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Mann, L.; Feddes, A.R.; Doosje, B.; Fischer, A.H.

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Withdraw or affiliate? The role of humiliation during initiation rituals

Liesbeth Mann, Allard R. Feddes, Bertjan Doosje, and Agneta H. Fischer

Department of Social Psychology, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Initiation rituals can take different forms and empirical evidence is inconsistent as to whether these rituals promote affiliation among novices. We argue that experienced humiliation during initiations leads to less affiliation among novices, in particular when one is initiated as sole group member rather than as part of the group. We examined this hypothesis in three studies, using different paradigms. In Study 1 (*N* = 123), perceived severity of an initiation in the past was associated with *lower* affiliation with other novices; this relationship was mediated by experienced humiliation. Study 2 (*N* = 64) showed that public derogation in the lab led to more humiliation when participants were the only victim than when they were derogated as a group. Study 3 (*N* = 248), a vignette study, showed that a similar effect of social context was mediated by expected support from other novices. We conclude that severe initiations may, due to experienced humiliation, result in less rather than more affiliation with fellow novices.

Keywords: Humiliation; Initiation rituals; Affiliation; Social support; Hazing.

Initiation rituals have been defined as events (or ceremonies) that mark important changes in people's lives, such as birth, puberty, marriage and death (Van Gennep, 1909/1961). Such rituals or "rites de passage" generally consist of symbolic transitions, in which the novice has to perform specific tasks before being integrated into a new environment. These tasks can sometimes be humiliating. For example, a student fraternity may force its newcomers to crawl through a muddy field wearing only their underwear, while someone curses and yells at them, holding a dog leash that is tied around their neck. Meanwhile, other people are watching and laughing. Such activities that humiliate, degrade, abuse or endanger, regardless of a person's willingness to participate (Hoover, 1999, p. 8), have been referred to as "hazing". Hazing practices have been justified by the assumption that the experiences create strong affiliation between novices and subsequently socialise them into the group.

The question is whether this assumption is correct. Previous research on initiation rituals containing hazing showed mixed evidence, finding no, or even the opposite effect, namely that perceived severity of initiations is related to *less*

Correspondence should be addressed to: Liesbeth Mann and Agneta H. Fischer, Department of Social Psychology, University of Amsterdam, Weesperplein 4, 1018 XA Amsterdam, The Netherlands. E-mails: l.mann@uva.nl and a.h.fischer@uva.nl

liking of the other newcomers with whom novices went through the initiation (e.g., Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997, 2001). We propose that experienced humiliation is an important explanation for this negative, rather than positive, relation. In the current research, we examine the role of humiliation during initiations in different social contexts.

The function of initiation rituals

The French anthropologist Van Gennep (1909/ 1961) distinguished three phases characterising most, if not all, initiation rituals. In the *separation* phase, the novice is set apart from his previous social group, sometimes symbolically dying to be "reborn" into a new environment. What follows is an "in between", or *transition* phase, in which the novice may have to perform difficult tasks and endure several challenges. Finally, during the *incorporation* phase, the novice, who now has a new identity and status, is reintegrated in his environment. In student fraternities, in particular the transition phase may involve effortful and humiliating practices that are forced upon the novices to socialise them into the group (Keating et al., 2005; Klein, 1991; Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997, 2001; Lodewijkx, Van Zomeren, & Syroit, 2005; Van Raalte, Cornelius, Linder, & Brewer, 2007; Waldron & Kowalski, 2009; Waldron, Lynn, & Krane, 2011; Winslow, 1999). Such practices typically include forced excessive alcohol consumption, physical abuse (i.e., hitting, being thrown or forced to crawl in mud or dirt, being urinated on, being tied up with duct tape, forced to eat or drink repulsive substances) and being forced to fake or perform (homo) sexual acts (e.g., Waldron et al., 2011; Winslow, 1999). Severe initiation rituals have a long tradition (e.g., Winslow, 1999) and seem quite resistant to change, presumably because of the idea that it positively affects affiliation with fellow victims.

Two lines of social-psychological research are usually offered to explain the hypothesised positive effects of severe initiations (Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997, 2001). The first, the "severity-attraction hypothesis" (Aronson & Mills, 1959), assumes

that severity of initiations is positively related to liking of a group. In their classic study, Aronson and Mills (1959) asked female participants who volunteered to join a discussion-group, to read out loud either obscene words (severe condition) or more neutral words (mild condition) to a male experimenter, or they did not read out anything (control condition). The participants were told that they had to be tested in this way to become a member of the group. After this initiation they listened to a recording of one of the group's discussions that turned out to be very boring. Importantly, in reality this group did not exist and participants never interacted with each other during the experiment, they could only judge the group on the basis of the recording. The researchers found that participants in the severe condition indicated to like the group and its members more than participants in the mild or control condition. This effect was interpreted as the result of dissonance reduction (Festinger, 1957); having to endure an embarrassing test to become member of a boring group arouses dissonance. To reduce this dissonance, participants raised their evaluation of the group.

The second explanation for the potential affiliation effect of initiations is based on research by Schachter (1959), who showed that people under threat have a stronger need for affiliation than people in non-threatening situations. This "severity-affiliation-attraction hypothesis" posits that perceived (or anticipated) severity of an initiation causes more attraction of the group because of a stronger need for affiliation amongst the novices (e.g., Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997, 2001; Lodewijkx et al., 2005). Somewhat related to this is the idea that more severe initiations lead to more group conformation and cohesion (e.g., Van Raalte et al., 2007; Waldron et al., 2011; Waldron & Kowalski, 2009).

Both explanations thus propose that severe initiations lead to more cohesion or group liking but they have actually received little support in studies on real initiations. These studies showed that severe initiations do not lead to more liking or affiliation with a group and, in some instances, even result in *less* group liking or team cohesion (e.

g., Lodwijkx & Syroit, 1997, 2001; Van Raalte et al., 2007; Waldron & Kowalski, 2009). For instance, in two longitudinal field studies of real-life initiations of two sororities, Lodwijkx and Syroit (1997, 2001) tested both the "severity-attraction hypothesis" (Aronson & Mills, 1959) and the "severity-affiliation-attraction hypothesis" based on Schachter (1959). They did not find support for either hypothesis. In contrast, they found a *negative* rather than a positive relationship between reported severity of the initiation and attractiveness of the group, a relationship that was mediated by frustration, loneliness and depressive mood. In line with this finding, Van Raalte and colleagues (2007) found that the more hazing respondents had to endure, or observed others being subjected to, the less cohesive they perceived their team to be in sport-related tasks.

To date no clear explanation has been tested for these contradictory results. Building on findings by Lodewijkx and Syroit (1997, 2001) that negative emotions are involved, we argue that particularly humiliation plays a crucial role during initiations, as this emotion may decrease rather than increase affiliative tendencies.

The role of humiliation during initiation rituals

Humiliation is generally considered a very negative emotional experience (e.g., Mann, Feddes, Leiser, Doosje, & Fischer, 2015). It is defined as "the deep dysphoric feeling associated with being, or perceiving oneself as being unjustly degraded, ridiculed, or put down—in particular, one's identity has been demeaned or devalued" (Hartling & Luchetta, 1999, p. 264). Humiliation is linked to psychosocial problems and mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, aggression and delinquency (see Elison & Harter, 2007; Harter, 2012; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Klein, 1991). Because hazing practices have been defined as activities that elicit humiliation (Hoover, 1999), we expect that the more initiation rituals contain hazing practices, the more humiliating they are. This would also imply that the perceived severity of an initiation ritual is related to the extent to which one feels humiliated, whether one is forced to eat disgusting food, to sit still for hours or to wear a funny T-shirt. We thus expect that the key feature of perceived severity is not the actual hardship or difficulty of the task, but the extent to which one *feels* humiliated. The concept of severity is thus quite broad and may encompass mentally or physically degrading experiences, which we think can both relate to humiliation.

One of the core assumptions behind potentially positive effects of initiation rituals is that the experience creates strong affiliation between novices, because being in a stressful situation with others facing the same stressors would lead one to seek the company of those others. We propose, however, that the elicitation of humiliation may have an opposite effect on one's relation with others, namely to seek withdrawal because one feels ashamed. Previous research has shown that humiliation often consists of a blend of anger and shame (e.g., Mann et al., 2015). Whereas anger and revenge tendencies may be stronger when focusing on the victim–perpetrator relationship (e.g., Harter, 2012), shame and withdrawal tendencies may be stronger when focusing on the relations *between fellow victims* in the group. In situations of public derogation, humiliation thus seems more strongly associated with shame and tendencies to withdraw from, rather than engage with fellow victims. In other words, stronger experiences of humiliation during an initiation ritual would lead to less rather than more affiliation with fellow novices. Whether a humiliating experience would also lead to less affiliation in the long run, and thus to reduced affiliation or even abandonment of this same group is less evident, because there are many factors that may influence the long-term effects of humiliation.

Another element in the initiation ritual that has received less attention is the *social* context of the emotional experience. In many initiation rituals novices are derogated in a group, together with others of the same status (Klein, 1991). However, it may also happen that only one individual is picked out of the group and degraded in front of

his or her peers. Because the in-group of fellow victims then suddenly becomes an audience of people who may laugh at you, we expect that feelings of humiliation in such situations increase (e.g., Elison & Harter, 2007; Mann et al., 2015). In such a context derogation may be most detrimental in terms of group affiliation, because humiliation may not be reduced as a consequence of experienced social support and feelings of "being in the same boat". There is indeed ample evidence that social support from friends or family can function as a buffer in stressful situations (e.g., Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; Taylor, 2011). To our knowledge, previous research on initiation rituals has not focused on the role of social context (i.e., being initiated individually in front of the group versus being initiated together with other novices).

In sum, we investigate six hypotheses that are graphically depicted in Figure 1. First, the perceived severity of an initiation, whether mental or physical, is positively related to humiliation and the tendency to withdraw from the group and negatively to affiliation with fellow novices (Hypothesis 1a, Hypothesis 1b and Hypothesis 1c respectively; Study 1). Second, humiliation is negatively related to affiliation with fellow victims and positively to withdrawal from the group (Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b; Study 1–3). Third, the relation between perceived severity and decreased affiliation is mediated by experienced humiliation (Hypothesis 3; Study 1). Fourth, being derogated as a group evokes less humiliation

than being derogated as an individual target within the group (Hypothesis 4; Study 2 and 3), and fifth, this effect can be explained by expected social support from fellow novices (Hypothesis 5; Study 2 and 3). Lastly, being derogated as a group also leads to more affiliation towards fellow victims and less withdrawal tendencies (Hypothesis 6a and 6b respectively; Study 2 and 3) than being derogated as individual target within the group.

We test these hypotheses in three studies, using different methods. For Study 1, we collected autobiographical reports of people who underwent an initiation ritual in order to become member of a fraternity or sorority. Study 2 was a lab study in which participants joined a group-assignment that was either derogating or non-derogating and this derogation was either directed at the whole group or only at one participant in the group. Study 3 consisted of vignettes in which we manipulated social context (individual versus group target) and the type of humiliating event (only mental versus a combination of physical and mental humiliation) during an initiation.

STUDY 1

We asked members of a fraternity or sorority in the Netherlands, who had been part of an initiation ritual in the past, to recall this experience, the extent to which they felt humiliated during the time and several other feelings, perceptions and behavioural tendencies. We hypothesised that the
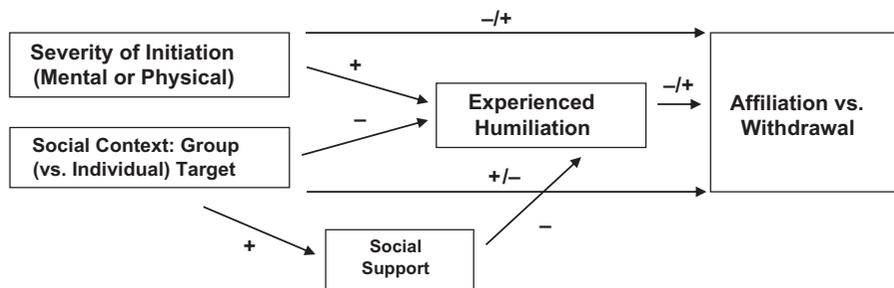

Figure 1. Model of the hypothesised relationships between severity (mental or physical) of the initiation, social context (group versus individual target), expected social support, experienced humiliation, affiliation with fellow novices and withdrawal tendencies. A plus (+) sign indicates a hypothesised positive relationship, a minus (−) sign indicates a hypothesised negative relationship.

perceived (mental and physical) severity of an initiation is positively related to reported humiliation (Hypothesis 1a) and withdrawal tendencies (Hypothesis 1b), and negatively to affiliation with fellow novices (Hypothesis 1c). Further, we hypothesised that humiliation is negatively associated with affiliation (Hypothesis 2a) and positively with withdrawal from fellow victims (Hypothesis 2b) and that the intensity of humiliation mediates the negative relationship between severity of the initiation and affiliation (Hypothesis 3).

METHOD

Respondents

One hundred and twenty-four current members and alumni of a fraternity or sorority in the Netherlands who had been part of an initiation ritual in the past filled out the questionnaire. One of them indicated that he did not respond seriously; therefore, his data were discarded. Thus, the final sample consisted of 123 respondents (42 male, 81 female) with a mean age of 25.46 (SD = 5.01; range: 19–54).[1] All respondents were either active member or alumnus of a Dutch fraternity or sorority and they had all experienced an initiation to become a member of this organisation.

Procedure

Most respondents were directly approached via email by a student who was member of a big sorority in Amsterdam (AVSV) and therefore had access to contact details of other members. In addition, respondents of other fraternities and sororities were approached via the snowball method and Facebook. They were not paid, but

we raffled off 50 euros under the respondents. Respondents were requested to fill out the questionnaire *only* if they had ever experienced an initiation ritual to become member of a fraternity or sorority. The questionnaire was administered online. After completion, respondents were thanked and debriefed.

Questionnaire

Unless specified otherwise, for all items, respondents were requested to indicate their agreement with a statement, ranging from 1 "not at all" to 7 "very much".

General questions

We started the questionnaire with general questions about respondents' membership of the fraternity or sorority. The main reason for this is that we did not want to deter respondents by starting with potentially sensitive topics such as humiliation. For the current manuscript, we did not use the data these questions generated.[2]

Mental and physical severity

Severity of the initiation was measured by the following two questions: "How tough was the mental ordeal?" and "How tough was the physical ordeal?" The correlation between the two items was positive (r = .44, p < .001).

Humiliation

Respondents were asked to recall the initiation period and to report to what extent they experienced several aspects of humiliation during this period. For this, 10 items of Hartling and Luchetta's (1999) Humiliation Inventory, namely: "put down", "laughed at", "bullied", "scorned",

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[1] Sixteen of these respondents stopped filling out the questionnaire when they were asked for a description of their most humiliating experience during the initiation. We did use the first part of their data. There were also 30 respondents who opened the questionnaire, but only filled out the first demographic questions and then quit. Data of these participants were not used.

[2] In addition, we measured several other variables in all three studies, namely state self-esteem, group identification, different emotion labels and behavioural intentions and general questions about (attitudes of) membership in fraternities/ sororities and involvement in hazing practices. We do not report the results for these variables; however, data of these measures may be obtained from the first author upon request.

Table 1. *Descriptives and correlations between reported humiliation (1), mental severity (2), physical severity (3), affiliation with fellows during the initiation (4), affiliation with fellows right now (5) and withdrawal tendencies (6), Study 1*

	Mean (SD)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Humiliation (1)	3.71 (1.28)	–					
Mental severity (2)	4.41 (1.60)	.62***	–				
Physical severity (3)	4.23 (1.47)	.44***	.44***	–			
Affiliation with fellow novices during initiation (4)	4.87 (1.10)	−.33***	−.21*	−.08	–		
Affiliation with fellow novices right now (5)	5.53 (1.22)	−.04	.12	.12	.27**	–	
Withdrawal tendencies (6)	3.50 (1.62)	.50***	.45***	.26**	−.22*	−.06	–

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

"excluded", "ridiculed", "harassed", "embarrassed", "cruelly criticised" and "called names", were selected and translated into Dutch. We used these labels in 10 sentences starting with: "During the initiation I experienced being…". These items formed a highly reliable scale (Cronbach's α = .91). After this measure we asked respondents to describe a specific event that they remembered as being the most humiliating during the initiation.

Affiliation

We asked respondents how they would describe the contact between them and their fellow victims *during the initiation* and *at this moment* on four dimensions: closeness, superficiality, pleasantness and equality. Reliability of both scales was good (Cronbach's α = .76 and .85, respectively).[3]

Withdrawal tendencies

Respondents were asked to what extent the following feelings and action tendencies were evoked by the humiliating event they described: shame (subjective feeling) and the tendencies to walk away and to hide.[4] These items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's α = .68), which we have labelled as withdrawal tendencies.

RESULTS

To investigate Hypotheses 1 and 2 we examined correlations between experienced humiliation, perceived severity, affiliation and withdrawal tendencies. To test Hypothesis 3, we investigated whether the expected negative relation between severity and affiliation was mediated by experienced humiliation via a bootstrapping procedure.

Main analyses

Correlations

In Table 1, correlations between the mean scores for all variables are reported. As expected (Hypothesis 1a), both mental (r = .62) and physical (r = .44) severity were positively related to humiliation. However, mental severity was more strongly related to humiliation than physical severity $t(120)$ = −2,50, p = .007. Moreover, only mental and not physical severity of the initiation was negatively related to affiliation with fellow victims (r = −.21) at the time of the initiation (Hypothesis 1c). Both types of severity were positively related to withdrawal tendencies (Hypothesis 1b). No correlations were found with respect to the *current* affiliation with fellow victims or withdrawal from the group. In line with Hypothesis 2a and 2b, humiliation was negatively

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[3] We asked the same questions with regard to members of the fraternity/sorority in general, also during the initiation and at this moment (Cronbach's α = .84 and .79, respectively). Results may be obtained from the first author upon request.

[4] In all three studies we also measured anger and tendencies to aggress against the initiator (Study 1 and 3) or derogator (Study 2). Correlations between these measures and humiliation are all positive and significant, ranging from r = .24 to r = .75.
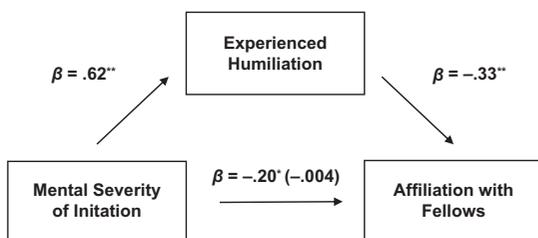
Figure 2. *Relationship between perceived mental severity of initiation and perceived affiliation with fellow victims, mediated by experienced humiliation.* $*p < .05$; $**p < .001$.
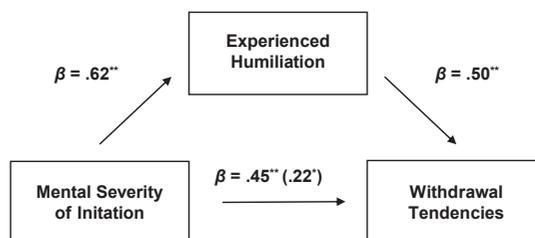

Figure 3. *Relationship between perceived mental severity of initiation and a tendency to withdraw from the group, mediated by experienced humiliation.* $*p < .05$; $**p < .001$.

related to affiliation from fellow victims and positively to withdrawal tendencies.

Mediation of humiliation on affiliation and withdrawal tendencies

To examine if the relation between mental severity and affiliation with fellow victims could be explained by reported intensity of humiliation (Hypothesis 3), we performed bootstrap analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Based on 5000 bootstrapped samples, we found that the indirect (mediated) effect was significant, as zero was not included in the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (lower CI = −.26; upper CI = −.03). Thus, in line with our expectations, humiliation significantly mediated the negative relationship between perceived mental severity and affiliation with fellows during the initiation (see Figure 2).

As we also found a positive relationship between mental severity and a tendency to withdraw, we performed a similar bootstrap analysis to inspect if humiliation mediated this relation. Based on 5000 bootstrapped samples, we found that the indirect (mediated) effect was significant, as zero was not included in the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (lower CI = .10; upper CI = .37). Thus, experienced humiliation could also partly explain the negative relation between mental severity and withdrawal tendencies (see Figure 3).

Content analysis

With a more exploratory aim we content-analysed respondents' descriptions of their most humiliating

experiences during the initiation. These experiences were coded independently by two researchers in terms of humiliating versus non-humiliating incidents, physical versus mental humiliation, being humiliated alone versus being humiliated together with the group and being humiliated in public versus private. One of the most important findings of this analysis was that respondents reported stronger experiences of humiliation when they described being humiliated individually—in front of the others—than when they described being humiliated together with other novices. Furthermore, respondents described both physical and mental variants of humiliation.

DISCUSSION

Study 1 partly confirmed our first three hypotheses and showed that both perceived mental and physical severity of an initiation in fraternities and sororities are related to more intense humiliation, although mental severity was more strongly related to humiliation than physical severity. Perceived severity was also related to lower affiliation with fellow victims of the initiation ritual; however, this only applied to mentally severe and not to physically severe initiation rituals. This may be explained by our finding that mentally severe initiations evoke stronger humiliation, compared to physically severe initiations, which may be enduring, but less mentally degrading. We will examine the role of mental and physical hardship further in Study 3. Most importantly, the relationship between perceived mental hardship and a

decrease in affiliation can be explained by experienced humiliation during the initiation. Both perceived severity and reported humiliation are positively correlated with tendencies to withdraw from the group, which forms further evidence for the non-affiliative effects of severe initiations. Moreover, experienced humiliation partly mediated the negative relation between perceived mental severity and tendencies to withdraw. Interestingly, no relationship was found between the perceived severity of the ritual and current affiliation with fellow victims, suggesting that whereas the effects of humiliating initiations are very negative in the short term, they may be absent in the long term.

This first study offers data that are ecologically valid, because they relate to real events and experiences. However, there are also some limitations. First, the data are based on recollections of events. The initiation event itself, and especially subsequent experiences with the sorority or fraternity, may have produced biases in the reports. A second limitation is that the data are correlational, which makes it difficult to draw causal conclusions. For example, it is not clear if experiences of humiliation led to less affiliation, or that low affiliation caused people to experience the initiation as more humiliating. Third, our method of data collection may have led to a selection bias. This is always a risk in (online) research but may be especially so in the current study because members of a fraternity or sorority are not supposed to disclose negative aspects of their organisation. It could well be that precisely those people who experienced humiliation during the initiation were also more inclined to break this code of honour and openly discuss their negative experiences. We aimed to overcome these limitations in the next two studies, by standardising the nature of the humiliating event and using a different sample of participants.

STUDY 2

One factor that may cause initiations to be experienced as less humiliating is the social context, because victims may find comfort in being together with other victims. In Study 2 we focused on this potential beneficial effect of the social setting. To this end we enacted a mild form of public derogation in the lab. Participants joined a group-dance session and the experimenter gave either no feedback (Control condition) or derogative feedback on their performance. This feedback was either directed at the whole group (Group condition) or at one participant in the group (Individual condition). Our choice for a dance session for this experiment was inspired by research by Hawk, Fischer, and van Kleef (2011) who used dancing performances to evoke a sense of embarrassment. Because in the current experiment we wanted to evoke humiliation rather than embarrassment, we included degrading feedback in the experimental sessions.

Based on earlier research showing that social support can form a buffer against aversive events (e.g., Haslam et al., 2005), we hypothesised that public derogation is experienced as less humiliating in the Group condition than in the Individual condition (Hypothesis 4), and we expected that this decreased effect of group derogation compared to individual derogation can be explained by expected social support from fellow novices (Hypothesis 5). In line with this, we expected that affiliation towards other group members is stronger and the tendency to withdraw from the group is weaker in the Group condition than in the Individual condition (Hypothesis 6a and 6b, respectively). Finally, we again predicted that humiliation is negatively associated with affiliation and positively with withdrawal from fellow victims (Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b).

METHOD

Participants and design

Eighty-four females aged 18–35 (mean: 21.27, $SD = 2.85$) subscribed to the experiment. Of these participants, 31% were first year Psychology students, the others were either more advanced Psychology students, other students or they did not study. They were rewarded with course credits or 5 Euros. Participants joined the experiment in

groups of three people (i.e., two real participants and one confederate) and were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: Control (no feedback), Individual (negative feedback to only one of the participants), Group (negative feedback to the whole group) and Witness (consisting of the participants who witnessed the feedback of another participant in the Individual condition). We do not report the Witness condition here; therefore, the final sample that we analysed consisted of 64 participants.[5]

Materials and procedure

Two rooms were used for the experiment. The first room was equipped with a DVD-player and a camera. The second room was empty, except for three chairs. The experimenters were two female second year Psychology students. They were trained to provide identical instructions to all participants. Two female confederates, also second year Psychology students, alternately joined the experiment and pretended they were participants as well (they attended the experiment in the same way as the real participants). Thus each session consisted of two real participants and one confederate. These confederates were also trained to play their role as naturally and consistently as possible. The experiment was called "Rhythm: Nature or Nurture?" and participants were told that the research was about the influence of sense of rhythm on collective task performance. Upon arrival in the lab, the two participants and the confederate (from now on: "participants") were led into the room with the DVD-player and camera and they read instructions explaining that they would perform rhythmical movements based on ancient African dances with the goal of sensing each other's movements in such a way that they could start moving "as one". Participants were told that the purpose was to see if this would lead to better group performance on a task

that they would perform afterwards. They also read that this dance session was filmed for later purposes. This was meant to induce a stronger feeling of publicity, but in reality the camera was not recording.

After participants finished reading, the experimenter showed them the dance movements that they should perform (i.e., standing widely and stamping the feet, shaking the hips and waving the arms in the air) and they practised them together. Subsequently, the experimenter turned on African music and told participants to start dancing. After one minute and 20 seconds, the experimenter turned off the music. In the Control condition no feedback was given and participants were told that they would now move on to the next task. In the Individual condition one of the two "real" participants was told that she performed this task very badly and that the experimenter thought she had no sense of rhythm at all. In order to randomise the target of the individual feedback as much as possible, this feedback was always given to the participant who came in the lab first. The experimenter made sure that she made the comment sound derogative but not too much.[6] In the Group condition the same feedback was directed to all three participants (for the exact wording of the feedback see Appendix).

After the dance session, the experimenter brought the confederate and the real participants to the second room where they could fill out a questionnaire about their reactions to the dance session and the feedback they received. They were also instructed not to talk to each other. After they finished, the experimenter thoroughly debriefed participants and the confederate revealed herself. They both made sure that participants were fully aware that the feedback was unrelated to their real performance and they did not feel uncomfortable in any way. In total, the experiment took about 30 minutes.

[5] These results are not reported in the present study because in this condition psychological phenomena other than the one we are focusing on in the current research may be at work. However, data can be requested from the first author. Importantly, all analyses show the same pattern if this condition is included.

[6] We did this for ethical reasons, but also to make the episode more credible, as we feared that a very derogative comment would have probably raised suspicion in this setting.

Measures

Unless mentioned otherwise, all questions were answered on 7-point scales ranging from 1 "*not at all*" to 7 "*very much*".

Humiliation

Humiliation was measured with seven translated items from Hartling and Luchetta's (1999) "Humiliation Inventory", starting with the sentence: "In this situation I felt…". The items were "cruelly criticised", "bullied", "scorned", "put down", "laughed at" "unfairly treated" and "ridiculed", and they were selected based on their relevance to the situation. To these seven items we added the specific emotion label "humiliated". This scale was highly reliable (Cronbach's α = .93).

Expected social support

Five items based on Doeglas et al. (1996) and translated into Dutch measured expected social support, i.e., "How strongly do you expect that the other participants will…"sympathise with you", "want to make you feel at ease", "want to reassure you", "want to support you" or "want to ridicule you" (reverse scored). Reliability was good (Cronbach's α = .84).

Affiliation

The current experiment did not allow us to measure group affiliation in exactly the same way as in Study 1, as it concerned a one-time interaction (rather than a sequence of interactions over a prolonged period of time, as is generally the case during initiations).[7] Therefore, we used a different self-report measure, tapping (need for) affiliation with 10 items based on Hill's (1987) Interpersonal Orientation Scale (subscale: Need for Emotional Support) which we translated into Dutch (e.g., "I tried to stay close to the other group members"). This scale was reliable (Cronbach's α = .81).

Withdrawal tendencies

In the current study we used a more elaborate measure of withdrawal tendencies than in Study 1. We measured these tendencies (i.e., "I wanted to become invisible", "I wanted to walk away", "I wanted to crawl away and hide in a corner") and feelings (e.g., "In this situation I felt ashamed", "In this situation I felt embarrassed")[8] with five items. This scale was highly reliable (Cronbach's α = .87).

RESULTS

In this experiment subjects participated in groups and we analysed data of two participants from each group (the third participant was a confederate, so we obviously did not use her data). This means the design involved two levels (participants were nested within groups), thus the data were hierarchical. As a result residual scores of participants within a group may be correlated, which violates the assumption of independent observations. Thus, the data analyses required multilevel modelling to investigate whether the social context of the derogation influenced reports on the dependent measures. As it concerned a simple two-level hierarchy we used SPSS (version 20.0) and followed the procedure described in Field (2013). For each dependent measure (i.e., humiliation, social support, affiliation and withdrawal tendencies) we compared the fit of a random intercept ($\mathrm{Var}(u_{0j})$) model with a fully fixed model [a regular analysis of variance (ANOVA)] with Social Context (Control, Individual and Group) as independent variable and the group participants belonged to as the contextual variable.

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[7] We also included a behavioural measure of affiliation (distance of participant chair to confederate chair). However, we faced some problems with the measurement of this variable and the data very likely became inaccurate. When included in the analyses, we found no effect on this measure and no relation with other variables.

[8] Although we are aware of differences between embarrassment and shame, we decided to use both emotion labels in one scale. We had two reasons for this. First, in Dutch, these emotion labels have more similar meanings than in English. This was also confirmed by a strong positive relation between these items (r = .48, p < .001). Second, the current research was not aimed at testing possible differences between shame and embarrassment in the context of initiations.

The relationship between Social Context and humiliation showed no significant intercept variance across participants, $Var(u_{0j})$ = .03, $\chi^2(1)$ = .01, p > .10. The same was true for the relationship between Social Context and expected social support, $Var(u_{0j})$ = .00, $\chi^2(1)$ = 0, p > .10, the relationship between Social Context and affiliation, $Var(u_{0j})$ = .00, $\chi^2(1)$ = 0, p > .10 and the relationship between Social Context and withdrawal tendencies, $Var(u_{0j})$ = .07, $\chi^2(1)$ = .06, p > .10. This indicated that residual scores of participants within groups were uncorrelated (i.e., the groups participants were in had no influence on their scores) thus we could analyse our data using regular ANOVAs, correlation analyses and bootstrapping to test the hypothesised and exploratory effects.

Humiliation

Correlations between humiliation and all other variables are reported in Table 2. Contrary to Hypothesis 2a, we found no significant relationship between humiliation and affiliation (r = .12, p = .34). In line with Hypothesis 2b, however, we found a strong positive relationship between humiliation and withdrawal tendencies (r = .70, p < .001). We next performed an ANOVA with Social Context (Individual, Group and Control) as factor and humiliation as dependent variable (for means and standard deviations see Table 3). There was a significant effect, $F(2, 61)$ = 19.07, p < .001, η_p^2 = .385. Standard simple contrasts revealed that participants in the Control condition reported significantly less humiliation than participants in the Individual and in the Group conditions (both ps < .001). Furthermore, repeated contrasts indicated

Table 2. *Correlations between reports of Humiliation (1), Affiliation (2), Expected Social Support (3) and Withdrawal Tendencies (4), Study 2*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Humiliation (1)	–			
Affiliation (2)	.12	–		
Expected Social Support (3)	.09	.47*	–	
Withdrawal Tendencies (4)	.70*	.07	.13	–

*p < .001.

that participants in the Individual condition reported more humiliation than participants in the Group condition (p = .023), confirming Hypothesis 4.

Mediation of social support on humiliation

We examined whether expected social support was stronger in the Individual versus Group condition by conducting an ANOVA with Social Context as factor and expected social support as dependent variable (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). There was no main effect of Social Context, $F(2, 61)$ = .38, p = .689, η_p^2 = .012. Testing only the difference between the Individual and the Group conditions also showed no effect (p = .994). Because we did not find differences between Group and Individual derogation on social support, we could not test for a mediation of social support. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was not confirmed.

Affiliation

An ANOVA was performed with Social Context as factor and self-reported affiliation as dependent variable (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). There was no main effect of Social Context, $F(2, 61)$ = .29, p = .750, η_p^2 = .009, and testing only the difference between the Individual and the Group conditions showed no effect

Table 3. *Means and standard deviations for reported Humiliation, Affiliation, Expected Social Support and Withdrawal Tendencies divided by Social Context (Control, Individual and Group), Study 2*

	Social Context		
	Control M (SD)	Individual M (SD)	Group M (SD)
Humiliation	1.41 (0.67)[a]	3.43 (1.06)[b]	2.66 (1.38)[c]
Affiliation	5.14 (0.87)[a]	4.99 (0.67)[a]	5.17 (0.91)[a]
Expected Social Support	4.99 (0.78)[a]	5.18 (0.84)[a]	5.18 (0.88)[a]
Withdrawal Tendencies	2.23 (0.76)[a]	3.80 (1.30)[b]	2.95 (1.23)[c]

Note: Means in one row with different superscripts differ at least at p < .05.

(p = .476). Thus, Hypothesis 6a could not be confirmed.

Withdrawal tendencies

An ANOVA with tendencies to withdraw as dependent variable revealed a significant effect, $F(2, 61)$ = 10.38, $p < .001$, η_p^2 = .254 (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). Simple contrasts showed that participants in the Individual and Group conditions reported more withdrawal tendencies than participants in the Control condition ($p < .001$ and p =.037, respectively). Furthermore, participants in the Individual condition reported a significantly stronger tendency to withdraw than participants in the Group condition (p = .016). Thus Hypothesis 6b was confirmed.

Mediation of humiliation on withdrawal tendencies

Because we found that the tendency to withdraw was stronger for participants in the Individual condition versus the Group condition, we explored whether this difference was mediated by experienced humiliation. We selected only the participants in the Individual and Group conditions (n = 42) and performed bootstrap analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Based on 5000 bootstrapped samples, we found that the indirect (mediated) effect was significant, as zero was not included in the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (lower CI = −1.0371; upper CI = −.0226). Thus, humiliation mediated the effect of Social Context (Individual versus Group derogation) on the tendency to withdraw.

DISCUSSION

This study supports the idea that public derogation targeted at one person within a group leads to stronger feelings of humiliation than public derogation of the whole group. In addition, derogation of one person also resulted in a stronger tendency to withdraw from the group compared to group derogation. This withdrawal

tendency was strongly related to humiliation and the effect of the social context on withdrawal was mediated by reported intensity of humiliation. Unexpectedly, we did not find expected social support to be stronger in the group condition and thus, it could not mediate the effect of social context on humiliation. Furthermore, affiliation did not vary depending on social context and it was not significantly related to reported humiliation. This may be explained by the experimental context and the artificial nature of the group and, most importantly, by the short-term character of the interaction, lacking a motivation for long-term bonding. The group members in the experiment were mostly strangers and did not form an actual group in real life, and thus questions about affiliation and expected social support may have appeared rather artificial, because participants knew that the existence of the group was only short term and in the context of lab research. In fraternities novices usually get to know one another before the initiation starts and they have certain expectancies about the outcomes of the initiation and the interrelationships after the initiation. In such contexts, affiliation and social support become more relevant, which may then result in different patterns of these variables depending on the social context of the initiation ritual.

Finally, for ethical reasons we used mild forms of derogation in this study, which may have had less strong effects than initiations in real life where hazing can be much more intense and prolonged, and the resulting feelings of humiliation may be more consequential with regard to affiliation. One way to examine and experimentally manipulate stronger forms of hazing without causing damage to participants is by using vignettes. Thus, to further investigate the potential role of expected social support and affiliation after humiliating experiences, we used vignettes in Study 3.

STUDY 3

In Study 3 we created imaginary situations, reflecting the nature of an initiation better than

what could be (ethically) feasible in a lab. On the basis of respondents' descriptions of both physically and mentally humiliating experiences during initiations in Study 1, we wrote vignettes in which we manipulated different social contexts (individual versus group target) and different types of humiliating events (only mental versus both physical and mental).

Our finding in Study 1 that perceived mental severity seems to have a stronger impact during initiations than perceived physical severity could be due to other aspects of the recollected event. This raised the question if this finding would hold if we would manipulate the nature of the humiliation event and standardise all other aspects of the initiation context. Thus, in the current study we manipulated whether the humiliating event (Event) was purely mental in nature (Mental), or also contained elements of physical humiliation (Physical and Mental) or was not humiliating (Control), trying to keep all the other aspects of the event as similar as possible. In line with findings of Study 1, we anticipated that both purely mental and a combination of physical and mental humiliating events would lead to more humiliation compared to the control condition and that there would be no difference between the two experimental conditions (i.e., adding a physical aspect does not make a strong difference with regard to humiliation). We further hypothesised that humiliation would be negatively associated with affiliation and positively with withdrawal from fellow victims (Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b).

In addition, we aimed to replicate the finding in Study 2 that group derogation elicits less intense experiences of humiliation than individual derogation in a group context (Hypothesis 4). We further predicted that expected social support mediates the relationship between Social Context (group vs. individual derogation) and reported humiliation (Hypothesis 5). Finally, we wanted to further examine the role of affiliation with fellow victims and withdrawal from the group. We again hypothesised that affiliation towards other group members is stronger and the tendency to withdraw from the group is weaker when the derogation is targeted at the whole group (Group condition) than when one is the only target in a group context (Individual condition; Hypothesis 6a and 6b respectively).

METHOD

Participants and procedure

Two hundred and sixty-two people filled in the online questionnaire. Ten of them did not answer our check question (see below) correctly, and four indicated to have not participated in a serious manner. Thus, a total of 248 participants (178 male, 70 female, aged 18–67, $M = 26.72$, $SD = 7.63$) remained. Participants were from the USA and they were recruited via the Amazon-website: "Mechanical Turk". When they started the questionnaire called: "Student organisations" they were requested to read a short text and imagine the situation described as if they were the protagonist. Then they were asked to complete a series of questions about their reactions in this situation. They were paid 0.50 dollar for their participation.

Vignettes and design

All vignettes started with the same introduction, in which the protagonist subscribes to a student organisation and joins an initiation ritual. This initiation event is described as either tough, but not humiliating (Control), as only mentally humiliating (Mental), or as both physically and mentally humiliating (Physical & Mental). Furthermore, the protagonist either goes through the initiation alone or with a group of novices. Thus, we had a 2 (Social Context: Individual versus Group) × 3 (Event: Control vs. Mental vs. Physical & Mental) between subjects design (see Appendix for the exact wording of the vignettes).

Measures

Unless mentioned otherwise, all questions were answered on 7-point scales that ranged from 1 "*not at all*" to 7 "*very much*".

Check

We checked if the participants read the story carefully by asking them the following questions: "What did the board members instruct you to do?" (Four possible answers: "to run", "to sing a song", "to eat a hamburger", "to do push-ups"), and: "Was this instruction directed at you alone or at the whole group of novices?" (Two possible answers: "only at me", "at the whole group of novices").[9]

Humiliation

To measure humiliation we used five items of Hartling and Luchetta's (1999) "Humiliation Inventory", namely "bullied", "scorned", "laughed at", "ridiculed" and "put down". All items started with the sentence: "In this situation, I would feel…". We added the emotion label "humiliation" to this scale.[10] Reliability of the scale was high (Cronbach's α = .95).

Expected social support

The same five items as used in Study 2 measured expected social support (e.g., "How strongly do you expect that the other novices would make you feel at ease"?). Reliability of this scale was good (Cronbach's α = .85).

Affiliation

Three items from the affiliation scale used in Study 2 measured need for affiliation (e.g., "In this situation, I would find comfort in being together with the other novices"). This scale was highly reliable (Cronbach's α = .93).

Withdrawal tendencies

We used three items to measure withdrawal (i.e., "In this situation I would try to make myself invisible", "I would leave the scene", "I felt ashamed"). Reliability was satisfactory (Cronbach's α = .64).

RESULTS

We performed ANOVAs to test whether Social Context and/or Event affected reports of humiliation, expected support from- and affiliation towards fellow group members, as well as withdrawal from the group. We used a bootstrapping procedure to test the hypothesised and exploratory mediations.

Humiliation

Correlations between humiliation and all other variables are reported in Table 4. Humiliation was marginally negatively related to affiliation (r = −.12, p = .06) which lent some support to Hypothesis 2a, and it was strongly positively related to withdrawal (r = .64) which supported Hypothesis 2b. We performed an ANOVA with Social Context (Individual versus Group) and Event (Control vs. Mental vs. Physical & Mental) as factors and humiliation as dependent variable. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 5. There was a significant main effect for Event, $F(2, 242)$ = 32.64, p < .001, η_p^2 = .212. Simple contrasts showed that reports of humiliation in both the Mental and the Physical & Mental conditions were higher than in the Control condition, both ps < .001. This indicated that

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[9] If participants answered these questions incorrectly, we suspected that they did not pay enough attention to our manipulation (of which one runs a higher risk in the case of Mechanical Turk participants). On the basis of this check we discarded data of 10 participants (see "Participants and Procedure").

[10] We could not use the exact same scale as in Study 2 as the situations were very different and some items used in the lab study were not relevant for the vignette-study. Furthermore, the questionnaire had to be short(er), as participant fatigue can pose a threat in M-Turk studies. However, five of the seven items used in Study 3 were the same as in Study 2. When we analysed the data in Study 1 and Study 2 using this 5-item humiliation scale instead of the longer item scales, we found the same results, except for the mediation of the effect of Social Context on withdrawal tendencies by humiliation in Study 2. This mediation is not significant using the 5-item scale. Thus, although we replicate this mediation in Study 3, we should interpret this finding with some caution.

Table 4. *Correlations between reported humiliation (1), affiliation (2), expected social support (3) and withdrawal tendencies (4), study 3*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Humiliation (1)	–			
Affiliation (2)	−.12[†]	–		
Expected social support (3)	−.15[*]	.64[**]	–	
Withdrawal tendencies (4)	.64[**]	−.08	−.07	–

[†]$p < .07$; [*]$p < .05$; [**]$p < .001$.

our manipulation of Event was successful. In line with the findings from Study 1, there was no difference for humiliation between the Mental and the Physical & Mental conditions ($p = .481$). We also found a significant main effect of Social Context, $F(1, 242) = 11.06$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .044$. Participants reported stronger humiliation when initiated as individual than as a group. No significant interaction effects were found. Because we found a main effect and no interaction, we could not confirm Hypothesis 4, which implied an interaction between Social Context and Nature of Humiliation. However, the fact that we found a

main effect of Social Context is in line with findings of Study 2.

Mediation of social support on humiliation

To investigate whether social support would mediate the social context effect on humiliation (Hypothesis 5), we first conducted an ANOVA with Social Context as factor and expected social support as dependent variable (see Table 5 for means and standard deviations). We found a significant main effect for Social Context, $F(1, 246) = 18.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .068$. Ratings of social support were lower in the Individual condition ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.33$) than in the Group condition ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.13$). We then performed bootstrap analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Based on 5000 bootstrapped samples, we found that the indirect (mediated) effect was significant, as zero was not included in the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (lower CI = −.237; upper CI = −.001). Thus, although the effect was small, expected social support significantly mediated the effect of Social Context on humiliation, supporting Hypothesis 5. Specifically, reported humiliation

Table 5. *Means and standard deviations for reported Humiliation, Affiliation, Expected Social Support and Withdrawal Tendencies depending on social context (Individual vs. Group) and Event (Control, Mental and Mental & Physical), Study 3*

	Social context	Event			
		Control M (SD)	Mental M (SD)	Mental & Physical M (SD)	Total M (SD)
Humiliation	Individual	4.00 (1.48)[1a]	5.70 (1.28)[2a]	5.66 (1.46)[2a]	5.07 (1.61)[a]
	Group	3.48 (1.47)[1a]	4.82 (1.46)[2b]	5.18 (1.54)[2a]	4.55 (1.64)[b]
	Total	3.73 (1.49)[1]	5.22 (1.44)[2]	5.35 (1.52)[2]	4.78 (1.65)
Affiliation	Individual	4.66 (1.11)[1a]	4.87 (1.48)[1a]	4.43 (1.81)[1a]	4.68 (1.46)[a]
	Group	5.08 (1.30)[1a]	5.00 (1.47)[1a]	5.21 (1.39)[1b]	5.10 (1.39)[b]
	Total	4.88 (1.22)[1]	4.94 (1.47)[1]	4.93 (1.59)[1]	4.92 (1.43)
Withdrawal Tendencies	Individual	3.37 (1.27)[1a]	4.19 (1.60)[2a]	3.98 (1.44)[12a]	3.84 (1.48)[a]
	Group	2.73 (1.37)[1b]	3.72 (1.59)[2a]	3.69 (1.43)[2a]	3.41 (1.53)[b]
	Total	3.04 (1.35)[1]	3.93 (1.61)[2]	3.79 (1.43)[2]	3.60 (1.52)

Note: The superscripts reflect main effects of Event or Social Context, no interactions. Means in one row with a different number differ at least at $p < .05$. Means in one column with a different letter differ at least at $p < .05$. Means of the separate conditions are not tested against totals.
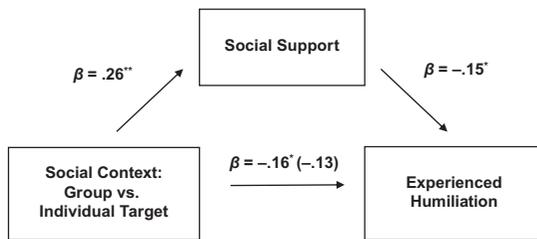
Figure 4. *Effect of social context (group versus individual target) on experienced humiliation, mediated by expected social support.* *p < .05; **p < .001.

was lower in the Group condition because of expected social support (see Figure 4).

Affiliation

An ANOVA was performed with Social Context and Event as factors and affiliation as dependent variables (see Table 5 for means and standard deviations). We found no main effect of Event, $F(2, 242) = .13$, $p = .880$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, but a significant main effect of Social Context, $F(1, 242) = 5.89$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .024$. Confirming Hypothesis 6a, ratings of affiliation were lower in the Individual condition than in the Group condition. There was no significant interaction.

Withdrawal tendencies

An ANOVA was performed with Event and Social Context on the tendency to withdraw, see Table 5 for means and standard deviations. There was a significant main effect for Event, $F(2, 242) = 9.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .071$. Ratings on this tendency were higher in the Mental condition than in the Control condition ($p < .001$), and they were higher in the Physical & Mental condition than in the Control condition ($p = .001$). The Mental and Physical & Mental conditions did not differ significantly from each other ($p = .606$). We also found a significant main effect of Social Context, $F(1, 242) = 6.09$, $p = .014$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$. In line with findings from Study 2, and confirming Hypothesis 6b, participants reported stronger withdrawal tendencies in the Individual than in

the Group condition. There was no significant interaction.

Mediation of humiliation on withdrawal tendencies

We again used bootstrap analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) to investigate whether the difference between group and individual context on reported tendencies to withdraw was mediated by reports of humiliation. Based on 5000 bootstrapped samples, we found that the indirect (mediated) effect was significant, as zero was not included in the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (lower CI = −.5618; upper CI = −.0639). Thus, reported humiliation mediated the effect of Social Context (Individual versus Group) on a reported tendency to withdraw from other group members, that is, humiliation could explain a stronger tendency to withdraw in the Individual than in the Group condition, which was in line with the findings of Study 2.

DISCUSSION

Study 3 shows that humiliation, as well as tendencies to withdraw from the group, are rated as more intense for descriptions of both mentally and a combination of physically and mentally humiliating initiation rituals, compared to non-humiliating initiation rituals. It should be noted that non-humiliating physical initiation rituals, such as running around a camp site, were reported to evoke considerable reports of humiliation as well. This may be due to the fact that participants do associate such initiation rituals with humiliating experiences, even though they were not explicitly described. In line with results of Study 1 (and partly Study 2), humiliation was marginally negatively related to affiliation with others and strongly positively related to withdrawal tendencies. There was no effect for the type of event on affiliation. One explanation for this may be that—contrary to withdrawal tendencies, which may be considered more concrete and direct reactions in these kind of situations—affiliation needs more

time to develop (such as in a real fraternity, see also the Discussion of Study 2).

We further found that descriptions of humiliation in the individual condition evoked higher reports of humiliation than descriptions of group humiliation, which is in line with findings of Study 2. We also found somewhat stronger reports of humiliation in the individual context of the control condition (see Table 5). Thus, descriptions of being initiated generally evoked stronger reports of humiliation if these initiations were targeted at one individual than at the group. The same pattern was found for the tendency to withdraw from the group and this effect was mediated by ratings of humiliation. This suggests that experienced humiliation during initiation rituals is an important explanatory factor that influences behavioural tendencies associated with less rather than more group affiliation. Affiliation with others also decreased when participants imagined to be initiated alone. Finally, we found that expected social support mediated the effect of social context on humiliation, although this effect was small. This suggests that the real or imaginary support that people expect from others in their group may prevent them from feeling humiliated or at least help them to cope better with their feelings.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In three studies using very different methods, we have provided evidence for the idea that the amount of humiliation during initiation rituals is crucial for the outcome of such rituals. The current research suggests that stronger experiences of humiliation lead to less rather than more affiliation with fellow novices, compared to rituals which evoke no (or less) humiliation. Humiliation also explains the negative relation between severity of the initiation and affiliation with fellows and it is strongly related to a tendency to withdraw from the group.

We further found that experiences of humiliation are lower when the initiation is targeted at an individual rather than at a group. Being in a group may function as a buffer because it triggers higher expectations of social support, which can prevent strong feelings of humiliation. Insight in the consequences of humiliation as part of initiation rituals is important, as common knowledge and some of the previous studies suggest that initiation rituals have mainly beneficial effects on group formation and cohesion. Although some elements of initiation rituals (e.g., physical pain) may indeed be beneficial for group affiliation, cooperation or prosocial behaviour (e.g., Bastian, Jetten, & Ferris, 2014; Xygalatas et al., 2013), our research suggests that humiliation destroys these beneficial effects. Having said this, it may still be possible that a humiliating individual initiation causes stronger affiliation than no initiation at all. In the current research we did not compare the results of initiations with the absence of initiations, and therefore we cannot draw conclusions on whether initiation rituals are functional at all.

As said, we found that feelings of humiliation vary with the social context in which the initiation ritual takes place. Humiliation seem to be especially strong when people are singled out and humiliated alone in front of their peers. In Study 2, we found that when participants are derogated as an individual in front of a group, humiliation increases compared to when participants are derogated together with the other group members. In Study 3, we found that when participants imagine being initiated (either by being humiliated or by having to perform something difficult and tough), reports of humiliation are higher when this initiation is imagined as experienced individually in front of the group than together with the group. We found similar results regarding the tendency to withdraw from the group. Thus, when participants are derogated as an individual (Study 2) or imagine to be the sole target of an initiation ritual (Study 3), tendencies to withdraw are stronger than when one is derogated or imagines to be initiated as a group. A similar effect was found for affiliation, but only in Study 3. Participants who imagined being the sole target reported less affiliation than participants who imagined being initiated as a group. The current studies further show that a tendency to withdraw from the group

was not, or only weakly, related to affiliation with fellow victims, suggesting that these are independent behavioural tendencies. On the basis of the present data, we cannot draw firm conclusions about the exact relationship between withdrawal and affiliation, because both may have short-term and long-term effects. We expect, however, that it is very likely that withdrawal from the group at one point in time is negatively related to affiliation in the long run and may therefore be detrimental for functional and satisfying relationships among group members.

One aspect of the research designs in Study 2 and 3 that we should note here is that the individual condition always involves an audience, namely the other participants or novices who are not derogated or humiliated. This audience is not present in the group conditions, because in these conditions the whole group is derogated and the only audience left is the experimenter (Study 2) or the initiators (Study 3). Future research is needed to disentangle the effects of individual versus group humiliation from the presence versus absence of an audience.

We found that both physical and mental severity are related to humiliation although only mental severity was related to affiliation with fellow victims (Study 1). We also found that adding a physical aspect to a description of mental humiliation did not make a difference (Study 3) with regard to the amount of humiliation, affiliation or withdrawal tendencies that were reported. It is important to acknowledge that this latter result is based on a vignette study. Reality may be different and it would be interesting to investigate whether mental or physical humiliation differs with regard to emotions, action tendencies and perceived affiliation and social support. Such research should ideally be longitudinal and conducted during a real initiation (e.g., in a fraternity or in the army).

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The current research is in line with earlier findings (e.g., Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997, 2001) and shows

that perceived severity of an initiation leads to *less* instead of more affiliation. We have tested one explanation of these negative effects of initiations, namely experienced humiliation and its related action tendencies, rather than general negative affect. In addition, we have shown that the emotions and action tendencies experienced during initiations are dependent on the social context.

These findings are important as they suggest that initiations that evoke humiliation—which especially applies to initiations that are experienced individually in front of a group—may be less functional than initiations without humiliation, if the goal of the initiation is to create a strong and cohesive group. We therefore suggest that hazing, defined as initiation practices including negative emotions such as humiliation, has negative consequences for the relations with fellow novices. Although initiation rituals in general (including hardship, challenge and pain) may serve important functions in people's life such as group affiliation (Bastian et al, 2014; Van Gennep, 1909/1961; Xygalatas et al., 2013), these rituals may only have positive outcomes if they do not include humiliating experiences. However, as said before, it is still possible that humiliating rituals lead to more affiliation than no ritual at all, because we only examined various forms of public rituals with and without humiliation and did not compare this with the absence of a ritual. This is a question that should be tested in future research.

Our finding of stronger humiliation as a result of derogation of an individual picked out of the group, rather than derogation of the whole group should be taken into account by (potential) initiators. Unless the goal of such individual hazing is to "filter out" people who might not fit in well in the group, or to select people who can stand humiliation, our results indicate that this might not be an effective strategy for creating a bond in a group. Selection methods may indeed be an important motivation to use humiliation in initiations. Especially in the army (much more so than in fraternities or other social organisations), novices should be tough and resilient in order to cope with physical as well as mental challenges. However, such selection procedures containing

individual hazing may in some cases do more harm than good. Although humiliation aimed at an individual in a group may serve to filter out the "good guys and girls", it may damage a victim–perpetrator relationship with potential aggressive reactions by a victim, and most importantly from the perspective of our studies, it may not promote affiliation in a group but rather strengthens withdrawal tendencies.

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APPENDIX

Feedback to participant(s) after dance session, Study 2

Group and personal conditions (differences between brackets):
"Well, sorry, but I couldn't do anything else than turn off the music, because this was a complete failure. Have you ever danced before? It doesn't look like it because you really don't have a sense of rhythm" (Only in personal condition: "This is so much out of rhythm with the other two participants"). You weren't even able to perform the different movements with the others. Well then, I will already hand you the questionnaire for the next part of the study, while I am going to discuss for a minute if we can use your results altogether, or whether we have to find an extra group of participants. Of course, you cannot help it much, but it is the first time that (Group condition: "a group is not able to be rhythmically tuned to each other", Personal condition: "someone moves so out of rhythm with the others").

Control
"We are finished with this part and will go on to the next part of the research".

Vignettes, Study 3:

General introduction:
You start a new study in a big city. Because you are from a town far away and you don't know anybody in this city, you think about joining a fraternity/sorority. At your university's introduction day, some fraternities and sororities present themselves and you strike up a conversation with a member of the organisation "Epsilon". You like this person and the organisation attracts you very much. You decide to apply to become a member of Epsilon. Part of the introduction is an initiation period of two weeks. In the first week you and the other novices go camping in the woods, together with the organisation's board members. As part of the initiation you have to perform several tasks and assignments. At the third day of the camp you are at the camp site of Epsilon. Twelve other novices and yourself are standing in line next to your tent. In front of you are three members of the initiation board.

Vignette 1: Individual—Control
Suddenly one of the board members shouts at you personally: "You there! Run ten times around the camp site!" You quickly realise this will take you at least 30 minutes and it will be a tough exercise. You worry if you will make it. All by yourself, you start running. When you get tired, all board members are pushing you to go on.

Vignette 2: Group—Control
Suddenly one of the board members shouts at you and the other novices: "All of you! Run ten times around the camp site!" You

quickly realise this will take you at least 30 minutes and it will be a tough exercise. You worry if you will make it. Together with the other novices, you start running. When everyone gets tired, all board members are pushing you to go on.

Vignette 3: Individual—Mental humiliation
Suddenly one of the board members shouts at you personally: "You there! Sing our favourite song right now!" All by yourself, you start singing. After ten seconds the board member who gave the order thinks you sing out of tune and he shouts at you: "You are a big loser and you're full of shit. Look at yourself, you worthless trash!" Subsequently, another board member starts mimicking you. All board members are laughing their heads off.

Vignette 4: Group—Mental humiliation
Suddenly one of the board members shouts at you and the other novices: "All of you! Sing our favourite song right now!" Together with the other novices, you start singing. After ten seconds the board member who gave the order thinks you all sing out of tune and he shouts at you: "You are all big losers and you're full of shit. Look at yourself, you worthless trash!"

Subsequently, another board member starts mimicking everyone. All board members are laughing their heads off.

Vignette 5: Individual—Mental & Physical humiliation
Suddenly one of the board members shouts at you personally: "You there! Run ten times around the camp site!" All by yourself, you start running. The first time you pass the board member who gave the order, he shouts at you: "You are a big loser and you're full of shit. Look at yourself, you worthless trash!" Subsequently, every board member empties a glass of beer over your head when you pass them. All board members are laughing their heads off.

Vignette 6: Group—Mental & Physical humiliation
Suddenly one of the board members shouts at you and the other initiates: "All of you! Run ten times around the camp site!" Together with the other novices, you start running. The first time you pass the board member who gave the order, he shouts at you: "You are all big losers and you're full of shit. Look at yourself, you worthless trash!" Subsequently, every board member empties a glass of beer over everyone's head when the group passes them. All board members are laughing their heads off.