



‘But most of it’s banter’

Exploring the perspectives of staff in UK HEIs

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NUS (2010, 2014)

Statement on Female Students:

Some girls aren't too easy on the eyes. Some, are a tad on the large side.
Some of them have difficulty comprehending simple tasks such as:
driving, cooking, basic maths, telling good jokes and following orders.

So long as girls keep shagging away on our site
and others, we forgive them.

Shag at Uni



This hot totty, Katrina, is actually a UK student believe it or not. The wench got paid to pose for this photo for Nuts. We heard she has lads line up outside her room as she ruins one at a time for £50 a pop.

Disclaimer: We never heard this at all. We just like to mess up.

2/3 have experienced
verbal or non-verbal
harassment

37% of women and 12% of
men had experienced
unwanted sexual advances

2/3 of respondents said
they have seen students
put up with unwanted
sexual comments

Majority of perpetrators
were other students in
same institution

That's what she said (2013)



NUS 2013 (Phipps & Young, 2013: 7)
*'Lad culture' was seen as a 'pack' mentality evident in activities such as sport and heavy alcohol consumption, and 'banter' which was often **sexist, misogynist and homophobic**. It was also thought to be sexualized and to involve the objectification of women, and at its extremes **rape supportive attitudes and sexual harassment and violence.***

*Student 'lad culture' has become a national issue. The phenomenon, often associated with the website Unilad, has become a catch-all term for anything from boozy boisterousness to casual misogyny and even sexual abuse. **But despite numerous media reports on laddism, universities still have little idea of how widespread its effects are.***

Guardian.co.uk, 05/04/2013

Focus on staff perspectives and experiences

Research questions:

1. In what ways are lad cultures manifest in different HE contexts?
2. Are these manifestations problematic and if so, how?
3. Are universities working to tackle lad cultures and if so, how?
4. Does more need to be done to tackle lad culture in HE and if so, what?

- Six universities across England, purposively selected in terms of pre/post 1992 status; campus/non-campus; collegiate system; and student demographics (SES, ethnicity, gender)
- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a range of staff including: PVCs for students/teaching; provosts/deans/heads; college tutors/welfare; student services; E&D staff; SU staff; security; academic registrars.
- Between 12-14 individual interviews and 2-3 focus groups per HEI
- Total sample of ~ 120 staff

What is lad culture?

- Sexist, demeaning to women
- Can include racism and homophobia
- Linked to sports and alcohol
- Having a laugh at the expense of others
- Competition and entitlement

#The LADS Prayer

Our LADS who art in women,
Whatever be thy name.
Thy Sperm will come.
In the Fanny or the Bum
At home as it is in a brothel.
Give us this day our daily head,
And forgive us our Eagerness,
As we forgive those who are frigid against us,
And lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from babies.
For LADS made the kingdom,
And the LAD power, and the morning glory,
For ever and ever.
Alad.

COMMANDMENT 24th Apr 2012

'Sending each other pictures of their conquests, either mid shag, or sometimes without them knowing which is very concerning [...] blokes circulating pictures of unconscious or just women who are not dressed at all, completely naked, who are not aware of the fact that a picture's been sent and it will be circulated around men. And what's really worrying is how acceptable that is amongst other men, completely acceptable.' (HEI 4, focus grp 4b, male)

'Recently I've seen advertising at the University for summer internships at the sports centre on campus and the advert consists of a photograph of a woman's backside in bikini bottoms, but just that, no head, no legs, nothing, just her arse, and filling the frame of the image and it's very kind of Loaded magazine kind of style. And that's been used to advertise summer internships at the sports centre on campus. (HEI1, interview 7, female)

'They [rugby club boys] were commenting on me [via a Twitter account] , it started with a rumour that I had spent three times over my budget, it's really bizarre, I don't know where it came from, and it kind of slowly got worse and turned into rumours about me cheating on my boyfriend who was in the rugby club and various things about my brother, various things about my mother being a slut, all of these kind of erotic pictures that they put on line as if they were me' (HEI 4, interview 9, female)

'He [one of the rugby club boys] said something as he walked through the door like, the girl I took home last night had an implant in her arm so she must have been a slut' (HEI 2, interview 3, female)



Who enacts 'lad culture'?

Who enacts lad culture?

- Young men (institutional differences regarding BME status)
- Association with privilege, entitlement
- Sports teams
- Men, but also women (girls can be 'just as bad' as boys)



Who enacts 'lad culture'?

- Class

'When I think of kind of lad culture, I tend to think, not so much of working class people, I think people who are maybe from a little bit more privileged backgrounds. And think of maybes they've been a bit spoilt you know, a bit indulged by parents' (HEI 3, interview 6, female)

I mean not necessarily bringing class into it but there is obviously that case of the [college] guys who blacked up as well. There's that sort of. ... I mean, it might also be the fact that York does have quite a lot of privately educated people, again from white dominated backgrounds- (HEI 4, focus group 4a, female)

- Sports

'[...] it's like a different set of rules then applied because they're in the sports teams. When you're in the sports teams, you be this person, you can have banter and you can say these things because nothing's off limits' (HEI 5, interview 8, female)

Who enacts 'lad culture'?

- Perception of gender parity

'I don't believe that lad culture just relates to male students. I think there's an issue amongst female students. (HEI 4, interview 1, male)

'We don't really think it's just lads as well, I mean it's big groups of girls as well sometimes, that's sometimes a problem' (HEI 5, focus grp 2, male and female)

'The terminology, lad culture in itself is quite a sex biased term, because it's not just lads that behave this way, it can be women as well' (HEI 3, focus grp 5, female)

'The risk of calling it lad culture is it says that women aren't involved in this and I don't think that's the case. I think a lot of these attitudes also exist amongst young women' (HEI 4, interview 7, male)

Where does lad culture occur?

- Social contexts
- Some instances in teaching/learning contexts
- Few instances reported within the academy
- Perception of gender parity in senior levels of academy



FRESHERS VIOLATION!!!

Public · By Tequila UK

Page Events

Going (73)



Welcome guests (20+ new)

Maybe (3)



Thursday, 3 October 2013

22:00 until 03:00

FUCK ME I'M A FRESHER

pole dancers
tequila cards
tequila cage
and more...

lie on the bar, open ur mouths and let someone pour u some TEQUILA-
things r gonna get diirrrty-lets clean these freshers up!!

Facebook

Where does 'lad culture' occur?

Teaching and learning contexts

- Disruptive behaviour and 'bonding'

'They generally won't, they talk a lot of respect and they generally won't be quiet for a lecturer unless they respect them.' (HEI 1, interview 3, male)

'I mean there is a risk that because there's this whole social culture going on around that, that actually inhibits academic discussion [...] so when you've got somebody who's well known on campus, for having laddish attitudes [...] in a seminar group it's going to be difficult to get people to [...] [challenge] those attitudes and discussing feminism or gender issues in seminars ' (HEI 4, interview 7, male)

'It will be the relation between a lot of men lecturers [and male students], it will be those relationships and they are like really singled out. So they will have conversations about like sport and like typically masculine things, kind of through a big room of women as if nobody else is going to be interested in that conversation, which is a lie. (HEI 4, f/g 4a, female)



Where does 'lad culture' occur?

Teaching and learning contexts

- Valuations of female staff

Another example for you, one of my department's lecturers was giving quite an interactive lecture on India and she said 'does anyone know how many women are in the [Indian parliament]? There was a cry from the back: 'too many'. In my department, I certainly encounter a lot of misogyny and 'jokes' about feminism and about women [...] (HEI 4, interview 3, male)

'I was, actually, I was the female being challenged where these two students just kept raising their hands and saying, excuse me but, excuse me but and challenging every statement I made or every instruction I gave.' (HEI 1, interview 10, female)

I would say if you want good feedback and I don't know if this is lad culture or what, but if you want good feedback for your lectures and seminars, don't be female, don't be foreign. (HEI 5, interview 6, male)

Where does 'lad culture' occur?

- Few instances of lad culture reported in the academy

'Actually what goes on in our department now is really benevolent sexism. It's not much of the hostile in your face 'little woman get back in the kitchen' or 'don't do that', it's much more pretending to be supportive and 'oh it's wonderful', but then subtly undermining and teasing (HEI 1, interview 9, female)

'A 'grown-up' lad culture does exist; senior lad culture. Jokes are made at women's expense or in their 'comfort zone', which gives a feel of 'rotary club' culture.' (HEI 3, interview 1, female)

- But by some, perception of gender parity in academy

'Colleagues in other schools have not mentioned lad culture and I've seen no evidence of lad culture or male influence at senior level e.g. university committees [...] It doesn't happen in HE anymore.' (HEI, 3 interview 5, male)



Is lad culture problematic?

- Pack phenomenon ('high spirits')
- Not always seen as problematic
- Can be beneficial, empowering for some (male) students
- Problem mainly cast in terms of vandalism, rowdiness



Is 'lad culture' problematic?

*I don't see it as being deeply offensive or worrisome, because I put the **lighter social connotation on it**. (HEI 1, interview 1, female)*

*'[...]I've tended to see it more as a, **it could be a source of entertainment, it could be a source of fun**, it can be a sort of joke and when they get together and there's a congregated group then they'll behave in a particular way rather than [sexism being] a reason to get together.'* (HEI 2, interview 6, female)

*'But **most of it's banter**. So I wouldn't say people take it in offence. It generally is, it seems like the norm, whereas someone outside the perspective you could think, oh my God do they know what they're saying. [...] when I see the rugby lads it wouldn't necessarily be, it's less racist, less homophobic, **generally more on a stupidity kind of level**.'* (HEI 1, interview 8, female)

- Lad culture may even be viewed as beneficial

*'It's not all problematic I don't think because obviously to a certain extent **it does encourage people to mix and socialise** and to perhaps widen their social group which I think can be good.'* (HEI 2, interview 6, female)

*'If it gives people **a sense of belonging** to some sort of group then. We know for example that suicide is very high amongst young males. There is a sense of belonging.'* (HEI 2, interview 8, female)

*But **most of it's banter**. So I wouldn't say people take it in offence. It generally is, it seems like the norm, whereas someone outside the perspective you could think, oh my God do they know what they're saying. [...] when I see the rugby lads it wouldn't necessarily be, it's less racist, less homophobic, **generally more on a stupidity kind of level.**'* (HEI 1, interview 8, female)

Findings: what are HEIs doing?

- Across sample, HEIs are not actively involved in challenging 'lad culture' although all institutions have policies regarding equality and diversity and harassment
- Lad culture mainly linked to drunkenness, some institutions now moving towards 'drink safe' initiatives
- More awareness needed of multiple ways in which 'laddish' behaviour can manifest itself, incl. in T & L contexts
- Lad culture needs to be situated within gender equality/diversity framework, not health and safety, in order to recognise impact on women students in particular – and to recognise gendered pressures on men to conform