

A Culture of Institutional Misogyny: A study into the mistreatment and abuse of female soldiers in the Irish Defence Forces and British Armed Forces by the hands of their male counterparts.

By

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BA Arts in Public Administration with Sociology

“A Culture of Institutional Misogyny: A study into the mistreatment and abuse of female soldiers in the Irish Defence Forces and British Armed Forces by the hands of their male counterparts.”

A Final Year Project presented to the department of Politics and Public Administration

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Abstract

This research project investigates the levels of abuse, mistreatment, harassment and bullying that female soldiers experience in the British Armed Forces and The Irish Defence Forces. In recent years, many women have come forward and reported abuse that has occurred to them. With more women coming forward, many flaws in the IDF and BAF are being highlighted. Incidents of abuse include assault, men exposing themselves, threatening behaviour, and rape. Flaws highlighted are the abuse of power in both armies, the failures in the reporting systems and the lack of confidence in the court martial systems. By reviewing literature and exploring cases studies on topics such as recruitment, examples of abuse and description of military court proceedings, I show not only the flaws within both the BAF and IDF but also the reasons mistreatment and abuse are still as high as they are. By researching all the above, I show that the IDF and BAF both have a misogynistic culture where sexual violence is seen as a norm.

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Declaration

'I hereby declare that this project is entirely my own work, in my own words, and that all sources used in researching it are fully acknowledged and all quotations properly identified. It has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or another person, for the purpose of obtaining any other credit / grade. I understand the ethical implications of my research, and this work meets the requirements of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Signed: Fionnuala O'Connor

Date: 20/02/2025

Abbreviations

BAF	British Armed Forces
IDF	Irish Defence Forces
IRG - DF	Independent Review Group – Defence Forces
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoDREC	Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee
NAPs	National Actions Plans
UK	United Kingdom

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

The topic of abuse and mistreatment of female soldiers within the BAF and the IDF is not a new or groundbreaking one. The conversation regarding this topic has been happening for decades however it has not seen a change for the good in that time span. Tom Clonan first released a report in 2001 outlining the treatment of Irish female soldiers by their male counterparts. The details shed a light of the shocking and harrowing actions of male Irish soldiers and the bullying nature of the IDF. The IDF quickly attempted to stop the research in reaching the public and the silencing of Tom Clonan. However, Clonan was adamant in getting his findings out there and revealing the true behaviour of the male IDF soldiers. Even with Clonan's research revealed and an independent investigation carried out on the IDF, these actions still seem evident today in the IDF.

For my research project, I will be investigating the treatment of female soldiers in the IDF and the BAF and finding out if there has been any improvement over the years. I will be researching aspects such as the recruitment process to see whether it plays any role in aiding to the idea the IDF and the BAF are considered male centric. I will be examining the ways in which the IDF and the BAF recruit people into the army and if there are any female orientated recruitment campaigns. I will study the advertisements and online campaigns for the IDF and BAF and see if they are inclusive towards both a male and female audience. It is important to investigate the recruitment process as it is the first step people take in joining the army and if the idea that the IDF and BAF are favoured to men and allow the abuse of female soldiers, it is the first step in creating the problem. I will be exploring the abuse experienced by female soldiers by getting examples of women coming forward and if their abusers were punished for their actions.

The main topic this project centres on is researching the abuse and mistreatment female soldiers experience in the IDF and BAF. I will be using the examples from former female soldiers who came forward about their abuse and the events that followed suit, if they were successful in getting justice or if they were punished for accusing a fellow soldier. I will be laying out the court martial system and seeing if it is effective in prosecuting those who are accused of harassment or bullying. I will also be looking at cases that were brought to the public court system and examine the results of those. Researchers such as Tom Clonan, Victoria Basham, and Natalie Jester have all written on such topic and for my research project, I will be reviewing their writings and exploring the idea that if more investigations are being carried out around this area, the problem will lessen.

1.2 Literature Review

Literature on the topic of mistreatment and abuse of female soldiers is immense for both Ireland and the UK. Literature ranges from academic researchers carrying out research in Irish and the UK barracks and on overseas missions. Resources also studied were reports published by the MoD, the IDF and independent groups such as Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research. Researchers also go into detail of the experiences not only did female soldiers endure, but the experiences the researchers themselves had.

Recruitment is the initial step in the army and is important to study as to develop an understanding of where the misogynistic army culture developed. It is also important to understand if recruits are exposed to this mentality from the offset of their career. This was an idea Rachel Woodward and Patricia Winter wanted to understand in their paper “Gender and the Limits to Diversity in the Contemporary British Army.” (Woodward and Winter, 2006) In the late 1990’s, the British army wanted to move away from the notion that all genders, race, ethnicities, and sexualities had equal opportunities with the armed forces and shifted to a “diversity management”. (Woodward and Winter, 2006) To achieve this, the BAF wanted to incorporate the cultures of people hoping to join the army and those already enrolled to expand the army's culture to be more inclusive. Woodward and Winter focused on the aspect of gender and how even with the British Army becoming more progressive, it was still limiting to women. The authors point out that the BAF still saw women different to men and how female soldiers would not be suitable to all positions within the army. At the time this article was released,

female soldiers in the BAF were not allowed on frontline combat, a restriction that was only lifted in 2016. (Ministry of Defence, 2016) Woodward and Winter highlight that the BAF were continuing the culture for limitation for female soldiers. Policies may have changed to promote diversity but to the army, diversity did not include women. Policies to recruit more women were done more so to fit societal trends. In civilian life, women's rights were furthering and progressing, however, the army saw itself as a separate institute from society so did not feel the urgency to attend to women's rights. Woodward's and Winter's overarching idea is that army culture is so deeply ingrained within the institution that no number of policies will increase female recruitment or participation in the BAF. This article was released in 2006 yet still resonates with current day ideals regarding army culture. The authors released on article on the same topic in 2004, "Discourses of Gender in the Contemporary British Army" (Woodward and Winter, 2004), focusing again on policy change and women in the army. However, much of the same conclusions were drawn from both articles. The authors were pointing out vital flaws in the army twenty years ago, flaws that still exist today.

Recruitment campaigns are vital to study as they are the segway for civilians to join the army. If recruitment advertisements and videos are not successful in gaining recruits, numbers of recruits will fall. Natalie Jester examined army recruitment ads in the US and UK from 2002 to 2018 to see if the male dominated image of the army had changed over time. (Jester, 2019) Jester outlines that the BAF and the US Army recruitment campaigns have been attempting to leave behind a masculine image. They have done this by showing the BAF in less action and combat settings and more towards representing teamwork. The ads are aimed towards the viewer, using techniques such as breaking the fourth wall and making the ads more immersive. Jester also highlights the move towards inclusion and diversity in the ads. Ads are showing men and women in a range of distinct roles within the army, challenging the idea that some roles are typically male or female. Jester concludes that the BAF are successful in shifting from masculine recruitment campaigns to be more inclusive towards women and portray the BAF as an institute that values teamwork and cohesion. Jester's article is valuable in the writings of recruitment for the British army as it shows that the BAF are proving to be more diverse and inclusive in their recruitment campaigns. To further the research, study could be done on the successfulness of the BAF's campaign such as "Your Army Needs You" (Commarts, 2019) poster campaign. A qualitative study could be done also on army cadets to see if recruitment ads aided their decision to join the army.

In 2007, Claire Duncanson carried out a study on the construction of masculinity in the BAF by doing a qualitative study of a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia in the 1990s. (Duncanson, 2009) Duncanson began by laying out how the BAF was traditionally seen as male dominated but also had defined masculine and feminine roles and structures within the BAF. From Duncanson's interviews, some soldiers saw the peacekeeping missions as emasculating, with there being no fighting or combat. Whereas others saw it as testing their masculine traits such as discipline and control. From her study, Duncanson showed that women in areas where soldiers were stationed were seen in their stereotypical roles. They are seen as mothers or victims that need saving and protecting. Duncanson's study revealed that peacekeeping missions have the effect of introducing lesser masculine roles to the BAF. However, overall, peacekeeping missions do not challenge the overtly masculine traits of the army. Duncanson outlined that for a meaningful change to happen, the military culture would need extreme changes to occur, the same conclusions Catignani and Basham came to. (Catignani and Basham, 2021)

A more modern writing on female representation in the army, "The gendered politics of researching military policy in the age of the 'knowledge economy" was written by Catignani and Basham in 2021. (Catignani and Basham, 2021) While more modern research is needed regarding women in the army, the authors detail their experiences and barriers they faced in conducting their research. This is a common occurrence for researchers in this area and a main reason research cannot be carried out. Authors such as Catignani, Basham, Graham and Clonan have all either found themselves in a battle with the BAF or IDF to conduct research and gain information or were on the receiving end of the abuse and harassment they were trying to expose. For most of these authors, it was the British and Irish Armies obstructing their research, however Catignani and Basham mention how the MoDREC were the ones to limit them. This shows that it is not just the military stopping research from happening, the British Government is playing a part also. MoDREC are the ones to choose what research is conducted, however Catignani and Basham point out that they favour quantitate over qualitative research to fit the narrative the BAF want public. Favouring one over the other means research regarding stats and figures have more of a chance of being published rather than interviews with soldiers or field work being conducted. Many of the articles reviewed alluded to the idea that power is a main identity with the military. Who has power and who does not have power is prominent not just within the BAF and IDF but also for those conducting research. Dr. Shirley Graham experienced the true extent of the power the IDF can hold over someone and the extent they

will go to silence a researcher. Shirley Graham's research on civilian women in peacekeeping missions was hindered by both the IDF and the university she was studying her PhD. (Graham, 2022) Graham endured harassment and misogynistic treatment at the hands of the IDF to try and deter her away from carrying out research. To conduct her research, Graham was forced to sign a proforma which meant that if the IDF did not approve of what she had written, they had the chance to change and edit it. This was another showing of the IDF having power, as if Graham did not sign the proforma, research could not have been carried out. Graham found it tough to get interviewees as there was still apprehension within the IDF to allow studies of women in the army after Tom Clonan's publishing's. Over the course of three years, fifteen women were interviewed. Before submitting her thesis, Graham removed a chapter focusing on the bullying, harassment and sexism female soldiers endure in the IDF. This was due to the fear of the backlash she and the interviewees would face. On the completion of her thesis, Graham met with a female officer who was overlooking her submission, who told Graham that she agreed with every word in her research. (Graham, 2022) However, the female officer changed her opinion when Graham presented her findings to the university and the IDF. The female officer, in front of many male officers, said she disagreed with Graham's findings of sexism and bullying within the IDF. It was not until years later that Graham felt no longer silenced by the IDF that she released the chapter that gave details of the abuse some female soldiers had experienced. Some experiences detailed women who were threatened if they reported the abuse. Shirley Graham's writings are a fantastic representation of the struggles researchers face in this area and the immense power the IDF have in prohibiting it from being done.

Flynn, Hogan, and Feeney also write on the consequences for exposing the treatment of women in the IDF. (Flynn, Hogan and Feeney, 2019) Their writings focus on Tom Clonan being an initial whistleblower of the IDF and his experiences thereafter. When Clonan had released his findings on the abuse female soldiers endured, both him and the women he interviewed suffered consequences. Clonan was threatened in person, over email and over phone calls. One of the women who took part suspected she was passed over for a promotion. (Flynn, Hogan and Feeney, 2019) While Clonan was not silenced like Graham was, the power the IDF had to attack one's character and cause them physical and mental harm was clear. Flynn, Hogan, and Feeney (2019) point out the positive results in the publishing of Clonan's work. The IDF released National Action Plans to eliminate abuse and bullying within the institution. Between 1998 and 2015, there was multiple Employment Equality Acts and Equal Status Acts

introduced to bring in equal pay and better conditions for soldiers in the IDF. (Flynn, Hogan and Feeney, 2019) These measures came in not after Clonan's work was published but after he was threatened and harassed. Researchers such as Graham, Clonan and Basham should not have to endure abuse and sexual harassment for the army to introduce legislation and policies. Even then, like authors have previously mentioned, these are in writing only. For sexual abuse and bullying to end in the army, the culture of male dominance within the army needs to be tackled and dealt with.

A panel held in 2013 which consisted of five female researchers, spoke about their experiences in researching the British Army. (Baker et al., 2016) Baker et al. (2016) discussed how they had to earn the trust of the BAF and use the correct language when speaking to them. This was done to be allowed to conduct research. The writers agreed that there were powers within the institution that dictated what was to be researched and who was to be researched. Like the writers who had written on the IDF, Baker et al. also had apprehensions when it came to the repercussions that the soldiers who took part could experience. This limited the writers in critiquing the BAF, thus limiting their own research.

The final aspect studied was the polices regarding assault and harassment within the IDF and BAF. Previous articles mentioned the change in policies the BAF made in the early 2000's aimed at inclusivity and diversity. This included Woodward and Winter (2004) and their writings on Physical Selection Standards. In more recent years, reports have been published on the areas of policies and initiatives that the BAF have implemented. In 2021, a report called "We Also Served" (Godier-McBard, Gillin and Fossey, 2021) was published by Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research. It studied female BAF veterans and their time in the army, the services available to them during that and the care they received by the MoD after leaving the army and becoming veterans. The report laid out the challenges they faced and recommended polices the BAF could implement to care for their female veterans more. As previous writers mentioned, they reiterated the challenges women soldiers face. The veterans interviewed spoke of the abuse, harassment, and the barriers they faced in reporting it. After leaving the army, the female veterans detailed the hardships in finding work after serving in the army and the physical and mental health issues they suffer, with no aid from the BAF. The report gives recommendations which include policies to implement, research to carry out and services to give to veterans. The policies they suggest are to improve the system in reporting incidents such as harassment and abuse. They also suggest services that are gender sensitive. Veterans support services should include the improvement of female veteran resettlement

programmes. This report was another example of the army culture being called out and criticised for being dated and misogynistic, with notable examples of what women face while serving and after leaving the army.

The IDF released a similar report in 2023 that was carried out by the IRG-DF. (Minister for Defence, 2023) It studied if the current policies and legislation in place were efficient enough in tackling the abuse and male culture within the IDF. The same findings that were found in the Veterans and Families Institute were also seen in the IDF report. Details of the failures of reporting abuse and harassment were given, and the hierarchy of male power was criticised. Recommendations included to improve the reporting system of incidents, cultural reform, and improved policies on medical and psychological support services. (Minister for Defence, 2023) This report also highlighted a major downfall in the IDF and recommended that data and accounts of abuse be better collected so that those accused could be held accountable. This report was vital to be published as it underlined the major reasons connected with abuse within the IDF. If the IDF does not follow the recommendations, abuse will continue and those in charge cannot be held accountable or punished for not adhering to the recommendations.

The literature studied consisted of many the same conclusions in that the IDF and BAF have a deeply ingrained masculine culture that needs reforming. If the chain of command and the hierarchy within both armies does not change, the levels of female abuse, bullying and harassment will not change. Reporting of abuse needs to be followed through and not brushed under the carpet and investigated by an external group, such as Louise Morgan (2020) suggested. The Irish recruitment campaigns need to be studied to examine if they have improved to be more inclusive and diverse. It is also to be seen if they have reached modern techniques in recruiting women and if they are successful in recruiting women. Modern research like Jester's article (2019) needs to be carried out with a look at social media platforms and their effectiveness. The largest limitation in researching the BAF and IDF are the institutions themselves. They give limited access to researchers and bias is given to quantitative studies over qualitative studies. The British government department, the MoD is also a barrier in research that needs to be lifted. Researchers should not feel apprehensive about carrying out studies for the fear of experiencing harassment themselves. Change cannot happen if the IDF and BAF are not open to being investigated and are not willing to change themselves.

Chapter 2

2.1 Method

For this project I carried out several types of research methods to explore my research topic. I focused on carrying out a qualitative study as this project focused on people's experiences and the structure around them. For my three topics I undertook distinct types of qualitive methods and analysis.

2.1.1 Researching Recruitment Process

To research the recruitment process for the IDF and BAF I looked at a wide variety of media and content. I examined recruitment posters for both countries. I watched advertisements uploaded on YouTube and short documentaries uploaded also. I analysed the cinematic techniques used in the ads. By watching the documentaries, I did a discourse analysis to develop an understanding of the language used and how trainee officers spoke to the recruits. I analysed all the above in their use and feature of women. I took note of the level of inclusion and diversity with recruitment campaigns. I studied the catchphrases and slogans used. In the documentaries, I wanted to see if masculine traits were taught to recruits from the early stage and the treatment of male and female recruits, to witness if there were differences between the training each received.

2.1.2 Researching Examples of Abuse

To get the full extent of the abuse that happens in the IDF and BAF, I did an elevated level of phenomenological analysis to get a full understanding of the experiences the female soldiers went through. I listened to the Women of Honour radio programme and read newspapers

articles about the outcome of the programme. I listened to other RTÉ Drivetime episodes which featured Tom Clonan and Dr. Shirley Grahm, who both spoke about their time exposing the IDF. I read newspaper articles about both researchers to find out the outcomes of the works being published. I researched other case studies of sexual abuse and assault in both armies, their experiences reporting it and the consequences they suffered, if any. I read reports carried out by independent groups, the IDF, the MoD and the BAF on the policies they had implemented and initiatives they are in the process of implementing to tackle sexual assault.

2.1.3 Legal proceedings and Polices Research

I began by researching the court martial system for both countries. I read up on what cases are sent to the military court and what is sent to civilian court. I researched female soldiers' experiences going through the military court system and the civilian court system. I read newspaper articles of male soldiers going through the military court system for both the IDF and BAF. I researched if any laws had been passed when it came to sexual violence within the IDF and BAF. I investigated if any law had been amended regarding the topic. I looked at polices both armies had undertaken to tackle the problem. Finally, I researched any initiatives and campaigns also ran by both armies to lessen female soldier abuse.

2.2 Justification

I choose to undertake a qualitive approach as this project is about understanding what these women went through by the hands of their male colleagues and the lasting effects it had on them. There are numerous stories to be told from both British and Irish soldiers, which meant finding source material was not hard. I choose not to carry out interviews or a focus group as I do not know any female soldiers currently or who had served in the BAF and IDF. Carrying out interviews on such a heavy topic also would be something that I am ill equipped for and would not be able to carry out successfully.

I choose to study the recruitment process, the ads and poster campaigns as it is the first step in a soldier's career. I wanted to examine if cadets are taught masculine traits, if they are immersed into the army culture and if this culture come from higher ranks. I wanted to test if male and female cadets are treated differently. It would be important to see if the army are trying to leave the boys club mentality behind in the advertisements or if they are using women as tokenistic

figures. I questioned whether current recruitment campaigns are being altered to fit society's standards or do the IDF and BAF genuinely believe in achieving equality. Documentaries were watched to gain an insight into cadet life, from both the cadet's point of view and the trainee officer's point of view. I wanted to understand the culture they create while training. I watched Call of Duty and Metal Gear Solid advertisements to compare with army ads. I wanted to witness if video game companies were copying the IDF and BAF or if the defence forces were copying video games. Techniques such as the male and female gaze were studied to understand what audience the IDF and BAF were appealing to. Content analysis was used regarding the recruitment campaign to find patterns in both the IDF and BAF ads, posters, and social media content.

I needed to gain a full understanding of what female soldiers experienced, about the abuse and bullying they endured. I wanted to see who was carrying out the abuse and if was done by higher ranks or male soldiers of the same rank. Incidents of abuse were read up on to test whether abuse happened more so in the IDF and BAF barracks, on overseas missions or on peace keeping missions. Personal stories were examined to understand if they are one-time incidents or if abuse happen over an extended period. Experiences of reporting the abuse were studied to investigate if they were successful in reporting or if it is a failing system. I wanted to discover if the women affected had someone to turn to within the IDF and BAF or services they could avail of. Ultimately, I wanted to understand and expose how common abuse happens within the IDF and BAF.

Chapter 3

3.1 Recruitment process analysis

3.1.1 Advertisements

When asking if the recruitment process of the IDF and BAF is effective for female recruits, the place to look is the advertisements both countries release. The most popular form of recruitment advertisements are television ads. Both countries have an array of ads for various roles on their YouTube channels. Both countries ads share many elements in terms of music, key words used and appealing to a certain audience. In 2023, The Royal Marines Commander released numerous videos all under the same title, “Within you is the best you”. (Royal Marines Recruitment, 2023) The five videos are labelled with different attributes one should have when joining the Royal Marines Commander. Many of the videos show BAF officers in action, be it in mid battle, treating the injured or infiltrating enemy lines. If the soldiers are not in action, the videos show them in picturesque areas with appealing backdrops. In the first video, just labelled “Within you is the best you” (Royal Marines Recruitment, 2023), it opens with a scenic backdrop and a soldier climbing up a hill. Later, there is a shot of a cave with clear blue water and the officer in the centre of the shot. One of the final scenes is a cloudless sky with the sun shining. The use of picturesque shots in the British ads is appealing to the viewer, promising to visit beautiful, scenic areas and get to travel to exotic places. The ad wants the viewer to forget the reason they would be in this place in the first place and look forwards to the views

they would see. Like the ads researched by Natallie Jester, modern ads show that “risk-taking is minimal” (2019)

Both the male and female gaze are appealed to also in ads by both the Irish and British armies. The British Royal Marines Commando have multiple shots such as sneaking behind an enemy and camouflaging oneself in the forest. These shots consist of soldiers in full combat uniform and painted faces. The shots of a soldier seen clearly are close shots and they do not have any face paint on. In these instances, the soldiers used are conventionally attractive men. They are good looking and have what would be considered a perfect physique. In 2019, the IDF released a video called “Army Recruitment 2019” Óglaigh na hÉireann / Irish Defence Forces (2019) with a shot of a female officer in a formal uniform with pristine hair and perfect makeup. It is the only close-up angle of a female officer in the ad. These shots appeal to both the male and female gaze. It appeals to men by showing that the IDF is not just a men’s club but also has attractive women enlisted. This image also appeals to women as it shows that they can still be dressed up with their hair and makeup done while enlisted in the army. Jester also points out the male gaze was used in a British Army ad in 2006. (2019) Even as time has gone on, the IDF are still using the same tactics to appeal to the audience.

3.1.2 Resemblance to Video Games

The visual effects used by both countries' armies please the male gaze by both creating advertisements to appear like video games. Natalie Jester (2019) describes the British ads that resemble video games as “immersive” so that the viewers can see themselves in the ads. When watching the numerous recruitments ads, various video games came to mind such as Call of Duty and Metal Gear Solid. The ad “Determination” (Royal Marines Recruitment, 2023) shows a British soldier sneaking up on an enemy from behind while being silent. This is reminiscent of a typical video game level of infiltrating the enemy base while using stealth. The ad is portraying the message that if someone wanted to live out their desire to recreate their favourite game, they could achieve so by enrolling in the BAF. The IDF and BAF use captivating scenes of soldiers in action, patrolling through a forest in camouflage and throwing smoke grenades, both of which are seen in slow motion. The 2019 Irish Recruitment ad has rock music playing in the background to give the video an edgier and cooler feel. One must only look at any Call of Duty trailer released in the last five years to see the similarities mentioned above. From the slow-motion action shots of explosions to soldiers kitted out with extreme firepower to songs

such as Firestarter by The Prodigy playing in the background. (Call of Duty, 2024) The only difference between the video game ads and the ads for the real IDF and BAF, is that the scenes are animated.

When following the link in the description of the "Within You is the best you," it brings you to the website for the recruitment page of The Royal Marines. Here, distinct roles are listed such as "Sharp Shooter" and "Jungle". (Royal Marines | Royal Navy, 2025) To display what weapons each of the eight roles use, a display is used on the website to show a solider in full combat uniform with the gun they use in hand. It is a video with a black background and large red writing with the role written out in capital letters. The soldier emerges from the black background and turns slightly to each side, showing off the uniform and the weapon. This is a clear copy of a character select menu in any army-based video game. Therefore, again appealing to the male gaze by wanting to become their favourite character.

3.1.3 Poster Campaigns

When searching for posters regarding army recruitment, the most recent poster campaign for the BAF was from 2019. The campaign was called "Your Army Needs You." (Commarts, 2019) It is a series of six posters with a member of the defence forces staring directly into the camera with phrases such as "Class Clown" and "Binge Gamers" written above them. (Commarts, 2019) The campaign was aimed at the younger demographic and the "common misconception" (Al-Othman, 2024) they face. The posters were aimed for young people to see the true potential they could reach if they joined the army. The campaign proved worthwhile as it "resulted in Army job applications being at a five-year high" (Commarts, 2019) However, the campaign was not as positive as it claimed. Kerry-Ann Knight, who appeared on one of the posters, realised she was asked to take part in the campaign as a tokenistic woman of colour. "I didn't know it was because I was going to be the only Black woman in that regiment" (Al-Othman, 2024) Knight endured years of sexual and racist abuse during her time in the 26 Regiment Royal Artillery. Her hopes of becoming a "bright hope" (Al-Othman, 2024) for young Black women were dashed as her decade long abuse ended with Knight eventually leaving her post in training new recruits.

The IDF released an infographic on why someone should join them. The tagline on the infographic is "be more." (Irish Defence Forces, 2024) The posters describe the salaries one would be on, how to enter various parts of the IDF, such as for the army or the air corps,

benefits they would be entitled to and annual leave they are entitled to. While the infographic is informational and detailed, it feels overall impersonal. The colour choice used is dark and bland with generic symbols used to represent what it being said. The IDF symbol is in the background of the infographic and is tough to see. There are no photos of actual soldiers, barracks, or recruits in the infographic either. When comparing this to the UK's "Your Army Needs You" campaign, the use of real British soldiers adds a level of personification which would entice a civilian more to join the DF.

3.1.4 Documentaries

When researching the recruitment process for the BAF and IDF, I came across clips of documentaries for both countries. The clips were very telling of how the armies create a "boys club" mentality from the recruitment stage but also how discipline is taken seriously, even for minute details such as wearing the incorrect socks. In the clip called "What does it take to be a soldier in the British Army?" by the BBC. (2023) It follows Private Owen South and the limits he is pushed to in becoming a soldier. In the clip, all the higher ranked soldiers shown are men, with no leading female soldiers. The corporal in charge also uses the phrase "where the men will be separated from the boys. "(BBC, 2023) From this early stage in a soldier's career, they are being taught the army is a male world and dominated by men in charge. The recruitment officers may not intentionally perceive this; however, the BAF has been inherently male for many years which results in the recruitment officers not knowing any other way to act.

In 2015, RTÉ released a documentary called "Recruits", (YouTube, 2017) following a class of forty recruits during their thirteen-week recruitment training in The Curragh, Kildare. The two-part documentary showed immense detail of what Irish DF recruits go through to become a part of the IDF. However, like the BBC clip, there are telling signs of how the IDF is still a male dominated industry with no signs of changing any time soon. In the class of forty, only two are women with only one ending up finishing the thirteen-week course. Women applying to the IDF was low then and is still low nowadays with only one woman being inducted into the IDF out of the 617 applicants in 2023. (Bray, 2023) In the documentary, it is drilled into recruits that there is no difference between men and women, however this tone is not consistent in the documentary. Phrases such as "Mammy is not here to mind you" and "want your mother to do it for you?" (YouTube, 2017) are used in a derogatory manner to the recruits. The

recruitment officers are enforcing the idea that it is a mother's job to take care of a child but also enforcing the derogatory idea that it is bad to be close to one's mother or to be a “mammy’s boy.” Inclusive language is also not used in the documentary. “Leave no man behind.... how you lead men into battle.” (YouTube, 2017) While there is only one woman in the recruitment class, there is no effort to use inclusive language and to prevent the creation of a male orientated field. One large aspect of the documentary is that if the recruits misbehave or step out of line, they will be punished and disciplined. Recruits are punished for things such as incorrect uniform, untidy lockers and back answering an officer. Punishments include extra cleaning duties or extra exercise drills for the whole recruit class. Discipline and correct behaviour are so enforced into them at an early stage for minor acts but when it comes to higher ranked soldiers committing serious offences such as sexual harassment or bullying, little to no punishment is enforced on them.

Over the years, ways of recruitment by the BAF and IDF have changed and adapted through the times to be more inclusive. As Jester highlights, “UK advertising pre-2012 does not feature any women” (2019) This is not the case nowadays, as both men and women feature greatly in recruitment ads and campaigns. However, while the presence of women has improved, the use of women in the campaigns, the style of campaigns and the aim to recruit more women have all fallen short. Women are still tokenistic, as seen in the “Your Army Needs You” campaign (Al-Othman, 2024) and the treatment of Kerry-Ann Knight. Clear images of women used in many ads are close-up shots of women in their formal uniform with their hair and make-up done. The male and female gaze is appealed to entice the viewer to apply for the IDF and BAF. The tactics used are dated and derogatory and prove not useful with the numbers of women applying to the armies are still lower than men. The latest figure for the BAF showed that only 11.7% were female. (Ministry Of Defence, 2023) For recruitment campaigns to be successful, both countries need to steer away from the video game style action advertisements and connect more with the viewers. Modern day research needs to be carried out on the attempts to recruit women to the IDF, explore what needs to be improved on and the reasons why women are not applying. When researching ads, I did not come across any that used the narrative of fighting for one’s country and the honour it could have on a soldier. Using this narrative could resonate with the audience on a national pride level. Advertisements for both countries could be more informative also. They could include facts such as the salaries one could earn as a soldier. They could include the health benefits and annual leave dates, as seen on the Irish infographic. Both countries could interact with the public more by carrying out speeches in schools, open days to

visit the barracks and organise charity events to get the public more aware of the work they carry out. If the BAF and IDF continue with the same style of recruitment campaigns, not only will the overall number of applicants fall but the number of women recruits will almost diminish.

3.2 Examples of Abuse Analysis

3.2.1 Research of Tom Clonan and Dr. Shirley Graham

The misogynistic culture of the IDF and BAF has been no secret for many years. Multiple investigations and reports have been carried out, but they often result in no change. Two people to conduct research into the treatment of female soldiers in the IDF were Tom Clonan and Dr. Shirley Graham. Tom Clonan was a former Army Captain who conducted research in the early 2000s in which he interviewed sixty women working in the IDF. The research was originally about equality, however based on their answers, Clonan realised his research was going to uncover the harrowing reality of women in the defence forces. Of the sixty women interviewed, fifty-nine of them had experienced sexual harassment, bullying, rape, or assault. (Graham, 2022) A common trait within the women interviewed was that many had reported the abuse they had endured but nothing came of their complaints. Those who came forward were instead isolated and experienced hostile scrutiny in their camps. (Flynn, Hogan and Feeney, 2019) Clonan brought forward his findings to the IDF in 1999, however was met with backlash from the higher ups.

Like those who were victims to the abuse, Clonan endured the same treatment after attempting to release his findings. Clonan's reputation as a former Captain was tarnished by his peers and was subject to character assassination within the IDF. This however did not stop Clonan from eventually releasing his findings in August 2001. (Flynn, Hogan and Feeney, 2019) Prior to the release, Clonan met with the Chief of Staff of the IDF at the time, to warn him and the IDF of the release of his findings and the backlash they might face. During the meeting, Clonan was told, "it's about women, who cares ... no one reads the Sunday World." (Whistleblowers Programmes, 2013) The IDF quickly tried to diminish Clonan's work and claim it as false, also

stating they were not made aware Clonan was going to publish his work. Clonan faced years of bullying with threats made to him and his family. Also following the report, the women who partook in it were punished for coming forward. There were subject to scrutiny and interrogation and were asked what they had said to Clonan. Eventually, the Minister of Defence, Michael Smith intervened and got behind Clonan and his research. Clonan wanted an independent study to take place on the IDF and what it was like to be a woman in the IDF. After the independent study was carried out and confirmed the findings, the IDF took on the recommendations to make improvements for female soldiers. Tom Clonan's research had both positive and negative outcomes for women in the IDF and for further studies. While measures were taken in support of female soldiers and awareness was brought to the abuse and harassment with the IDF, the women who took part in the study were ultimately punished. Clonan's research is incredibly important to analyse as it was one of the first public critical studies carried out on the IDF and one of the first whistleblower moments for the IDF. Researchers in the future would face barriers to conducting further studies of women in the IDF, a topic Dr. Shirley Graham faced years later.

Between 2006 and 2008, Dr. Shirley Graham conducted field research of the IDF at Camp Clarke in Kosovo. (Graham, 2022) Graham's study was to "find out the impact, if any, of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 on women, peace and security" (Graham, 2022) To conduct her research, Graham was sent to Kosovo, where the IDF were carrying out a peace keeping mission. Graham was aware she would come across difficulties during her research due to Clonan's report in 2001. The male orientated culture was exposed in the IDF, and their name was tarnished in the media from Clonan's claims. While Graham expected to find it tough in getting approval for her research or finding participants, she did not expect the treatment she received in the lead up to her arrival in Kosovo and during her time there. Prior to being sent to Camp Clarke, Graham attended a course being run by the IDF. While in this course, a Senior male officer posed a question to Graham. "Know what they two toughest things are out in a peace keeping mission?" in which he replied, "women and alcohol." (Abuse in the Defence Forces, 2021) From the onset, Graham was already developing an understanding of the culture the IDF had created. Graham's firsthand experience of the misogynistic treatment did not stop there. On her first night at Camp Clarke, Graham was having drinks with some of the male soldiers. During the night, Graham went to use the women's toilet, which was down a dark and unlit path. When she exited the cubicle, one of the male soldiers was standing outside of it, exposing himself to Graham. For the rest of her time on the peace keeping mission,

Graham was uncomfortable to leave her room at night. Graham did not report these instances as she felt she would be seen as making a fuss or being a troublemaker.

Shirley Graham's initial research was centred around the local civilian women and their security with the aid of the IDF female soldiers. After Graham's experiences of harassment from male IDF soldiers, her research became limited due to the repercussions she knew herself and the female IDF soldiers would face if she reported all her findings. Before conducting any research, Graham had already faced apprehensions from the IDF and knew if she released her chapter on "Sexism, Bullying and Harassment of women," the backlash would worsen for Graham and the soldiers involved. This led to Graham removing this chapter from her PhD. In the chapter, women had stressed how they would not report any incident for fear of how they would be treated afterwards. The women had relayed instances of being sexually assaulted while on another peace keeping mission in Liberia and kicked and beaten to a level that they needed hospitalisation. (Graham, 2022) Graham once more experienced the culture of harassment as during a one-to-one meeting with a senior male officer, he attempted to play "footsie" with her under the table. (Abuse in the Defence Forces, 2021)

Similar to Clonan, Graham was met with backlash and denial from the IDF when she released all her findings relating to bullying and harassment of women. Between the time of Clonan's and Graham's work being released, the IDF had released three NAPs to tackle abuse and the mistreatment of women soldiers. Graham, however pointed out a vital flaw in the NAPs. Having recommendations, legislation, and ways in which to improve life for female soldiers written down in paper is for the IDF to be seen making changes. The IDF is riddled with a culture that is sexist and mistreating of women that having these plans accumulate to nothing. For change to happen, it needs to start within with how senior male officers treat women themselves, how junior male ranks are taught to treat women and the handling of accusations made. Senior ranked male officers need to create a safe environment in which female soldiers feel comfortable and safe to report an assault or abuse.

3.2.2 Women of Honour

The Women of Honour originally started out as a radio programme that was released on RTÉ Radio presented by Katie Hannon. (Women of Honour, 2021) It is now the name of a group of brave women who came forward and gave in depth detail about the abuse, bullying and mistreatment they had experienced by the hands of their male colleagues. The hour-long radio

broadcast told of incidents that women such as Yvonne O'Rourke, Diane Byrne and Honor Murphy had all gone through. The incidents were shocking and harrowing to think these women experienced this while at work for an institution that was supposed to defend the nation. Incidents told involved senior officers making advancement on cadets, giving one female cadet a birthday present of lingerie with the note "wish I was here" written in the crotch area. (Women of Honour, 2021) One of the women explained that when she reported her abuse to her commanding officer, he apologised for the men's actions, then proceeded to try and kiss her afterwards. Male soldiers had forced themselves into a female soldier's room, in which she was told to try and forget about it when she reported it the same night it occurred. The incidents were not all sexual abuse or violence. One of the women of honour described how she flet punished for taking maternity leave. She received an inferior performance review after coming back from maternity leave which prevented her from getting the correct training to carry out an overseas mission. The list of indecent behaviour was endless with the group of women going on to describe those in charge in the IDF. The women described how those in power had "created an environment of protecting the predator" (Women of Honour, 2021) The women expressed how they had no confidence in the procedure of reporting sexual violence incidents and how the data on sexual harassment and abuse cannot be relied upon. The release of the radio programme was not the first publishing of the level of abuse that female soldiers experience in the IDF, however it was one that gave extreme detail of incidents and the actions of those in charge. It gave the Irish government the push it needed in carrying out the in-depth review on the current policies and legislation in place regarding sexual assault and abuse within the IDF. Recommendations were given, however if the IDF carry these out is yet to be seen. However, no amount of polices can alter the problematic culture of the IDF and those who create it.

3.2.3 BAF Examples

The BAF have much the same accusations being reported by service women. Female soldiers outline the consequences that happened to them when they reported on incidents. Soldiers were ostracised and isolated with peers refusing to work with them. (University of York, 2023) Senior officers were successful in prohibiting stories from reaching the media, due to their high rank. Superior officers would order their subordinates to delete any texts, photos, or videos from their phones in fear that it would get to the media. The BAF's main agenda is keeping up the pretence that it is an honourable institution that is to be held in a high regard. Speaking out

against them or attempting to make accusations about abuse or the handling of reports can end up having dire consequences for women. Women who had experienced abuse, bullying, or silencing from the BAF often experience trauma for years after. This often causes mental health problems with attempting and taking their own lives. This is what happened to Jaysley Beck, Anne-Marie Ellement and Olivia Perks.

Beck, Ellement and Perks were all members of the BAF who endured some form of abuse, harassment or bullying during their time serving. Each of the women suffered from the incidents that played a role in the three of taking of them taking their own lives while still serving. Royal Artillery Gunner Jaysley Beck was only nineteen at the time. Her time serving in the BAF was "an intense period of unwelcome behaviour" (University of York, 2023) Beck's immediate boss spent the previous months leading up to her death harassing Beck by sending countless messages. The level of messages reached to 3000 sent from her boss to Beck. The messages consisted of controlling behaviour towards Beck. A report on her death was carried out, however the superior involved was unnamed, evidence again of the BAF protecting their own when higher ranks is involved. Anne-Marie Ellement was the victim of an alleged rape by two male soldiers. On the night it occurred, Ellement was found "nearly naked and crying" (BBC News, 2016) Jeremy Jones and Thomas Fulton were arrested for rape, but the case was dismissed. They were tried in a court martial seven years after the alleged event. However, following the first case dismissal, Ellement's fellow soldiers she worked alongside bullied her for and claimed she made the incident up. She was sent home from an overseas mission in Germany. She took her own life soon after being sent home. The lack of support Ellement received after the abuse, along with the incident itself, were all contributing factors to her suicide. Olivia Perks took her own life due to multiple incidents while serving. Perks had attempted to take her own life once before while being a soldier, a fact that the BAF were aware of. (BBC News, 2023) However, Perks was not monitored as one should be if they are in a vulnerable state and returned to her position two days after her first attempt. Perks was threatened and punished for her actions, being warned that she would lose her role if she continued her behaviour. It is important to note that all three women took their own lives in the barracks they were stationed in.

The levels of abuse women endure from both the IDF and BAF are at a worrying level. The cases of abuse are extreme examples of abuse with long-lasting physical and mental effects. It is a common trait of the examples that a higher rank is involved in the abuse, with cover ups being the norm. It is a clear abuse of power of those in charge with no consideration taken

towards the victims. While it is harrowing to read the cases of abuse, it is vital that they reach media and the public. Without this happening, the level of concern would not exist, and nothing would come of the women coming forward and telling their stories.

3.3 Legal Proceedings and Policies Analysis

3.3.1 Layout of IDF Court Martial

The IDF military court system has three distinct types of court martials. Summary court martial has the less serious offences. The case is decided by a military judge sitting alone. All members of the IDF up to the rank of Commandant can be tried in the Summary Court with the maximum prison sentence being six months. (Military.ie, 2025) A Limited court martial consists of a military judge with at least three members of the IDF on a board which is the equivalent of a jury in a civilian court. Cases held here are for non-commissioned ranks with the maximum sentence of two years. The most serious offences are brought to the General Court Martial. The board has five members with sentences including life imprisonment. Court martials can be held abroad if the defendant is serving abroad.

3.3.2 IDF Policies and Laws

Throughout the years, the IDF have implemented laws and policies to help reduce sexual violence and abuse of female soldiers. In 2023, the Sexual offences and Human Trafficking Bill was passed. (gov.ie, 2024) The passing of this law means that cases that involve rape and aggravated sexual assault are dealt with by An Garda Síochána and prosecuted in a civilian court. (gov.ie, 2024) The IRG - DF was established in January 2022 (gov.ie, 2022) They overlook how effective policies are concerning abuse and bullying within the IDF. Their 2023 report brought about the establishment of an External Oversight Body. (gov.ie, 2023) This is to make the IDF more transparent and accountable. The IDF also undertook a Zero Tolerance Policy so they would be in line with international policies such as the UNSCR 1325.

3.3.3 Examples within IDF

While measures have been taken and polices have been implemented to help reduce the levels of sexual violence in the IDF, women who have experienced military court still have no confidence in the system. Diane Byrne, one of the Women of Honour, described the court martial as a "boys club and you have to be one of the boys, although girls can be one of the boys but you have to one of the chosen, accepted few" (Clifford, 2023) Byrne pointed out that it is a self-regulating body where the military court carry out the investigation themselves and decide the punishment themselves. Byrne also highlighted that the system is used to punish people for speaking up about problems within the IDF. A major flaw was also pointed out in that if a victim does not agree with the verdict decided, it can be appealed through the Court Martial Appeal Court (Clifford, 2023), which again is an internal body which can act as a method to make the problem go away. Cases can be appealed in civilian court, but it does prolong the process, adding more stress to the victim with the accused still being able to work alongside the defendant. The Defence Act 1954, Section 168 is seen as a "catch-all which can be used to cover any range of offences." (Clifford, 2023) Section 168 states that:

> (1) Every person subject to military law who commits any act, conduct, disorder or neglect to the prejudice of good order and discipline is guilty of an offence against military law and shall, on conviction by court-martial, be liable, if an officer, to suffer dismissal from the Defence Forces or any less punishment awardable by a court-martial and, if a man, to suffer imprisonment or any less punishment awardable by a court-martial.
>
> (Defence Act, 1954)

In 2024, Richard Muldarry was given a suspended sentence for sexually assaulting multiple colleagues. (Gallagher, 2024) Muldarry was found guilty of all seven charges he was facing, which included sexual assault, assault, and misconduct. Even though he was found guilty, he was given a suspended sentence due to Col Campion, who was the judge of the case, saying that Muldarry "was previously of good character, had no previous civil convictions of any type, enjoyed strong character references, had a history of charity work and showed remorse for his offending" (Gallagher, 2024) A suspended sentence for multiple counts of sexual violence is a worrying result as if this was tried in a civilian court, the sentence may have resulted differently. Col Campion's comments again prove that the IDF look after one another and this is a clear problem of the court martial being self-regulated.

3.3.4 Layout of BAF Court Martial

The BAF system differs to the IDF by having only one type of court martial. This is the General Court Martial and handles all cases. It includes a military judge and a board of officers. (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, n.d.) However, the BAF is like the IDF as it is a self-regulated system. This was evident in a 2024 case where a senior officer forced himself on a female colleague. (Rod Minchin, 2024) The presiding judge commented that James Roddis' actions "has resulted in the loss of a career that he spent 30 years building – a distinguished career in which he has received a number of citations." (Rod Minchin, 2024) Even though Roddis had assaulted a colleague, his career was still commended on. The BAF military court system had also come under fire for its handling of cases regarding sexual violence. A study carried out found that between January 2018 and April 2024, fewer than a quarter of the 93 cases brought to court martials ended in a guilty verdict. (Norris, 2024) The system is also flawed in that those accused of any sexual misconduct are not suspended while being investigated. (Norris, 2024) This means a female soldier could work alongside someone they have accused of sexual abuse. Only in 2023 were all male military court boards banned. The BAF court martial has seen attempts to improve the system by prioritising accountability and transparency, however women who have experienced military court still express their concerns about the process and even the reluctance to report an incidental at all.

Chapter 4

4.1 Results

4.1.1 True extent of abuse

Conducting this research revealed countless examples of female soldiers detailing their abuse and violence. It is important to point out that these are the examples that have been reported. It has been seen that women were reluctant to come forward or took years to report their incidents. There could still be endless women who have not come forward due to feeling scared of the repercussions. There have also been examples of the IDF and BAF attempting to silence women or prevent them from coming forward. There has also been bullying from peers like seen in the Ellement case that may have caused other women to lose confidence in coming forward. During this research when conducting an internet search on sexual violence within both the IDF and BAF, endless results came up of women telling their stories. The examples have several types of abuse mentioned. These went from forcing themselves on female soldiers, sending threatening texts, rape, exposing themselves and bullying. There were no levels that male soldiers have not lowered themselves to. Even when female soldiers expressed that they had boyfriends or partners, this did not stop abuse coming their way. Sexual violence is common as male soldiers have a high chance of getting away with it. The chain of command will protect them if they are accused. The true extent is that there is a culture that sexual violence is a norm within the IDF and BAF. There are many examples of repeat offences, of male soldiers having multiple charges against them. The same is said for victims, with women experiencing more than one incident of abuse.

4.1.2 Overseas or in Ireland & UK

It has been revealed that incidents occur both in the barracks in Ireland and the UK, but stories examined showed that it happened more so overseas. This was seen as Anne-Marie Ellement was sexually assaulted while on an overseas mission in Germany. (BBC News, 2014) It was also seen in the Women of Honour radio programme. Within the IDF, sexual abuse which occur overseas are investigated by the military court which can play a part into why it occurs more so overseas. As mentioned, the military court does not punish sexual violence harshly, hence why male soldiers feel they can carry it out. When overseas, many factors play a part, the

person a woman reports an incident to, would know the person accused, so the theme of cover ups could occur. It would also be a longer process to report and investigate as it occurred overseas. Peers are also going to defend the abuser, as was seen for Ellement. There is also a drinking culture with a common trait that the woman accusing is punished for drinking alcohol or being drunk, as was seen with Olivia Perks. There are also examples of women drinking being brought up as evidence in court against the victim. The drinking culture creates an idea that anything goes overseas.

4.1.3 Soldiers of a higher rank

There are many examples of male soldiers in a senior role like being a senior officer, being the abuser. However, women of all ranks experience abuse. This was seen with cadet Becks. The chain of command and those in power are greatly to blame for creating this culture.

4.1.4 Flaws in court martial system

As pointed out by the women who experienced it, there are numerous flaws in both IDF and BAF systems. Measures taken out by the IDF, such as the establishment of the IRG have made military court more transparent and accountable. While the Sexual offences and Human Trafficking Bill come into legislation in 2023, the incidents that occurred before the bill was passed are still being investigated by the military police. The accused are not suspended so the possibility for a female victim to work alongside the person they accused is being investigated is still a possibility. The BAF brought in a policy that there could be no all-male board in a court martial, which the IDF must bring in. Both systems focus on the type of career the accuser had, their accomplishments, which should not be taken into consideration. What happened on the day of the incident or the lead up to it should be used as evidence.

4.1.5 Laws or policies added and amended

The IDF implemented the 2023 bill, the establishment of the IRG, which are both vital for transparency. It will hopefully result in fairer trials and confidence in the court martial and IDF from female soldiers' victim of sexual misconduct. External overnight board brought in also with ethics training. The IDF is progressing themselves to help address the problem of female soldier mistreatment. However, Section 168 needs updating as it is used as a scapegoat for

court martial decisions. It was written in 1954, with no mention of women as women could not serve in the IDF at this time. The BAF have brought in polices such as the Zero Tolerance Policy, however no laws have been amended or legislation passed to reduce female abuse. If polices are not adhered to, there are no consequences. Legislation needs to be passed for male soldiers to be punished accordingly and real change to occur.

4.1.6 Services available

In the IDF, there are counselling services and helplines to call if a current or former member of the IDF has been a victim of sexual violence. These include Raiseaconcern (CCP), Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, INSPIRE, the Defence Forces Personnel Support Service (PSS) and the Chaplaincy Service (military.ie, 2024) Ethics training is also provided to members of the IDF as to how to react if an incident has happened to them, if someone comes to them telling of their abuse or if they come across an incident. The BAF also have multiple helplines in place. These include Victim Support, The Survivors Trust, Galop and the Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCS). (Justice, 2022)

4.2 Conclusion

This study has revealed the overarching problem within both the IDF and BAF when it comes to mistreatment of female soldiers and gender-based violence. The hierarchal power that controls both armies is the apparent problem that leads to abuse and violence occurring at all levels of the IDF and BAF. The abuse of power has resulted in a deep misogynistic culture where women are prey. Incidents have occurred to women at a cadet level, such as Jeysley Beck and after serving for multiple years. It even happens to external parties, such as Dr. Shirely Graham.

From the research carried out, the problem lies in every step along the IDF and BAF. From the masculine traits taught at the early steps of recruitment, to the endless accounts of abuse and assault that happen on missions to the highly flawed court martial system for both the UK and Ireland. A culture of silence was key for the IDF and BAF to create, however as time as gone, this culture is being left behind due to the brave women speaking up about their experiences. The ones to continue this culture of silence is the army institutions themselves in their reluctance to carry out independent reviews and continuing to be self-regulated.

Both the IDF and BAF need an upheaval of those in power, extreme punishment to those who carry out any gender-based violence and the removal of any sexual violence cases from the court martial system, all of which could help change the culture of a misogynistic military. Reformative legislation needs to come into effect also, not just the implementation of performative policies

Undertaking this project has been an eye-opening experience on this topic, one I wish there was more awareness of. It is great to see more inquests happening on abuse cases and deaths of female soldiers, as seen just a few days ago on the death of Jeysley Beck. (Mitchell, 2025) This problem needs more people behind it, the public need to be more aware of what these women have gone through so that change can occur. The violence and trauma these women have suffered through should serve as a catalyst for major change to come.

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