase life scenarios of airborne soldiers are tested among recruits. For example, they must jump from a table blindfolded. Hereby they learn to do whatever their superiors tell them to do (Winslow, 1999). The recruits who go through these rituals often do not find them harmful, but are proud to have demonstrated self-regulation and physical endurance (Albuquerque & Paes-Machado, 2004; Winslow, 1999). It appears that the more severe the initiation rituals are, the stronger the eventual devotion to the group is (Winslow, 1999). Public denigration of outsiders and those who show weakness reconfirms military values, increases the desire to belong to the exclusive in-group, or rather, the fear of belonging to the out-group. Hence, staff members often tolerate or even promote such group rituals, since they are regarded as functional for military effectiveness and cohesion (Zedlacher, 2013).

The harsh training methods, monitoring experiences and rituals foster peer loyalty and the notion of “companions in fate” (e.g. King, 2006; Pershing, 2001; cf. Zedlacher, 2013). Alcohol is a crucial tool for male bonding and is also viewed as a means to relax after intensive training and surveillance in national armies:
After a week’s work, we get together and have a beer call. That’s where we can really talk, we always have something to say to one another. It’s a place where we can really relax, because no matter how you look at it, the friction builds up in this work. Here, we can say anything and not worry about who’s listening, we don’t have to be in uniform, that’s good. (Canadian Airborne soldier, as cited in Winslow, 1999, p. 438)

Social cohesion has been found to be the result of such stern socialization processes as described above rather than naturally developed in elite military units (King, 2006). Several studies of a variety of national armies show that task cohesion is also positively related to military performance, but social cohesion is not (MacCoun, Kier, & Belkinn, 2005; Kier, 1998; King, 2006).

There are costs to such intense cohesion when too close bonds in a subculture or unit outweigh organizational goals. For example, Pershing’s (2002) study of the US naval academy found that midshipmen share a tight bond because of exposure to excessive monitoring and regulations. An informal code of silence forbids them to report severe predatory bullying of their peers, despite the official duty for all navy men to report violations of honour (Pershing, 2002; cf. Zedlacher, 2013). Those who exert the official rules too wilfully are regarded as connivers and “honor-nazis” (Pershing, 2002). In highly cohesive groups, peers would ignore or deny even severe misconduct to not to betray the fellow soldier (cf. Winslow, 1999). Thus, peer challenge of aggressive practices and treatment is neutralized.

### 3.3 Predominance of (Hyper-)Masculine Values

For centuries, military organizations have been male-only societies. Violence, warfare and guns have been associated with men, whereas women have mostly been portrayed as the weak victim or as war trophy, which can be violated (cf. Baaz & Stern, 2009; Zedlacher, 2013). Female soldiers who engage in violent behaviours generate substantial public interest (for example in the torture scandal in Abu Graib) as they violate traditional gender roles (cf. Gabbert, 2007). Also, homosexuals have been described as “effeminate” and as potential risk for security (cf. Sinclair, 2009).

To understand the effect of masculinity on systemic (sexual) violence in the military, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is useful. This term denotes the normative embodiment of the ideal man (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It points to the (white) male, heterosexual dominance, which is implicitly considered legitimate in most societal and organizational contexts. The concept works through the distinction from women and femininity, and the constant competition between men over “manhood” (cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014). The persistent ideal image of a male soldier reflects this hegemonic masculinity and is associated with a strong physical body through (self-) discipline and endurance, capable of exerting physical dominance and sexual violence. The male penis functions not (only) as instrument of sexual desire, but also represents hegemonic masculine power. The war customs of raping female captives, severing or publicly displaying the penis of enemies, or teasing and forcing lower ranked soldiers to touch one’s
penis are a way to exerting control over someone's body and to prove the other's lack of (male) power (Kwon, Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2007; Raasch, 2004).

The hegemony of masculine values and the control of the soldiers' bodies are inscribed into the organization of military systems. Admission and promotion criteria in national armies are still highly related to physical performance (cf. Cnossen, 1999)—despite a new, less physically oriented art of warfare. Many armies have introduced gender-normed physical training standards with lower admission criteria for women (cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014). This has been highly disputed, since through such a distinction the salience of physical fitness is re-emphasized and cements the hierarchical gender order in the military (Apelt, Dittmer, & Mangold, 2005). If physical fitness is considered as essential for combat effectiveness, women who underwent easier performance tests are very likely not to be regarded as equal fellows and trustworthy comrades (cf. Cohn, 2000; Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014). Feelings of injustice, alleged female privilege and threats to operational effectiveness and prestige are triggers for male backlash and aggression against female soldiers (Zedlacher, 2013). This is demonstrated by a quote from a male officer of the Austrian Armed Forces, who recounts a special treatment of women in training and routine marches:

Well, they were attended to (...) they did not have to carry so much, rather the load was distributed among men; and then there was the topic of the different sports limits. 'Why is she allowed to run less kilometres than me?' And that led to a bad tension right away (...).
(Josef, male officer in the Austrian Armed Forces, as cited in Zedlacher, 2013, p. 171 f. translated by authors)

Several well-known military rituals are highly gendered. For example, hazing rituals as described before are also masculinity tests. Those who fail receive nicknames such as "wimp", "wussy", "skirt" or "pussy" (e.g. Cohn, 1993; Kimmel, 2000), since failure is equated with femininity or homosexuality. Also, punishment duties like kitchen service or cleaning are stereotypically female tasks. Soldiers also show that they are manlier than others by demonstrating drinking skills, physical fitness, technological expertise and exclusion of others (e.g. Cohn, 1993; Higate, 2003; King, 2006; Winslow, 1999). In interviews with male soldiers, Green, Emslie, O'Neill, Hunt and Walker (2010) found that the need to suppress emotions and hide weakness fosters work-related distress. Soldiers buffer distress through homophile tight bonds and friendships in the military, however at the same time they risk being ridiculed as homosexuals.

Especially in traditionally male-dominated and highly cohesive subunits, the so-called hypermasculine behaviour, i.e. exaggerated masculinity concomitant with bragging about sexual experiences and even dehumanization, violation and sexual objectification of women, can develop (for empirical evidence see e.g. Rosen, Knudson, & Fancher, 2003). Hypermasculinity may involve sexual assaults because of a feeling of entitlement to regular sex. Women soldiers have been found to feel forced to engage in sexual relationships with their male colleagues
(Castro, Kintzle, Schuyler, Lucas, & Warner, 2015). The strong bonds between male
soldiers in a male-only unit makes them prone to induce, perpetuate and cover up
violence and even rape against women (cf. Castro, Kintzle, Schuyler, Lucas, &
often severe alcohol abuse plays a key role in assaults against female soldiers
(Castro, Kintzle, Schuyler, Lucas, & Warner, 2015). Also, male-to-male violence
is condoned in such settings, as Kwon, Lee, Kim, & Kim, (2007) reveal in a study
from the South Korean Army: Physical violence and sexualized behaviours like
forced hugging or touching the penises of recruits often occur in public. Male
perpetrators, who usually contest homosexual desires, concede that these behaviours
are a means to control the body of subordinates and reaffirm the hierarchical order
(Kwon, Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2007).

Female soldiers in male-dominated branches are highly visible and thus at risk to
be stereotyped. Therefore, they often assimilate into the existing (hyper-)masculine
culture and are likely to strive for high physical fitness and assertiveness to be
regarded a full member of the group (e.g. Cnossen, 1999; Zedlacher, 2013). King
(2006) found that women in the British Army are only accepted as fellow soldiers,
when they participate in drinking rituals and severe alcohol abuse. Similarly, a recent
study from the South African army reveals that female soldiers feel they must “hide”
their femininity and sexuality and are not respected in the army as much as male
soldiers (Heinecken, 2016). A Russian soldier describes the pressure like this:

In order to show what you’re capable of, that you are suitable, that you are no worse than
your competitor, a woman has to invest much more. But not by charming the supervisor, but
through work related issues or skills (...) (Russian female soldier in Eifler, 2001, p. 128,
translated by authors)

Often, women who occupy masculine functions in male-dominated combat-
related units and academies tell misogynistic jokes or discriminate against other
“weaker” women to prove that they are loyal to the male group and equal to their
male peers (e.g. Sasson-Levy, 2003). These coping strategies do not challenge the
overall masculine culture of the army. At the same time, female soldiers risk being
denigrated because of a masculine demeanour. For example, in the US army, a make-
up requirement was imposed on female soldiers (Williams, 2006). In the Russian
military, beauty contests of female soldiers reconfirm gender stereotypes and put
women in sexualized positions (Eifler, 2001). Balancing these contradictory gender
expectations proves a dilemma for female soldiers and a constant, often unconscious
stressor at work.

To sum up, organizational characteristics like rigid chain of commands, social
cohesion and training for physical dominance have been considered functional for
military performance in wartime and combat, and have thus become institutional-
ized. Each of the features essentially builds on the claim that homogeneity is crucial
for performance. Consequently, (violent) exclusion of “weaker” members and
minorities is condoned or even promoted.
Prevalence Studies of Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Military Organizations

4.1 Workplace Bullying in National Armies

Workplace bullying is often characterized by subtle, covert negative actions (e.g. withholding information, spreading rumours behind one’s back, etc.). If these behaviours are repeated over time, they make targets feel increasingly powerless and unable to defend. Exposure to bullying is considered slightly higher for women than for men (Zapf, Escartin, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2011). However, women tend to rate many bullying behaviours as more severe than men, and they often feel more harmed by social exclusion and manipulation (Escartin, Salin, & Rodriguez-Caballeira, 2013; Salin, 2003; cf. Zedlacher, 2013).

In the European tradition, two types of workplace bullying are distinguished. *Dispute-related bullying* is a result of a normal work conflict that escalates because of tit-for-tat actions by both conflict parties. However, Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf and Cooper (2011) contend that within male-dominated organizations such as the military, *predatory bullying* is common. Predatory bullying denotes a form of bullying where the reason or trigger for escalation is not an unsolved interpersonal conflict or a provocation, but rather the mechanisms described before. Here bullying serves as a mechanism to socialize into or to sanction the violation of a hypermasculine military culture (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011; cf. Zedlacher, 2013).

This conceptualization suggests that predatory bullying is a (group) phenomenon of its own and more related to the original definition of *mobbing* as social exclusion of a single deviant co-worker. Predatory bullying also overlaps with hazing, since public denigration is usually characteristic for hazing rituals. However, bullying and hazing are—theoretically—distinct phenomena: Hazing implies that a cohort mistreats another cohort, e.g. the new members (cf. Ostvik & Rudmin, 2001), even if the ritual is only performed against one member. The feeling of being singled-out is pervasive in bullying cases and contributes to the feeling of victimization. In contrast, hazing eventually increases social identification with the group. Moreover, hazing is ritualistic, i.e. the same behaviours are performed to newcomers with minor change, while bullying usually has no predefined procedure and end (Ostvik & Rudmin, 2001). Bullying research is characterized by placing the experiences of bullying targets central (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). Therefore, the question arises if and why empirically targets of bullying *perceive* a difference between hazing rituals and workplace bullying. Ostvik & Rudmin (2001) find that soldiers, who are asked about their experiences with bullying, often confound bullying with hazing. A study of bullying during socialization within UK police forces shows that new members perceive the experienced bullying acts as a “harmless” ritual, if, and only if they have eventually made it into the group (Miller & Rayner, 2012).

The literature review suggests that collective predatory bullying dynamics is especially prevalent in elite academies and combat-oriented units (e.g. Ostvik & Rudmin, 2001; Pershing, 2003, 2006; Winslow, 1999). Ostvik & Rudmin (2001) cite...
various severe incidences of public hazing (in the Philippines, the former Czechoslovakian Republic, etc.), which sometimes result in death or suicide. In 2006, a young recruit in the Russian army lost his arms and legs from a collective hazing ritual. He was beaten, tied between the two chairs and made to squat. The Russian army tried to hide the scandal, before it became public. Then the case was treated as a single unfortunate exception (Lowry, 2008). In 2011, the Australia Armed Forces announced an external review of allegations of abuse (“Report on Abuse in Defence”, 2014). In the so-called “Piper Report” an external law firm collected more than 2240 allegations, which have occurred during the last decades. Almost half of incidences were about physical abuse, but between 2000 and 2011 reports of covert bullying behaviours have also increased (“Report on Abuse in Defence”, 2014).

Few studies of military organizations measure the distinct phenomenon of workplace bullying with established instruments. A rate of 3–4% of severe bullying, i.e. long-term exposure to bullying at a weekly basis or more, is considered average in European organizations (Zapf, Escartin, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2011). In the study on bullying and hazing in the Norwegian army (n = 696), the bullying rate was 12% (Ostvik & Rudmin, 2001). However, exposure to bullying was measured only with a self-labelling method (“Have you been bullied”) without a definition of bullying. As such, bullying might even be underreported, since identifying oneself as a victim is hardly desirable within this organizational context of the military. Fifty-three percent of respondents reported witnessing bullying in the Norwegian army. Respondents are exposed to a variety of bullying behaviours, including both physical and psychological assaults, person- and work-related bullying. Young soldiers were more likely to report having been bullied. Mageroy, Lau, Riise and Moen (2009) measured bullying in 97 Norwegian Navy departments (n = 1604) with a self-labelling method including definition. Two and half percent of respondents reported being bullied and 9% witnessed bullying. The results also indicate that a lack of fair leadership, innovative climate and unfair treatment as well as a low mean age accounted for the occurrence of bullying at the departmental level.

Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch’s, (2014) study of different units of the Austrian Armed Forces also found a higher risk for younger soldiers and a rate of 6.5% of severe bullying measured with the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror (LIPT; Leymann, 1996). All reported bullying cases were collective phenomena with at least two perpetrators, which points to predatory bullying/mobbing. Academies and schools as training centres were highly affected by incidents of severe bullying, followed by combat units and, to a much lesser degree, support units. Moreover, women were 2.5 times more likely to experience severe bullying acts than male soldiers. Male soldiers and female victims of bullying have been found to be more likely to conduct aggressive acts against female soldiers (Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014; Zedlacher, 2013). In contrast to the propositions of predatory bullying (cf. Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011), most of the reported bullying behaviours (n = 254) were not overt and not physical (e.g. “Innuendos without direct communication”, “assignment of meaningless tasks”, “spreading rumours” and “constant criticism of one’s work”). The least cited acts were
"violent threats and violence". Few incidences of sexual harassment and only one sexual assault were reported (cf. Zedlacher, 2013).

4.2 Sexual Harassment and Assaults in National Armies

You all know that we are looking at allegations that Marines, specifically female Marines, have been subjected to cyberbullying and non-consensual sharing of images, disrespectful comments made about them presumably by other marines. These allegations are in contrast to everything we stand for as Marine corps, as Marines; discipline, honour, professionalism, and respect and trust amongst each other; for those Marines that are watching this or listening or who may have been involved in this: (…), you are not helping the marine corps. (…) you know that we claim that being a Marine is a special title and something that you earn (…). that there is no honour in denigrating a fellow Marine in a way, shape or form. (Marines General Robert Nueller at a press conference, cf. Starr & Almasy, 2017)

Schneider, Pryor and Fitzgerald (2011) distinguish between two forms of sexual harassment: (1) Unwelcome sex- or gender-related behaviour that creates a hostile work environment (unwanted attention like uninvited requests for dates, secret filming, gender harassment like misogynistic jokes) and (2) Quid pro Quo harassment, i.e. promising employing benefits depending on sexual favours. Sexual assault denotes unwanted sexual contact and can range from touching and attempts to commit a sexual action to rape (Castro, Kintzle, Schuyler, Lucas, & Warner, 2015; Cotter, 2016; Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014). Gender discrimination refers to incidences in which a person is unequally treated based on his/her gender category membership in a manner that affects his/her employment conditions (Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014).

While workplace bullying is often (falsely) characterized as gender-neutral, sexual misconduct carries a clear gender component (cf. Zedlacher, 2013). Like workplace bullying, women tend to perceive a broader range of sexual behaviours as harassing than men (Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001). While sexual harassment can be constituted by one act, measurement usually considers the type/severity of behaviour and whether the behaviour occurred repeatedly (e.g. Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014).

Sexual misconduct is more frequently surveyed in (western) military organizations than workplace bullying. Especially in the US, many surveys and reviews on the relationship between military culture, environmental factors and health correlates exist (e.g. Sadler, Booth, Cook, & Doebbeling, 2003; Turchik & Wilson, 2010, to name just a few). Often studies from the (US) military are restricted to one group of soldiers, e.g. reservists (e.g. Firestone & Harris, 2009; Street, Stafford, Mahan, & Hendricks, 2008). Also, we did not find representative studies on the prevalence of harassment against LGBTQ people.

In the following we review recent large-scale studies from various national armies. However, since terminology and measurement of negative sexual experiences in military organizations is not consistent across studies, the comparison of results must be treated with care. In the US, a large-scale study (n = 560,000) by the National
Defense Research Institute (Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014) on sexual harassment, assault and gender discrimination was conducted among active force members and reservists. In the Canadian Armed Forces, a survey on sexual misconduct including most of above behaviours was distributed among active force members in 2016 (n = 43,000).

Twenty-six percent of female and 7% of male active duty members of the US Airforce, Army, Navy and Marines report having experienced sexual harassment or gender discrimination in the prior year, more than half of them on a regular basis. Most of the reports by female victims point to persistent, i.e. repeated exposure, and do not point at sexual coercion, but to a (sexually) hostile work environment (Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014): The most frequently reported behaviours were sexual jokes, trying to establish romantic relationships, sexual comments about one’s appearance, suggesting that one does not act like a man/woman. In Canada, 17% of regular force members were exposed to sexual harassment or discrimination, with women being twice as likely as men to report harassment (Cotter, 2016). (Repeated) sexual jokes were also the most frequently reported form of harassment in the Canadian survey, and Quid pro Quo harassment was considered rare in both studies. Moreover, in both studies more than half of respondents reported that their supervisor or unit leader was one of the people who engaged in the harassment (Cotter, 2016; Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014).

Reports of sexual harassment and assaults in the US sample correlate with each other, which confirm other studies (e.g. Harris, McDonald, & Sparks, 2017). The rates for sexual assaults in US army were 1% for men and 4.9% for women, which is very similar to the rates in the Canadian Armed Forces (1% for men, 4.8% for women). In the US sample, male victims were often sexually assaulted by two or more offenders at work. However, men more than women defined the experiences as a means of hazing and denigration rather than behaviour with sexual intent (Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014). Assaults against female US soldiers were often related to alcohol abuse. Significantly more assaults against women were reported in the US Marine Corps and Navy than in other branches. The US Airforce disclosed low rates of assaults. Junior enlisted members in the US army have the highest risk of sexual harassment and assaults. Also in Canada, younger regular force members, especially young female soldiers, reported more assaults and harassment (Cotter, 2016). Among US reservists, rates of harassment and assaults against men and women were significantly lower than for active duty members (Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014).

A recent survey study of Harris, McDonald and Sparks (2017) among US soldiers shows that a sexist environment (measured at the organizational level from an independent sample) in a unit is related to exposure to sexual harassment and assault. This points to the existence of sexist subcultures prone to the acceptance of even severe violations. In this study, the experiences of harassment and assaults were independent of race, gender or unit cohesion, but related to a general tolerance of sexist comments in the department. In contrast, Buchanan, Settles and Woods’ (2008) study of 7000 female US soldiers found that white women reported higher rates of gender harassment, and black women reported higher rates of unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion.
There is evidence of sexual harassment in other national armies. For example, in a study in the Swedish military (n = 324), 84% of women reported experiencing unwanted sex-related behaviours in the past 24 months (Estrada & Berggren, 2009). This study revealed very different results, when women where asked directly whether they were exposed to sexual harassment; in this case, “only” 31% reported exposure. The “Piper Report” of the Australian Defence Forces reveals that 38% of all 2240 cases received by the taskforce were about sexual abuse (“Report on Abuse in Defence”, 2014). Typically, there was a single perpetrator and women were more affected by the assaults. Also, qualitative studies of national armies, e.g. Russia and Israel (Eifler, 2001; Sasson-Levy, 2003), show that female soldiers suffer from misogynistic jokes, denigrating glances, but sometimes also from open sexual assaults to reaffirm the traditional gender order.

To sum up, sexual harassment and assaults have been considered a major problem in the military context and have—so far—received more research attention than workplace bullying. For the US army, various scholars (e.g. Firestone & Harris, 2003; Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014) contend that overall, incidences of sexual harassment have decreased over the last years. In-depth results indicate that the awareness for the damaging effect of covert and private bullying behaviours has increased. However, victims of both phenomena still face a culture of denial in most national armies, which is the major obstacle for effective prevention and intervention.

5 Tackling Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Military Organizations

5.1 Empirical Evidence on Reactions to Workplace Bullying

In the representative study of the US military (Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014), only 14% of victims of sexual assaults in the active component report to have filed an official report. Of those who reported the problem to superiors, 41% were unsatisfied with the actions taken. In the Canadian survey, 23% of victims of sexual assaults reported the incidence to an authority, most often their military supervisor. Less than 7% reported their victimization to the military police or the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service (Cotter, 2016). Moreover, only 5% of victims of “less severe” forms of sexual misconduct (e.g. unwanted touching) reported the misconduct. Thus, it can be assumed that there are high numbers of unreported experiences of workplace bullying and sexual harassment. Reasons for not disclosing sexual harassment and gender discrimination include trivialization, especially of “minor” incidents, as well as worries about retaliation and stigma in a culture where unit loyalty and endurance are regarded as essential and where commanders often promote hypermasculine behaviour (cf. Firestone & Harris, 2003; Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014).

Related to this, the inertia of military systems prevents victims of harassment or assaults from reporting their experiences. For example, in the South African Forces...
only 26% of female victims of sexual harassment reported the incidents (Heinecken, 2016). The reasons for not reporting were that victims felt no action would be taken (17%), or that the complaint would take a long time to process (49%). These obstacles for effective formal grievances have also been found in studies of sexual harassment in the US and Canadian Defence Forces (e.g. Cotter, 2016; Firestone & Harris, 2003; Pershing, 2003). In the review report from the Australian Defence Forces, only one quarter of victims, who had filed a formal suit, were satisfied with the official defence management by army officials (Rumble, McKean, & Pearce, 2011). If complaints are raised only informally and discussed off the record with the supervisor, it is easier for management to keep the problem quiet. Moreover, ignorance, trivialization or denial of the incidences can lead to feelings of “secondary victimization”, i.e. additional trauma for the victims of bullying and harassment because they are not believed, ignored or blamed for what has happened.

Another challenge is the trivialization of “minor incidences” by the targets themselves. The high value of endurance and the acceptance of a (sexually) hostile environment might contribute to the normalization of sexual assaults in the unit. Women as minority members might condone the assaults to not cause “gender trouble” or be ridiculed as “hypersensitive”; they might even act aggressively against other women who feel threatened by hostile comments (e.g. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014; Sasson-Levy, 2003). The study of sexual violence in the South Korean Army showed that also men tend to trivialize the incidence (Kwon, Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2007).

5.2 Recommendations for Prevention and Intervention in National Armies

There are only few studies on the effectiveness of prevention and intervention tools in military environments (e.g. Firestone & Harris, 2003). Therefore, we have additionally interviewed practitioners from the Austrian Armed Forces about their experiences and recommendations.

Our analysis suggests that, first and foremost, a profound change of cultural values is needed to effectively reduce systematic bullying and harassment. Obsolete beliefs about military effectiveness must be revised. Modern warfare, peace missions and “civilian” functions require a broader range of skills than physical dominance and high role-commitment. For example, soldiers engaging in peacekeeping missions need to possess stereotypically feminine skills like language and cross-cultural skills as well as strategic thinking (cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014). For soldiers on deployment in Kongo or Afghanistan, “culturally-sensitive” interaction with civilians is crucial to receive information on planned terror attacks, government opponents, etc. (cf. Tomforde, 2010). Female soldiers are crucial, not least for interaction with female victims of violence. These new requirements for soldiers need to be incorporated into admission and performance criteria. This measure will over time potentially change the ideal image of soldiers and eventually reduce hypermasculine dynamics and harassment against members perceived to be
weak by those standards. It can also attract more women to the military and increase
their acceptance since the new criteria carry less gender bias. Moreover, rather than
having gender-normed physical admission or training standard which undermine a
gender hierarchy, some national armies have levelled the standards for physical
performance for all genders (cf. Koeszegi, Zedlacher, & Hudribusch, 2014;
Zedlacher, 2013). However, downward-levelling might induce severe organizational
resistance since many soldiers will assume that operational performance and prestige
will decrease. As such, comprehensive information and communication is essential.
The US army has recently published “gender-neutral” fitness criteria for each of the
specific branches. Combat functions have the highest physical demands and fitness
criteria, whereas fitness limits for cyber functions are lower (Vergun, 2017).

Another persistent belief is the importance of social cohesion and male bonding.
Supervisors need to be made aware that there is no causal link between social
cohesion and military performance. Soldiers do not necessarily have to like each
and be alike to perform well. Apart from that, bonding often happens through
common stress and common experiences independent of race, gender and sexual
orientation (MacCoun, Kier, & Belkin, 2005). To foster cohesion, Albuquerque and
Paes-Machado (2004) recommend promoting positive celebrations and ceremonies
as a future substitute for institutionalized hazing rituals. In this context, leaders and
commanders need to be made aware, that the traditional affiliation to one small
military unit is still important in combat positions, but less so in peacekeeping
missions. These requirements for the post-modern military will potentially facilitate
the full inclusion of women and LGBTQ people. Rather than presuming a tension
between operational effectiveness and diversity, leaders and soldiers need to be made
aware and educated that it is harassment rather than a heterogeneous work force that
eventually destroys cohesion and productivity.

In Norway, where conscription for both men and women has been recently
introduced, soldiers sleep in mixed rooms and relationships are officially allowed.
While no evaluations of such measures exist at this point of time, we consider
tackling the tabooing of (homo)sexuality in Armed Forces as important for the
prevention of harassment and assaults. In this context, the sexist environment in
traditional branches and subunits needs to be tackled. In particular, subunits of
traditional military units and branches (e.g. the Navy) need to be monitored closely,
including the behaviour of the respective supervisor. Women or male members in
marginalized positions might feel harmed by specific “cultural” behaviours, but
might also fear that other members and organizational officials will not regard the
behaviours as harmful. This might be also true for collective ritualistic harassment
and hazing. To reduce fear of reporting, we therefore recommend including and
labelling hazing rituals as possible incidences of workplace bullying or harassment
and present them through various channels (e.g. brochures, policy papers and
websites). Practitioners of the Austrian Armed Forces claim that targets often
confound workplace bullying with negative performance evaluation or “normal”
conflicts. To create more awareness for the distinct features of workplace bullying,
examples and comparisons of bullying to “normal work situations” should be
described during leadership trainings as well as in all written documents.
Importantly, also practitioners need to be made aware that men and women might perceive different acts of bullying or sexist remarks as not equally damaging. Typical experiences of female victims also need to be assessed and described in official documents as bullying. Military officials also need to consider that a lot of indirect and subtle behaviours and new forms of cyberbullying like secret filming are part of the bullying experience. These bullying behaviours are (yet) not commonly associated with the military culture, but are—if they are repeated over and over—as harmful as overt bullying and assaults, but harder to detect.

As our analysis has shown, a general hostile climate can contribute to severe cases of bullying and assaults. Thus, the persistence of “minor” incidences of bullying and harassment need to be closely monitored, evaluated and tackled. An external agency or taskforce, as installed in Australia after allegations of systematic misconduct (cf. “Report on Abuse in Defence”, 2014), can guarantee independent evaluation of prevalence and incidence rates and increase legitimacy of results. The detailed measurement procedure of the National Defense Research Institute (Morral, Gore, & Schell, 2014) included a pre-definition of the behaviours as crimes under the Uniform Code of Military Justice or as violation of Equal Opportunities legislation and regulations. As such, findings cannot be easily trivialised, but need then to be tackled by officials.

Firestone and Harris (2003) argue that zero-tolerance policies adopted by the military may improve the military image, but do not necessarily reduce the fear of reporting and social ostracism. Rather, it is recommended to display strong public statements by military leaders like Marines General Nueller that bullying and sexual harassment have no place in the military, but all allegations are taken seriously and are thoroughly investigated, and bullying is prevented with policies and procedures along with educational programmes (cf. Firestone & Harris, 2003).

Moreover, compulsory briefings on bullying and ongoing (!) leadership trainings are often recommended. Practitioners from the Austrian Armed Forces state that highly experienced military leaders often refuse to seek help from experts and coaches if confronted with bullying cases. For workplace bullying, leaders need to be made aware of the features, escalation dynamics and negative consequences of late or inadequate intervention (e.g. implementing “soft” mediation in highly escalated stages of bullying). In the case of sexual harassment, increased awareness through anti-sexual harassment policies and trainings might have contributed to a better handling of cases and the slight reduction of victimization rates.

For intervention, intervention chain and a clear formal process with roles and responsibilities increase perceptions of procedural justice (Hoel & Einarsen, 2010). Although procedures for formal complaints are written down in many national armies, official channels are often not trusted. Therefore, Firestone and Harris (2003) recommend individual, informal responses to harassment (e.g. discussing the allegations with the supervisor) to be accompanied or followed by organizational formal complaints. Various organizational contact points, which victims can choose from, should be established (e.g. Equal Opportunities Office, health services, call centers). In the Austrian Armed Forces, an anonymous, 24/7 anti-bullying-helpline has been implemented after results of the study of Koeszegi, Zedlacher, &
Hudribusch, (2014) were published. To date, an evaluation of the effectiveness of
intervention procedures is still in progress. Practitioners report in interviews that the
helpline has been considered helpful by targets of bullying. Targets are usually
offered further legal or psychological advice by the helpline. They often opt for
legal rather than for psychological advice in the first place. If they want to proceed
with the allegation, they need to give testimony in front of an internal committee
including psychologists and internal legal consultants. Practitioners also report that
targets often withdraw their accusations when the problem becomes public,
e.g. when their subunit leaders must be informed, or the victims need to collaborate
in witness questioning. This reaction is very common for victims, since they fear
reprisals, ostracism and victim-blaming. To reduce feelings of secondary victimiza-
tion, the Austrian Armed Forces plan to install the so-called persons of trust or
spokespeople, who also accompany the victims to interrogations by the committee.
Also, Austrian practitioners plan to introduce Case Management methodology,
which should help comprehensively monitor each bullying case even after the
bullying case was “solved”.

The formalization and evaluation of internal prevention and intervention pro-
cedures in military organizations as well as the involvement of all parties in
intervention is crucial. However, we also regard the participation of external con-
sultants as essential for impartial investigations of allegations.

6 Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

This chapter on bullying and harassment in the military forged a bridge between
different topics. It covered an outline of the social and gendered structure of
postmodern military organizations, a theoretical analysis of systemic violence in
military organizations as well as recent empirical findings on the prevalence of
workplace bullying and harassment in national armies. Taking a gender or feminist
perspective in bullying research proves useful, as it uncovers taken-for-granted
social norms, which condone inequality and harassment.

Overall, our review suggests that both covert and overt aggressive behaviours are
pervasive in military organizations. However, the type of harassment and the risk for
increased exposure also depends on the branch, function, subunit, tenure and gender.
Higher exposure rates for young soldiers, cadets of (elite) academies and women
relates to their weaker position in the military culture. The example of the military
shows the decisiveness of the organizational context in bullying incidences. Targets
appraise and label their bullying experiences (e.g. in hazing rituals) depending on
how they make sense of these behaviours retrospectively and whether they eventu-
ally are regarded as full members of their working group.

These observations have implications for future research in the military. Access to
military organizations for research on bullying and harassment is difficult. Often
researchers are employed by military research departments, which might influence
the way they address thorny issues like bullying inside the ranks. Increased collab-
oration with practitioners and between members of international associations like the
European Research Group on Military and Society (ERGOMAS) can help fostering scholarly research on bullying and harassment in different military organizations.

It is remarkable that—while sexual harassment in the US army is widespread—the study in the peacekeeping Austrian Armed Forces did not reveal similarly high rates of sexual harassment. Comparative studies across peace-making and peacekeeping armies with the same measurement tools might provide more detailed insights; e.g. to what extent soldiers in peacekeeping armies are exposed to harsh training, hazing rituals and hypermasculine dynamics. In this context, it would be also interesting to assess the impact of national culture on bullying and harassment.

For example, in Latin American countries like Costa Rica, workplace bullying is still considered a physical phenomenon (Escartin, Zapf, Arrieta, & Rodriguez-Carballeira, 2011). Provided access to military systems, it would be interesting to compare results on factors like leadership style, awareness, prevalence and types of bullying, and integration of ethnic or sexual minorities between different countries; for example by contrasting individualist, “feminine” low power distance cultures like the Scandinavian countries with samples from under-researched armies of high power distance, masculine and collectivist countries in Asia, Africa or Latin America (e.g. China, Japan, or Argentina). Apart from the study by Heinecken (2016), there is—to our best knowledge—a lack of research on workplace bullying and harassment within African national armies. Sexual violence by soldiers against civilians during war has been studied (e.g. in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, cf. Baaz & Stern, 2009) and is worth of a detailed analysis in combination with workplace bullying research.

Apart from valuable in-depth qualitative studies, quantitative approaches with established instruments can also deliver new insights. The Negative Acts Questionnaire (e.g. Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009) considers the difference between the subjective perception of victimization and objective exposure to negative acts. Also, research on the persistence as well as perceived severity and health effects of different bullying or hazing behaviours (cf. Escartin, Rodriguez-Carballeira, Zapf, Porrúa, & Martin-Pena, 2009; Hoel, Cooper and Faragher, 2004) in the military culture can deliver detailed insights. Likewise, in sexual harassment research, a combination of direct and indirect methods, i.e. self-labelling and behavioural checklists, is recommended to reduce bias (cf. Estrada & Berggren, 2009). Also, measuring behaviours of both workplace bullying and sexual harassment within one study could provide interesting insights into overlaps of the two phenomena. Moreover, future studies should investigate in detail the retrospective sensemaking process and the difference between ritualistic hazing and bullying from the perspective of the victims.

We also suggest empirically testing whether bullying and/or sexual harassment are related to sexist (sub)units with hypermasculine dynamics where predatory behaviours with multiple perpetrators potentially evolve. In this respect, unit- or departmental level analyses including the impact of leadership behaviour can deliver new insights into triggers and correlates of misconduct. It is also important to further study the situation of ethnic minorities and LGBTQ in national armies—provided that anonymous data collection is possible.
Finally, we strongly recommend setting a research focus on the investigation of effective intervention and prevention procedures and its challenges. Including the views and experiences of third parties and practitioners is essential to reduce the existing literature gap.

We conclude our analysis with a reference to the title of this book chapter—*Bullying Inc.?* Military organizations indeed *incorporate* traditional structural features and cultural values, which are a fertile ground for the normalization of bullying and harassment. However, the *overemphasis* or *misuse* of organizational features, group norms and discretionary powers is why systematic harassment occurs and is promoted. Thus, even in the “violent” military culture, individual perpetrators are to be held fully responsible.

7 Cross-Reference

- Dark Behaviours and Shadowy Places: Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment as Linked to Hidden Organizations
- Whistleblowing and Workplace Bullying
- Workplace Bullying in the Public Sector
- Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment in Fire Departments
- Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment in the Field of Corrections
- Workplace Violence

References


Cohn, C. (2000). ‘How can she claim equal rights when she doesn’t have to do as many push-ups as I do?’ The framing of men’s opposition to women’s equality in the military. *Men and Masculinities, 3*(131), 130–151.


Index Terms:

Abuse 15
Alcohol 10
Australian Defence Forces 18
Austrian Armed Forces 19
Bureaucracies 7
Case management 22
Code of silence 11
Departmental level analyses 23
Disciplined and homogeneous unit 7
Dispute related bullying 14
Escalation dynamics 21
Ethnic minorities 5
European Research Group on Military and Society (ERGOMAS) 23
Female soldier proportion 6
Gender-normed physical admission 20
Hazing rituals 10, 14
Hegemonic masculinity 11
Hierarchy 20
Homogeneity 3
Homosexuals 6
Hypermasculine behaviour 12
Hypermasculinity 12
Initiation rituals 2, 10
Institutional orientation 4
Intervention 21
Leadership trainings 20
LGBTQ 5–6
Male backlash 12
Male bonding 9, 20
Marines General Nueller 21
Military culture 3, 5, 8, 14, 21
Mixed rooms 20
Moral disentanglement 8
National culture 23
National Defense Research Institute 17
NATO 3
Negative Acts Questionnaire 23
Nonjudicial punishment 8
Normalized violence 2
Ostracism 22
Peacekeeping armies 5
Peacekeeping missions 19
Post-modern military era 4
Practitioners 22
Predatory bullying 14
Prevention procedures 24
Punishment rituals 2
Secondary victimization 19
Self-labelling method 15
Sexual assault 16
Sexual assaults 12
Sexual harassment 16
Social cohesion 9, 20
Socialisation phase 8
Swedish military 18
Total institutions 4
Trivialisation 18
US Marine Corps 17
Women 5
Workplace bullying 3
  empirical evidence on reactions 18–19
  misuse of hierarchical and bureaucratical structures 7–8
  national armies 14–16
  recommendations for prevention and intervention 19–22
  sexual harassment and assaults 16–18
  socialisation processes and training rituals 8–11