Mapping university lad culture: investigating laddish identity and practice

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Abstract

Laddism is a pervasive form of masculinity in UK universities associated with: binge drinking (Dempster, 2011), casual sex (Jeffries, 2019), misogynist and sexist banter (Phipps & Young, 2013), playing sports (Dempster, 2009). In addition, this form of masculinity is linked with endemic sexual violence in student communities (Goldhill & Bingham, 2015; Smith, 2010). However, little research has investigated laddish identity and (sexually violent) practices from the perspective of self-identified lads (SILs), which this thesis redresses. This project used a mixed methods approach to more precisely define lad culture, primarily through semi-structured interviews with SILs (n=5), which sought to gather data on the 'lived experience' of lad culture. These data were triangulated with a questionnaire (n=144) and semi-structured interviews with university activists (n=10) in order to compare SIL and non-lad responses.

Quantitative data indicated that self-reported laddism is significantly related to viewing sexually violent acts as less problematic, and to frequent engagement in banter and playing sport. Thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed that SILs construct their identity in relation to an 'ideal laddish subject' – which is male and masculine, heterosexual, white, and young – while recognising their own distance from this ideal. Confirming previous research, SILs recognised binge drinking, banter, playing sports and casual sex as laddish practices. Through these acts, SILs 'do' laddish hegemonic masculinity and subordinate alternative masculinities and women. The practices are also performative of neoliberal discourses of consumption, competition, individualism and disaffection. Findings demonstrated that laddish practices create a 'conducive context' for sexual violence (Kelly, 2016).

Because these findings offer an understanding of laddish identity as related to structural privilege, future anti-lad culture activism in universities must destabilise structures such as heteropatriarchy. Future research should map out and evaluate the efficacy of such activism, to generate effective alternatives to the hegemony of laddism in university contexts.

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Finally, I want to dedicate this thesis to the loves of my life, Siân and Crumpet. I love you both so dearly and would never have been able to complete this thesis without your daily affection, grace and firm belief in me.

Thank you,
Annis Stenson

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. Some of the research conducted as part of this project has been previously published in peer-reviewed book chapters, which are properly referenced in the thesis. All sources are acknowledged as References.

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1 Introduction

In the year 2015, when this research project began, the national furore surrounding lad culture had reached a fever pitch: the National Union of Students (NUS) had published three reports on the issue (Phipps & Young, 2013; Smith, 2010; Stanton, 2014) and called a summit of academics and experts to challenge laddism in universities. Lad culture was defined by women students as a 'pack mentality' among predominantly male students, centred around binge drinking, sexist and homophobic banter and sexual objectification of women (Phipps & Young, 2013). The NUS then created a *Tackling Lad Culture Hub* webpage (NUS, 2015) with advice and resources for Students' Unions (SUs) attempting to challenge laddism in their universities. Sajid Javid MP, then Business Secretary, released a government press statement declaring that a Universities UK (UUK) led taskforce would be set up to reduce violence against women in universities (Gov.uk, 2015a). This move, described in the Telegraph as a "Crackdown on laddish campus culture" (Milward, 2015, para 1), illustrated the importance of lad culture to national discourse about UK universities, and in particular the assumed relationship between lad culture and sexual violence.

The justifications for such anti-lad culture efforts have often rested on the idea that sexual violence, harassment and bullying are perpetrated by lads. Throughout the 2010s national media reports linked lad culture to male university students' harassment of women. For example, the printing of flyers for a London School of Economics (LSE) rugby club which included homophobia and described women as "slags" and "mingers" (Doughty, 2014). Even recently a leaked group chat between prospective students at the University of Durham, showed discussion of methods of getting women into bed and a competition among "posh lads" to sleep with the poorest girl (Halliday, 2020). Additionally, media outlets with laddish students as a target audience – such as *UniLad* and *The Lad Bible*[1] – perpetuated notions of laddish banter as misogynist, homophobic and racist jokes. Though now removed, the website and Facebook page of *UniLad* displayed articles such as "The Angry Shag" in which the writer suggests smashing the head of a sexual partner into a wall "to knock some sense into her" (as described in McAlpine, 2012, p. 1). Lad culture was therefore seen as a factor underlying the prevalence of sexual harassment and violence in university contexts (Smith, 2010). Additionally, the poor mental health of male students was seen as linked to the toxic masculinity of lad culture, which valorises stoicism and prevents health-seeking behaviours among young men (Sherriff, 2015).

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[1] These national media sites have developed a large following from both within and outside the university community (40 million and 34 million Facebook 'likes' respectively).

I began investigating laddism in the context of such media attention, initially interested in investigating the efficacy of anti-lad culture campaigns, with a view to creating an activist toolkit for resisting lad culture in universities. Upon closely examining prior literature (e.g. Dempster, 2007; Jackson & Sundaram, 2020; Phipps & Young 2013), and through feasibility interviews with university activists, it became clear that research on lad culture was extremely limited and that anti-lad culture campaigns often lacked funding and means of evaluating effectiveness. I turned my attention to the under-researched construction of laddish identities among self-identified lads (SILs) and the link between lad culture and sexual violence. This brief introduction puts forward my personal motivations for conducting this research, before discussing the aim of the project and the research questions that this thesis will answer. The structure of the thesis is then outlined with a synopsis of each chapter.

1.1 **Motivation for the Project**

It was impossible for me to not be aware of the widespread sexual harassment and violence faced by women[2] in UK institutions. During my undergraduate study, for example, the concept of sexual 'sharking' was everywhere. This term, referring to the practice of upper year student intentionally predating on younger students (as discussed in national media e.g. Bates, 2014) was commonplace in student media (Keenan, 2012)[3] and club night promotions (e.g. advertising of a nightclub on Park End Street as 'Shark End'). I heard within the first 2 weeks of starting university that a group of upper year students held a competition to sleep with the most first year students, crossing off conquests on a photo-sheet in the common room. I was in my second year of study when the issue of sexual harassment in universities become the subject of national reports and media articles (beginning with the *Hidden Marks* report (Smith, 2010)). As a welfare tutor[4] during my postgraduate study, I supported resident undergraduate students with welfare issues, and was aware of the ubiquity of and harm caused by sexual harassment in university communities. This motivated me to research student culture and factors which facilitated sexual violence in this context.

Further, the findings of my MA dissertation research project led me to consider the relationship between masculinity and harassment and violence towards the 'other'. The project

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[2] Within this thesis, 'women' and 'woman' are predominantly used, as a means of referring to those who identify as women. However, some studies discussed use the term 'female', so these may appear to be used interchangeably in the thesis. I want to recognise that these terms are not necessarily interchangeable.

[3] For example, in a regular "parody" Agony Lad feature of *The Oxford Student* during my undergraduate study, the advice for older male students on 'sharking' was: "The first night of university, away from the comfort, security and certainty of home life, leaves even the most confident and attitude-filled ladies at their most vulnerable." (Renton, 2011).

[4] A pastoral role with residential status.

used personal retrospective narratives of adults to interrogate the long-term impact of homophobic bullying experienced in secondary school, as compared with non-homophobic bullying. I found that homophobic bullying was often tied in with gender and sexuality norms: boys were perceived to be homosexual as a result of their effeminacy, and gender non-conformity among girls was policed through lesbophobia and body-shaming. A stand-out finding from my MA research, was that sexual violence played a significant part in the bullying experienced by LGBT students. Sexual violence was used in these contexts to exert power and police boundaries, rather than to satisfy the sexual urges of the perpetrator. In addition, some participants experienced bullying which related to more than one identity category (such as being a woman and LGBT). These interactions mirrored the harassment I had witnessed or been a victim of during my undergraduate study, and I was compelled to understand how the dominant social cultures in higher education facilitated harm to 'othered' students.

Following the completion of my MA in November 2013, I took interest in the issues surrounding harassment (particularly homophobic and misogynist discrimination) and sexual violence outside of the university. In 2012, Laura Bates had launched the Everyday Sexism Project (as in Bates, 2014) which became a source of succour for many women who had experienced misogyny. Her book chronicled hundreds of stories from women contributors, with her own insights illustrating that these acts of harassment should be considered as part of a wider patriarchal culture. Later, the widespread social media proliferation of the #MeToo movement in 2017 created an international media discourse about the prevalence of experience of sexual violence among women. While the explosion of interest in this movement began after I had begun conducting research, activist Tarana Burke had been creating solidarity between survivors of sexual violence using this empathy building exercise since 2007 (as discussed in Garcia, 2017). In the social media iteration of the movement survivors of sexual harassment and violence, predominantly women, posted narratives of their experiences to social media sites. Scrutiny was given to sexual harassment in male-dominated institutions, such as the UK Parliament and Hollywood and the wider Western entertainment industry. The ground-breaking #MeToo and Everyday Sexism movements, coupled with the expansion of national discourse relating to lad culture, points to a burgeoning discontentment among women (in western contexts), with the prevalence of sexual violence. It is therefore timely, and indeed necessary, to investigate and rationalise the impact of gendered cultures on higher education. Of course, sexual violence is not limited to university settings, and documenting the narratives of survivors is not a novel phenomenon (see Kelly, 1988) but the ubiquity of lad culture in UK universities (Phipps & Young, 2013; Stanton, 2014) warrants investigation.

1.2 **Aim and Research Questions**

This thesis will expand on prior research on university lad culture (Dempster, 2007; Jackson & Sundaram, 2020; Phipps & Young, 2013) with the overarching aim: *To more precisely define lad culture in the UK university context.* This thesis will answer the following research questions:

R.Q.1. How is laddish identity constructed?

    1.1. By self-identified lads (SILs)?

    1.2. By non-lads in a university context?

R.Q.2. What are the practices of lad culture?

    2.1. What is the relative importance of each laddish practice?

    2.2. What motivates SILs to carry out these practices?

R.Q.3. Is there a relationship between lad culture and sexual violence?

The project utilises mixed methods, centring semi-structured interviews with self-identified lads (SILs), to offer a unique perspective on university lad culture. There is little research on lad culture as a whole and studies with university SIL participants are extremely limited (Dempster, 2007; Jeffries, 2019). Using a combination of questionnaire data, from a survey of SIL and non-lad students, and interviews with SILs and university activists , this project will provide both a whole-context view of lad culture and a close examination of the personal identities and subjective realities of SILs. Using the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) this research will expand upon suggestions that lad culture is a hegemonic masculinity in university contexts (Dempster, 2007). The project will also contribute valuable empirical evidence to support theories that lad culture is scaffolded by neoliberal rationalities in higher education (Phipps, 2018b; Phipps & Young, 2015a). Notably, this thesis is original in researching the perspective of SILs on the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence. By providing a clearer picture of lad culture in universities, from the perspective of SILs, this research can inform efforts to challenge lad culture and prevent sexual violence in universities.

1.3 **Outline of Thesis**

Following this brief introductory chapter, this thesis will comprise seven chapters. Chapter Two combines an overview of prior literature in the field of lad culture and an outline of the theoretical framework for this project. This chapter illuminates that there are very few studies of lad culture to date, and that only a small number have used self-identified lads (SILs) as participants. Of these none have yet investigated SILs perception of sexual violence in lad

culture. This chapter also considers criticisms of the term 'lad culture' and justifies its use as lens for analysing gendered practices in university social contexts. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity is introduced as the theoretical framework for this project. The section acknowledges and responds to criticisms, such as Anderson's (2009) claim of inclusive sporting masculinities. The impact of neoliberal discourses on higher education, and the subjective practice of university students, is also identified as a framework for understanding lad culture. The chapter then turns to research which links laddish practices to masculinity among university/college students, owing to the dearth of literature which directly speaks to manifestations of lad culture. A wealth of evidence on the prevalence and correlates of sexual violence in universities is analysed; lad culture is understood as synonymous with sexual violence by previous writers, though no prior research has accounted for SIL perspectives on this topic. Theorisations of sexual violence as a continuum of practices (Kelly, 1987) and an extension of patriarchal control of women are outlined as the foundation of this project's approach to sexual violence. Finally, a small but important field of research on student responses to lad culture and university campaigns which aim to tackle laddism is introduced. This thesis contributes to greater understanding of lad culture which can be used to inform effective anti-lad culture work in the future.

Chapter Three details the research methodology of the project, beginning with an outline of the epistemological standpoint taken. The mixed-methods procedure through which data were collected is then explained, describing the design of the research instruments. The final procedure consisted of a questionnaire aimed at SIL and non-lad students and semi-structured interviews with both SILs and university activists (members of staff and student union representatives who worked on student-facing campaigns at a single institution). Care is taken to demonstrate how this project was conducted ethically, recognising the importance of a transparent and flexible approach to data collection on the sensitive topic of sexual violence. Attention is paid to the methods of recruitment, recognising the impact of my position as a researcher on the self-selecting participants. The methods by which the data were analysed are then clarified, and considerations of the integrity of the findings are outlined.

The following four chapters present and discuss the findings of this research project, in one quantitative results chapter (4) and three qualitative data analysis chapters (5, 6 and 7). Chapter Four presents analysis of quantitative questionnaire data collected from 144 respondents. Throughout this chapter, comparisons between self-identified lads (SILs) and non-lads are made to determine whether there are significant differences between these populations. Demographic data are first analysed, comparing lads and non-lads on age, type of study and gender. The populations are compared on their perception of practices (behaviours and attributes) as laddish, and problematic. Analysis of the frequency with which laddish

behaviours are engaged in is also presented. This chapter then addresses data on perpetration and experience of sexual violence. Harassment is acknowledged as a common experience for women students, and a statistical relationship between sexual violence and self-rated laddism is investigated.

Chapter Five answers **R.Q.1.** investigating how SILs construct their identity. I argue that SILs understand themselves in relation to an 'ideal laddish subject' discourse. First, I outline the common attributes associated with the laddish subject, including gender, class and race. These attributes are inherently linked to the hegemonic masculinity in western education contexts and are privileged by overlapping structures of heteropatriarchy, capitalism and white supremacy. This chapter expands upon Warin & Dempster's (2007) notion of a continuum of laddish practices to account for the dissonance between the subject position constructed as the ideal lad and the majority of my SIL participants who do not measure up to this. SILs are therefore complicit in supporting the hegemonic ideal. Thus, I will consider the ways in which individual SILs construct themselves in relation and/or opposition to the idealised masculine subject.

Chapter Six answers **R.Q.2.** through an in-depth analysis of the practices of lad culture, examining practices of binge drinking, banter, playing sports and casual sex. In this chapter, I argue that the combined frameworks of hegemonic masculinity and of the postfeminist neoliberal self are essential to understanding lad culture. Laddish practices are performative of neoliberal hegemonic masculinity through emphasis on individual enjoyment (at the expense of other students), excessive and efficient consumerism, and the introduction of market rationalities of competition and self-audit into social life. In these ways, SILs are performing 'the neoliberal self' proposed by McGuigan (2014). Drawing on Gill's theorisation of the psychic life of neoliberal postfeminism (2017), as well as McGuigan's discussion of disaffection and 'cool capitalism' (2011), I also consider the (dis)affective experience of SILs.

Chapter Seven answers **R.Q.3.** determining whether there is a relationship between lad culture and sexual violence. First, I analyse non-lad perceptions of lad culture as synonymous with sexual violence, and narratives of witnessed sexual violence from SILs. Then, employing Kelly's concept of a 'conducive context' for sexual violence (2016), I argue that laddish practices of banter, heterosexism and binge drinking create a discursive and practical context in which sexual violence can flourish. Narratives of misogynist and sexually violent banter as 'just a joke' are used to position sexual violence as trivial and justify harm done to victims. Further, the emphatic heterosexuality and competition for sexual capital among SILs encourage carelessness in sexual encounters, and a disconnect between personal desire and sexual conquest, which can result in sexual violence. Further, encouraging excessive binge drinking disinhibits potential perpetrators of sexual violence and is commonly drawn on in victim-blaming narratives. This

chapter provides a unique contribution to the field of study, by presenting SIL perspectives on sexual violence in universities.

The final chapter (Chapter Eight) provides a review of the findings of this project, and the theoretical and practical implications of these. The limitations of this work are accounted for and future research on anti-lad culture interventions in university contexts is recommended. This chapter concludes with final remarks on the research, providing recommendations for transformative university activism. This thesis locates itself within a small but expanding canon of research on university lad culture, supplying empirical evidence from self-identified lads (SILs) on laddish identity, practices and sexual violence.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Although the subject of much media attention (as discussed in Introduction) and relevant to discussions of prevalent sexual violence in universities, academic research investigating lad culture in UK universities is sparse. This chapter will outline the research context for this project, identifying a need for in-depth empirical research with self-identified lads, and explain the theoretical frameworks employed for appraising lad culture. I will first chronologically assess previous research on lad culture both in higher and secondary education contexts. This work originally centred on anti-school attitudes held by working class boys in secondary schools, before utilising the term 'lad culture' to account for gendered social contexts in universities. Lad culture has been frequently linked with sexual violence in literature. A key debate in prior research, then, is whether the term 'lad culture' should be used. Critics argue that the term trivialises extreme laddish practices such as misogynist and homophobic banter, and sexual violence. Additionally, it could be argued that the connotations of the term 'lad' referring to young men may attribute this culture to a small number of male undergraduates, despite its ubiquity in university contexts. Further, recent research (Jeffries, 2019; Nichols, 2018a) on lad culture has sought to present the nuance within lad culture and create novel conceptual frameworks to explore the positive aspects of this culture for the members. The use of this term is defended as a lens through which UK university communities can be understood.

Much effort has been made to theorise lad culture in the limited research that exists, which will next be reviewed. These theorisations typically consider laddism as a form of masculinity or consider the impact of neoliberalism (and the neoliberalisation of higher education) on the increased importance of lad culture. Firstly, lad culture will be addressed as a masculine configuration, and in particular as a hegemonic masculinity within UK higher education. The concept of hegemonic masculinity will then be examined, considering the practices through which a masculine configuration achieves and maintains hegemony, and evaluating the concept through criticisms and proposed extensions. Secondly, the relationship of lad culture to neoliberalism will be explored before investigating the broader context of neoliberalism in the UK and its impact on subjectivities. Finally, the two-fold effect of neoliberal discourses on higher education is explored through assessment of student subjectivities and the organisational practices of universities. The theoretical framework of neoliberalism is essential to understanding lad culture because neoliberal discourses are hegemonic and evident in social practice in UK institutions. A combined theoretical toolkit of hegemonic masculinity and

neoliberalism will grant analysis of the ways in which structural heteropatriarchy and capitalism overlap in the lived experience of self-identified lads.

Attention will then be turned to the various practices of lad culture (as delineated in section 2.2) of binge drinking, banter, playing sports, casual sex and anti-schoolwork attitudes. Owing to the paucity of research on laddish practices, and the earlier demonstration of laddism as a hegemonic masculinity, in each of these sections I will present findings which directly refer to lad culture or laddish identities as well as considering research which looks at these contexts in relation to broader masculinities. This thesis aims to counteract the dearth of academic research which specifically addresses the practices of lad culture. Understanding the practices of lad culture is crucial to any exploration of laddism because gendered social practice is performative. Further, these practices are not unique to self-identified lads and are evident in wider student culture, therefore analysis is required to tease out what makes these practices laddish.

A review of the literature finds that sexual violence is frequently understood as a part of/consequence of lad culture in universities. The next section will argue that although this is commonly understood there is limited evidence demonstrating a link between the two. This thesis will provide much needed empirical evidence on this relationship. First, evidence of the prevalence of sexual violence in UK and US university contexts is analysed before outlining the theoretical understandings of sexual violence that will be utilised to interrogate lad culture's link to sexual violence.

Finally, this chapter will talk about the emergence of anti-lad culture campaigns and draw conclusions about the most harmful aspects of lad culture as understood by university communities. This section will consider the efforts of student activists, SUs and university policies to tackle lad culture. The chapter concludes with a summary outlining the key issues evident in prior literature on lad culture and sexual violence in universities.

2.2 Prior Research on Lad Culture

This section will chronologically review academic research on lad culture and on constructions of laddish masculinity as it relates to national media discourses of laddish binge drinking, sexist and homophobic banter, and sexual violence. Further, the ways in which lad culture has been theorised by previous scholars will be addressed.

The existence of a laddish subculture and the concept of 'lads' within education was first examined through ethnography by Paul Willis more than 40 years ago. In his foundational work *Learning to Labour* he describes the adoption of anti-schoolwork discourses by the subjects of his ethnography - the lads - as a tool for positioning themselves at great distance from other

secondary schoolers- the 'ear 'oles' (Willis, 1977). The lads compared their pursuits of drinking, smoking and sexual encounters with girls with what they saw as the simpering academic masculinity of middle-class boys. Further research on lad culture in secondary schools is discussed in section 2.4.5.

Investigation of media representations of masculinity (for overview see Beynon, 2001) have also contributed to recent understandings of university lad culture. In her genealogy of men's lifestyle magazines, Benwell (2002; 2003) traces the change in discourse from the 'new man' of the 1980s – a man who cared about his appearance and his family - to the emergence of the figure of the 'new lad' in the 1990s. This 'new lad', rather than being new, she asserted, was a resurgence of traditionally masculine traits and interests, such as drinking beer and having casual sex with women. The publication of *loaded* from 1994 is often reported as a paragon of this 'new lad' construct:

> *loaded* is a new magazine dedicated to life, liberty and the pursuit of sex, drink,
> football and less serious matters (*loaded* as cited in The Guardian, 2010).

To use Tim Edwards' phraseology, the interests of the 'new lad' are "drinking, football and fucking" (Edwards, 1997, p. 82). The distinction between the 'new man' and 'new lad' was also underlined in Gill's (2003) Foucauldian analysis of the constructs, adding that the 'new lad' shirks responsibility and approaches structural inequalities (such as patriarchy) with ironic humour. Rather than a representation of a specific kind of man, she insists that these constructions should be viewed as discourses which individual men then position themselves in relation to. She concluded that as well as being a 'backlash' against feminism (Beynon, 2001; Faludi, 1991) the valorisation of the 'new lad' should be recognised as an opposition to alternative masculinities. The lad is positioned as authentically masculine and dominant compared with the asexual, vain and weak 'new man.'

Substantial research was conducted on laddish masculinities in secondary schools (Francis, 1999; Jackson, 2002, 2003; Jackson, 2006a), with particular focus on anti-schoolwork attitude and disruptive behaviours in teaching and learning contexts. Laddish masculinity was seen as a potential cause of the 'underachievement' of white working-class boys (Frosh et al., 2002), though this has been criticised as a 'moral panic' (Griffin, 2000). The research on laddism in this context will be discussed in more detail in section 2.4.5 in anti-schoolwork attitude.

Academic research on *university* lad culture began with Steven Dempster's doctoral project[5] (2007). His two-phase exploratory study used mixed methods, a questionnaire with 180 respondents and 24 interviews, to investigate student masculinities. The questionnaire was

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[5] Dempster completed his PhD at Lancaster University, supervised by Carolyn Jackson whose research on lad culture in schools is prolific, and will be addressed in section 2.4.5.

disseminated to all male undergraduates in two departments from each of five faculties (ten departments in total) at a single university. Participants were asked to indicate which of an array of behaviours were most associated with being 'one of the lads' and to identify whether they considered themselves to be a lad – participants approached for interview were half SILs and half non-lads. This represents one of two projects prior to this research which studied SILs (Jeffries, 2019). Findings revealed that the lad culture evident in secondary schools (see section 2.4.5) was also a salient construct for male undergraduates; indeed, this was the hegemonic masculine configuration in universities. He argued that lad culture, notably evident in practices of binge drinking (2011) and sport (2009), was a gendered template often adopted by male undergraduates for 'fitting in' during the transition to higher education (Warin & Dempster, 2007). Laddism was also theorised as a continuum of practices, which male undergraduates took part in, or identified with, to a greater or lesser extent (Dempster & Jackson, 2014).

Subsequently, research commissioned by the National Union of Students (NUS) contributed much to the national discourse around lad culture. Their influential report *Hidden Marks* found that 1 in 7 women students experienced a serious physical or sexual assault during their time at university (Smith, 2010). Research on the prevalence and impact of sexual violence in UK universities will be considered in section 2.5. Next, the report *That's What She Said* (Phipps & Young, 2013), documented findings from qualitative research with 40 women students from institutions across the UK. In the 4 focus groups and 21 interviews, a diverse sample of women students (though predominantly white and heterosexual) were asked about their experiences at university, and particularly lad culture. Participants indicated that in the university milieu laddism was pervasive. This was especially influential in social settings, such as Student Union owned venues and bars, where heavy alcohol consumption was encouraged, and sexual harassment often occurred. They explained that campus lad culture made them feel under pressure to engage in casual sex, and laddism was associated with a disdain for longer-term sexual and romantic relationships. Laddism was described as a 'pack culture' which centred around binge drinking, harassment, banter, sexism and homophobia. Nevertheless, some also described the impact of laddish behaviours on teaching and learning contexts, including that male students dominate classroom discussions. Similarly, Jackson and Dempster (2009) found evidence of anti-academic work discourses among male students, and disruption of teaching and learning contexts by lads (Jackson et al., 2014).

In subsequent publications theorising lad culture (Phipps, 2015, 2016, 2018a, 2018b; Phipps & Young, 2015a) the authors have argued that neoliberalism in universities scaffolds lad culture, by increasing self-audit and competition between lads, including in relation to casual sex. In this context, women are objectified and commodified. This project will contribute to an understanding of lad culture as a neoliberal project. Further, it was claimed that lad culture can

be understood as a backlash against perceived loss of privilege by middle-class male students, which is practiced through performative homophobic and sexist harassment (Phipps, 2016). The NUS *Lad Culture & Sexism Survey* (Stanton, 2014) expanded on these findings, using a national questionnaire aimed at students of all genders, reporting that more than three-quarters of students surveyed were aware of laddish media sites such as UniLad and The Lad Bible, and that experiences of sexism and sexual harassment were common for students. Clearly, lad culture is evident in UK institutions and sexual harassment is prevalent. However, no research has yet specifically investigated SIL perceptions of the link between sexual violence and lad culture. Nevertheless, the ability of women students to resist ubiquitous lad culture should not be overlooked. Phipps and Young (2015b) found that many women students occupied a position between the discourses of 'sexual panic' over the prevalence of misogynist and sexually violent lad culture, and neoliberal 'sexual celebration' (Gill & Donaghue, 2013). Indeed, women students have been found to use feminist activism to resist lad culture (Lewis et al., 2018) and attempt to transform university communities (Stenson, 2020). These findings indicate the importance of locating lad culture within broader theoretical discussions of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) in universities (see section 2.5 for further discussion of lad culture and sexual violence in universities).

In their recent monograph *Lad Culture in Higher Education* Jackson and Sundaram (2020) draw on their extensive interviewing of university and student union staff at six HEIs across the UK, to illuminate staff understandings of lad culture. Their research has confirmed the importance of binge drinking, playing sport and sexist, homophobic and racist banter to lad culture. Moreover, they emphasise that these practices are "underpinned by gender-based harassment and abuse" (Jackson & Sundaram, 2020, p.33. Lads were commonly identified as white, heterosexual, young men who held privilege in university communities and were involved in lad culture as a way of having harmless fun or acting out of character. They discovered that while laddish practices are recognised, these are often seen as harmless or invisible to staff because of their predominance in social contexts (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018) . This means that the prevalence and impact of lad culture is minimised or trivialised by staff (Sundaram & Jackson, 2018), or seen as the fault of a few individuals. In fact, Phipps (2018b) has warned of the neoliberal individualising approach of universities to tackling lad culture.

While this body of work is enormously significant, additional research on university lad culture is essential. This project will compare the views of SILs with non-lads and interrogate the relationship between sexual violence and lad culture, thereby speaking to notable gaps in the literature. Furthermore, there is clearly a need to continue theorising lad culture and SILs, combining theoretical frameworks of hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism, as will be

addressed in section 2.3. Any investigation of lad culture, must address the essential laddish practices of binge drinking, playing sport and casual sex, which will be addressed in section 2.4.

2.2.1 Problematising 'lad culture'

There is much scholarship invested in problematising the term 'lad culture', with recent publications seeking to expand on Warin & Dempster's (2007) notion of laddism existing on a continuum. For example, Stentiford's (2018) research with women engineering students compared interpretations of two forms of laddism: those experienced as hostile 'laddy lads' and the amiable joking upper/middle-class lads. She focused on the agency that her women participants had to resist hostile forms of laddism and tolerate genial banter. While there may indeed be subtle distinctions between male students' investment in, and performance of, lad culture SILs interviewed by Jeffries (2019) rationalised (often sexist and homophobic) banter as a crucial part of the camaraderie of lad culture. These male students distinguished themselves from more extreme exemplars of laddism, who they recognised as bullies. They found themselves less able to mediate their own involvement in laddish practices when part of a group. Despite acknowledging the importance of sexual objectification of women and casual sex to lad culture, Jeffries (2019) claimed that the resistance to anti-academic work discourses among his participants demonstrates a positive side to lad culture. Similarly, students reacting to national anti-lad culture campaigns operationalised discourses of a 'light side' and 'dark side' of laddism (Owen, 2020). These papers recommend the importance of a nuanced understanding of lad culture, which accounts for low level adherence to practices, when building campaigns to tackle laddism in universities. A broader definition of lad culture has also been recommended based on research outside of higher education. Nichols (2018a) conducted an ethnography of a Rugby Union Club and interviewed individual men about their engagement in laddish banter. She proposed that theorisations of lad culture must account for lads' knowledge that their jokes are sexist or homophobic; that lads engage in intentionally 'mischievous masculinities'. These findings demonstrate an appetite to broaden academic understanding of lad culture, meaning that this thesis is timely. However, these theorisations tend to individualise lads, by implying that laddish practice should be understood outside of its structural context. Lads' jokes and emotional connections are theorised as subjective practice outside of neoliberal heteropatriarchy which privileges lads in universities.

While it has been acknowledged that "the concept of 'lad culture' lacks nuance" (Phipps et al., 2018) p.5) and argued that the term implies a non-existent uniformity among lads (Phipps & Young, 2015a, 2015b) there is still value in investigating laddism. Criticisms of the term which brand it as vague or too broad demand research which more clearly defines laddism and self-

identified lads. As discussed in the Universities UK report on lad culture and hate crimes in universities (2016), there are a myriad of issues with the term 'lad culture':

> It could create the impression that what was being referred to was trivial and not serious, or lead to an assumption that misogyny, racism and homophobia are specific to an alcohol/sporting culture when they are present across all cultures and demographics. It could also create unfair stereotypes. Although there is no evidence to show that sexual harassment or homophobia is a direct result of lad culture, it can result in the normalisation of sexist and misogynistic behaviour. (Universities UK, 2016, p. 19).

What is clear, is that while the configuration of practices associated with lad culture are important to consider in synchrony, these are not limited to lad culture. Binge drinking, discriminatory language and playing sport exist in broader university culture and beyond. Indeed, I have argued that the extremes of 'lad culture' should be assessed and described plainly as acts of sexual violence (Stead, 2017). However, critiques of 'lad culture' as an umbrella term, fail to account for the prevalent use of this descriptor; the term is widely intelligible in spite the multitude of aforementioned issues. Identifying oneself as a lad is considered positive by members of the culture who find solace in the laddish group and are rewarded for enacting laddish behaviours (Jeffries, 2019) Moreover, recent research on the affective dimension of lad culture uncovers the extent to which lad culture is felt not only in the practices of self-identified lads, but also in a broader sense in social contexts as a 'sticky atmosphere' which pervades university communities (Diaz-Fernandez & Evans, 2020). To ignore the prevalence with which students (of all genders) refer to themselves as lads and experience lad culture in universities would be to reject a cultural phenomenon which is deserving of research.

Additionally, the protracted use of the term lad culture has provided a language through which victims/witnesses of sexual violence can describe the behaviours they see/experience regularly on campus without explicit reference to violence, which may be upsetting or alienating for some. The euphemistic use of this term for sexually violent behaviours has brought debates about campus cultures of sexual violence to the academic fore. It is known that sexual harassment has become so prevalent in nightclubs that it is seen as normalised by victims (Smith, 2010). Thus, the proliferation of the term 'lad culture' has allowed victims/survivors to label their experiences within this framework and acknowledge them as unpleasant and unacceptable. Nonetheless, no prior research has explicitly researched the link between sexual violence and lad culture with SILs as participants. While there is debate on the use of the term 'lad culture' and precisely what practices are classed as laddish, Jackson and Sundaram (2020) summarised prior research on lad culture as having multiple key themes. They argued that lad culture, though not always performed by men (See Jackson, 2006a) is masculine performance typically performed by men, though not all men. The picture of laddism in academic research is

not wholly negative – the fun and camaraderie that self-identified lads experience is critical to understanding why lad culture dominates in university settings. Additionally, prior research has theorised laddism as existing on a continuum against which students measure their own identity. Even SILs distance themselves from 'proper lads' and practices which cause harm, such as sexual violence.

This project therefore addresses a significant gap in our current understanding of lad culture, expanding on knowledge of laddish identity and practice and contributing valuable empirical knowledge on the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence. The following sections will outline the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, of hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism. Further, in section 2.5, sexual violence will be theorised as a form of gender-based violence.

2.3 Theorising Lad Culture

This section will introduce the two theoretical frameworks for analysing university lad culture which are utilised in this thesis. Although separate theories, the effects of vying for a hegemonic masculine position and of internalising neoliberal discourses may overlap in influencing laddish subjectivities and laddish practice. This can lead to complex and sometimes contradictory influences on SILs, who may act in accordance with hegemonic masculinity, neoliberalism or both.

2.3.1 Laddism and masculinity

Lad culture has been theorised as a particular form of masculinity (Jackson & Sundaram, 2020) and should be considered through this lens for a number of reasons; that men are most likely to be identified as lads, and misogynist laddish banter and other laddish practices are signifiers of masculinity. Despite evidence of feminised laddism in secondary schools (Jackson, 2006a; Jackson, 2006b; Jackson & Tinkler, 2007) there is little discussion of female lads in higher education. While it is conceded that women may perform laddish practices, such as binge drinking and casual sex, they are not often seen as lads when doing so. Moreover, misogynist banter is a frequent signifier of lad culture (Jeffries, 2019; Nichols, 2018a; Phipps & Young, 2015a) indicating a positioning of women and femininity in contrast to the maleness and masculinity of lad culture. Commonly identified laddish practices of binge drinking (Dempster, 2011) and playing sport (2009) are also continually investigated as practices of masculinity. Finally, the frequent association of lad culture with sexual violence against women (Lewis et al., 2018; Phipps & Young, 2015b; Sundaram & Jackson, 2018), locates lad culture within a broader context of gender-based violence, and as specifically masculine. Lad culture is identified in prior

literature as a form of masculinity which is hegemonic in universities (Jackson & Sundaram, 2020; Phipps & Young, 2015a; Warin & Dempster, 2007). That is, that laddism holds a hegemonic position in universities, as compared with other configurations of masculinity for students. This section will present the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity, which is used as a lens for understanding lad culture in this thesis and demonstrate the salience of this theory. However, this theory is not without controversy so this section will address the critiques, reiterations and alternatives to this concept, before justifying its employment in this project.

Connell (1987, 1995) couches her theorisation of masculinities in the broader context of scholarship on the social construction of gender. She first demonstrates the influence of gender on social practice at the institutional, ideological and individual level (similar to Stevi Jackson's (2005, 2006) discussion of structure, representation and discourse and subjective practice as units of gender analysis) and proposes a model for the structure of gender which comprises power relations, production relations and cathexis. Connell argues for the importance of considering women's subordination by men, the unequal division of economic and domestic labour, and the sexual and emotional dynamics between men and women. 'Masculinity' is not, then, an innate product of maleness, but is a socially constructed position of men in relation to women in a hierarchical gender order. In all understandings of gender, masculinity and femininity are relational, in that one cannot exist without being compared in opposition to the other. In the field of psychology, much research has attempted to measure individuals' personality in relation to sex role on a continuum from masculine to feminine (Basow, 1992; Bem, 1974). While early theorisations of gender, as distinct from sex rather than innate or essential, proposed that men and women were socialised into binary 'gender roles' (as in Money, 1954), Connell's theorisation (in Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1995) of hegemonic masculinity argued that there are multiple configurations of masculinity. Of these constructions, one masculinity is discursively, socially and culturally valorised and positioned as dominant over other masculinities – it is hegemonic. The position of this configuration is maintained through practices of hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalisation. Messerschmidt (2018) has argued that these practices actually create four forms of masculinity configurations (i.e. hegemonic, subordinated, complicit and marginalised masculinities). Power is achieved through the positive representation of hegemonically masculine traits, the censure and structural oppression of non-hegemonic traits, and the invisibilising of gender as a point of discussion.

2.3.1.1 Hegemony

Adapted from Gramsci's prison notebook theorisations of hegemony as a tool for maintaining capitalism (Gramsci & Hoare, 1971), hegemonic masculinity is the accepted configuration of masculinity which maintains pole position without force. That is, that this configuration maintains its position through being consented to by the majority (including through complicity of non-hegemonic men):

> What is hegemonic about certain idealized forms of masculinity, Carrigan, Connell and Lee argue, is not that all or even most men perform them: it is that they have such a grip on men's – and women's – sense of what men should be and do that they are virtually unquestioned. (Cornwall, in Cornwall et al., 2016, p. 5)

The hegemonic masculinity is relational to femininity and is positioned atop a hierarchy of forms of masculinity (subordinated and marginalised). In the reformulation of the concept Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledged that there may be different hegemonic masculinities in different contexts: local, regional, and global; and that there are relationships between these. Further, that there may in fact be multiple hegemonic masculinities in each setting (such as at the local level of a university community). What is critical to understanding hegemonic masculinity, is that this form is seen to legitimate patriarchal gender order (Beasley, 2008; Schippers, 2007) rather than simply describing the most dominant form of masculinity in a given context, this must also relate to a legitimation of power in gender order. Messerschmidt (2018) distinguishes between hegemonic (one which dominates) and *dominant* masculinities and warns against claiming one form of masculinity as the single hegemonic masculinity in any given context.

Connell (1995) specifies that there is not a 1:1 relationship between hegemonic masculinity and power, as many men with material wealth and or political power are not exemplars of hegemonic masculinity. Further, many whose practices mimic the discursive power of hegemonic masculinity do not hold material and political power. Yet, she argues that the norms of hegemonic masculinity must bear resemblance to those embedded into institutional power to naturalise and normalise the claim to dominance. Therefore, the configuration of masculinity which holds weight in a local, regional or global setting likely does not reflect the practices or traits of the majority of men in that context but is culturally accepted. This is not simply a type of man, or even possible for one man to fulfil, but is instead a configuration of practices and discourses. The hierarchical relationship between masculinities is not fixed, and the hegemonic configuration therefore takes on different qualities over time and dynamically adapts to societal norms, as Connell puts it "hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic positions in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable"

(1995, p. 76). Men therefore construct and perform their own masculinity in dialect with an ever-changing construction, rather than follow a linear 'gender role' socialisation. Furthermore, masculinity is considered separately from men; though it is recognised that men are the most frequent actors of hegemonic masculinity, women may also uphold and perform masculine practices.

2.3.1.2 Subordination

Hegemony is also achieved through the subordination of other forms of masculinity – particularly the oppression of non-heterosexual masculinities. This is achieved in part through the employment of discourses which categorise any homosexual desire is analogous to femininity, which is, of course, vehemently opposed as unmasculine. Subordination is performatively created through exclusion of gay men, homophobic language, and violence. It is not only homosexual men who are policed in this way, but men who fall short of the hegemonic configuration. There has been much research which challenges the existence of homophobia in masculine domains, such as male sports (Adams, 2011; Anderson, 2005) and US fraternities (Anderson, 2008), with claims of a 'declining significance' of homophobia in secondary schools (McCormack, 2013, 2014). Instead, it is contended, sporting masculinity is *inclusive* of gay men (Anderson, 2009; Anderson & McCormack, 2018). Although homophobic attitudes may have declined in recent decades, national surveys of LGBT students in schools, colleges and universities point to widespread homophobia in these settings, and prevalent fear of harassment. In their report on LGBT students in universities, LGBT charity Stonewall (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018) showed that 42% of LGBT students hid their identity for fear of harassment, and more than 1 in 5 had experienced harassment from other students during their time at university. Further, aforementioned research highlights the importance of misogynist and homophobic banter within lad culture (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018; Phipps et al., 2018). In addition to the continued salience of homophobia, the inclusive masculinity theory suggests that the concept of hegemonic masculinity cannot account for the acceptance of gay men (Anderson, 2001). De Boise (2015) argues that Anderson's theorisation does not account for the historicity of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987), which is not a fixed character type, but is a dynamic configuration which adapts, and has adapted to include some gay men. Demetriou argued that hegemonic masculinity appropriates non-hegemonic masculine practices "capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures" as a method of further legitimating supremacy (2001, 355). Bridges & Pascoe (2014) confirm that hegemonic *hybrid* masculinities may take on practices of subordinated masculinities, but that this is done to further legitimate their claim to dominance. Rather than a reduction in hegemonic masculinity, these hybridised configurations simply appropriate new practices and

maintain subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities. In their retheorisation, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848) did account for the agency that subordinated groups have in the gender hierarchy, acknowledging Demetriou's (2001) suggestion that masculinities may change in dialect with one another. In her discussion of global society and disability, Connell (2011) argued that society and the gender order is not static, but ontoformatively (re)produced through social process and changing social norms.

2.3.1.3 Complicity

Complicity refers to the role that the majority of men have in relation to the construct of hegemonic masculinity; that they are complicit in upholding this configuration as an authoritative masculinity. Most men do not achieve the practices of hegemonic masculinity but uphold this configuration as a natural or true masculinity because of the patriarchal dividend which they gain from its power. Connell describes complicit masculinities as those which "are organized around the acceptance of the patriarchal dividend but are not militant in defence of patriarchy" (2000, p. 31). She suggests that some men do not embody the hegemonic project in order to maintain respectful and happy relationships with women and children, while continuing to reap the benefits of patriarchy (Connell, 1995, pp.79-80). However, Jeff Hearn challenges the usefulness of this conception, arguing instead for a model which accounts for the *hegemony of men* (2004). Using the example of men's violence against known women, Hearn (2012) argues that hegemonic masculinity does little to explain why women are so often the victims of abuse, even when different configurations of masculinity are lauded in different contexts. Similarly, the existence of misogyny among subordinated gay men (as theorised in Hale & Ojeda, 2018), illustrates the extent to which men as a group hold power in society, regardless of their place in the hierarchy of masculinities. Hearn (2004) recommends considering the category of men, and their practices in understanding how patriarchy is maintained, insisting that investigation of masculinity is not as important as an investigation of men. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasise that hegemonic masculinity is not a static typology, and that it can be embodied by women; they point to the work of Jack Halberstam, whose pivotal discussion of *Female Masculinity* exemplified the importance of masculinity as a point of analysis, which is separated from the social category of men (1998). Nevertheless, women who engage in masculine practices do not benefit from a patriarchal dividend, and the boundaries of gender conformity may be violently policed. Therefore, when understanding complicity in regards to hegemonic masculinity, Hearn's account of the hegemony of men as a class is useful.

2.3.1.4 Marginalisation

Connell (1987, 1995) argues that while one configuration of masculinity is hegemonic, other forms of masculinity (even if similar) may be marginalised because of other structural inequalities, such as the marginalisation of working-class and black masculinities. She is cognisant of the interrelations between class, race and gender, insisting that any analysis of gender order should also consider the ways in dominance is not only gendered, but also classed and raced. More comprehensive analysis of the overlapping forms of marginalisation is evident in Crenshaw's influential theory of 'intersectionality' (1991). In her analysis of the experience of sexual violence by black women, she addresses the ways in which women of colour may be disadvantaged by intersecting systemic inequalities, and conflicting subject positions, in what Collins refers to as the 'matrix of domination' (2015). These analytic tools can be employed to understand the marginalisation of women of colour, and working-class men of colour, and can also be applied to understanding the power and privilege held by middle-class white heterosexual men in institutions – they are privileged by multiple intersecting social systems.

When it comes to masculinity, Coston and Kimmel[6] (2012) argue, marginalised men do hold male privilege, but gender is the also the metric by which they are marginalised – i.e. black, disabled and working-class men are positioned as 'not men'. Marginalised masculinities may therefore have very similar configurations of practice to the hegemonic masculinity/ies but not be valorised or recognised as a dominant masculinity. Connell (1995) suggested that marginalised men may adopt 'protest masculinities' to counteract their experience of powerlessness, which are hypermasculinised in specific ways. Her life histories with working-class men revealed a greater importance placed on physical and sexual masculinity, as political and financial success were unlikely for these men, in the form of violence emphatic homophobia. However, research conducted with working-class laddish school leavers (McDowell, 2002) suggested that while some adopt the 'hard lad' protest masculinity, for many there was a desire to achieve respect from wider society through gainful employment and adopting masculine practices. The majority of research on lad culture in secondary school contexts refers to working-class protest masculinities (e.g. Jackson, 2002), whereas university lad culture is often enacted by middle-class students (Phipps & Young, 2013).

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[6] It is acknowledged that Michael Kimmel has been publicly accused of sexual harassment in universities where he holds power (Ratcliffe, 2018). His theorisations of masculinity and anti-violence work which includes men are nonetheless prominent in the field, so they have been included. Still, I want to recognise that I am aware of these allegations, and that I stand in support with those who have come forward.

2.3.1.5 Masculinity in this project

This thesis is based on feminist theorisations of gender as performative (Butler, 1988, 1990), a social construction which is brought about through social practice and discourse. As a result, gender can be investigated by observing how it is 'done' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and examining embodied 'manhood acts' (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009) which create and reinforce gendered inequality. Gender is understood as relational; masculinity and femininity are constructed in relation to/opposition to one another. I adopt the reformulated concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) as a lens through which to study lad culture. While research has identified lad culture as dominant within UK university communities (Phipps & Young, 2013), this project will interrogate whether lad culture merely dominates or is hegemonic (as differentiated in Messerschmidt, 2018b). I will take into account Whitehead's (2002) criticism that theorisations of hegemonic masculinity must focus on discourses and how they impact and are enacted by individual men – I will investigate how self-identified lads (SILs) position themselves in relation to masculine discourses. Though the theory has been challenged as not offering focus on the subject (Wetherell & Edley, 1999), through interviews with SILs which allow participants to identify their own practices of laddism, this project will contribute empirical evidence which extends academic understanding of practices of laddish hegemonic masculinity.

Claims of inclusive masculinity among university sportsmen (Anderson, 2009) and of 'mischievous masculinities' enacted by sportsmen (Nichols, 2018a) while optimistic for the future of masculinity, do little to account for the ways in which the patriarchal gender order is structurally upheld. Of particular interest, as will be outlined in the next section, is the interaction between hegemonic masculinity and neoliberal capitalism. The concept of hegemonic masculinity demonstrates links between local interactions between men and the global patriarchal dividend enjoyed by men. Further, because of the dynamism of hegemonic masculinity, I find evidence of declining homophobia to be well accounted for in the formulation. Additionally, the promise of a masculine configuration which can be transformed through social practice is compelling – there is the potential for unseating the "currently accepted" hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Conceptualising laddish masculinity in this way opens up the possibility of transformations to the current gender order, through ontoformative social praxis, rather than describing changes which may have already occurred in masculinity. Further, although this project will thoroughly explore relationships between subordinated and hegemonic masculinities in lad culture, of key importance (especially in the interrogation of sexual violence and lad culture) is the dialect between masculinities and women.

2.3.2 Laddism and neoliberalism

Significant theorisation of lad culture by Alison Phipps and co-authors (Phipps, 2015, 2016, 2018a, 2018b; Phipps & Young, 2015a) has argued that the recent expansion of lad culture in UK university communities is an outcome of an economic and socio-political turn towards neoliberalism in the West. They on the one hand recognise that many of the practices associated with lad culture – sexism, homophobia, sexual violence, racism and binge drinking – are by no means new. Laddish masculinities have existed in media since at least the 1950s (Beynon, 2002), sexual violence has been researched in universities for the last 40 years (for a review see Jessup-Anger et al., 2018), and the notorious University of Oxford dining club 'The Bullingdon Club' has been reportedly engaging in excessive drinking and vandalism since the 1800s (as discussed in Long et al. 2015, p. 196). On the other hand, they argue that the resurgence of the importance and acceptability of these laddish discourses can be understood as supported by neoliberalism:

> We also suggest that neoliberal frameworks scaffold an individualistic and adversarial culture among young people that interacts with perceived threats to men's privilege and intensifies attempts to put women in their place through misogyny and sexual harassment. Furthermore, lad cultures', sexism and sexual harassment in higher education may be invisibilised by institutions to preserve marketability in a neoliberal context. (Phipps & Young, 2015a, p. 305)

This extract points to two main spheres for considering the influence of neoliberalism on lad culture: firstly, the impact of neoliberalising discourses on subjectivity and social practice and secondly the impact of the neoliberalisation of universities and the higher education sector, which may normalise or invisibilise the social practices. This section will first give an overview of neoliberalism, then outline research on the subjective and institutional context in which lad culture has been investigated.

Neoliberalism broadly refers to a recent (late 19th Century) return to economic and political classical liberalism, wherein 'free market' capitalism is favoured as a system for promoting economic growth. The logic of liberalist scholars (such as Adam Smith and John Locke) was that by allowing economic freedom, and eschewing state limitations on corporate growth, all members of society would eventually benefit from the successes of businesses in the free market – as this would in turn lead to greater employment opportunities and boost the national economy. This underlying aim is reiterated on the home page of UK Think Tank *Adam Smith Institute* as "Using free markets to create a richer, freer, happier world" (Adam Smith Institute, n.d., homepage). While a noble aim, the deregulation of businesses and low taxes for the highest earners evident in neoliberal policies has increased wealth inequality in the UK since the resurgence of these ideas in the 1970s (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Often associated

with the economic policy of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, neoliberalism is also related to the reduction of state spending in part through the withdrawal or limitation of welfare benefits and privatisation of public services. Following the 2007 financial crash, UK economic policy used 'austerity measures' in an attempt to reduced national debt; these cuts to the funding of public services and reduction in benefits were particularly detrimental to women and people of colour (Pearson, 2019).

The proliferation of neoliberal economic and social policies, as well as the infusion of neoliberal discourse into the media has resulted in neoliberal subjectivities. McGuigan (2014) outlines multiple indicators of the impact of neoliberalism on subjectivities, in a constellation which he describes as the 'neoliberal self'. Though this theorisation lacks an analysis of gender, the neoliberal self is identified as prioritising individualism, competition, and consumption. His prior work (McGuigan, 2011) explores how disaffection is embedded into consumerism, referring to prevailing discourses as 'cool capitalism'. The key features of being cool were, in his theorisation, hedonistic consumerism, narcissism and an ironic disaffection. Adherence to these discourses positions opponents to capitalism as uncool and out-of-touch, and proponents as free neoliberal individuals. Gill's concept of a 'postfeminist sensibility' (2007), which she explains can be "understood in terms of gendered neoliberalism" in her revisiting, also bears much resemblance to this subject position (2017, p. 620). Gill (2007) has described this sensibility and involving the reiteration and repudiation of feminist rhetoric; postfeminism involves the upholding of feminist values, while simultaneously believing that feminism's goals have been achieved, thus rendering feminism unnecessary. While Gill's work specifically looks at the affective life of postfeminism for women, her arguments that postfeminism has imbued subjectivity, and requires self-audit of the body and the affect (2017) is useful for understanding the impact of neoliberalism on individual and social practice. These theorisations are pertinent to understanding why the current forms of laddish practices (as distinct from laddish practices and attitudes from the past) are influenced by neoliberalism.

2.3.2.1 The neoliberal university

The impact of market forces is that universities are situated in competition with each other, such as via the publication of league tables and National Student Satisfaction survey results, and act as corporations (Connell, 2013) rather than as supportive educational institutions. In this context, university students are repositioned as consumers (Gov.uk, 2015b) and "omniscient consumers" (Nixon et al., 2016) who must be provided ample information on university rankings to make choices about where to study. More recently, in thematic analysis of 40 policy documents and government speeches, Rachel Brooks found prominent discourses of students as vulnerable consumers, being taken advantage of by HEIs and as "future workers" (2018) for

whom higher education is an investment. In this context, education is not undertaken for its own sake, but is commodified: a degree is not considered as a process through which knowledge is developed, but as a product which confers knowledge once purchased. The neoliberal university is therefore constructed as a producer, within a competitive marketplace, with students as consumers (whether vulnerable or "omniscient"). It might be expected that the need for universities to compete in the educational marketplace would counteract laddish practices, in particular sexual harassment, as this may damage the reputation of universities. However, universities thus have a vested interest in silencing complaints from students or minimising the perceived impact of negative cultures on students, through what Phipps calls 'institutional airbrushing' (2019). Indeed, university staff (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018) frequently invisibilised and normalised sexual violence and lad culture in the university setting, seen either as an expected element of the university experience or as anomalous extreme incidents perpetrated by a few individuals (despite common knowledge about underreporting). Analysis of university responses to sexual violence (Shannon, 2018; Strait, 2020) criticise the individualistic sanctioning of perpetrators, without investment in cultural change.

In addition to the neoliberal culture of UK universities, there are other organisational factors which may account for the domination of lad culture in higher education. One such factor is the overrepresentation of men in positions of power at UK Universities (both in academic and managerial roles). Male professors outnumber females at a ratio of 1 to 2 (14,205 male professors to 4,735 female professors in HESA data 2016/17), and nearly 80% of Vice Chancellors are men (21% of Vice Chancellors are female according to HESA data from 2015/16). This is not new – in that universities in the UK have always been dominated by (white) men – but this situation can help explain why current lad culture meets little resistance from universities in spite of the negative impact of lad culture on university students. The managing bodies of universities, overwhelmingly male, may minimise the impact of lad culture on university communities, considering these behaviours as harmless iterations of youth masculinity. Indeed, laddish behaviours are enacted or enshrined by some male university staff members (found in Jackson and Sundaram, 2018), and so their prominence or harmfulness may be downplayed by university staff.

Dominant discourses of neoliberalism in universities can imbue students with a competitive nature whereby all personal successes are considered zero-sum gains. In this culture, the improvements in women's rights are perceived as a threat to the freedoms and hegemony of men - a threat which must be challenged through rigid gender norms and misogyny. Lad culture can therefore be considered as a reactionary 'backlash' (Faludi, 1991) in response to the improvement of women's rights, which is perceived by some as a threat to the security of male power/privilege. This is also evident in discourses of restricted speech in

university settings, such as the claim from independent news site *Spiked* that the majority of UK universities censor free speech; their most recent annual report claimed that 54% of institutions studied actively contend free speech (Spiked, 2018).

Moreover, university experience is discursively constructed as an adventure and a transitional phase, which may cause some to justify their laddish behaviours as experimentation and even as a rite of passage. Capraro (2000) reviewed the influence of these discourses on alcohol consumption among male college students, suggesting that college is experienced as another world, a place to explore being and doing (of masculinity) outside of civil society. He uses this model to account for risky behaviours - such as initiations and forfeits for sports teams and Greek system in the US - which adhere to notions of danger and boundary crossing as forms of adventure. Through these trials new undergraduates make themselves vulnerable and entrust their safety to the social group, thus creating strong bonds.

2.4 **Laddish Practices**

Practices which were identified as laddish in research on lad culture (in section 2.2) include: binge drinking, homosociality, banter (misogynist, homophobic and racist), playing sports, casual sex and sexual objectification of women, and anti-schoolwork attitude. It is important to recognise that while research using the term 'lad culture' is sparse, that there is a wealth of literature addressing laddish practices as conducted by young men and male university students. Having established that lad culture is a form of hegemonic masculinity in universities (section 2.3.1) and because of the paucity of research which specifically investigates lad culture, this section will provide an overview of these practices in relation to university masculinity more generally.

2.4.1 Binge drinking

UK university students drink significantly more than non-student peers (Davoren et al., 2015; Kypri et al., 2005). Students are also more likely to meet the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) criteria for alcohol abuse (Knight et al., 2002) and more likely to be problem/hazardous drinkers than non-student peers (Blanco et al., 2008; Heather et al., 2011). This is perhaps unsurprising, given the common view that drinking is "integral to the student role" (Crawford & Novak, 2006, p. 193) for University students. They surveyed 293 students at Midwestern US University and found that the college experience as a rite of passage was a prevailing discourse among students. They also noted a strong link between holding this belief and alcohol (ab)use, quantitatively corroborating evidence that students consider heavy drinking to be intrinsic to the university experience. Drinking is often seen as related

to/required for social bonding, parties and communal living on campus (NUS, 2016; Wechsler et al., 1995). In a factsheet for parents of college students created by the US National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism it is suggested that "certain aspects of college life, such as unstructured time, the widespread availability of alcohol" allow for excessive drinking to take place. (2020, p. 2).

This is explicitly linked to gender roles for male students, in particular those who are white and middle-class, who use alcohol consumption as a means for constructing masculinity (Peralta, 2007). Peralta noted that stories of alcohol consumption are used to socially reiterate oneself as masculine: portraying key points of bodily strength and risk-taking. Male students' ability to 'hold their drink' is given as evidence of their physical ability, while simultaneously used to denigrate those who are unable to as weak, feminine or homosexual. In this way consumption of alcohol, in large volumes without noticeable effect, is not only considered masculine, but related to the compulsory heteronormativity of maleness: the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler, 1990, p. 141). Males who believed that college was a rite of passage drank significantly more than their female counterparts, but for students who did not hold this belief, gender did not have an effect on drinking practices. This finding corroborates with evidence showing that not only are college-attendees drinking more than their working peers, but that male students are consuming more alcohol than female students (O'Malley & Johnston, 2002). For male students, Murphy et al. (2005) found a positive curvilinear relationship between alcohol consumption and social satisfaction, meaning that men who drank more had higher satisfaction, up to a point. Comparatively, non-drinking women had higher life satisfaction than did female students who drank heavily. Male students may drink more because of a perceived link between alcohol consumption and masculinity, whereby drinking is seen as a "predominantly a male activity, where power and masculinity are directly related to an individual's capacity for alcohol consumption" (Henry-Edwards & Pols, 1991, p. 26). Dempster (2011) also found evidence that 'holding' one's drink (retaining composure despite drinking heavily) is also important for maintenance of masculine standing, and that those who are too reckless or commit acts of violence are positioned as the extreme negative of lad culture.

The use of alcohol in constructing oneself as masculine presents potential health problems, as men uncomfortable in their masculinity are most at risk of developing alcohol-related issues (McCreary et al., 1999). These researchers also found that single-sex social settings facilitate greater consumption of alcohol. The findings further indicate that those with who feel insecure in their masculine identities in relation to their peer group are at risk of developing a dependency on alcohol. As well as bolstering one's masculinity, consumption of alcohol can be used for developing intimacy in male friendship groups. Men drink significantly more when in the company of other men, suggesting that there is a shared masculinity

associated with drinking. Lied and Marlatt (1979) experimented using men and women in laboratory conditions, pairing each participant with a same sex confederate of the experimenters. When the male confederate drank heavily, so did the male participants. Potentially, then, drinking alcohol is used as a social demonstration of masculine prowess, that there is perceived competition between the men in the experiment. Or that a camaraderie is felt by the participant when modelling the behaviour of a male confederate. It is clear regardless, that homosocial groups of men will encourage drinking of alcohol. Thus, the homosocial friendship groups of lad culture may be conducive to excessive (or binge) drinking.

In addition, through shared embodied activities, intimate bonds can be formed while retaining distance between the self and group members (Rubin, 1985). In his ethnographic study of 'stag tours'[7], Thomas Thurnell-Read (2011) identified the embodied effects of binge drinking as a site for intimacy between male friends. He suggested that excessive alcohol consumption was in part used to place some group members in a vulnerable state (such as vomiting or losing consciousness) which the group could then protect, in order to convey intimate friendship and trust. This celebration of 'leaky bodies' (as in Shildrick, 1994) was considered by the group to be as important as intimate conversations. Thus, binge drinking might not only be used to construct one's own masculinity, but to exercise trust in the homosocial group and to strengthen intimate bonds. Therefore, those who do not drink may be ostracised, perpetuating heavy drinking as the dominant form of socialising in homosocial groups. To show vulnerability (both physical and emotional) men use alcohol, thus alcohol is linked to permissiveness. Similarly, Clayton and Harris (2008) found university drinking spaces, such as the Pub or student bar, to be areas for resisting social change in the outside world, with "alcohol as abettor to men's discourses of hegemonic masculinity" (p. 313). This suggests that alcohol consumption may be used in order to prove one's masculinity and to revert to binary gendered practices and traditional gender roles, which are perceived as threatened by queer and intersectional feminisms. Excessive consumption of alcohol is at once a masculine act, but also reduces adherence to the inhibiting norms of political correctness, allowing men to behave in traditionally masculine ways (Capraro, 2000). There are strong cultural expectations that link masculinity with drinking, such that the act of drinking can be seen as masculine, and "men become more likely to feel and act in traditionally manly ways when they drink" (Lemle & Mishkind, 1989, p. 214).

Finally, there is a strong correlation between sexual violence and alcohol consumption. Abbey et al. (2002) found that more than half of incidences of sexual assault or rape among college students involved alcohol consumption. A national survey of female students revealed

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[7] Pre-marital holidays where the soon-to-be groom is celebrated.

that alcohol consumption (of both perpetrator and victim) predicted the severity of sexually violent acts (Ullman et al., 1999). Thus, masculinity is performed through physical strength and endurance via consumption of alcohol, then when drunk, men are uninhibited and able to enact gender typical behaviours, including that of compulsory heterosexuality. This results in the objectification of women, sexual harassment and sexual assault. The greater the reduction in inhibitions, the more likely such behaviour is to occur, and the more violently it is enacted. Given the risk that such uninhibited behaviour poses to female and other marginalised students (as well as the potential legal repercussions for perpetrators and HEIs), it is essential that the practice of binge drinking in lad culture is interrogated.

2.4.2 Banter

The jocular discourse 'banter' has frequently been referred to as a practice of lad culture (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018; Phipps & Young, 2013) and is recognised as frequently including sexism and misogyny as well as homophobia and racism (Jackson & Sundaram, 2020). Of key importance in academic discussion of banter, is whether the jokes between lads are problematic, and whether they represent the views of lads. Linguistic scholar Deborah Cameron (2020) warns against considering banter as an authentic communication form, though, arguing that what is joked about between men is about homosocial bonding and masculine performance, rather than admissions of true acts. She acknowledges Sanday's (2007) research with fraternity members, which recognised banter as an essential bonding practice among members, which served to ease anxieties about sexual performance. Sanday argued that this banter was part of 'rape culture' evident in fraternities, which scaffolds sexual violence in US universities. Further investigation of banter and cultures which support sexual violence in the UK context is required.

Outside of the research context of higher education, some have suggested that banter can be used to destabilise misogynist cultures, and to support alternative forms of masculinity thus creating inclusive spaces within the culture (Nichols, 2018a, 2018b; Thurnell-Read, 2012). Following an ethnography of a Rugby Union club, Nichols (2018a) argued that rather than viewing lads' banter as wholly harmful, the knowing ironic misogynist banter should be considered as part of 'mischievous masculinities' employed by men to relax among one another. Observing a lads' drinking session, Gough and Edwards (1998) also found that homophobia, misogyny and racism were present in homosocial conversation. Lads' cited the importance of these gatherings, and this language, to "let off steam" in the joint understanding that such jokes were unacceptable in other contexts (p. 413). So too did university lads (Jeffries, 2019) who took part in banter which they recognised may be seen as bullying if directed outside of the laddish group. What these characterisations of laddish banter tend to assume is that all

members of a laddish group are white, heterosexual and cisgender – they claim that banter is understood by group members as a harmless tongue-in-cheek mockery of political correctness, without the acknowledgement that these jokes would cause harm if group members were the target of such jokes. It is evident, for example, that while such jokes may be seen as harmless by the tellers, LGBT students fear for their safety in UK university communities (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018; Young-Powell & Gil, 2015).

Another proposal is that laddish banter is a method of engaging emotionally with male friends (Nichols, 2018b). Lawless & Magrath (2020) differentiated between inclusionary and exclusionary banter employed by a grass-roots cricket team. Their participants recognised the unacceptability of jokes involving misogyny and racism, while maintaining that referring to other players by a woman's name or miming a sex act on a fellow player using a cricket bat was inclusionary. Both accounts imply that banter is used to connect with other club members and demonstrate a caring relationship between lads. Any investigation of lad culture must address SILs understanding of their banter, teasing out the nuance within such jokes between lads.

2.4.3 Playing sports

"Historically, sport has been so closely identified with men that sport has become one of the key signifiers of masculinity in many Western societies" (Wheaton, 2000, p. 434) and a wealth of academic literature points to sport as a signifier of masculinity (e.g. Kidd, 2013; Messner, 1989, 1990). Limited but consistent evidence links sports to lad culture (Dempster, 2009; Jeffries, 2019; Phipps & Young, 2013). There is an emerging body of evidence on this topic, e.g. Hardiman (2015) conducted 11 semi-structured interviews with male undergraduates as part of his undergraduate thesis project. Cluster analysis of interview data revealed that lad culture was seen as significant in the construction of sporting masculinities, and that laddism had a negative effect on the behaviour and attitudes of university sports teams. Dempster's (2009) research using qualitative interviews with male undergraduates found that engagement with sport is central to their self-construction of masculinity. Being a member of a university sports team allows students entry to the laddish group by way of proof of physical ability. SILs identified particular sports as being most closely aligned with lad culture: rugby and football (Jeffries, 2019). While they recognised that lads were not only those who played sport, or that those who played sport were not always lads, being involved in a sports team or having a keen engagement in sport were seen as 'laddish norms'.

Other laddish practices are also particularly demonstrated by university sportsmen. University football players were found to use alcohol as a central element to team bonding and developing friendships (Clayton & Harris, 2008) and binge drinking was associated with participation in organised sport at university (Green et al., 2014). 68% of male undergraduates

identified lads who played sports as the biggest drinkers on campus (Dempster, 2011), revealing linkages between laddish identity sport and alcohol. Banter was evident in sporting contexts (Nichols, 2018a). Although team sports have previously been identified as sites of "homophobia and the denigration of women" (Messner & Sabo, 1994, p.110), recent research has suggested that homophobia has diminished in British sporting contexts (Bush et al., 2012). Additionally, the use of 'initiations' and 'hazing' for incoming students to sports teams has been identified as physically and sexually abusive (Kirby & Wintrup, 2002). Moreover, the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated by collegiate athletes in the US has commanded much academic attention (for review see McCray, 2015). Investigation of laddish practices must therefore consider the importance of playing sport, as both a site of positive camaraderie and potential context for violence.

2.4.4 Casual sex

An explicit impact of lad culture on sex and relationships was found by Phipps and Young (2013), with the effect that pressure to engage in casual sex is felt because of discourses of distaste towards committed relationships. SILs interviewed by Jeffries (2019) identified 'pulling' as a prominent practice of lad culture. Opting for casual sexual encounters rather than long term relationships is often referred to as 'hookup culture' in literature on university students (Heldman & Wade, 2010; Paul et al., 2010) as preference for 'no strings attached' sex among adolescents and young adults. Sites such as www.shagatuni.com boast that they "have thousands of students all over the UK who want to hook up for sex" (Shag at Uni, 2016, homepage). Engaging in 'hookup culture' and a positive attitude towards casual sex were more common in students with "strong ties to peers" (Holman & Sillars, 2011, p. 205) suggesting that laddish social groups might support 'hookup culture' through homosocial bonding. This research also revealed that university students overestimated the extent to which 'hookups' were taking place in the student community. It can then be assumed that 'hookup culture' is partially maintained through positive talk amongst peer groups.

However, some researchers suggest that this culture is experienced differently by male and female students. Empirical research by Bradshaw, Khan and Saville (2010) found that female students preferred dating to 'hooking up' in most scenarios, while the opposite was true for male students. Following interviews with male US college students (and some recent graduates), Kimmel's (2008) 'Guyland' explores "hooking up" as a prominent feature of male experience at US colleges, which is then retold in sexual stories among male friends, as a demonstration of 'bragging rights'. Lisa Wade's (2017) *American Hookup*… she argues that this practice is undertaken in similar ways by both female and male students, but that men are more likely to hookup than women (see also Padgett & Wade, 2018). Hooking up may also be a way of

exerting dominance over others, by competing with other lads to sleep with the most, or most attractive women. Recent reports of "posh lads competing on fucking the poorest girl" at Durham University indicate that hooking up may also be used to exert dominance over those with less privilege (as in Halliday, 2020, p. 1). Research on the sharing of sexual stories indicates that students share these differently depending on the social context: Currier (2013) found that the ambiguity of the term 'hookup' is employed by men to insinuate that they have engaged in more sexual acts, and by women to do the opposite, arguing that the term is therefore used to reinforce hegemonic masculinity and protect femininity for women. Hookup culture is frequently associate with social drinking in university communities (Garcia et al., 2012; Stinson et al., 2014), further illustrating the parallels within lad culture.

2.4.5 Anti-schoolwork attitude

A significant amount of research has examined laddism in secondary schools. This began with Paul Willis' ethnography and group interview research on working-class 'lads', *Learning to Labour* (1977). In the case of Willis' lads, to be interested in schoolwork was seen not only as 'uncool' but to some extent emasculating. They understood masculinity in relation to their male role models (usually fathers or older brothers) who typically worked in manual labour roles and considered schoolwork unnecessary to fulfilling these career goals. So, then, to participate in scholarly activity was to be effeminate, or at least worthy of derision from the lads, because it did not apply to their understanding of working-class masculinity. Yet, the same attitudes and associated behaviours have been found in secondary schools across class - and gender – boundaries.

Couched in the examination of discourses of boys' underachievement, 'laddism' became a commonly used term to describe boisterous and disruptive behaviour in classrooms, and a strong anti-school attitude (Francis, 2010; Jackson, 2006a; Skelton, 2001). Some found that this was particularly evident in all-male teaching environments (Warrington & Younger, 2003). The motivation for these lads, according to Jackson, was not simply to model the masculinity of the generation before them, but to preserve self-worth in the face of potential academic failure or of appearing 'stupid' (2002). In ground-breaking publications, the concept of 'ladettes' (female lads) was examined, revealing that the masculine norms associated with lad culture were not limited to male students (Jackson, 2006a). This work reiterated that laddish behaviours were enacted by pupils out of a fear of failure, with the notion that failing when having been seen to have worked hard carries more embarrassment than failing without trying - causing students to avoid appearing as if they had spent time on schoolwork, even if they had done so. Further, their findings are evidence of the performativity of gendered practices, which are not necessarily tied to male bodies. In addition to the impact on subjective experience for pupils of all genders (in

their approach to and engagement with schooling), and the disruption of lessons, lad culture was found to have an impact on the individual practices of teachers who encountered it. In order to engage laddish students, some teachers felt the need to mirror laddish practices, such as talking about football in lessons, engaging in playful physicality or "joining in with the sort of mickey taking" between students (Jackson, 2010, p. 513). In this study of 30 teachers in England, teachers characterised lad culture as being centred around group-based attention-seeking activities. laddish individuals were also seen as those with sporting prowess, in contrast to their academic attainment. Thus, lad culture has long been recognised as a potential component of secondary education, perceived as related to anti-school attitude and the concordant low achievement of boys. Yet, the research in this area has uncovered a broad spectrum of identities which may interact with laddish behaviours, including class, gender and race (Francis & Archer, 2005). While there have been theories of the motivation for partaking in lad culture, little attention has been paid in this arena to the relationships between laddism and sexual violence, though research on the prevalence of sexual violence in secondary schools is common (Girlguiding, 2017, p.19; Lombard, 2016 and for a review see Women's and Equalities Committee, 2016). Further, although a focal point of discourses of lad culture in the media, little empirical research has investigated 'laddism' in higher education contexts.

The research that is available indicates that the same norms are also present in higher education; interviews with male undergraduates revealed that these students adopted similar markers of masculinity and laddism regardless of their class/socio-economic background (Jackson & Dempster, 2009), such as boisterous behaviour, binge drinking and casual sex. These men also felt the need to position themselves as anti-schoolwork to demonstrate their masculinity, and often did so through the employ of other masculine performances, notably the consumption of alcohol. These attitudes were often at odds with the expectations upon them to engage with academic work, given their position as university students. It was theorised by Warin and Dempster that adopting laddish masculinities might be a strategy for 'fitting in' when arriving at university, stating that "gender operates as a salient and accessible means of identifying an in-group of peers and that laddish practices are enacted as a function of the initial stages of peer group formation" (2007, p. 887). They argue that incoming first year students, who are faced with large numbers of peer strangers, use any identities at their disposal to connect them to social groups - and that lad culture in particular and gender, in general, are useful defaults for making friends during the tumult of transition to university. By this logic, university students would be less likely to identify with 'laddism' the longer that they continue studying.

While 'laddism' may serve a social purpose, the performance of being uninterested in academic work can be disruptive to other students and even university staff. Interviews with

students on a sports science degree revealed laddish behaviours, such as disruption with boisterous interruptions and bullying, in teaching and learning contexts (Jackson et al, 2014). The authors of this paper noted that laddish behaviours in this context serve to disadvantage the teaching staff, the other students *and* the lads themselves. Further recent publications, based on interviews with over 70 staff at 6 UK universities, describe the way in which laddish disruptions of teaching and learning contexts are most commonly experienced by female teaching staff members (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018, 2020). There is also suggestion that anti-schoolwork behaviours, such as "coming to class without having prepared to participate or contribute to academic discussion, constant interruptions to the lecture/lecturer, heckling or undermining the lecturer or other students in the session" were most commonly reported by staff members at post-1992 institutions (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018, p. 12). These findings demonstrate the impact of lad culture on learning spaces, but also serve to exemplify the range of behaviours considered under the umbrella term 'laddism'. The current research project will contribute empirical data which expand upon these findings, combining student and staff interviews with questionnaire responses. While the majority of female respondents in the aforementioned Phipps and Young study (2013) did not feel that lad culture had a direct influence on teaching and learning contexts, they were aware of the ways in which gender influenced their university experiences. From subject segregation (with seemingly masculine subjects such as STEM being viewed as higher status than feminine) to the failure to address issues of feminism and gender in the curriculum - it was implied that universities are at once arenas in which laddism is enacted and where actors perpetuate gendered (if not laddish) norms.

2.5 Lad Culture and Sexual Violence

Female students argued that lad culture in university social contexts was responsible for pressure to have casual sex, and disdain for longer term relationships (Phipps & Young, 2013). Added to the laddish preference for casual sex, a potential impact of lad culture at university can be seen in the high incidence of gendered sexual violence. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) also identified university lad culture and sexual harassment among the issues of concern from universities in the UK, stating that students have submitted complaints against their universities, about violence sustained during their study. However, much of the evidence is anecdotal or from limited sources, in the words of the Chief Executive of Universities UK (UUK): "On sexual violence explicitly, there is no comprehensive data available to indicate how many UK university students are affected by such incidents. The evidence is limited to NUS survey findings." (UUK, 2016, p. 1). Online resources accompanying anti-lad culture workshops in the

UK have explicitly made an association between laddism and sexual violence, with the statement that "student communities where sexual boundaries are routinely crossed may be conducive to sexual assault and rape" (Phipps and Whittington, 2015, p. 2). Further a national campaign by the NUS in 2015 used the term euphemistically, as a stand in for rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment in both printed materials and on the dedicated *Tackling Lad Culture Hub* webpage (NUS, 2015). In a Master's thesis on the topic, Craig (2016) presents evidence that acceptance of sexual assault by university students is positively correlated with reported involvement with lad culture. A qualitative element to this investigation revealed that lad culture was normalised and prevalent within the university experience. Nevertheless, further investigation of lad culture and sexual violence is required to understand what underpins this relationship. Although there is limited research on university sexual violence which refers to 'lad culture', there is a wealth of evidence that sexual violence is most often perpetrated by male students against female students, and that practices evident in lad culture are related to sexual violence (such as binge drinking and playing sport). This section will address the prevalence of sexual violence in university contexts, and research which relates sexual violence to laddish practices.

2.5.1 Sexual violence in universities

A plethora of survey findings display the prevalence of sexual violence for women at university; in the UK 1 in 7 of the female students surveyed were victims of a serious physical or sexual assault during their study (Smith, 2010). In another survey carried out at the University of Cambridge, more than three quarters of students said they had experienced sexual harassment during their degree (Cambridge University Students' Union, 2014). Findings from a survey of over 4,000 UK students (Revolt Sexual Assault & The Student Room, 2018) reveal that 63% of students had experienced sexual violence, and that the proportion of female students experiencing sexual violence was 70%, compared with 26% of male students. Of women who had experience sexual violence, 48% were survivors of sexual assault, more than twice the proportion of those estimated in the *Hidden Marks* survey (Smith, 2010). The vast majority of students had not reported their experience, with some arguing that sexual violence was so ubiquitous that they did not see the point in reporting it to the university or police. Similar findings were found in a survey commissioned by *The Telegraph* which found that more than a third of female students had experienced sexual violence or unwanted groping, and that around half of these women had never told their university, family or friends about their experience (Goldhill & Bingham, 2015). It is abundantly clear that women students are frequently harassed and assaulted during their time at university, in significantly higher proportions than men. The sexual health and wellbeing charity Brook also conducted a survey of university students with

5,649 respondents (66% female, 32% male, 2% other). Of those participating[8], more than half had experienced unwanted sexual advances, which included receiving sexual images and unwanted touching or forced sex acts. Of those who had experienced harassment (56%) less than 1 in 6 had recognised this as sexual harassment; the charity argued that this revealed "a significant gap in understanding of consent and what constitutes sexual harassment and violence" (Brook, 2019, para 3). Research on knowledge of consent among university/college students is certainly limited, and findings suggest that the majority of students ascertain consent through employment of traditional (hetero)sexual scripts of men as instigators and women as gatekeepers of sex (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013). It is therefore essential to consider sexual violence in relation to gendered scripts, as will be discussed in section 2.5.2.

High rates of campus sexual violence have also been revealed in the United States (US). Gross et al. (2006) found that 27% of women questioned had experienced unwanted sexual contact, since they enrolled in college, ranging from kissing and groping to rape. A review of studies of US colleges revealed that 35 out of every 1000 female undergraduates were the victims of rape each year (Fisher, 2000). Research by Krebs et al. (2016) found that 21% of female students experienced sexual assault since studying at college. These findings indicate that female students are put at risk of sexual violence simply by entering university and that there is a widespread culture of sexual violence in universities in the Western world. It has been argued that sexual violence is just the 'tip of the iceberg', and that experience of stalking, emotional abuse and physical violence from partners or ex-partners is even more widespread among college students than sexual violence (Oswalt et al., 2015). Violence and rape within dating relationships among college students has been the subject of investigation for multiple decades, with nearly four times as many female students reporting this (25%) compared with males (7%) (Aizenman & Kelley, 1988). In a review of over 50 years worth of studies investigating sexual violence perpetrated by university men against female students, McDermott et al. (2015) advocated for greater understanding of masculinities and the way these affect perpetration, rather than simply analysis of students' attitudes towards women.

Sexual violence in colleges in the US is commonly related to the Greek system of fraternities, where students live in sex-segregated dormitories, with a focus on social activities (for review see Seabrook, 2017). Research on the factors underlying this association points to high conformity to masculine norms (Seabrook et al., 2018), and higher rape myth acceptance (Bleecker & Murnen, 2005) among fraternity brothers. The term 'rape culture' (Sanday, 1981), was coined to refer to the finding that rape is most prevalent in communities where male aggression, dominance and single-sex groups are tolerated, for example, rape supportive

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[8] The report does not split experience and reporting statistics by gender.

attitudes are more frequently held by fraternity members (Sanday, 1992). Belonging to a heavily gendered social group, with normative values placed on masculine behaviour, might predict acts of sexual violence. Further, findings from Franklin et al. (2012) suggest that the level of perceived secrecy in a fraternity directly predicted sexual assault. The similarity in homosocial bonding between fraternity culture and the 'pack mentality' of UK lad culture (Phipps & Young, 2013) may account for the high incidence of sexual violence in UK universities.

Another laddish practice which is associated with sexual violence is binge drinking. Antonia Abbey's body of research on the relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual violence is extensive. She discovered that college students' alcohol consumption increases the likelihood that sexual violence will occur (Abbey, 2002) whether the perpetrator and/or the victim drinks. Her review of the literature (Abbey, 2011) illustrates that those who perpetrate sexual violence when drunk are those men predisposed to sexual aggression, for whom alcohol exaggerates their hostility and predatory sexual behaviours. In fact, Gervais et al. (2014) found that sexual objectification of women is a factor which mediates the relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual violence. Through an online survey of 2,548 New Zealand students, Connor et al. (2010) observed that alcohol consumption was a contributing factor in experiencing unwanted sex, risky sex, and sexual assault. Among female students who had been assaulted, nearly half reported that the perpetrator had consumed alcohol (Gross et al., 2006). Pressure to engage in binge drinking predicts higher episodic drinking and higher perpetration of sexual violence (Bellis et al., 2020), thus communities where binge drinking is promoted may be those which promote sexual violence. Binge drinking is commonly associated with lad culture and exacerbates the risk of sexual violence perpetration among those who hold rape supportive or misogynist attitudes. The prevalence of sexist banter and rape supportive jokes within lad culture, combined with frequent binge drinking are therefore risk factors for sexual violence.

Finally, playing sport at a collegiate level has been associated with perpetration of sexual violence (for review see Taylor, 2020), mediated by engagement in more frequent binge drinking and hypermasculinity (Zeitchick, 2017). Similar trends were captured in the 2015 documentary *The Hunting Ground* (Dick, 2015) which recorded the narratives of victims of campus sexual assault across America, and the failure of colleges to sanction those responsible (often university athletes). Nevertheless, McCray (2019) has opined that further research is needed to understand the relationship between sexual violence and engagement in university sports. A thorough investigation of sexual violence and lad culture must also consider the association of laddism with rugby and football players within the university.

2.5.2 *Understanding sexual violence*

As well as risk factors for perpetration of sexual violence, misogynist banter and rape jokes may be considered a form of sexual violence in their own right, depending on the theoretical framework adopted for considering violence. This project adopts Liz Kelly's (1987) conceptualisation of sexual violence as existing on a continuum. In this theorisation, 'sexual violence' is not limited to legal definitions of physical assault and rape, but accounts for any behaviour which harms the recipient, and takes away their control. This framework is used to account for the ways in which sexually violent acts are interrelated and are expressions of misogyny. Recent use of this concept to discuss the #MeToo movement (Boyle, 2019) is eager to point out that understanding acts on a continuum is far from conflating forms of sexual violence. Rather, acts of misogyny are understood as part of the same systemic oppression of women as violent rape. In Griffin's *Rape: The All American Crime* (1971), rape and acts of sexual violence were considered to be inherently related to the subjugation of women. Some theorists have gone so far as to suggest that "Female fear of an open season of rape, and not a natural inclination toward monogamy, motherhood or love, was probably the single causative factor in the original subjugation of woman by man" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 16). While Brownmiller's theory is somewhat essentialising of sexual desire and gender roles, many others have argued that sexually violent acts are not to be seen as 'crimes of passion' but acts of violence which are practiced in parallel with a patriarchal society (Kelly, 1987; MacKinnon, 1989). Explicitly, the report on a *WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence* described violence against women as "a concrete manifestation of inequality between the sexes" (García-Moreno et al., 2005, p. 1282). This is similar to the justifications for sexual assault given by perpetrators in life histories conducted by Messerschmidt (2000). He concludes that sexual violence is used to re-establish power when facing "masculinity challenges". When young men face these challenges, with no obvious solution of regaining masculine power through heterosexual success, power is obtained secretly elsewhere, through carefully planned assault. Research by Robinson (2005) in Australian secondary schools revealed that boys (sexually) harass girls because they either feel that they should, or they feel that girls should experience it. Similarly, McCarry (2010) found that secondary school students drew on discourses of 'proper' masculinity in explaining boys' violence. Violence is intimately linked to the patriarchal gender order. Indeed, evidence suggests that hostile sexism predicts proclivity for acquaintance rape, and that perpetrators are more inclined to sexually assault victims who do not adhere to gender norms (Masser et al., 2006). Edwards et al. (2015) demonstrated that the incidence of sexual and physical violence was significantly higher among non-heterosexual students than heterosexual students. Therefore, sexual violence is used not only to put women 'in their place'

but also to reify the boundaries of heteropatriarchy, further exemplifying the importance of feminism in researching sexual violence.

This thesis will draw on the canon of theorisations of sexual violence as based in the patriarchal oppression of women. Further, I will utilise Kelly's (2005, 2016) concept of 'conducive contexts' for sexual violence. She argues, drawing on Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality, that a combination of social and political factors (including systemic racism, poverty and misogyny) made some individuals more likely to be victims of sexual violence, and some situations more conducive to the perpetration of sexual violence. Moreover, that there are overlapping and parallel structural inequalities which can make a person least able to access support or justice if they do report. This theory may be used to account for the prevalence of sexual violence in universities, which this project relates to.

2.6 **Challenges to Lad Culture**

The original purpose of this research project was to evaluate the efficacy of anti-lad culture campaigns in UK universities, with a view to understanding what universities could do to challenge laddism. While this aim was revised following a feasibility study, it remains important to consider the ways in which universities and Student Unions have attempted to address lad culture, as these campaigns offer insight into how laddism is perceived in university contexts, and which practices are most associated with lad culture. This section will first address notable campaigns which have endeavoured to confront lad culture which are also often interventions which aim to tackle sexual violence in universities.

The National Union of Students launched a large-scale campaign against lad culture beginning in 2010, influenced by the findings from their *Hidden Marks* report (Smith, 2010). This featured the calling of a lad culture summit, the development of a national lad culture Strategy Team and performing an audit of Student Union (SU) and university policies for dealing with laddish incidents. Their policy audit utilised survey feedback from 35 SUs and analysed submitted policies from 20 SUs to determine whether SUs and universities had policy, training and victim support programmes relating to lad culture. The results showed that most SUs were lacking a specific policy on lad culture, and that nearly half did not have a formal sexual harassment policy in place (NUS, 2015). Further, although the vast majority of institutions did have counselling services which could support victims of sexual violence, collaboration with local survivor charities was not the norm, and many institutions did not support students to make third party crime reports. Anti-lad culture campaigns did exist prior to this intervention, e.g. following reports of a presentation on having sex with "girls with low self-esteem" delivered by football club member (Duhig, 2014) Cardiff University SU officers designed a specific anti-lad

culture policy (Cardiff University SU, 2013). However, the NUS built on these to develop a Lad Culture Strategy through which institutions could improve policy and education on lad culture, which they rolled out in 9 pilot SUs: Bradford University, Cardiff University, King's College London, Leeds University, London School of Economics (LSE), Oxford University, Queen Mary University London, University of Sussex and University of Warwick. The perceived necessity of such interventions can be taken as evidence that a profound negative impact of laddism is felt in HEIs.

Each SU took a different approach to addressing lad culture, an indication of the multiple and overlapping practices which are perceived to be laddish in UK universities. For example, Bradford University SU held a Reclaim the Night march, invested in a lad culture reporting app and created a pledge with local partners (such as the city council and some nightlife venues) to tackle harassment. LSE SU held events, including one on challenging homophobia in rugby teams while Sussex University SU created 'I Heart Consent' with a programme of consent talks for incoming students. Almost all 9 unions sought to address objectification of women and sexual harassment and violence – indicating the importance of a thorough investigation of the links between sexual violence and lad culture. An area of interest for me was the rise of Student Union campaigns which were set up to challenge lad culture, but that seemed to lack a basis in the deconstruction (or even acknowledgement) of patriarchal structures. For example, a campaign run by the Cardiff University Students' Union called *It's No Joke* focused on cultivating respect between students yet failed to acknowledge the social differences between a Caucasian student making a joke about being BME and the reverse situation. Without couching understandings of misogyny in the implicit power that men exert over women in the gender order, those campaigns seemed to be examples of 'institutional airbrushing' (Phipps, 2019) rather than concerted efforts to make cultural change.

Another notable example intervention is *The Good Lad Initiative* (GLI), a social enterprise implemented by Oxford University Student Union. This centres around informal workshops where male university students (particularly sports teams) are presented with scenarios and encouraged to offer solutions. This practice is underpinned by the idea that encouraging 'Positive Masculinity' can result in better issue resolutions than proposing a minimum standard for groups to meet. They have conducted workshops in at least 7 UK universities, and report that more than 3 in 4 of their participants responded that they felt better able to challenge problematic group norms following the workshops (GLI, 2021).

In the follow-up reports to UUK's *Changing the Culture* released 1 year and 2 years after the original report respectively (Baird & Nash-Henry, 2018; Smail, 2019) it was acknowledged that many HEIs across the UK have taken strides in implementing anti-lad culture policies, training and supporting survivors of sexual violence. The majority of this progress has been

made in relation to challenging sexual harassment and violence, rather than a range of laddish practices. They note that a fifth of institutions in their sample (of 20) had not made significant changes in line with UUK recommendations (Baird & Nash-Henry, 2018), in part due to issues of securing funding from external sources e.g. the HEFCE Catalyst fund for Safeguarding Students. They recommend an institution-wide approach to prevention of sexual violence (through training and culture change) and supporting reporting students – including those who wish to make reports to police (Smail, 2019). While these results imply a sector wide improvement in addressing student sexual misconduct, lad culture encompasses a broader range of practices other than sexual violence, which need closer investigation.

Recent research (Lewis & Marine, 2018) has turned to the work of feminist activists in university spaces as having the potential to transform lad culture (and cultures which support gender-based violence). Lewis et al. (2018) found that feminist students resisted lad culture – referred to as 'rape culture' by American participants – through a variety of means, and that university was understood by interviewees as a place of safety for feminist discourse. Feminists held events, participated in marches, lobbied their institutions for policy change and support for survivors. In interviewing student volunteers for a bystander intervention programme to challenge GBV, Jordan et al. (2019) found that student activists frequently experienced, and attempted to resist GBV. They adopted creative methods of feminist activism, using theatre presentations of violence with audience interaction to spark conversations, and encouraged students to create a 'wall of voices' of the reasons for tackling GBV. Further, my own case studies of university activists interviewed for this project (Stenson, 2020) detail the efforts of feminist activists to embed research evidence and survivor-led practice into student-facing campaigns. For example, university activist Marie[9] developed a post-assault procedure for residential assistants receiving disclosures from students, consulting with local sexual violence charities to provide evidence-based support to students. Krause et al. (2017) recommend that future research must map out the forms and areas of student-led feminist activism in universities so that best practice can be shared. Additionally, universities are called upon to collaborate with, and support, student activists (Bovill et al., 2020). Some have criticised the 'call out culture' evident in social media criticisms of universities' treatment of survivors as punitive rather than transformative (Johnson, 2016), others recognise the effect that such action can have in holding institutions to account (Vemuri, 2020). Moreover, social media may hold importance as a method of maintaining a record of past campaigns, which may counteract the transience of high turnover in student activism (Bovill et al., 2020). This rapidly-evolving area of research demonstrates the appetite among students to counteract laddish cultures and sexual violence

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[9] This is a pseudonym.

and the agency of students in responding to lad culture (Phipps & Young, 2015b). Further, the proliferation of research on anti-lad culture activism in universities shows that there is tremendous potential for activists and institutions to transform hegemonic university culture.

2.7 **Chapter Summary**

The small amount of literature on lad culture points to a need for additional exploratory empirical work on the topic. Crucially, there are limited studies with self-identified lads, which this project will remedy. While research on university laddism is in its infancy, there are multiple themes which tie this work together: identifying features of lad culture and lads themselves, motivations for laddish practice and methods of tackling lad culture.

Firstly, much prior literature seeks to answer the question: *What is lad culture?* Although definitions vary, most agree that lad culture is typically enacted by male students, though not exclusively, and is understood as a hegemonic masculinity in university contexts. The culture involves boisterous, reckless behaviour of young men who value traditionally male pursuits of drinking, sports and casual sex with women. An essential element of this culture is the knowing use of discriminatory humour known as 'banter', where lads volley misogynist, homophobic and racist jokes. Research conducted on laddism in secondary schools finds that anti-schoolwork attitude and disruptive classroom behaviours are regular features. Lad culture is frequently linked to incidents of sexual harassment in student barroom venues, and to the ritual objectification of women. This project will expand on these findings to investigate the relative importance of laddish practices to self-identified lads. Further, this thesis is unique in addressing SILs' understandings of the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence.

There is much call for a nuanced approach to laddism with many papers employing Warin & Dempster's (2007) concept of a laddish continuum to account for the breadth of experience and practice of lads. These papers emphasise that lad culture is not wholly problematic, and that the camaraderie between young men should not be overlooked. It is therefore necessary to investigate both the positive and negative aspects of lad culture, from the point of view of those within the culture. Although some have argued that the term 'lad culture' is problematic, the continued utility of this term is defended because of its intelligibility and ability to capture the cluster of masculinised practices evident among lads. Nevertheless, by recruiting participants who self-identify as lads, rather than only male undergraduate students, this project offers a more expansive view of those who identify with laddism but have not been captured in previous work. Prior research sees lad culture in secondary schools as the preserve of working-class white boys, and in higher education as enacted by privileged middle-class

white men. Certainly, more work which seeks to understand who identifies with lad culture – and why – is sought.

Owing to the limited research on lad culture, little is known about the relative importance of laddish practices, and the discourses which motivate engagement in these practices. Jackson (2002) argued that working-class boys may adopt laddish behaviours as a self-worth protection strategy in secondary schools. Lads avoid schoolwork so that poor results can be attributed to poor effort, rather than to a lack of intelligence. In the university, though, the motivations for lad culture are less clear, especially as academic effort is required for success in this context. Phipps (2016, 2018b) has theorised that lad culture is influenced by and performative of neoliberal rationalities which imbue contemporary marketised education. The intentionally politically-incorrect banter may be understood as a method of developing vulnerable emotional connections with peers, or as the foundations of a rape supportive culture. Speaking with SILs about what motivates their laddish practices and analysing the discourses employed to explain these will offer additional depth to understanding of laddish practices.

While there is a wealth of research evincing the prevalence of sexual violence in universities, no research to date has investigated SILs' views on lad culture and sexual violence. A review of the literature demonstrates the importance of understanding sexual violence as part of broader misogyny and gender-based violence. Further, that practices associated with laddism, such as binge drinking and casual sex, are potential risk factors for sexual violence. Therefore, the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence is worthy of further consideration.

Finally, because of the initial intention to evaluate the efficacy of anti-lad culture campaigns, this chapter introduced evidence of activism aiming to challenge laddism in universities. These largely utilised feminist activism and creative community building to confront misogynist humour and sexual violence. Through investigating laddish identity and practice, this project aims to equip future activism with understanding to effect culture change in universities.

3 Research Methods and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The overarching aim of this project was: *To more precisely define lad culture in the UK university context.* The original aim of this PhD project was to investigate anti-lad culture campaigns and a feasibility study interviewing university activists was conducted. However, owing to the limited anti-lad culture activism evident in these interviews – for example university activist David described a university-wide campaign to challenge lad culture as a "damp squib" – the research strategy was altered. Secondly, having identified the paucity of literature on the topic of lad culture (section 2.2), and specifically very few studies had investigated lad culture from the point of view of SILs (Dempster, 2007; Jeffries, 2019) this thesis then sought to fill this gap.

This aim to more precisely define lad culture accounts for the exploratory nature of the study, given the broad usage of the term lad culture in national and student media at the outset of this research (see chapter 1). The term 'lad culture' was used in prior literature to describe and account for misogynist and homophobic banter, sexual violence, binge drinking, male students' poor mental health, camaraderie and friendship between men (in chapter 2). It was felt that minimising lad culture to only one or some of these elements might bias the research and omit key elements of lad culture from analysis. Lad culture as a whole was therefore investigated in line with three research questions:

R.Q.1. How is laddish identity constructed?

    1.1. By self-identified lads (SILs)?

    1.2. By non-lads in a university context?

R.Q.2. What are the practices of lad culture?

    2.1. What is the relative importance of each laddish practice?

    2.2. What motivates SILs to carry out these practices?

R.Q.3. Is there a relationship between lad culture and sexual violence?

These research questions each require a different methodological approach. Nevertheless, many indicate the importance of investigating the 'lived experience' of SILs. Therefore qualitative-dominant mixed methods were employed, and a self-selecting SIL sample recruited.

A questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative and qualitative data from students of all genders and from universities across the UK. By asking participants to rate themselves on a scale of laddism from 0-100, I aimed to collect data from lads who may otherwise not be represented (such as women, and those who consider themselves only partially laddish). However, the majority of respondents were students at a single institution, which I had greatest

access to. The questionnaire included an option to provide one's email for a subsequent interview, so that I could specifically interview self-identified lads. Yet, only 8 questionnaire participants self-identified as lads, and none left their email address for interview, so the research strategy had to be revised again. Finally, I specifically recruited self-identified lads for interview participation, using a variety of printed materials, emails and in-person recruitment strategies. The data analysed in the remainder of this thesis are therefore made up of three sets:

1. Questionnaire with university students of all genders (n=144, SILs = 8)
2. Semi-structure interviews with self-identified lads (SILs) (n=5)
3. Semi-structured interviews with university activists (University Activists) (n=10)

In the first section of this chapter, this PhD research is established as a feminist project. This thesis is located in an epistemological tradition of postmodernist constructivist research, wherein multiple 'truths' are acknowledged. The purposive use of mixed methods is rationalised in line with the requirements of the research questions. Efforts to embed feminist praxis in research design are then discussed, before turning to the intended implications of this research for feminist activism. The importance of centring feminism when conducting research on GBV cannot be overstated.

This is followed by an explanation of the design of research methods by which data were collected. Prior use of anonymous questionnaires for garnering information about sexually violent activity (*Sexual Experiences Survey*, Koss & Oros, 1982) is evaluated, and interview design is outlined.

An exploration of all ethical considerations is then given, explaining the ways in which the prevention of harm to participants was prioritised throughout the project. This section addresses the following factors considered to conduct this project ethically: informed consent, right to withdraw, harm arising from participation, privacy and data storage, disclosure of sexual violence, incentives and researcher position. Throughout, the particular importance of ethical considerations for conducting research on the topic of sexual violence are reiterated.

The fifth section of this chapter provides a detailed account of the recruitment and sampling strategies employed in conducting this research. This section also presents contextual information about the institution from which the majority of participants were recruited, and details of the participants themselves. The project's sample is understood as a non-representative self-selecting sample, gathered through convenience sampling.

The penultimate part of the methodology chapter describes the process of data analysis and details efforts made to ensure the integrity of findings. Both the reliability and validity of quantitative findings and the trustworthiness of qualitative findings are addressed, owing to the

mixed-methods research design. The chapter will conclude with a summary which considers alternative methods of analysing quantitative data and summarises the challenges of conducting research on lad culture as a queer woman.

3.2 **Methodology**

As lad culture is understood as a form of hegemonic masculinity in universities (see section 2.3.1), this PhD project is located within a field of research on masculinities. While it may be assumed that a focus on masculinity is tangential to feminist inquiry, this field germinated from feminist activism, and exists in conversation with feminism (Srivastava, 2015). As Connell argues

> Research on men and masculinities is not a separate field dependent on feminism. It is, rather, part of the feminist revolution in knowledge that has been opening up in the last generation. Indeed it can be seen as a strategic part of feminist research, the moment of 'studying up', the power structure research that we need to understand the gender order. (Connell, 2012, p. 9).

Further, this project was motivated by survey data demonstrating the prevalence of sexual violence in universities (as discussed in section 2.5). Sexual violence is understood as a form of gender-based violence, in that this is most commonly perpetrated by men against women. Therefore, the present project must be considered a feminist project. There has been much discussion of the conditions under which a research project might be considered feminist (see Harding, 1987; Maynard & Purvis, 1994) the criteria are as follows:

1. Adoption of a feminist epistemology
2. Conducting research using a feminist procedure
3. The impact/outcome of the research is feminist

Below, I will delineate the ways in which this project meets the criteria.

3.2.1 Feminist epistemology and research strategy

A feminist epistemology is often assumed to be directly related to a social constructionist onotological perspective, qualitative research strategy and interpretivist research philosophy. Feminist epistemology draws on the works of postmodernist scholars (in particular Foucault, 1979/1976) which have argued that oppression (of women and homosexuals for example) is based in socially constructed power relationships and discourse, rather than innate difference. Gender is not simply a fixed category, but is created and recreated through performative social action (Butler, 1990). This calls into question notions of singular 'truths' of social identity or experience. Instead, knowledge is epistemically relative; that is, the assertion that one factor

affects another may only be true in certain circumstances (Wright, 2008). All knowledge is a product of the context in which it was created, and there is no universally objective truth. This may be seen as presenting dilemma for feminist research, as although postmodernism offers challenges to norms and truths, feminist activism traditionally relies on exposing and interrogating material and physical oppression of women. Nevertheless, scholars have argued that the two approaches can be combined (Ahmed, 1998; McNay, 1992).

Therefore, to state that one's research constitutes a feminist project, may be seen as 'pigeon-holing' oneself into use of qualitative research methods. Reinharz (1992) goes as far as drawing a distinction between alternative/feminist research and conventional/patriarchal research, implying that adopting conventional positivist approaches produces un-feminist research. However, this is based on the false dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative methodologies and the assumed link between these and the selection of research methods. As Bryman states "the contrast between quantitative and qualitative research should not be overdrawn" (2016, p. 622). In fact, this project does not correspond with either of Reinharz' distinct paradigms in a number of ways.

Firstly, this project's subject, lad culture, is both of social significance to women students (feminist)- whose university experience is dominated by the 'pack mentality' of lads (Phipps & Young, 2013) – and identified in scholarly literature (patriarchal). Another way in which this project diverges from the dichotomous paradigms presented by Reinharz (1992), is that in researching laddish identity, practices and sexual violence some of the research questions can be answered with data which is easily quantified and coded, whereas others can't. This PhD project therefore uses a mixed methods approach.

The advantages of using mixed methods are that lad culture may be understood from multiple viewpoints, and that the appropriate method is utilised for each research question (Bryman et al., 2008). Firstly, the data are more likely to represent a valid picture of how lad culture is perceived and enacted (Sadan, 2014). Secondly, although an interpretivist epistemology is adopted, it is recognised that some research questions are most appropriately answered with quantitative data – for example the relative importance of laddish practices (**R.Q.2.1**) is most easily determined by asking participants to rate the perceived importance using a sliding scale, then comparing average ratings. Thus, it is imperative to combine both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to answer the research questions posed.

There are concerns that mixed methods are often used without adequate justification, and that collection of both quantitative and qualitative data may be conducted as a 'catch -all' rather than a targeted approach (Bryman, 2008). In their theorisation Greene et al (1989, p. 259) purport that there are five potential purposes of mixed methods approaches:

- Triangulation – confirmation of findings from different methods
- Complementarity – furthering of finding from different methods
- Development – use of one method to develop questions/ideas for later instrument design and data collection
- Initiation – aims to find contradictions in findings from different methods
- Expansion – use of different methods to answer different research questions

The revised research strategy for this PhD project (following feasibility study interviewing University Activists) was to gather large-scale survey data from SILs and non-lads, with the purpose of comparing the demographic data, engagement in and perception of laddish practices and definitions of laddism of these two groups. In order to collect a large number of responses from students at a number of HEIs and to facilitate statistical comparison of populations, it was decided that a questionnaire with quantitative items would be the most appropriate research method. Interviews with SILs were intended to supplement and corroborate the findings of the questionnaire, and dig deeper into SILs' construction of their identity as lads. In actuality, only a small number of SILs responded to the questionnaire making between-group comparisons difficult. As a result, interview questions often replicated or overlapped with those asked in the questionnaire. Therefore, this study employed mixed methods to *complement* and *triangulate* data (seeking to observe any overlaps and extensions in collected data) and *expand* data collection in line with the requirements of each research question.

Another important element of adopting a feminist research paradigm (Reinharz, 1992), is to diverge from conventional hierarchies of power between researcher and participant. I attempted to avoid positioning myself as the 'expert knower' (Elshtain, 1981) on the topic of lad culture, and made efforts to build rapport with participants and allow them to give their own insight on their 'lived experience' (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992).

3.2.2 *Feminist procedure*

While Reinharz (1992) indicated that there is no specific 'feminist method' and that one may apply a feminist perspective to methodological decisions and design, common to feminist procedures is the prioritising of the ethical safety of women and attempts to represent as many women's voices as possible. Although there are links between methodologies and the subsequent aims, methods of data collection and analysis methods, taking a feminist postmodernist epistemology need not prescribe the use of certain methods of data collection or analysis (Oakley, 1998). Indeed, there are instances in which a proposed research strategy does not reflect the reality of research praxis. For example. Oakley (1981) argued that even carrying out research interviews, which are often considered the optimal research paradigm for social

scientists and interpretivist in epistemology, are still expected to be governed by masculinist ideals of objectivity. In this way, research theory and practice are misaligned. Consequently, research methods with a basis in positivism, or which collect quantitative data, need not be ruled out of feminist research. Instead this section contends that feminism "should be present in positive ways within the research process" (Stanley & Wise, 1990, p.25) and recognises how the research design of this PhD project exemplifies this. Below, I outline the ways in which the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews can be seen as feminist procedures. Details of the design of these research instruments are discussed in section 3.3.

3.2.2.1 Questionnaire

The use of a questionnaire, traditionally considered a positivist research tool by some feminist researchers (e.g. Farran, 1990), can actually meet a number of feminist research aims. One way in which the use of a questionnaire may be feminist, is that it can allow for a greater diversity of women participants. The questionnaire for this research project was created using online software Qualtrics, it could be accessed from any location, at any time, using any internet connected device. This means that it could be distributed using a variety of social media channels and email, and could be shared by participants with ease. Such accessibility allowed for a greater number of participants overall to be recruited, but in particular for women students whose student experience differs from the norm, e.g. those with caring responsibilities, disabilities or taking courses with a high number of placement hours (Nursing and PGCE). In particular, the use of an online platform for a research questionnaire means that participants can tailor their experience based on access needs, by increasing image/text size, taking rest breaks or having the text on screen read aloud. This research method was selected for the purpose of collecting the maximum number of respondents possible, while also making the questionnaire accessible to those whose participation is often absent from traditional research, e.g. using social media to recruit students outside of specific disciplines/backgrounds. Use of a questionnaire also prevented excessive time consumption for both researcher and subjects, potentially making participation in the research project more appealing to student schedules.

Additionally, by allowing flexibility of responses for some items (as will be addressed in section 3.3.1) the questionnaire flouts traditional research principles of the dynamic between participant and researcher. Each response is then not necessarily comparable and can be used to represent the variety of subjective experiences of laddism, rather than forcibly objectifying lived experience. In this way, participants' views and subjective experience were prioritised over the ease of coding and analysis.

In spite of these accommodations, the research design could be said to uphold some traditions of positivist research. For example, the abstraction of subjective experience into

Likert scales could be construed as overly artificial, or as an attempt to exert control over participants (McCormack, 1981). Further, the quantitative data were analysed using statistical methods which may be read as more valuable or factual than qualitative data, though I make no such claims. Analysis, of all forms of data, should be understood as influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher. Nonetheless, a questionnaire was deemed to be the most appropriate method for answering some research questions, affirming Westmarland's (2001) assertion that the only criterion for determining whether a research method is feminist, is whether research is conducted in a feminist way.

3.2.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to centre participants in multiple ways. The use of semi-structured interviews is generally accepted as a staple method of qualitative (and feminist) research (Bryman, 2016; Roberts, 1981) in part because of the potential to collect data which is rich in detail and speaks to the 'lived experience' of participants. The purpose of interviews with SILs was to identify elements of lad culture which were understood as central by lads themselves, rather than imposing my views as a researcher. Where participants did identify elements which had arisen in a review of prior literature I was poised to ask further about these laddish practices. Nevertheless, the aim of the interviews was for SILs to lead the discussion. This is the reason for asking open, narrative-inducing questions such as:

> What does being a lad mean to you?

> Can you tell me about a time where you most felt like a lad?

Participants' responses to these questions were typically lengthy and offered rich detail not common in questionnaire responses. Further, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to reflexively alter the structure or tone of questions (or probe further on relevant topics) in reaction to participant responses. This was essential to enabling the exploratory aim of this research project, and positioning participants as the authorities on their own experience. The somewhat unstructured nature of the interviews also allowed participants to ask questions of the researcher, both about the purpose and scope of the research and on my own experience. Oakley (1981) famously challenged the notion that research interviews could be objective, or even one-sided, admitting that in practice the interviewer often offers their own input as part of the interview conversation. In this way, researchers and participants can be seen as co-constructors of the data collected through interviews, and each interview may take a different path, rather than researchers being positioned as the extractors of factual information from participants. This was particularly true for interviews conducted with university activists some of whom I knew from my own roles in university activism and events organising. These

interviews frequently used shared knowledge of university processes, which enabled me to ask further about campaigns/events I was aware of.

Semi-structured interviews also offered the opportunity to build rapport with SIL participants which was essential to bridging the gap between myself and SIL participants, whose experience of university was very different from my own. Through a pre-amble before each interview explaining to each participant that my aim was to understand lad culture from their perspective, I was able to establish trust with the participants to collect the most valid data. While my position no doubt impacted data collection (discussed in more detail in section 3.6.3) the use of a flexible and participant-centred research method bears more resemblance to the process of Oakley (1981) and Finch (1984) than their predecessors; arguably a feminist procedure.

Another way in which this project's methods meet the principles of feminist research, is that the duty of care for research participants is foregrounded in the research design. The ways in which participants were protected from harm are discussed in section 3.3.

3.2.3 Feminist outcomes

The effect of improving the lives of women is arguably a better measure of whether research is feminist than the method followed (Kelly et al., 1992). As a queer woman in a university community, my fate is shared with that of many of the questionnaire participants, in that I too have witnessed and experienced (sexual) harassment during my time at university. My interest in conducting research on lad culture, is to understand the prevailing discourses which serve to position laddism as hegemonic in the university milieu and thus subordinate women and queer people. By better understanding the construction of this identity and the practices that are used to perform laddism, we can better create interventions which effectively challenge lad culture. For this reason, the assumed impact is undeniably feminist. While the traditional intended impact of a research project is academic publication and knowledge contribution, this project provides theoretical knowledge which can be used to transform university communities, and make the lives of women and othered students safer. Therefore, potential feminist outcomes of this project may be recommendations for anti-lad culture policy, activism and support for survivors of sexual violence.

3.3 Research Design

This section addresses the design of research instruments. The questionnaire and interviews with SILs are prioritised as methods which answer the research questions and are the main focus of the remaining chapters of this thesis. Interviews with university activists were retained following the initial feasibility study but make up only a small amount of the analysis in this

thesis. Further analysis of the findings of those interviews, can be found in other publications (Stead, 2017; Stenson, 2020).

3.3.1 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was created using Qualtrics online software, which allows participants to remain entirely anonymous at the point of data collection and to engage with the questions on a range of electronic devices (the full questionnaire is available in Appendix F). It was piloted with three academic peers, in order to assess the content validity of the questionnaire and receive feedback on the design – this was done for multiple iterations of the questionnaire (for more on this see section 3.6.3). The questionnaire consisted of questions related to the following four topics addressed below: experience of laddish practices, laddish practices as problematic, defining lad culture and personal information. There were 50 items in total, though these included the information sheet and consent form as well as a number of 'break' items which reminded participants that their participation was valuable and encouraging them to continue. The questionnaire is estimated to take 17 minutes to complete by the Qualtrics Expert Review analysis tool.

Participants were asked to identify their involvement in a range of laddish practices, with items relating to engagement in and experience of these practices. These were based on prior research on laddish practices (as identified in section 2.4) and included: disruptive behaviour in teaching and learning environments, harassment and banter, binge drinking, playing sports, and being sexually violent. In a variety of item structures, participants were shown laddish practices and asked to indicate how often they had engaged in these, using Likert scales. Participants were also asked about harassment and laddish practices which they *witnessed* in their institution in a number of different ways. The questionnaire did invite participants to disclose sexually violent acts and incidents of harassment that they have witnessed/been the victim of/been the perpetrator of. In the field of criminology Stanko (1992) has indicated that an investigation of the position of women as victims of sexual violence necessarily leads to questioning men. This research project effectively achieves both simultaneously, by asking participants of all genders about their perpetration and experience of sexual violence. The questions for the majority of the block about sexual violence were adapted from the *Sexual Experiences Survey* (SES) created by Mary Koss and Cheryl Oros (1982). This survey has also been found to produce reliable results with a high level of veracity (discussed in section 3.6.3.1). Inclusion of these questions can provide depth to understandings of lad culture and the extent to which sexual violence is considered central to the culture.

Participants were also asked to indicate whether they considered practices to be problematic. Their answer could be indicated on a scale of 0 - 100. The intention of collecting

these data was to determine whether self-identified lads considered laddish practices less problematic than non-lads, as a measure of the potential motivation for lads to engage in these practices. Figure 1 shows how these items appeared to participants in the questionnaire.

Figure 1. Preview image of Q.22. of the Qualtrics questionnaire.

Similar to the question presented above, participants were asked to rate (also on a scale from 0-100) the extent to which they considered named behaviours and attitudes to be "'central to lad culture". This questionnaire design expands on Dempster's (2007) work identifying practices of lad culture, to offer insight on the *relative* importance of practices (**R.Q.2.1**), providing a more nuanced understanding of the nature of lad culture. As part of these blocks, participants were offered open-text boxes in which to identify additional laddish practices that they felt the questionnaire had not discussed, then rate their relevance. This centred participants' own views in the item design. The final item on defining lad culture asked respondents *"What do you understand the term lad culture to mean? Please give as much detail as possible"* with an open-text item. This gave the opportunity for participants to supply rich descriptive data and define lad culture in their own terms.

Questions about personal information were placed at the end of the questionnaire. This was because respondents rated their own laddishness in this block, which could have resulted in an order effect if asked before answering questions on laddism. This block of items asked participants to fill in their institution, year of study and type of degree (Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research). The former was asked in order to group participants by institution so that comparisons could be made, though a significant majority of participants were students at a single institution (see section 3.5.1). Information on year of

study and degree type was collected so that comparisons could be made between year groups and between under/postgraduate students. Further, data of this nature could be used to draw conclusions on the temporality of engagement with lad culture during the university lifetime, which was suggested to wane following first year study (Warin & Dempster, 2007).

Students were also asked to state their gender (both assigned at birth and identified gender). They also rated their masculinity and femininity on a scale, as much prior research in this field only accounts for categorical gender. Given the potentially misogynist and homophobic nature of lad culture, one's gender is likely to have an effect on the extent to which someone is a victim of or participant in laddish practices. Crucially, a 0-100 thermometer scale was used for participants to indicate the extent to which they considered themselves laddish. Those who rated themselves as 50% or higher on this scale were then taken to be self-identified lads (n=8). The benefit of capturing such data in a scale is that this may account for participants who identify somewhat with laddism but may not identify as a lad when asked a categorical question. Further, correlations between other scale variables used could then be analysed. Questions on race, ethnicity, nationality and social class could have also been included at this stage, in order to clarify the modal identity among actors of laddism but this did not meet the primary purpose of the research and would have made the questionnaire longer (this is discussed in section 8.4.3).

3.3.2 Interview design

All interviews were semi-structured, conducted predominantly in person, with various lengths. Participants were not given the questions ahead of the interview, but provided information sheets detailing of the nature of the questions, and were reminded that they could opt-out of any questions with which they were uncomfortable. While there were similarities in the method of interview between SIL and university activist interviews, the following sections separately outline the question design for each participant group (schedules are available in Appendix G and Appendix H respectively). Common to both were the use of open questions and the option to reflexively change the interview schedule. This meant that interviews were not identical, nor were they intended to be. Interviews were treated as research conversations, adopting Oakley's understanding that in building rapport with a participant, it may be necessary for the researcher to contribute their own experience or understanding (1981).

3.3.2.1 Self-identified lad (SIL) interviews

In order to answer many of the research questions, it was essential that data were collected from students who identified as lads, obtaining as much information as possible from each participant, with a focus on 'lived experience' of laddism. Interview questions for self-

identifying lads were split into two sections: firstly, those pertaining to the interviewees' own understanding of their identity and impact on university communities, and secondly questions relating to how they felt lad culture was perceived by others. There were 6 questions scheduled for each of these sections, but additional prompts were prepared for the event that participants were not forthcoming with their responses. An example of this is below:

> Is banter an important element of being a lad?
>
>> (Intended probe) What kinds of topics are off limits when it comes to banter?
>>
>> (Reflexive probe) Do you make jokes about women?

Again, attempts were made to allow reflexivity in the interview questions, following up on interviewees' comments in the moment. Questions were predominantly open, with the intention of eliciting detailed answers and a similar framing to language in the questionnaire. Interviews lasted from 18 minutes to 45 minutes and were varied in depth of response.

3.3.2.2 University activist interviews – Feasibility study

These interviews were conducted with the aim of determining whether an investigation of anti-lad culture campaigns would be feasible at The University. The rationale was that asking university activists about their perception of, and involvement in, anti-lad culture activism would provide a foundation for a later evaluation of campaigns. The interview schedule was designed to induce narrative style conversations between myself and participants, beginning with questions about "the biggest issue facing UK students". While these questions don't necessarily speak directly to the research questions, they were used to determine how lad culture was perceived by those who had engaged in anti-lad culture activism. Participants were asked to define 'lad culture' and comment on how this related to misogyny and 'rape culture'.

These interviews were based on a schedule of 4 main questions, with prepared probe questions and the option for divergence in the conversation. As with Oakley's (1981) interviews with expectant mothers, the shared role that I had with university activists (having engaged in much university activism myself) meant that these interviews were often closer to a two-way conversation than a traditional 'objective' research interview. For example, several UAs referred to events/campaigns which I was familiar with, had attended or had been involved with. These conversations were therefore more fluid and valid representations of activist discussions. As the purpose of this feasibility study was to determine whether enough anti-lad culture activism had been conducted to warrant an evaluative study, these interviews were intended to be simple discussions of the activism that each participant had been involved in. Interviews lasted between 15 and 50 minutes.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In this section, I will address the ethical considerations in conducting this research, based on guidelines for ethical educational research from the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). Owing to the discussion of sexual violence with both non-lads and SILs, guidance on conducting research on gender-based violence (Ellseberg & Heise, 2002) and with perpetrators of sexual violence (Hearn et al., 2007; Jewkes et al., 2012) was followed. Approval for the project was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Education, University of York. It is important to state that I do not consider a commitment to ethical research to be one which is met in a single instance, but rather agree with Hughes in the statement that "Ethical practice is an ongoing interaction of values in shifting contexts and relationships rather than something delivered by a signed consent form or adherence to a static set of principles." (2005, p. 231).

3.4.1 Informed consent
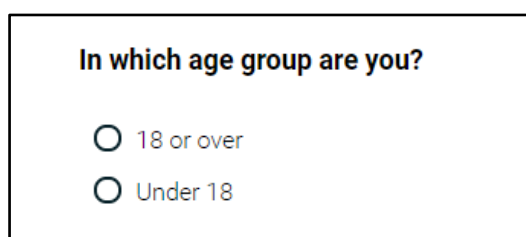
Participants' consent to be involved with any research project should be based on a clear understanding of the requirements of the research and of how their responses will be used. This is particularly important when conducting research which refers to sensitive issues, such as the discussion of sexual violence in this project. Therefore, all participants were provided with an information sheet which transparently described the purpose and nature of the research. For the questionnaire, the information sheet (Appendix B) clearly stated that clicking to continue with the questions was considered consent to participate: "Continuing with this survey will be considered formal consent for your data to be used in the project."

For interview participants an information sheet and consent form (Appendix D for SILs, Appendix E for University Activists) were also provided and signed by willing participants at the time of interview. At this point, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. The information sheet was intentionally designed to be short, based on the finding from Boothroyd and Best (2003) that participants' understanding of research participation decreases as the length of informed consent form increased. When recruiting participants in person, via social media or email, the nature of the research was made transparent, including the time commitment required from participants.

Recruiting from university populations meant that some potential participants were under the age of eighteen, which was considered too young to consent to discussions of sexual violence. Care was therefore taken to recruit participants over this age, recognising that there is no way to entirely prevent underage participants when distributing an online questionnaire. Participants were asked to answer the question '**In which age group are you?**' (see Figure 2

below), and those responding 'Under 18' were redirected to the end of the questionnaire in order to safeguard younger students. This question was compulsory, and so participants were unable to continue to the next page of the questionnaire without responding.

Figure 2. Preview image of age barrier Q.2. in Qualtrics questionnaire.

In which age group are you?

○ 18 or over
○ Under 18

It could be argued that there is an issue of deception in the naming of the questionnaire, which was originally titled the 'UK University Culture Survey'. As discussed in section 3.1, the original title of the questionnaire did not yield a high number of SIL participants, therefore after substantial data collection the questionnaire was given the updated title 'Lad Culture Survey'. An updated version following the renaming of the survey can be found in Appendix C. For participants recruited during the original phase, it could be said that deception was used. It was thought that naming the project after the topic of interest (given the contentious nature of the definition (Phipps & Young, 2015a; Stead, 2017) might increase response bias in the sample, as students give answers that they assume are desired by the researcher. The original title was approved by the Full Ethics Committee of the Department of Education, University of York, on the grounds that the information sheet clearly stated that there would be some questions relating to harassment and sexual violence. While lad culture was not mentioned in the original information sheets, participants were informed of the kinds of sensitive information that they may be asked for, before giving consent, using the following text:

> Some of the questions refer to experiences of harassment and violence while at university. You do not need to answer these, unless you are comfortable in doing so.

Given the experience of sexual violence as one which is degrading and removes agency from victims (Kelly, 1988) the main aim when conducting such research is to ensure that participants are not retraumatised by experiencing a loss of control/agency as part of the research project. Therefore, it was imperative that participants be informed of the sensitive nature of some questions prior to consenting to take part.

3.4.2 Right to withdraw

To ensure that participants' consent is continuous, participants must be reminded of their right to withdraw from the research project at any point. This was clearly explained in the

information sheets for all elements of the project, and in email and in-person communication between the researcher and participants. In particular, when asking questions which referred to harassment and violence participants were reminded that they had the option of not answering and moving on to the next questions. It is crucial to give a voice to as many survivors of campus sexual assault as possible, and to collect accurate and in-depth data regarding those experiences, while avoiding retraumatisation of victims/survivors.

In terms of allowing questionnaire participants to withdraw from answering particular questions, especially those relating to experience/perpetration of sexual violence and harassment, Fontes (2004) suggests simply "introducing the section of questions on violence with a simple statement such as, "Now I would like to ask you some questions on violence. Would you like to continue?" (p. 145). Given that the questionnaire is not explicitly on the topic of sexual violence, and that such questions appear at a midpoint in the research tool, it is important that participants are able to avoid questions on this topic. The benefit of this design, embedding questions on sexual violence perpetration and experience within a questionnaire on a broader topic, is lowered risk for those who disclose perpetration (for whom participation in an explicit investigation of sexual violence perpetration might cause fear of retribution). The figures below demonstrate the way in which this was presented in the questionnaire, with clear language detailing the potential distress (though without using words that might cause distress) and clear options using display/skip logic[10]. Responses to these questions were made compulsory, so that one could not access the questions beyond without having given explicit consent. If selecting the latter of the options (in both examples) the participant would be displayed the next set of questions after those on sensitive issues.

Figure 3. Skip barrier for questions about experiences of sexual violence.

The next questions ask about experiences of a sexual nature, and may cause distress to some participants. Please click below to <u>skip</u> these questions.

○ I am happy to continue
○ I would like to skip these questions

---

[10] This refers to the programming of Qualtrics software to display (or not display) certain questions given certain inputs from participants.

The next questions ask about sexual behaviour, which some participants may find distressing. You are able to answer as much or as little as you want, or can opt to <u>skip</u> these questions below.

○ I'm happy to continue
○ I'd like to skip these questions

As the questionnaire was completed by participants without the supervision of a researcher, the data are anonymous at the point of collection, and thus cannot be withdrawn after completion. Participants were advised in the information sheet that if they wished to withdraw, they must type "withdraw" into any open text answer field. The reason that this must be made explicit, is that incomplete questionnaire entries were to be included in analysis. The majority of questions on violence were not compulsory, meaning that each participant could opt to answer only the questions that they were comfortable with, giving them the option to withdraw from answering any which caused distress.

In the interviews with SILs, participants were forewarned of the questions relating to sexual violence, using the following statement:

> The next question is about sexual violence, I want to remind you that you are able to skip these questions.

Further, following interviews, transcripts of interviews were sent to participants for comment – which they were informed of in the information sheet – so that they could withdraw any statements they had given. Participants were given 2 weeks to return the transcript with any comments, though no participants asked to have comments removed.

3.4.3 Harm arising from participation in research

It is the aim of all social research that participants are not harmed by their participation, or as a later result of their participation, in research. By attaining informed consent from participants and providing the right to withdraw, some causes of distress have been avoided. Even with these precautions in place, some participants may find the process of speaking/writing about their experience distressing, in particular if discussing their experience of sexual violence. McGee et al. (2002) argue that the main concern of research asking participants about their experience of sexual violence is that the discussion will raise traumatic memories for the participant. There is a balance to be struck, though, when conducting research with potential perpetrators of sexual violence. Although one should avoid causing distress to participants,

some perpetrators may find it distressing to be asked about their sexually violent acts, which are the focus of **R.Q.3**. Hearn et al. (2007) consider that this should not be used as a reason to not ask about these acts, but is something that researchers should be cognisant of. Potential disclosure of experience and/or perpetration of sexual violence is considered in section 3.4.5.

Prior to consenting to participate, respondents were provided with an information sheet contact details for local and national support services (those specialising in listening to people in distress and in supporting survivors of sexual violence). A more comprehensive list of support services was provided following participation, which was automatic for questionnaire participants, and made available to interview participants. In addition, all interviews were conducted by myself. I have had extensive training in supporting students in distress (from previous voluntary and student support roles) and have completed a 2-day course in Mental Health First Aid. This meant that should a participant experience distress as a result of their involvement, I could respond effectively and direct them to appropriate long-term support if necessary.

Some participants may fear that if they disclose their experience of sexual violence, that they will be the target of retribution from abusers – or if they disclose perpetration of sexual violence that they will be report to the criminal justice system. The potential harm was prevented by maintaining the confidentiality of all contributors, as detailed next, and through providing a detailed explanation of the conditions under which I would pass on disclosures to authorities.

3.4.4 Privacy and data storage

In addition to making clear a participant's right to withdraw, all educational research must retain the anonymity of research participants, which is of particular importance when conducting research on sexual violence. As a further matter, ensured anonymity for research participants may improve the validity of the data collected, as participants are more likely to give detailed accounts when sure of the confidentiality of such information. Victims/survivors of sexual violence may fear additional violence as a result of disclosure (or even involvement in the research project if this is identifiable as being on the topic of sexual violence), therefore it was imperative that participants' privacy and anonymity were maintained.

Questionnaire participants' fears about coming forward might have been reduced by the fact that data was anonymous at the point of collection. This even included anonymity of consent form responses, as participants clicked to continue as an indication of consent rather than providing name and signature. In addition, by using Qualtrics it was possible opt to not collect respondent IP addresses, making their data even more anonymous. The Qualtrics

account through which the questionnaire was created, and responses stored, was password protected and only accessed by the researcher.

Interviewees were given options about the location of the interview, so that they were able to control who might see them engaging with the research project. The interviews were then recorded using an Olympus Dictaphone, which was password protected. Next, audio files were transferred to password protected devices, stored on secure drives and only accessed by the researcher. Files were transcribed by the researcher and allocated a pseudonym (shown in section 3.5.3), with all identifying information redacted at the point of transcription. The subsequent analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS 24 and NVivo 11 and 12, the files of which were securely stored in password protected folders. For all elements of the research project, participants were informed of the steps taken to protect their confidentiality and how their data would be stored.

3.4.5 Disclosure

When conducting research on the topic of sexual violence, it is crucial that the researcher plans for potential disclosures of experience and/or perpetration of sexual violence by participants. Some participants might be concerned that disclosure of criminal activity would result in a report to the police, especially when being asked about perpetration of sexual violence. It is paramount that researchers do not collude with research participants in obscuring information from authorities. Yet, one must not put a participant at risk of criminal investigation without clear warning. In the information sheet, and in the pre-amble to SIL interviews, a transparent description of the conditions under which disclosures would be passed on was communicated to the participant. The information sheet for both the questionnaire and interviews notified participants that any disclosure which featured *named individuals* would be reported to relevant authorities. Official guidance from the Sexual Violence Research Institute (SVRI) recommends that referring to a study as one which investigates perpetration of sexual violence may result in harm to the participant who is seen taking part, as onlookers may perceive any person participating as a criminal (Jewkes et al., 2012). This is one of a number of reasons for originally obscuring the exact nature of the research when advertising, as lad culture is often used synonymously with sexual violence.

For women students, who are more likely to have encountered sexual violence as part of their university experience, or who may be in sexually violent relationships, it is essential that their responses remain anonymous. Similarly, participants who disclose that they are perpetrators of sexual violence, may only feel emboldened to do so if they can be certain that their anonymity is protected.

Care for participants is a central tenet of feminist research, and especially important when working with survivors of sexual violence. Participants were provided with printed lists of the places where they could access support following questionnaire and interview participation. And for interviews, I ensured that I had ample time before and after the interview to sit and talk with the participant if necessary. This is something I learned from my MA dissertation research on homophobic bullying. In this research multiple participants were distressed by the discussion of painful memories in the interview, and required a period of aftercare following interviews. Although no participants responded in this way during my PhD research, I was prepared to sit and talk with, and care for participants in distress.

3.4.6 Incentives

Participants were originally not offered material incentives as part of the recruitment for this research project, and as a result questionnaire participants and university activist interviews were not rewarded for their participation. Recruitment of SILs for interview was largely unsuccessful prior to the introduction of incentives, in that only one participant agreed to be interviewed. After a long period of calls for participants, approval was sought from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Education in July 2018 and permission was granted to include minor incentives (£5.00 gift vouchers for www.amazon.co.uk) in the call for participants. This incentive was not viewed to compromise the ethical conduct of the research, by making participants feel as though they had to continue. In fact, participants were handed a printed voucher at the beginning of the interview (alongside their consent form) to indicate that their reimbursement was not conditional on their completion of the interview and that they could leave at any point. Nor was this incentive seen to bias potential participants to become involved, thus giving invalid or unrepresentative data.

There was also a potential benefit of representing the views of university communities on lad culture which may have attracted some participants. Another benefit might be the cathartic and potentially therapeutic effects of disclosing one's experience of sexual violence to a trusted source. While there may be issues of retraumatisation when disclosing, evidence suggests that the act of sharing this information with someone who is able to listen non-judgmentally and who will not break confidentiality is a positive experience (Draucker, 1999).

3.4.7 Reflections on researcher position

Based on recommendations in *Ethics and Education Research* (Brooks et al., 2014), I considered my own position as a researcher and the (perceived) effect that this might have on my research practice. My position within the research was considered in two ways: the influence of my position on the research and the influence of the research on me as a researcher.

Firstly, I considered my perceived power in comparison to (predominantly) undergraduate SIL students. I was a PhD candidate (potentially intimidating to someone new to academic contexts), significantly older[11] than most participants and employed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the University of York. In addition, during my postgraduate study, I have held voluntary roles in colleges and the Graduate Students' Association, giving me some authority or power when it came to organising events or providing low-level welfare support. On the one hand, if participants were aware of my position, this could lend credence to my research and make participants feel certain that their contributions would be put to use. Moreover, as someone visibly involved in university activism, I may have appeared more similar in experience to the students. However, there are also drawbacks as I was concerned that my position may intimidate (potential) participants. For one, this could be disconcerting for prospective participants who may feel that in spite of promises to maintain confidentiality, they would rather I not know about their personal life. Additionally, my positions in university activism might seem to "give away" my political leanings, which might be construed as having an impact on my research. In particular, I was the convenor for the Postgraduate LGBTQ Network for almost two academic years, a position which might seem untenable with an objective project on lad culture - which has some reputation as involving homo/transphobia. In fact, the project does not attempt to be entirely objective, or to only represent lads in a negative light. This may also be a factor when recruiting in person, as I have a butch gender presentation[12], which may be read by onlookers as feminist, queer or gender non-conforming. While it is all of the above, and thus so is this research project, this does not mean that I am unable to empathise with the lived experience of laddish individuals, or that I have only a single opinion about lad culture. The purpose of this research was to collect data from SILs with the intention of representing lad culture from their point of view. I balanced this by attempting to build rapport with SIL participants through casual chat prior to the interview.

Secondly, the impact of conducting research on the researcher should be considered. Research on sexual violence can be traumatising for researchers, a problem which has been addressed in SVRI guidelines (Jewkes et al., 2012) which recommend that researchers equip themselves with knowledge of support services. Although no SILs directly disclosed that they had acted in sexually violent ways, there were references to drink-spiking, sexual aggression and groping. Further, a number of questionnaire participants indicated that they had

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[11] In 2018, when most of the SIL interviews were conducted, I was 27 compared with the majority of SILs who were in their upper undergraduate degrees (aged around 20).

[12] While 'butch' cannot be simplified into single signifiers, and there are many different presentations of butch, I believe that my participants may have recognised my presentation as such. For reference, I have my hair styled in a 'short-back-and-sides' typical of men's haircuts, wear clothing from the 'men's section' of clothing stores and wear multiple visible facial piercings. I typically wear leather boots threaded with Stonewall's 'Rainbow Laces'.

experienced sexual violence, including some who referred to repeated experience of rape. Research on the experiences of researchers of sexual violence (Coles et al., 2014) found that the process can be traumatising for researchers. The research's effect on me was something I reflected on in notes I made during the analysis of questionnaire data, writing:

> Of course I knew that it was statistically likely that I would have some participants report that they had been raped, but seeing the disclosure made me feel guilty that I could only record the information for research purposes, that I could not do anything to help the victim. (Reflective journal)

Recommendations for handling research interviews and data analysis are that researchers should undertake training and preparation as well as forms of self-care. I made use of some PhD supervision sessions to speak with my supervisor (Vanita Sundaram) about the difficulty of analysing data on sexual violence, as use of research teams for emotional support was also recommended.

3.5 Data Collection

This section addresses the process of data collection, addressing sampling methods employed and recruitment efforts. This section will present the institutional context in which most participants were students or activists, and descriptive features of those who did participate in this project. I will recognise the impact of my position as a researcher on participant recruitment.

3.5.1 'The University'

The majority of participants (discussed in detail in section 3.5.3) were students and staff members at a single institution, henceforth known as The University. The institution is a plate-glass collegiate campus University in the North of England. In 2015/16, when this project began data collection, over 15,000 students were enrolled, with around 80% Home/EU students. Most students were taking undergraduate degrees, which were predominantly in the Sciences. Around 1/5 students were mature students and less than 1/4 were BME students. The University regularly ranks highly on league tables, the Research Excellence Framework and Teaching Excellence Framework, and performs well in the National Student Satisfaction survey. The campus is made up of college communities, which each have an elected student committee for events planning and student representation. Each college also has a small Welfare Team, which includes administrative and pastoral roles as well as staff on both paid and voluntary contracts, aiming to promote student wellbeing, develop employable skills and support diverse communities. There are more than 60 ratified sports teams representing The University, and

students can also compete on behalf of their college in intramural leagues. The institution is one which I have personal connections with, and therefore was able to access a number of staff and students. The impact of my involvement on the data collected is considered in section 3.4.7.

3.5.2 Recruitment

Recruitment for both the questionnaire and SIL interviews was done in a variety of ways in order to reach as many potential participants as possible. University activist interviews were recruited for by emailing those who had been publicly involved in anti-lad culture campaigns, or who held positions in the Students' Union and student support roles at The University. Following the discovery that a study investigating a specific anti-lad culture campaign would be fruitless, the next intention with this project, was to centre the questionnaire in the research design. In this scenario, interviews were to be supplementary to the large-scale survey data I hoped to collect. With that in mind, questionnaire participants were recruited from universities across the country, aiming to understand the impact of lad culture on different institutions. Effort was made to contact students' unions at the majority of UK HEIs, spending a large amount of time collating contact details for these, before getting in contact via email and/or phone. NUS officers were also contacted, in the hope that these individuals could share the questionnaire link with relevant student union officers, students on their mailing lists or on their personal/political Twitter accounts, though only a single representative responded. This strategy was unsuccessful, with only a minority of participants responding to the questionnaire from outside The University. The questionnaire was originally named the 'UK University Culture Survey' owing to the broader scope of the intended recruitment. This was partly used in order to encourage unbiased responses to questions on laddish behaviours, and to appeal to a mass student audience who may feel that the moniker 'lad' was a deterrent to participation. There was limited success in recruiting students who identified with laddism using this title, and preliminary analysis suggested that some participants didn't necessarily have the ability to/interest in defining lad culture, so the survey was renamed. Given the timely nature of this research project (lad culture still holding the attention of international media) using the topic lad culture in the promotion of the questionnaire yielded more *relevant* interest.

The main method of reaching participants for questionnaire and SIL interviews was to use my personal social media, asking that friends and followers also share the link to participate with their networks (snowball sampling via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram). Owing to the various voluntary and paid positions I've held in universities and Students' Unions this did prove somewhat fruitful. Following the questionnaire name change, posts were also made using unique social media accounts for 'The Lad Culture Survey' (Instagram and Twitter) and

directing potential participants to a custom website[13] providing details of the research project and sign-up forms. The social media accounts had few followers but enabled me to monitor the feeds of institutions and Students' Unions so that I could introduce the questionnaire at suitable junctures. Participants were encouraged to share links on their own social media, and tell friends about the project (snowball sampling). In order to maximise the number of participants, questionnaires could be taken using any internet-connected device, including mobile phones. The link for the questionnaire was transformed using the website www.tinyurl.com to make link more appealing/professional: www.tinyurl/com/LadCultureSurvey.

Once it became clear that the majority of participants were students at The University, an effort was made to expand the reach of the questionnaire by choosing two additional institutions (with very different student populations, campus arrangements and subject choices). These institutions were also chosen because of the access that I had to them, in terms of location and connections I had from prior work. I registered to have a stall at the Freshers' Fair events of each of the three institutions, where I had QR codes for the questionnaire, paper sign-up sheets for interview participants and was available to receive questions on the purpose of the research. As discussed in section 3.4.7 I was aware of my position in conducting research, and the impact that my presence may have on recruitment in-person. My queer presentation may have deterred some potential participants from engaging with the project, because of an assumed anti-lad culture stance. Nevertheless, my presentation may also have encouraged otherwise under-researched SILs to participate. Unlike prior research on lad culture (Dempster, 2007; Jefferies, 2019), the SILs interviewed in this project were not all heterosexual. Georgina, the only female SIL, indicated that she was gay, and Richard stated "I'm bi myself" when discussing the prevalence of homophobia in lad culture. Until the interview, I was not aware of the sexual orientation of these participants but had met/seen both in person prior to the interview (when recruiting). Therefore, it is probable that these lads felt able to speak to me about their experience as a result of my own visible queer presentation.

Additionally, owing to the small number of SIL participants recruited, I decided to target university sports teams, taking fliers (See Appendix I for all recruitment materials) which I distributed to each sports society at each of the Freshers' Fairs. Further, I specifically addressed sports teams using social media and emails for each of the three institutions. I never received a reply from any sports team addressing my call for participants. The questionnaire was open to respondents from October 2016 until February 2019 in order to reach as many participants as possible. Finally, I displayed posters with a call for participants across the campus of The

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[13] The website was created using a free platform (www.wix.com) but since its inactivity from the end point of recruitment, the domain and contents have become unavailable.

University, in public areas, which advertised an incentive of a £5.00 Amazon voucher for SIL interview participants.

3.5.3 Participants

3.5.3.1 Questionnaire

While the dissemination of the questionnaire was quite strategic – in that SU representatives and NUS elected officers were emailed because of their reach in university communities – the sample was ultimately self-selecting. Students who saw the questionnaire advertised in emails and on social media chose to take part in the questionnaire, understanding that it was about UK university culture or lad culture. The sample is therefore non-representative of UK student experience. A high proportion of participants were students at a single institution (discussed above), and the sample was not representative of the population of that university when compared on measures of gender, age and year/type of study.

The questionnaire had 144 responses of whom only 53% completed the entire survey, though incomplete responses were retained and analysed (in line with the information sheet). As a result, analyses conducted – presented in chapter 4 – were based on a different participant number for each item. Only one participant indicated that they wished to withdraw their responses by typing "withdraw" in an open-text questionnaire item. Because the questionnaire was originally intended to capture a large cohort of respondents from universities across the UK, there are a number of institutions represented. However, given the use of snowball and opportunity sampling, the majority of participants (over 65%) were students at a single institution (The University). The average age of participants was 24 and the majority of participants were female, and cisgender. One person responded that their gender was not that assigned at birth, and two participants selected 'Prefer not to say'. Most participants did not rate themselves highly on the laddism scale, with only 8 participants rated themselves as over 50% laddish and a large share rating themselves at 0% laddism. As many postgraduates as undergraduates filled in the questionnaire and most participants were in the upper years of their degree, with few first-year students. This may account for the lack of self-identifying lads present in the sample, as Dempster (2007) found that male students tend to disassociate themselves from lad culture following their first year of study. Comparison of the demographics of SILs and non-lads and analysis of their responses is presented in the next chapter.

3.5.3.2 Interviews with self-identified lads

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 5 self-identified lads. SIL participants were also a self-selecting sample of students who responded to requests for participation on social media, via email, at in-person events and through printed materials posted around The

University campus. The purpose of this sample was not to be representative, but to gather valid data on laddish identity, therefore this purposive sampling approach is justified. Of these 4 were students at The University, however 1 participant was not at same institution. This is because of the use of social media as a tool for recruitment, which allowed those outside The University to hear about the project. This single participant was, however, a student at a prestigious collegiate institution with similar student demography to the primary university, therefore his interview has been retained for analysis. One of the interviews was conducted via email, the remainder were in-person interviews. Table 1 below outlines the pseudonyms attributed to each participant and a brief description of their status as lads and identifying features. All participants were read by the researcher as white and under the age of 25, though race and age were not asked about in interview questions. Among SIL interview participants, 2 were recruited in-person (both non-heterosexual participants), 2 from posters and 1 from social media.

3.5.3.3 Interviews with university activists

As the original aim of this project was to investigate the efficacy of anti-lad culture campaigns, feasibility interviews were conducted with 10 university activists at The University. In 2013, a specific anti-lad culture campaign was proposed by the Students' Union (SU) at The University following accounts of discriminatory behaviour from students reported in national newspapers. Student-facing campaigns at this institution could be/were organised by college Welfare Teams, college student councils, the Students' Union and by centralised Student Support services (psychological and mental health team, financial services, immigration advice). These interviews were retained for analysis owing to their utility in understanding lad culture from the perspective of non-lads.

These participants were a purposive sample of members of student support staff and student representatives who had been involved in anti-lad culture campaigns in the institution. Half of interviewees were men, half were women - this was not intentional in the research design, but likely as a result of their roles: women predominantly in student support, men in elected leadership positions. All but one of the interviews were conducted in person, with the final one done via email. Table 2 below shows the pseudonyms, gender, age group and role in The University of each participant.

Table 1: Participant characteristics - Self-identified lad interviewees

Pseudonym	Participant description
Georgina	Gay female postgraduate taught student, played rugby at university level
Richard	Bisexual male undergraduate student, captain of college football team, non-drinker
Lawrence	Working-class male undergraduate student, keen football fan but didn't play competitively
John	Male undergraduate student, not involved in competitive sports
Matthew	Male postgraduate research student, played Rugby League at university level, not at The University

Table 2: Participant characteristics - University activist interviewees

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	Role in The University
David	Male	20s	Student Union Sabbatical Officer
Paul	Male	20s	Student Union Sabbatical Officer
Arthur	Male	20s	Student Union Sabbatical Officer
Phillip	Male	20s	Student Union Sabbatical Officer
Emma	Female	20s	Student Union Part Time Officer
Ann	Female	30s	Student Support Services (College)
Bethany	Female	30s	Student Support Services (College)
Evangeline	Female	30s	Student Support Services (College)
Edward	Male	40s	Student Support Services (Central)
Marie	Female	20s	Residential Assistant (College)

3.6 **Analysis**

3.6.1 Quantitative analysis

The analysis of quantitative questionnaire data will be discussed in detail in chapter 4, therefore this section gives an overview of the analyses used. Data were analysed using SPSS 24 initially conducting tests to determine whether the data were normally distributed. These included tests of skewness and kurtosis; the former produces a numerical measure of the extent to which data are distributed symmetrically around the mean, the latter measures the spread of each tail of data to determine whether one has more outliers than the other. Histograms were also generated for each variable, in order to view the distribution of data. Because these tests revealed that the majority of variables were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests were used to analyse data.

For some questionnaire items, such as where rating 11 behaviours on their centrality to lad culture, Cronbach's alpha analysis was used to determine whether there was internal consistency between similar items. In comparing the ratings of lads and non-lads, the Mann Whitney U test was employed, which assigns a rank to each datum in a group (such as responses from SILs) then compares the mean of these ranks. This is a non-parametric analogue of a t-test and provides a p value indicating whether the difference between groups is due to chance. Spearman's Rank correlations were calculated when investigating relationships between two or more scale variables, such as when correlating laddism with masculinity. Finally, Kruskal Wallis H tests, known as 'one-way ANOVA on ranks', was used to determine the difference between multiple groups on a single variable – for example comparing the laddism of groups who each engaged in binge drinking with different frequencies. This test indicates that groups are likely from different populations, but doesn't show the difference between individual groups, therefore the Bonferroni post-hoc test was also utilised.

3.6.2 Qualitative analysis

There were two forms of qualitative data collected in this project: responses to open-text items in the questionnaire and interview data. These were thematically analysed in line with the 6-step process set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first of these steps is to transcribe the audio files of interviews. I transcribed all interview data as soon after completing the interview as possible, recording the words, hesitations (such as 'erm') and pauses. These transcripts were then sent to participants so that they could comment on them for ethical reasons discussed above. In presenting extracts for analysis, some repeated words and fillers (such as 'like') are

removed for clarity. While doing this, I made notes of themes within the data which formed the basis of my initial coding schedule.

Thematic analysis allowed me to take an approach that was both deductive and inductive (Clarke & Braun, 2015), in that there were particular themes that I was looking out for, and some themes which were data-driven. For example, I developed an initial coding scheduling based on themes identified in prior literature of: attributes of lads, behaviours of lads (including sport, anti-schoolwork behaviours and binge drinking) and links between lad culture and sexual violence. Once I had read through the transcripts, a number of references to the limits of banter and the pressure that SILs felt to binge drink emerged from the data, so these were included in the coding schedule. Coding was then conducted for all qualitative data using NVivo 11 and 12.

The next step was to collate codes into broader themes, such as codes of initiations, playing sports, sports team socials and sports fanaticism were grouped into the theme 'Sports' within a larger theme of laddish practices. The relevance of each theme to the collated references was then reviewed, rechecking coded extracts for importance in the topic and recoding where necessary. The purpose of this refining, according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is to generate a 'thematic map' of the data, drawing together themes which are linked. As well as themes which had a high number of references (such as binge drinking), I also collated themes that were present in only a few interviews, but which were stated as particularly important by interview participants. In this process it was clear that some themes emerged which did not aid in answering the research questions of this project but had relevance to the field of study and so were published elsewhere. In a number of references, especially in interviews with activists, participants referred to the ways in which the term 'lad culture' was problematic (as presented in Stead, 2017) and of their work to counter act lad culture in universities (as presented in Stenson, 2020).

There were often tensions between the perspectives of interviewees on key themes, therefore pulling together themes often required judgements between opposing references. For example, when discussing 'rape jokes' (as in section 7.3.1) Georgina positioned this as a very common element of some laddish humour in her experience: "I know groups of friends, groups of lads that I've been in, that's like a hot topic". Compared with Lawrence's claim that "that's not something we'd joke about." It was not always possible to represent the array of views on a particular theme when conducting analysis, but where relevant and appropriate, these have been discussed in analysis.

3.6.3 *Integrity of findings*

This section is concerned with the extent to which findings and analysis can be said to be accurate and consistent reflections of the 'truth' of lad culture in universities. As discussed earlier, owing to the epistemological approach taken in this project, my view is not that there is any one 'truth', and I acknowledge that all data reflect the social context in which they were collected. Nevertheless, steps were taken to maintain reliability and validity in this research project. The data collected across quantitative and qualitative research methods have been triangulated in this thesis, lending credibility to the findings.

3.6.3.1 Reliability and validity of quantitative findings

Guidance from Rattray and Jones (2005) was followed when designing the quantitative items of the questionnaire. As discussed earlier, the questions relating to sexual violence were adapted from those of the *Sexual Experiences Survey*. This is a survey which has been disseminated among university student populations and originally drew a sample which did not significantly differ from the demographics of the target population. The research tool was tested for internal consistency and test-retest reliability revealing overwhelmingly positive results, as well as there being a strong correlation between the results provided for the self-report questionnaires and in later research interviews, indicating veracity of responses (Koss & Gidycz, 1985).

Items which were not based on this scale were uniquely created for this project, thus it was important to ensure the reliability and validity of these items. Validity refers to the extent that an instrument measures what it claims to (Drost, 2011). Content/face validity of the questionnaire was determined through a pilot study. Three academic peers were asked to rate the questionnaire on its appearance and usability, the tone of questions and whether the questionnaire met the purpose of the research. These trials allowed for changes to be made to the tool before dissemination to intended participants.

Additionally, participants were able to add their own practices to rate on their centrality to lad culture, allowing students to validly represent their experience of lad culture. 16 participants filled in one or more of their own practices (out of 61 participants who rated laddish practices), indicating the importance of this option. Nevertheless, most participants simply rated the provided practices, indicating that these items were valid to their experience of lad culture.

Reliability refers to the extent that findings are consistent and replicable. One way of determining the internal consistency of questionnaire items is to conduct Cronbach's alpha analyses on items presented in a scale. For example, in Q.43. of the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate 11 practices on the extent to which they were central to lad culture (0-100). Bowling (1997) recommends that items presented in a scale should have a Cronbach's alpha of

>0.7 for the scale to be considered to have internal consistency. For Q.43. on laddish practices, among 61 responses, the Cronbach's α = 0.836. For Q.44. on attributes of laddism, among 66 participants, Cronbach's α = 0.783. Although the purpose of this questionnaire was not to create a scale for measuring perceptions of laddism, the finding that each question showed consistency between items does indicate that there is high reliability in this scale.

3.6.3.2 Trustworthiness of qualitative findings

Guba (1981) theorised that there are multiple forms of trustworthiness when conducting qualitative research, including but not limited to: dependability, confirmability, credibility and transferability. Because the interviews and open-text questionnaire items invited participants to define and describe lad culture in their own terms, rather than imposing researcher definitions, data collected should have a high degree of validity. Yet, in all interviews and questionnaire data collection there is some degree of artificiality.

Qualitative research can be deemed dependable if the research process is clear and could be followed by another researcher (Shenton, 2004). As with all semi-structured interviews, each interview has the potential to be different, therefore there cannot be exact replicability of findings. Nonetheless, there were some questions which were asked using the same wording in each interview. These were in line with the research questions for the project, asking participants to discuss laddish identity, practices and sexual violence. The full questionnaire and interview schedules are presented in the Appendix, so that the procedure is transparent (questionnaire: Appendix F, SIL interview schedule: Appendix G, University Activist interview schedule: Appendix H). Further, these were asked in the same order in each interview to avoid order effects. Questions about sexual violence were asked towards the end of the interview so that rapport could've been built prior (to ensure the safety or participant and researcher) and to avoid this topic influencing the questions about laddish practice. During the data collection process, I had intended to make detailed reflexive notes on the process of each interview which would aid in transparency. I found that to begin with, these notes contained rich information on my thoughts for future interviews, but that I saw diminishing returns from this approach and found that towards the end of data collection my notes were less consistent. When analysing qualitative data, it is important to maintain intra-coder reliability maintaining a consistent approach to coding throughout this process. To ensure this, I made use of the 'Notes' section of NVivo 11 and 12 to record my reflexive approach to coding, and frequently recoded references when changes had been made.

In conducting research which is confirmable by others, it is essential that the researcher's influence on data collection and analysis is recognised. I was very concerned in SIL interviews that my own apprehensions about lad culture would impact on the responses of

participants. Given the reputation of lad culture in national media and academic research, I believed that if students believed me to hold anti-laddism beliefs that they would give less information on lad culture, or seek to present lad culture in ways which they thought were socially desirable. While any research project may encourage socially desirable responses, I felt that because of the contentiousness of the topic, any presumption of my stance would influence participants. Knowing that participants would be less likely to give rich detailed responses if they felt that I was intending to paint lad culture in a negative light, I may have agreed too readily with them. not allowing thoughts to flow, or asking for clarification enough. For example, when SIL Georgina referred to lad culture as a "push and push and push environment" but that "there's always someone to make sure you're OK" my summary was perhaps too leading. I responded that "Yeah, the competition can be negative in that, but there's lots of ways it can be positive." I was conscious of this tendency to counteract my anti-laddism approach when analysing data too. I have therefore aimed to provide a thick description of findings to foreground the data themselves (Bryman, 2008; Mays & Pope, 1995).

In interviews with university activists, my position as a student activist with access to The University meant that I did ask participants about events and campaigns that I was aware of. This meant that some questions could be perceived as leading, but these were balanced with broad open questions about participants' own desires for future activism. Coar and Sim (2006) suggest, based on their analysis of interviewing fellow doctors, that interviewing peers has both advantages and disadvantages. While shared knowledge can be used to encourage more in-depth explanation – instead of superficial details – the prior relationship between researcher and participant can mean that interviewees feel the need to prove their expertise on a topic. Additionally, assumed shared knowledge may mean that key ideas are not explained in detail in the participants' own words.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has addressed the ways in which trustworthy qualitative-dominant data were collected in an ethically sound manner. Although the research journey was not as anticipated, each alteration to the research strategy has been accounted for and justified. Ultimately, this project utilised a questionnaire comparing non-lad and SIL responses, semi-structured interviews with SILs on their lived experience of laddism, and semi-structured interviews with University Activists to represent the perception of lad culture. This whole-context approach, with data predominantly from students and activists at a single institution, offers a rich understanding of lad culture in The University.

Although investigating lad culture as a hegemonic masculinity within university contexts this research is positioned as feminist project through: the adoption of a feminist epistemology, embedding feminist practice into the procedure and aiming for a feminist outcome. This project takes the perspective that gender is socially constructed, and achieved through reiterative performative practice (Butler, 1990). Therefore, this investigation of lad culture has not sought to represent a singular 'truth' about laddish identity, but to draw together discursive constructions of identity and embodied practice of laddism. The project sought to de-centre the power of the researcher in data collection, raising questions about the influence of the researcher on participants. This project has contributed evidence which may be employed in developing feminist anti-lad culture activism in the future.

The design of the questionnaire and interview schedules was outlined, demonstrating the ways in which participants' own views on lad culture were prioritised despite a grounding in prior literature. Ensuring that this research was conducted ethically and with integrity was central to research design, and the impact of my own position on the research process has been considered in relation to design, recruitment and analysis.

Because **R.Q.3.** required collection of data on the topic of sexual violence (both from SILs and non-lads) ethical guidance on conducting research with victims and perpetrators of sexual violence was followed. In particular, I prepared for the disclosure of perpetration and/or experience of sexual violence through informing participants of how their disclosures would be handled and developing a disclosure contingency procedure. While some participants may find the process of disclosing experience of sexual violence to be painful and traumatic, some victims find this process healing.

Participants were mostly connected to a single institution (The University) in spite of extensive attempts to expand the sample. The majority of questionnaire participants were women students in their 20s, the majority of SIL interview participants were men in their 20s reading for undergraduate degrees and University Activist interviewees were evenly split women and men in student support and student representative roles. Despite the small number of participants identifying as SILs in the questionnaire (n=8) and small number of SIL interviews (n=5), the rich detail offered by participants in their definitions of lad culture and discussion of laddish practice means that this project offers significant contribution to the field. The majority of participants who took part in interviews were white (or appeared white to the interviewer) – this wasn't asked about in the questionnaire – so this project could be extended by collecting a larger and more diverse sample.

Finally, this chapter has outlined the ways in which data were analysed and integrity of data was considered. Statistical analysis first indicated that quantitative data were not normally distributed, thus non-parametric tests were conducted. Comparisons between groups were

made, and correlations between scale variables were calculated. The high reliability of questionnaire scales indicates that there is potential to develop a scale of perception of laddism, though the number of respondents was too few to conduct factor analyses. While this analysis would be useful for clustering items into factors based on the amount of variance in the dataset that they account for, Comrey and Lee (1992) suggest that datasets with less than 300 cases do not make for a robust factor analysis. Qualitative data were thematically analysed in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure, from first reading through transcripts to the collation of references into overarching themes to report. Again, the influence of the researcher on data collection and analysis was accounted for.

This chapter has demonstrated the challenges in conducting research in lad culture, especially as a queer woman researcher. The main challenge was that participants may not wish to be involved, owing to the perceived stance of the researcher, or because participation in academic research is seen as antithetical to the anti-schoolwork attitudes of lad culture (Jackson, 2002). Further, careful preparations for conducting research on the topic of sexual violence had to be made. Once involved care was taken to avoid biasing data collection with my stance – perhaps being too quick to agree with participants. In analysis, accounting for the array of laddish perspectives and reflecting on disclosures of sexual violence experienced both presented difficulties. Nevertheless, the opportunity to present the experiences of SILs who did not meet the expected norm of maleness and heterosexuality was refreshing. Further, although participants did refer to features of laddish identity and practice identified in prior literature, interviews and questionnaire data also expanded on these in unexpected ways, as will be discussed in the following four findings chapters.

4 Results

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present statistical analyses of quantitative data collected through the questionnaire. For some questionnaire items, relevant qualitative data are also considered. The majority of qualitative findings will be discussed in the upcoming analysis chapters. This chapter gives an overview of the difference between the groups that I characterise as lads and non-lads, providing a overarching understanding of the behaviours, attributes and attitudes of lads that will be developed in later chapters. In total 144 participants responded to the survey, however only 53% of these were complete responses. The information sheet indicated that incomplete responses would be analysed, therefore these data are ethically sourced. As a result, the number of participants responding to each questionnaire item is indicated.

For most of the comparisons drawn in this chapter, the null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the populations of lads and non-lads. It should therefore be noted that only 8 participants rated themselves at 50 or more out of 100 on the laddism scale; these are henceforth referred to as lads, or Self-Identified Lads (SILs). While this small number of SILs means that findings are difficult to generalise, there are some significant differences between this group and non-lads, which suggest that these populations of students are indeed different in their perception of and engagement in some laddish behaviours and attributes. As a result of the sample size, it is unlikely that any statistically significant findings are the result of Type I errors. That is, the results are unlikely to be 'false positives', and instead can be viewed as fair reflections of the populations studied. However, owing to the overall small sample size and the very small sample of SILs, it is possible that there are Type II errors in the analyses below. These errors, known as 'false negatives', involve the acceptance of null hypotheses which may not be true. Overall, then, significant findings discussed in this chapter are unlikely to be false, but differences which are not statistically significant may actually represent a difference between populations if using a larger sample. For more discussion of the issues in sample size and potential errors, see section 8.4.1.

Skewness and kurtosis analyses revealed that many variables considered in this chapter showed scores of more than or less than one, and histograms showed that data were commonly skewed to the left. This is to be expected, as many questions refer to the engagement in laddish behaviours, which it would be expected that non-lads do not engage in with frequency. That the majority of participants did not identify as lads, accounts for the data being left skewed. As a result, non-parametric tests were used, for the avoidance of Type I errors.

Owing to the design of Qualtrics scale items, where participants were asked to rate an item out of 100, the scale was automatically set to zero. In many cases, participants gave scores to most of the items in a question set, but not all. This meant that there are multiple missing cases, which may have been left at zero by participants intending to give a score of zero. For example, many participants rated themselves on a scale of femininity, but gave no score for masculinity and laddism. While these are not binary opposites, it could be assumed that someone who scored very highly on femininity intended to score themselves at 0 masculinity. All scale items were presented in question sets (such as the eleven behaviours), meaning that missed cases were often among filled cases. I determined a method of filling in missing cases which was consistent. Where at least half of the items in a set were rated (6/11 behaviours) it was assumed that participants may have intentionally left rating sliders unmoved to give a score of zero. Thus, any missing cases where participants had completed at least half of the scales in a set were filled in with zeroes. Where this was not the case, it was assumed that participants had simply not rated many of the items, and these were treated as missing variables. There is only one exception, which is the rating of masculinity, femininity and laddism. These items were only in a set of three, so I assumed that if a participant had rated any one of these, that the others were left at zero intentionally.

The chapter begins with demographic data, showing the number of lads and non-lads in each category (e.g. year of study). These give an initial grounding in how lads identify. Then the perception of behaviours and attributes will be discussed. These questions allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the relative importance of practices of lad culture. The internal consistency and construct validity are addressed. These ratings were then compared between lads and non-lads on whether they consider a range of practices to be "central to lad culture" and reveal some significant differences in the ratings of lads contrasted with non-lads. Additionally, in these sections, correlation analyses were used, sometimes confirming differences as linear in nature. In section 4.4, the frequency of engagement in laddish behaviours was compared against self-reported laddism, including anti-schoolwork behaviours, homosocial behaviours and sexually violent acts. Analyses reveal that for some behaviours SILs do tend to have higher frequency of engagement than non-lads. Again, these offer a clearer picture of the perceived importance of behaviours to laddish identity. While a relationship between laddism and perpetration of or experience of sexual violence was not found, these data are considered in relation to the broader landscape of literature on sexual violence in universities and in general. In addition, considering the range of forms of harassment (including sexism and racism) and the relative prevalence of these is useful in understanding the university experience more broadly. Further, the extent to which prevailing discourses in lad culture create contexts which are conducive to sexual violence is discussed at length in chapter

8. Finally, the extent to which previously identified laddish behaviours are considered problematic is analysed. Although population comparison between lads and non-lads did not provide statistically significant findings, correlation analyses did reveal some staggered differences on the basis of self-reported laddism. These findings speak to potential motivations for engagement in laddish behaviour. The conclusion will consider questionnaire data which did not effectively answer the research questions and are therefore not presented in the thesis, before outlining the overall picture of laddism that these findings provide.

4.2 **Demographic Data**

In Table 3 below, comparisons between lads and non-lads are shown. For items where continuous data were collected, the median rating is given as a measure of central tendency, owing to the non-normal distribution of data. For items which had multiple possible responses, the respective number of participants selecting each response are provided.

The findings here suggest that lads are more often those who are cisgender and in their first year of taught study. However, the population of participants as a whole also share these demographic characteristics. There is no significant relationship between age and laddism, though this may be because of the wide range in ages given by SIL participants, from 18 to 78 (range = 60). Owing to the small number of SIL participants, the participant who reported their age as 78 was not removed from analysis, although their age is a significant outlier. It is not known whether this is the true age of the participant, or an accident or attempt to disguise their responses. Therefore, it is not possible using these data to draw comparisons between lads and non-lads. Nevertheless, there is a significant positive correlation between masculinity and laddism (r_s = 0.643, p<0.001) and a significant negative correlation between laddism and femininity (r_s = -0.344, p=0.003) evident from Spearman's rank analyses (n=72).

Table 3: Demographic data compared by laddism

		Lads ≥50	Non-lads <50
	Number of participants	8	64
	Median age	22	23
	Median Masculinity	77.5	19
	Median Femininity	27.5	70
Gender	Female	4	57
	Male	4	7
	Other	0	0
	Cisgender	6	61
	Transgender	1	1
	Prefer not to say	1	1
Type of Study	Undergraduate	3	36
	Postgraduate Taught	4	11
	Postgraduate Research	0	16
	Further Education	1	0
Year of Study	1	5	21
	2	1	12
	3	1	16
	4+	0	6

4.3 Perception of Behaviours and Attributes as Laddish

These sections review the data from two question sets in the questionnaire. For each of these, participants were asked to rate behaviours and attributes respectively on the extent to which they are "central to lad culture", using a 0-100 scale item. In each section, the validity and reliability of the question sets was considered, before comparing the populations of lads and non-lads using Mann Whitney U-test and Spearman's rank correlation analyses. Exact p values are reported owing to the small sample size, which makes Gaussian approximations inappropriate.

4.3.1 Behaviours

In Q43, participants were asked to rate eleven behaviours on their laddishness. The internal consistency between these items was calculated, revealing a strong reliability (N = 61, Cronbach's α = 0.836). All but two of the items were rated below 50 out of 100, suggesting that the questions have high content validity. Below, the mean ratings across all participants are shown, as well as results of Mann Whitney calculations, wherein SILs (those who rated themselves as ≥50 on laddism) are compared with non-lads.

The three behaviours which were seen as the most related to lad culture by questionnaire participants were: making jokes about women (Mean = 79.28), binge drinking (Mean = 78.33) and poking fun at friends (Mean = 75.78). These were also the highest rated items by non-lads, because the majority of participants are non-lads. Though, as can be seen from Table 4 below, those who rated themselves as 50 or higher on laddism gave a significantly lower rating for making jokes about women, than non-lads. Additionally, lads reported that perpetrating sexual violence (Mean = 25.50) and catcalling (Mean = 28.63) were significantly less central to laddism than non-lads. For SILs, binge drinking (Mean = 86.63), being assertive (Mean = 76.75) and having a group of single-sex friends (Mean = 74.00) were rated as the behaviours most central to lad culture, though these ratings were not significantly higher than for non-lads. In Table 4 5 below the mean ratings of each behaviour item are shown – differentiating between the mean ratings of lads, non-lads and the overall mean. It should be noted that owing to the small number of SILs the overall mean is skewed towards the ratings of non-lads. Nevertheless, this may be indicative of the overall perception of laddish behaviours among university students. Ranting on social media was the item least associated with lad culture by both SILs and non-lads (Mean = 30.00). The aim of this item was to capture the use of misogynist rhetoric on social media platforms, as has been documented in research since (Diaz-Fernandez & Evans, 2019), though the wording may have been too vague to truly reflect this.

To determine whether the significant differences are indicative of a linear relationship, correlations between behaviours perceived as laddish and self-reported laddism were calculated. Owing to the non-normal distribution of data, Spearman's Rank correlations were calculated, revealing significant negative correlations between self-reported laddism and perceiving two behaviours as central to lad culture. The higher the self-reported laddism, the lower the rating of catcalling (r_s = -0.321, p= 0.009) and perpetration of sexual assault (r_s = -0.258, p= 0.040) as central to lad culture. These are therefore similar to the Mann Whitney results discussed above, however there is no significant negative correlation between laddism and perceiving makings jokes about women to be laddish. These findings do imply a linear relationship, suggesting that laddism may be best understood (as Warin & Dempster (2007) suggest) as a continuum.

What is clear from these analyses, is that SILs are less likely to rate the most violent behaviours as central to their understanding of lad culture. This may be due to the low social desirability of these behaviours, including the fact that catcalling and sexual assault are illegal acts. Or, this could be because these behaviours are not routinely enacted by lads themselves. However, prior research with female students (Phipps & Young, 2013), university staff (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018, 2020) and lads themselves (Dempster, 2007; Jefferies, 2019) indicate that lad culture is typified by misogyny, sexual objectification of women and harassment. Perhaps then, these behaviours *are* carried out by lads, but are not considered the central element of the laddish experience for lads themselves. For them, binge drinking with a homosocial group is seen as more clear exemplars of their experience. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, there may be additional significant differences between lads and non-lads which are not evident from the small sample size analysed here. Nevertheless, qualitative findings suggest that misogynist banter is not only prevalent in lad culture (as in section 6.3), but that it provides a conducive context for sexual violence (as in section 7.3.1).

*Table 4: Q43 Behaviour items mean ratings and Mann Whitney results*

Behaviours	N	Mean rating	Mann Whitney U-test Results				U test statistic	Exact P value
			Lad ≥50		Non-lads <50			
			N	Mean Rank	N	Mean Rank		
Binge drinking (8+ units of alcohol)	70	78.33	8	43.88	59	32.66	157.00	0.119
Having a large group of single-sex friends	70	69.46	8	36.88	59	33.61	213.00	0.665
Catcalling (shouting at people you don't know in the street)	69	71.01	8	12.81	58	36.35	66.50	0.000*
Poking fun at friends	70	75.78	8	36.13	59	33.71	219.00	0.749
Being assertive	69	58.46	8	44.94	58	31.92	140.50	0.072
Playing sports	70	55.09	8	41.38	59	33.00	177.00	0.261
Perpetrating sexual assault	67	52.55	8	18.31	56	34.53	110.50	0.019*
Ranting about other students on social media	63	30.00	8	28.00	54	32.02	188.00	0.565

Making jokes about women	69	79.28	8	20.56	58	35.28	128.50	0.036*
Leaving academic work until the last minute	68	45.66	8	39.06	57	32.15	179.50	0.342
Having casual sex	69	69.75	8	34.94	58	33.30	220.50	0.828
Making jokes about being gay	69	67.01	8	30.38	58	33.93	207.00	0.631

Note: * denotes significant findings with p<0.05

Figure 5. Mean ratings of behaviours as "central to lad culture". Error bars denote one standard error around the mean.
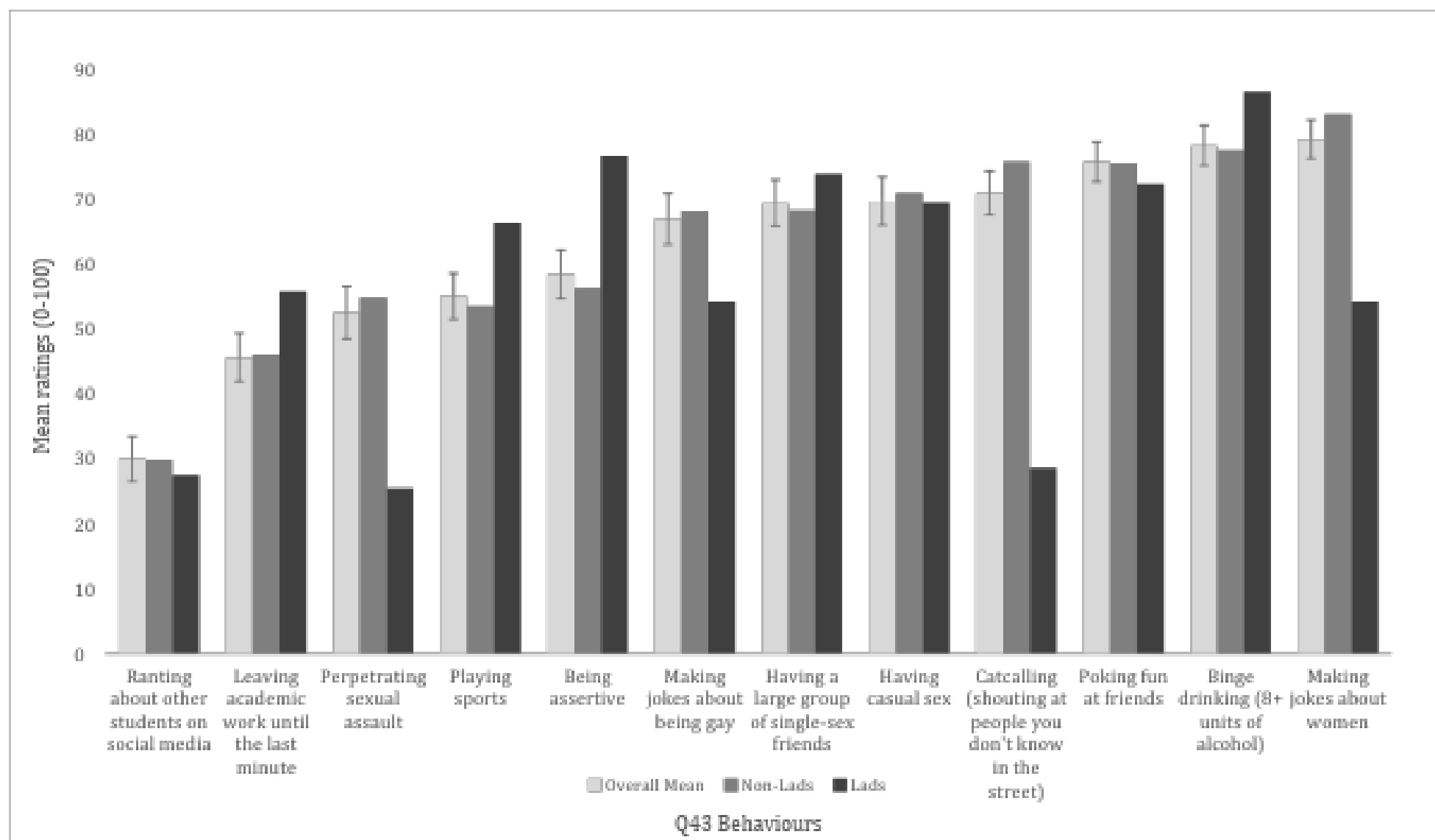
4.3.2 Attributes

In Q44 participants were asked to rate ten attributes on a scale of 0-100 on the extent to which they are "central to 'lad culture". Cronbach's alpha calculations revealed an acceptable reliability level (N = 66, α = 0.783) indicating that there is internal consistency between these items. Again, the majority of attitude items were identified as highly related to lad culture by participants, with all but two being rated more than 50 on the scale. This indicates that these items have high construct validity. In Table 5 below mean ratings for each item are given, as well as Mann Whitney comparisons revealing a significant difference between SILs and non-lads on three items.

Of note is that the average ratings for the ten attribute items is lower than for the behaviours, these are shown in Figure 6 below. A reason for this could be that the majority of questionnaire participants do not rate themselves highly on laddism and might feel unable to quantify the internally held attitudes (e.g. as with attribute misogynist) of those who do identify as lads. Nevertheless, the attributes and attitudes associated with lad culture in prior literature are also confirmed among the participants of this research project, with handling drink (Mean = 67.96), pushing jokes further (Mean = 71.35) and having more casual sex (Mean = 72.43) having the highest mean ratings overall. Aside from pushing jokes, these were also the highest rated among SILs, along with being physically strong. This could be because those who identify as lads are less likely to perceive their jokes as going too far, given that they are often not the butt of the jokes made – whereas those outside the culture, such as most female students, may consider jokes to have gone too far with a lower threshold. Perhaps unsurprisingly, SILs rated somewhat positive attributes (e.g. ability to handle drink (Mean = 92.00) and good sense of humour (Mean = 67.75)) as being central to lad culture with significantly higher ratings than those of non-lads. For these items, an issue may be in the subjective perception of humour and holding alcohol. That is, for non-lads, they may perceive lads jokes as harmful rather than funny or assume that 'holding alcohol' is not simply about consuming large quantities, but also maintaining decorum when drunk (which may be perceived differently by those experiencing the drunkenness than those witnessing it). Further, as identified in the literature, and will be explored using qualitative findings in section 6.2, binge drinking is frequently engaged in by lads, and perceived a central behaviour of lad culture, thus lads may be consuming a lot more alcohol than their non-lad peers on a regular basis. Therefore, lads may be more able to consume higher volumes of alcohol than non-lads and perceive this as the ability to hold their drink. SILs gave the attribute misogyny a significantly lower rating on its centrality to lad culture than did non-lads. This could be because misogyny is not socially desirable, and participants who identify as lads do not feel comfortable identifying this this attribute. Moreover, this could be as a result of the

normalisation of misogyny such that instances of it do not seem noteworthy. This is discussed in more detail in section 6.3.

Correlation analyses were conducted between attitudes and attributes perceived as laddish and self-reported laddism. Owing to the non-normal distribution of data, Spearman's Rank correlations were calculated, revealing significant negative correlations between self-reported laddism and perceiving misogyny (r_s = -0.269, p= 0.029) as central to lad culture. And a significant positive correlation was found between laddism and rating a good sense of humour as laddish (r_s = 0.364, p= 0.003). These confirm the findings of Mann Whitney results, but also suggest that laddism is linearly related to perception of laddism; that is that there is a continuum of laddism which aligns with a continuum of perception of laddism.

*Table 5: Q44 Attribute items mean ratings and Mann Whitney results*

Attributes	N	Mean rating	Mann Whitney U-test Results				U test statistic	Exact P value
			Lad ≥50		Non-lads <50			
			N	Mean Rank	N	Mean Rank		
Able to handle drinking a lot of alcohol	68	67.96	8	51.56	57	30.39	79.50	0.001*
Sporting prowess	67	55.10	8	31.31	56	32.67	214.50	0.427
Misogynist	69	63.04	8	22.13	58	35.07	141.00	0.037*
Physically strong	66	55.71	8	40.75	55	30.73	150.00	0.076
Homophobic	69	44.74	8	27.50	58	34.33	184.00	0.177
Able to 'pull' attractive partners	67	66.28	8	29.31	56	32.96	198.50	0.307
Able to 'pull' many partners	67	72.43	8	29.25	58	32.96	198.00	0.303
Likely to push jokes further than others	69	71.35	8	25.31	58	34.63	166.50	0.101

Stoic	67	34.99	8	40.69	56	31.33	158.50	0.092
Good sense of humour	67	39.37	8	47.44	56	30.37	104.50	0.007*

Note: * denotes significant findings with p<0.0

Figure 6. Mean ratings of attributes as "central to lad culture". Error bars denote one standard error around the mean.
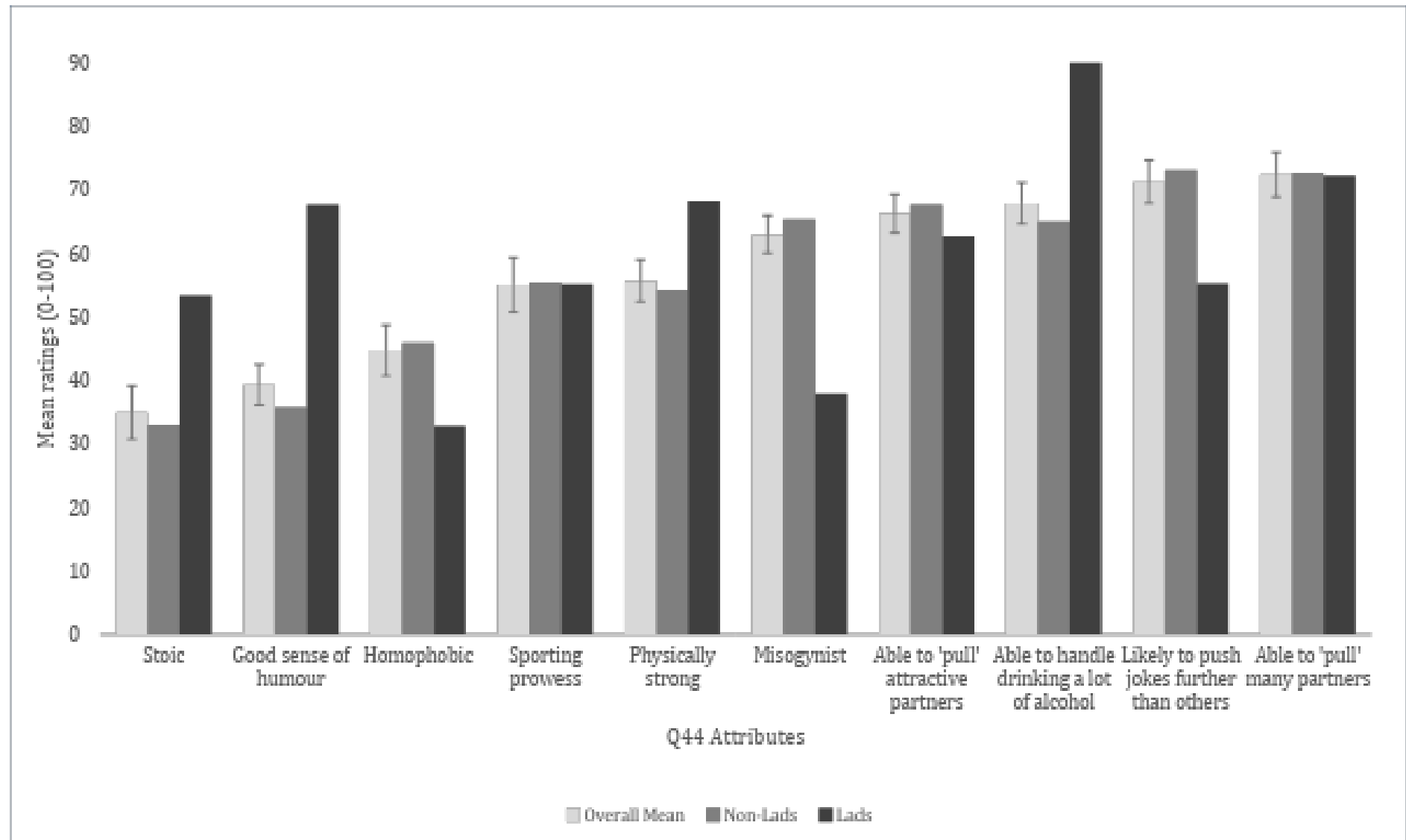
4.4 Engagement in Laddish Behaviours

In order to determine whether the SILs in my questionnaire dataset (n=8) engaged in behaviours identified as laddish in prior literature (such as binge drinking, anti-school behaviours and sexually violent acts) the self-reported laddism of questionnaire participants was compared across frequency of engagement in these behaviours. Participants weren't asked about their engagement in attributes, owing to the difficulty of quantifying frequency of engagement in an attribute, therefore it was not possible to compare the frequency of engagement in attributes against the variable of self-reported laddism. Having identified that parametric tests were inappropriate, a Kruskal-Wallis H Test was deemed the most appropriate statistical analysis for the present data.

4.4.1 Homosocial laddish and anti-schoolwork behaviours

In Q10, participants were asked to identify the frequency with which they participated in six social laddish behaviours: binge drinking, poking fun at friends, social media harassment, casual sex, playing sport and leaving academic work. They were provided, with 5 possible responses for each item (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often). Similarly, in Q6 laddish behaviours in teaching and learning settings were asked about. Participants reported on their frequency of engagement with a range of anti-schoolwork behaviours (using social media in class, talking over teachers, zoning out and arriving late), using a four-point frequency scale (Never, Sometimes, Often, All the Time). For all but three of the behaviours (using social media in class, zoning out, leaving academic work), the majority of participants reported that they never engaged in the behaviours and the minority of participants responded that the engaged with these behaviours very often. The majority of questionnaire participants answered that they did not binge drink at all for example, which may indicate that the sample are unrepresentative of the wider student population, as there are multiple reports that this behaviour is common within UK universities (See J Gill, 2002 for review). This also could be because participants may not wish to identify their behaviour as binge drinking, which holds negative connotations. However, the majority of participants did not rate themselves as high in laddism, so it may be that SILs do engage in these laddish behaviours, and that these students dominate university communities, but that the majority of this cohort are non-lads. Statistical comparisons between the self-reported laddism of those engaging in laddish behaviours in different frequency groups provides some insight.

While analyses were conducted for anti-schoolwork behaviours listed in Q6, there were no significant findings. This could be owing to the small number of laddish participants

surveyed, or could indicate that even though lads participate in these behaviours they are not comfortable admitting this, owing to the low social desirability of these behaviours. This seems unlikely in this case, as the majority of participants responded that they had engaged in at least one of the anti-schoolwork behaviours at some point. This may suggest the pervasiveness of laddish anti-schoolwork attitudes within UK universities, perhaps as a result of the increasingly neoliberalised higher education sector, and the positioning of students as a 'consumers' of education.

In Table 6 the modal frequencies for each behaviour in Q10 are presented, as well as test statistics and measures of significance for Kruskal Wallis analysis of frequency groups by self-reported laddism (n=72).

Table 6: Kruskal Wallis findings - Comparing self-reported laddism across frequency of engagement in laddish behaviours from Q10.

Social laddish Behaviour	Modal response	Degrees of Freedom	H Test Score	P value
Binge drink (8+ units of alcohol)	Never	4	9.02	0.061
Poke fun at my friends	Never	4	17.76	0.001*
Rant about other students on social media	Never	2	5.40	0.067
Have casual sex	Never	4	8.83	0.066
Play sports	Never	4	14.33	0.006*
Leave academic work until the last minute	Sometimes	4	3.22	0.521

Note: * denotes significance p<0.05.

As can be seen above, there is a significant difference between the laddish scores of those who engage in poking fun and playing sports at different frequencies. Where Kruskal Wallis results were significant, pairwise comparisons were made between all groups, and scores adjusted using the Bonferroni post-hoc test (Adjusted p values are reported). For poking fun at friends (a

proxy variable intended to measure banter), a significant difference was found between those who reported that they do this sometimes (Mean Rank = 27.63) and those who do this very often (Mean Rank = 53.69) with test results H(4) = -26.05, Adj. p= 0.008. There was also a significant difference between those who never poked fun (Mean Rank = 29.36) and those who did this very often, H(4) = -24.32, Adj. p= 0.009. Therefore, those who engage in poking fun at friends most often have significantly higher self-reported laddism than those who engage less frequently; SILs more frequently engage in banter. Regarding engagement in sports, there was only one significant finding, the difference between those who never played sports (Mean Rank = 29.07) and those who sometimes did this (Mean Rank = 46.53), with test statistics of H(4) = -17.46, Adj. p= 0.015. Those who play sports at least some of the time have significantly higher self-reported laddism, but there is not a clear distinction between lads and non-lads on this behaviour. This may be in part due to the small numbers of participants who rated themselves highly on laddism, and engagement in sports. The significant findings, support what has been found in prior literature, that lads are more often those who engage in sports (Dempster, 2009), and banter (Phipps & Young, 2013).

The low numbers of participants who rated themselves as highly laddish may also account for the lack of significant findings relating to engagement in other laddish behaviours which are prevalent in prior research. It may be that these findings represent Type II errors, and that there are significant differences between lads and non-lads on behaviours such as binge drinking (Dempster, 2011) or anti-schoolwork behaviours (Jackson et al., 2014), when considering a larger sample. In particular, as the majority of respondents were women, and there is stigma attached to frequent engagement in casual sex for women (Farvid et al., 2017), which has been found to mediate acceptance of casual sex for women (Conley et al., 2012), this may be a factor in the lack of significant findings for this item. In work by Currier (2003), male and female college students were asked about their participation in, and attitudes towards, 'hooking up'. It was found that while almost equal numbers engage in 'hook ups', the 'strategic ambiguity' of the term is used by women more often to downplay the number of sexual partners that they have had, and by men to imply that they have had more sexual partners, in order to receive kudos from male friends.

4.4.2 Sexual violence

In each of the sections on sexual violence, the prevalence of such behaviours is considered, before using Kruskal-Wallis H test analysis to determine whether there is a relationship between self-reported laddism and perpetration or experience of sexual violence.

4.4.2.1 Perpetration of sexually violent acts

In Q.19. (Figure 7 below) participants were shown nine sexually violent behaviours and asked how frequently they had engaged in these actions during university, when someone had "not agreed to" them. They were able to choose one of the following responses from a drop-down list: Never, Once, A couple of times, I've behaved in this way frequently and I always behave in this way. It could be argued that that this item elicits responses which refer to sexual behaviours with a lack of verbal consent ("not agreed to") rather than a lack of consent overall. For the following question (Q.20) which asked why participants had behaved in this way, the only selected response by any participant was "I didn't ask them if they wanted to." In the open-text box provided, some participants indicated that they were referring to instances where they had not sought verbal consent but felt that they had gained consent. For example, one participant indicated that they'd engaged in grinding with the reason that "she was 'sexually dancing' with me without answering the q. so i assumed it was a yeah". Yet, "agreed to" could just as easily refer to instances of non-verbal consent, and of the few other participants who gave reasons, such as "Alcohol" and "Not realising at the time that it was inappropriate to do this without asking", there is some suggestion that the acts responded to were engaged in without consent. Further, given that so few participants reported that they had engaged in these behaviours, and there is some evidence that much negotiation of sexual consent between college students is non-verbal (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2012), it can be assumed that the majority of participants were referring to non-consensual acts.

Figure 7. Preview image of Q.19. of the Qualtrics questionnaire.

How frequently have you engaged in the following behaviours whilst at University, when someone has <u>not agreed</u> to them?

Sexual dancing (grinding)

Showed them graphic images

Sexual touching (over clothes)

Sexual touching (without clothes)

Kissing

Manual sex (with hands)

Oral sex

Penetrative sex (vaginal)

Penetrative sex (anal)

As this question was preceded by a Skip logic which allowed participants to pass these questions, only those who had selected "I am happy to continue" were shown these questions. Further, as these were not compulsory items, no participants who saw them were required to answer, resulting in 84 responses to most of these nine items (out of 144 questionnaire participants). Of these participants 62 were women, 10 men and 12 did not give a gender. Those indicating that they behaved in these ways when others had "not agreed" either identified as female or did not give a gender.

Table 7: Instances of sexual violence perpetrated among 84 questionnaire participants

Behaviour engaged in when "not agreed" to	Never	Once	A couple of times	Frequently
Sexual dancing (grinding)	78	2	3	1
Showed them graphic images	81	0	2	1
Sexual touching (over clothes)	81	2	1	0
Sexual touching (without clothes)	84	0	0	0
Kissing	81	1	1	0
Manual sex (with hands)	83	1	0	0
Oral sex	82	2	0	0
Penetrative sex (vaginal)	84	0	0	0
Penetrative sex (anal)	84	0	0	0

The responses seem to suggest that non-consensual sexual acts are not particularly common, with the exception of grinding. The majority of participants responded never to all items. Of those that said they had participated in non-consensual acts, all but one person indicated that this was infrequent (once or a couple of times). Notwithstanding, two individuals have reported that they have engaged in what would be considered Serious Sexual Assault in the Sexual

Offences Act 2003. These do not align with the, albeit dated, findings from a study of sexual assault perpetration among male students at a large college in the US, where 26% of respondents admitted to having sexually assaulted someone (Abbey et al., 1998). A primary factor in the discrepancy may be that the majority of questionnaire participants are women, who are less likely to perpetrate sexually violent acts than men. And that students perhaps most likely to perpetrate sexual assault are unlikely to participate in a questionnaire on the topic of lad culture. In fact, of those that responded that they had engaged in these behaviours, only 2 were among those who rated themselves as 50 or above on laddism, and neither referred to having perpetrated Serious Sexual Assault, which could be used to suggest that there is not a relationship between lad culture and sexual violence. However, this could also be because of the low social desirability of sexually violent acts.

To determine whether there is a relationship between laddism and perpetration of sexual violence, Kruskal Wallis analyses were used to compare the populations of those who responded in each frequency category for each behaviour. In total, 72 participants were compared in this way.

Table 8: Kruskal Wallis findings - Comparing self-reported laddism across frequency of perpetration of sexually violent acts from Q19

Behaviour engaged in when "not agreed" to	Degrees of Freedom	H Test Score	P value
Sexual dancing (grinding)	4	4.94	0.293
Showed them graphic images	3	4.25	0.236
Sexual touching (over clothes)	2	3.71	0.157
Sexual touching (without clothes)	1	3.27	0.071
Kissing	3	4.16	0.245
Manual sex (with hands)	1	3.27	0.071
Oral sex	2	3.71	0.157
Penetrative sex (vaginal)	1	3.27	0.071

Penetrative sex (anal)	1	3.27	0.071

As shown in Table 6 above there were no statistically significant differences between the laddism of those in different frequency groups. That is, there is no significant relationship between being a lad and perpetrating sexual violence. As stated above, this may be as a result of the small number of participants who report acting in these ways, owing to the social undesirability of the behaviours. Further, as a result of the small number of laddish participants, it is possible that these findings are reflective of Type II errors. From these data, it is not possible to conclude whether sexual violence and lad culture are related.

4.4.2.2 Experience of sexually violent acts

Participants were also asked about their experience of sexual violence. It could be hypothesised that if there is a relationship between lad culture and perpetration of sexual violence that lads may be less likely to be victims of sexual violence than non-lads. This section will first address this assumption by comparing the populations of those who've experience sexual violence by their self-reported laddism. This section will then consider the prevalence of experience of sexual violence and harassment reported by questionnaire participants, and relate this to comparable studies.

4.4.2.2.1 Sexual violence and serious sexual assault

Participants were asked in Q.31. (shown in Figure 8 below) to respond to nine categories of sexually violent experience - for each behaviour they were able to provide one of the following responses from a dropdown list: Never, Once, A couple of times, Frequently, Very Frequently (almost daily). This question was also preceded by a Skip logic so again, only those who had selected "I am happy to continue" were shown these questions. No participants who saw them were required to answer, resulting in 40 responses to these nine items (out of 144 total questionnaire participants). Of those who chose to participate, 36 were women. It is not possible to know whether those that chose to respond are representative of the wider female student population, or even of their fellow questionnaire respondents - it may be that students who had experienced sexual violence were more likely to answer these questions than those who had not. Yet, the perception that participating in research on sexual violence may raise traumatic memories for survivors (Draucker, 1999) could also deter participants from answering these questions. Thus, these responses may represent a conservative estimate of the prevalence of sexual violence as those who had this experience may have avoided answering.

Figure 8. Preview image of Q.31. of the Qualtrics questionnaire.

Answer with how frequently you have experienced the following behaviours whilst at University, when you have <u>not agreed</u> to them.

Sexual dancing (grinding)	▾
Showed me graphic images	▾
Sexual touching (over clothes)	▾
Sexual touching (without clothes)	▾
Kissing	▾
Manual sex (with hands)	▾
Oral sex	▾
Penetrative sex (vaginal)	▾
Penetrative sex (anal)	▾

To determine whether there is a relationship between laddism and experience of sexual violence, Kruskal Wallis analyses were used to compare the populations of those who responded in each frequency category for each behaviour. In Table 9 below the test scores and p values are reported, indicating that there is no significant relationship between self-reported laddism and experience of sexual violence. Given that the majority of respondents to this question did not identify as lads, the small sample size may account for the lack of significant findings. From these findings, though, it is not clear whether there is a relationship between lad culture and sexual violence.

Table 9: Kruskal Wallis findings - Comparing self-reported laddism across frequency of experience of sexually violent acts from Q31

Behaviour experienced when "not agreed" to	Degrees of Freedom	H Test Score	P value
Sexual dancing (grinding)	5	1.98	0.852
Showed me graphic images	5	1.84	0.871
Sexual touching (over clothes)	5	1.07	0.957
Sexual touching (without clothes)	4	4.29	0.368
Kissing	5	6.44	0.266

Manual sex (with hands)	4	2.38	0.666
Oral sex	4	4.91	0.296
Penetrative sex (vaginal)	5	5.66	0.341
Penetrative sex (anal)	4	6.56	0.161

Nevertheless, there is value in considering the prevalence of experience of sexual violence among questionnaire participants in and of itself. These findings can contribute to a broader landscape of literature which demonstrate that sexual violence is commonly experienced by female university students (e.g. Smith, 2010). The results presented in Table 10 indicate the number of individuals who responded in each category for each item.

As can be seen below, experience of non-consensual sexual acts was extremely common among these questionnaire participants - including behaviours which would be categorised as serious sexual offences in UK law (manual sex and oral sex without consent are defined as sexual assault; only non-consensual penetrative sex with a penis is defined as rape). One eighth of respondents indicated that they had been vaginally raped and two out of forty respondents responded that they had been anally raped. In total, eight individuals reported that they had experienced a Serious Sexual Assault, a proportion of one in five respondents or 20%; of these 7 were women. It is important to note that the number of instances experienced is much higher than the number of experiences that people believe they have perpetrated. This may be related to gender differences in perpetration/victimisation - most participants for both questions (Q.19, 73.8 %; Q.31, 90%) were female. Women are overrepresented in these data and are more likely to experience than perpetrate sexual violence.

Table 10: Instances of sexual violence experienced among 40 questionnaire participants.

Behaviour experienced when "not agreed" to	Never	Once	A couple of times	Frequently	Very Frequently
Sexual dancing (grinding)	12	6	15	8	0
Showed me graphic images	31	4	4	1	0
Sexual touching (over clothes)	17	6	13	4	0

Sexual touching (without clothes)	31	8	1	0	0
Kissing	25	7	7	1	0
Manual sex (with hands)	33	4	3	0	0
Oral sex	37	2	0	0	1
Penetrative sex (vaginal)	35	3	1	1	0
Penetrative sex (anal)	38	1	0	0	1

These somewhat mirror the findings of the NUS *Hidden Marks* survey, which found that one in seven women had experienced a Serious Physical or Sexual Assault during their time at university (Smith, 2010). They also confirm findings of national surveys which indicated that sexual harassment was a common experience for university students (Goldhill & Bingham, 2015; Revolt Sexual Assault & The Student Room, 2018). The reported experience of sexual violence by participants is higher than that estimated from 2017 Crime Survey for England and Wales which suggested that "12.1% of adults aged 16 to 59 have experienced sexual assault (including attempts) since the age of 16" (Flatley, 2018, p. 4). There are a number of reasons which may account for the supposed overrepresentation of sexual violence experience among participants. Firstly, the majority of questionnaire respondents belong to populations which were recognised by the Crime Survey as having a higher rate of sexual assault experience; the majority of participants - and respondents to these items - were women, of which 20% experience sexual assault as adults (Flatley, 2018, p. 10), were young with a median participant age of (p. 12) and were students (p. 14).

Secondly, the terminology used in the questionnaire, adapted from the *Sexual Experiences Survey* (Koss & Oros, 1982) is different to that used in the Crime Survey. The Sexual Experiences Survey is known to illicit a higher number of positive responses and it is argued that this survey more accurately represents the experience of sexual assault, than asking individuals if they have been assaulted (Koss & Gidycz, 1985). Comparatively the Crime Survey of 2016-17 used specific legal terminology and used a description of sexual consent which might have prevented some victims from acknowledging their experience as a form of sexual violence: prior to answering questions on serious sexual assault, participants were shown a message, "The next questions are about sexual assaults such as rape and attempted rape or being forced

into some other sexual act when you were not capable of consent or when you made it clear you did not want to" (ONS, 2016, p. 243). The definition of consent used for the survey seems to rule out experiences where participants may have been physically able to consent, but did not for reasons such as coercion, use of force or because they "freeze". This doesn't seem to account for the legal definition of consent put forward in the Sexual Offences Act (2003) that a person gives consent if they agree "by choice and [have] the freedom and capacity to make that choice" (Section 74). Therefore, it can be assumed that some survivors of Serious Sexual Assault may have not felt that their experience was included within the narrow definition proposed.

When answering the follow-on question of "Through what means did these behaviours occur when you had not agreed to them?" the majority of people answered that "They didn't ask if I wanted to before behaving in this way". Participants who had experienced Serious Sexual Assault also selected "They did this while I was 'out of it' because of alcohol or drugs that I had taken" and "I felt I couldn't say no". While the design of the question didn't allow these reasons to be attributed to individual experiences, some responses to the following open-text question gave detail on this, e.g. one participant reasoned:

> At the time, I felt like I had agreed to things and that it was too late to change my
> mind. (I understand that I'm more than allowed to now, but at the time I felt like I had
> to 'go through with it' or let them down.)

This suggests that using the broader category of "not agreed to" sexual contact is capturing experiences where individuals were not comfortable with sex but felt pressured to continue. As with the Sexual Experiences Survey then, these questionnaire items are capturing unwanted sex, which may not be identified by victims as sexual violence, even though they may meet the legal definition. This echoes the findings of Fisher (2000) who found that those who have experienced rape may not define the experience using this term.

While it is tempting to dwell only on the most legally severe cases of sexual violence, in all cases of Serious Sexual Assault, participants had also responded that they had experienced at least one other form of sexual violence, such as grinding or groping (sexual touching). And far more individuals had experienced what might be thought of as "low level" sexual violence. It is crucial when analysing these findings, to draw on Kelly's (1987) continuum of sexual violence, wherein any non-consensual sexual act which causes harm to a person is accounted for, and it is recognised that sexual violence can take multiple and overlapping forms. Aside from grinding, 'Never' was still the most commonly selected answer for each of these experiences, which might indicate that these are not experienced by the majority of people, but that for those who are victimised in one way, they may also experience other forms of victimisation.

4.4.2.2.2 Harassment

In Q29 participants were asked "Which of the following forms of harassment have you experienced, and in what ways were you harassed?" (Figure 9 below) to offer an insight into the range of violence experienced by students. Participants were given the option to skip this question, either because they did not want to answer, or because they had not experienced any form of harassment. These items were not used to relate harassment to laddish identity, but to investigate the prevalence and types of harassment within university communities. In particular, whether gender-based harassment was noted as prevalent by participants, as this has been noted in previous research on university lad culture.

As anticipated, the form of harassment with the largest number of responses was sexist harassment, with 26, out of 101 valid participants having experienced this form of harassment. Over a quarter of questionnaire participants, then, have experienced sexist harassment whilst at university. All but two of those that experienced this harassment were women - 1 male and 1 other. Of those who had experienced sexist harassment, the most common form was verbal harassment with 23 individuals reporting this. The majority of individuals (14) had experienced more than one form of sexist harassment, giving weight to Kelly's (1987) understanding of sexual violence as multiple and overlapping forms of violence. Notably sexual harassment was reported by 12 women in response to this item, and 7 women reported physical harassment. This relates to an understanding of misogyny and sexual violence as interwoven; the prevalence of sexist harassment supports the existence of sexualised violence.

Figure 9. Preview image of some of the items of Q.29. of the Qualtrics questionnaire.

Which of the following forms of harassment have you experienced, and in what ways were you harassed?

These may be based on actual or perceived facets of your identity. If you have not experienced any of the following forms of harassment, please <u>skip</u> this question.

	Verbal harassment	Physical harassment	Online harassment	Serious physical assault	Sexual harassment
Homophobic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transphobic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sexist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Racist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Harassed as a result of a disability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Further, 9 women positively responded to an item asking whether students had been "Harassed because of my sexual behaviour" (not shown in Figure), predominantly in the form of verbal harassment. This item was intended to capture the existence of 'slut-shaming', wherein women are harassed for having had casual sex, and of harassment of women who are not engaged in regular casual sex as 'frigid.' The dual meaning of this item may have actually complicated the response for participants, which may account for the low number of responses to this item. Further, the majority of questionnaire participants indicated that they did not have high engagement in casual sex, therefore it may be that this sample is unlikely to experience this form of harassment, and perhaps unrepresentative of the wider student community. Sixteen women had experienced harassment "because of my body type", of which the majority was verbal harassment (10), and for 3 took the form of sexual harassment. This item was intended to capture the range of 'beauty ideal' based harassment that women may be subject to, for example fat-shaming. The prevalence of this experience among participants suggests that harassment regarding women's bodies is of note.

What can be deduced from these responses, is that harassment of female students is common at university, whether related to their gender, sexual behaviour or body type. Of the harassment experienced, sexual harassment makes up a large portion. Aside from gender-based violence, 15 participants had experienced homophobic harassment, 2 transphobic, 2 ableist and 2 racist. These responses seem to under-represent the findings of UUK (2016) report, which indicated that a range of hate crimes are experienced within UK universities at a higher rate.

As a further clarification, participants were asked in Q25 to rank five forms of harassment in the order of how frequently they witness them at university. For the majority of participants, misogynist harassment and sexual harassment occupied the top two positions in the ranking. Homophobia was frequently ranked third, then transphobia and racism were consistently ranked low on the scale. It is clear then, that experience of harassment is common in universities, and that misogynist/sexist harassment is viewed as the most prevalent by participants. In section 6.3 I will discuss the relationship between lad culture and misogynist banter, and the perception of this as harassment by non-lads. And in section 7.3.1 the relationship between misogynist banter and sexual violence in lad culture. Therefore, it is important to have established that misogynist harassment, as well as sexual violence is commonly experienced by female students.

4.5 Perception of Laddish behaviours as Problematic

Having identified that some behaviours are considered laddish and engaged in with a higher frequency by those who self-identify as lads, it is worth considering what the underlying reason

for this is, as in **R.Q.2.2.** *What motivates SILs to carry out these practices?* Do self-identifying lads recognise these behaviours as laddish or see them as problematic? While neither of the identified behaviours are necessarily problematic (playing sports and poking fun at friends), the reputation of lad culture in UK higher education is one of disruption and harassment. This perhaps indicates that there is a difference in the perception of laddish behaviours as problematic, depending on whether the perceiver is within or outside lad culture. Poking fun at friends/banter, for example, may be harmless, but may allow for more offensive jokes which are then perceived by others as harassment.

In the questionnaire (Q.43.), participants were asked to rate a range of behaviours identified as laddish from prior literature, on the extent to which these were considered problematic. The overall means and mean ranks for each item are shown in Table 11 below, as well as U-test statistics and exact significance results. It was hypothesised that there may be a significant difference between the ratings of those who rated themselves as lads, compared with those who did not, however Mann Whitney tests did not reveal any significant differences between the ratings of lads vs non-lads. Although the difference between the ratings of lads and non-lads were not significant, though there is a trend that all but one of the items is given a lower mean rating by lads than by non-lads, as can be seen in Figure 10.

The behaviours which were seen as least problematic by mean rating were playing sports (Mean = 4.08), casual sex (Mean = 28.43) and poking fun at friends (Mean = 32.89). These were also rated lowest by lads and non-lads alike. Items which refer to sexualised violence are the top three most problematic by mean rating, these include: mocking someone who doesn't want to engage in sexual activity (Mean = 89.98), engaging in sexual activity with someone who is "out of it" (Mean = 94.29) and engaging in sexual acts without asking (Mean = 94.63). These were similar for lads, though they gave a higher rating to catcalling (Mean = 83.86) than sex with someone who is "out of it" (Mean = 81.86).

Nevertheless, correlation analysis did indicate significant correlations between self-reported laddism and the perception of some behaviours as problematic. Although engaging in sports with a greater frequency than non-lads, there was a significant positive correlation between laddism and considering playing sports to be problematic. (n= 67, r_s = 0.260, p= 0.033). This could be because participants are conscious of the negative media attention that sporting laddism has attracted (e.g. Doughty, 2014) and do not want to associate themselves with this. Nevertheless, the mean rating for this was 11.75 for lads, so still a very low rating.

There was a significant negative correlation between self-reported laddism and three variables. The higher the self-reported laddism of participants, the lower the rating of poking fun at friends (n= 67, r_s = -0.244, p= 0.047), mocking someone who doesn't want to engage in sexual activity (n= 69, r_s = -0.288, p= 0.016) and engaging in sexual activity with someone who is

"out of it" (n= 70, r_s = -0.335, p= 0.005) as problematic. While these are not strong correlations, these findings do suggest that identifying as laddish is related to finding banter less problematic, as well as finding behaviours which support sexual violence less problematic. Mocking someone for not engaging in sexual activity could refer to either mocking peers for not having enough casual sex, which generates peer pressure to engage in casual sex. On the other hand, this may refer to the activity of mocking a potential sexual partner for not engaging in sexual activity; an act of sexual coercion. It is uncertain which act the ratings relate to, but in either case, this mockery could create a social context in which casual sex is viewed as a necessity rather that a mutually consensual activity, which may support sexual violence. Additionally, engaging in sexual activity with someone who is "out of it" refers to acts of sexual assault or rape, as someone who is "out of it" is unable to consent. Although in section 4.4.2 it was discussed that SILs are no more likely to have reported to engage in sexually violent acts, this suggests that lads consider sexually violent behaviours to be less problematic, which may create a context in which sexual violence can be normalised and justified.

Table 11: Behaviours as problematic items mean ratings and Mann Whitney results

Behaviour perceived as problematic	N	Mean rating	Mann Whitney U-test Results				U test statistic	Exact P value
			Lad ≥50		Non-lads <50			
			N	Mean Rank	N	Mean Rank		
Binge drinking	88	67.90	8	28.88	60	35.25	195.00	0.400
Casual sex	87	28.43	8	29.38	59	34.63	199.00	0.480
Interrupting teaching	90	68.91	7	32.79	63	35.80	201.50	0.718
Playing sports	87	4.08	8	42.38	59	32.86	169.00	0.144
Poking fun at friends	87	32.89	8	24.50	59	35.29	160.00	0.144
Poking fun at others	89	60.67	8	32.44	61	35.34	223.50	0.709
Ranting on social media	88	48.58	8	30.25	60	35.07	206.00	0.526
Using social media in teaching and learning settings	89	39.27	8	27.25	61	36.02	182.00	0.252

Groups making a lot of noise (e.g. chanting)	84	50.01	8	26.88	61	36.07	179.00	0.229
Engaging in sexual acts without asking	84	94.63	7	36.57	63	35.38	213.00	0.909
Catcalling (shouting at people you don't know in the street)	84	78.95	7	39.07	63	35.10	195.50	0.629
Mocking someone who doesn't want to engage in sexual activity	83	89.98	7	32.86	62	35.24	202.00	0.756
Groups dominating University spaces	83	52.94	7	28.50	62	35.73	171.50	0.376
Engaging in sexual activity with someone who is "out of it"	84	94.29	7	30.57	63	36.05	186.00	0.369
Arguing with others on social media	83	48.75	7	34.71	62	35.03	215.00	0.973

Figure 10. Mean ratings of behaviours as problematic. Error bars denote one standard error around the mean.
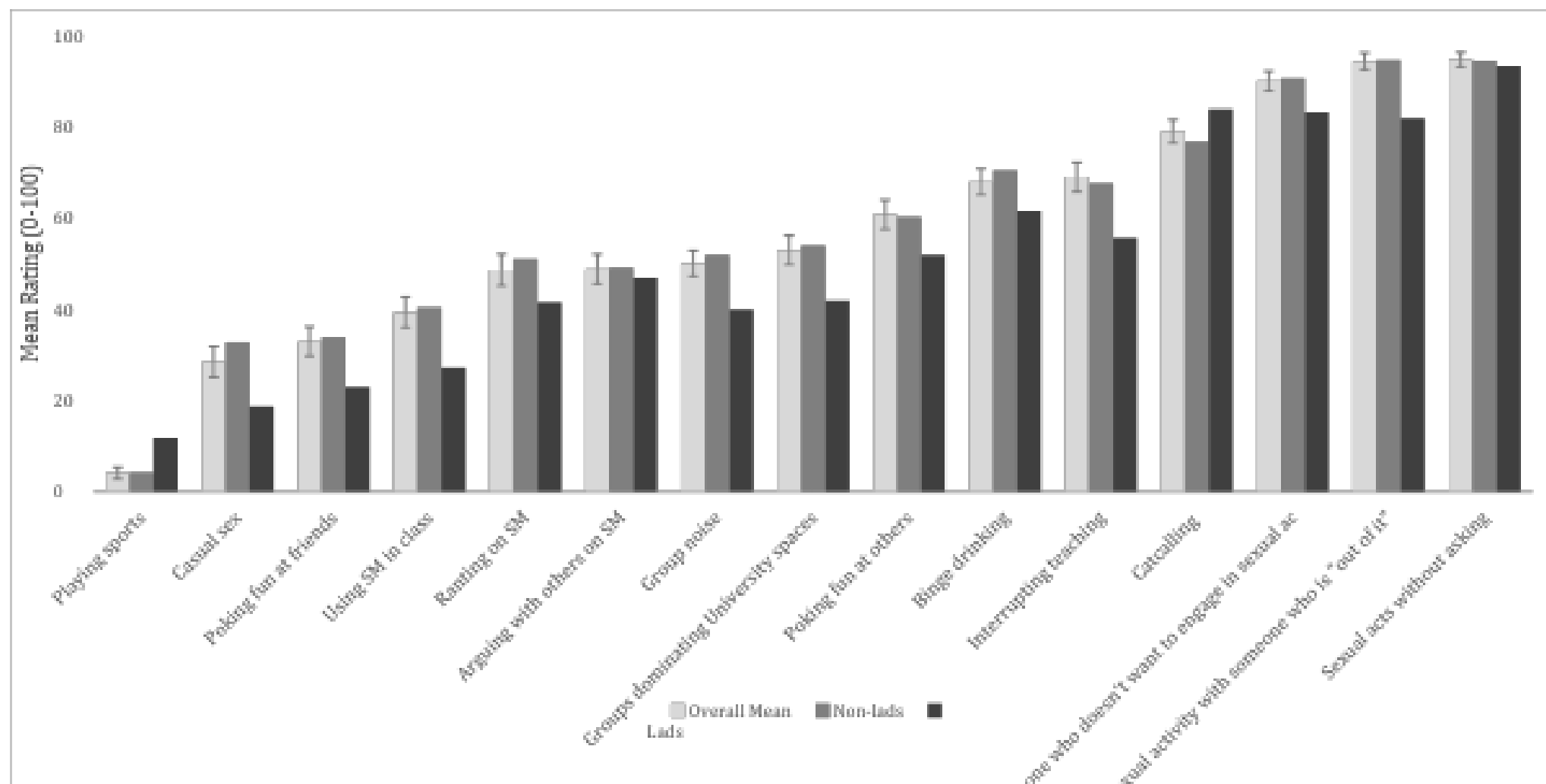
4.6 **Chapter Summary**

This project builds on the work of Stephen Dempster, whose 2007 thesis utilised questionnaire and interview methods to investigate the laddism of male undergraduates. His questionnaire involved students identifying behaviours as laddish or not, or compatible with laddism. The current project expands on his notion that laddism exists on a continuum (Warin & Dempster, 2007) to invite participants to rate behaviours, attributes and their own laddism on a continuous scale. This chapter has therefore answered **R.Q.2.1.** *What is the relative importance of each laddish practice?* Further, this project is the first to attempt to quantify a relationship between self-reported laddism and sexual violence.

Within this cohort laddism is highly associated with masculinity, though not necessarily with being male. . In terms of the relative importance of practices "central to lad culture", participants give high ratings to behaviours and attributes which are linked to homosocial interactions, and to having fun (handling drink, good sense of humour) and are keen to distance themselves from antisocial behaviours, particularly those associated with sexism (misogyny, catcalling). Although the majority of questionnaire participants did not participate in homosocial behaviours with high frequency, there were significant differences in self-rated laddism between those who engaged with the behaviours frequently and infrequently. They are more likely to engage in playing sports and poking fun at others very often. This suggests that as well as a personal identity, being a lad (or being laddish) is related to performatively "doing" laddish acts (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Further, the behaviours which were statistically associated with laddism have been identified as laddish in prior research with female students (Phipps & Young, 2013) and male students – including self-identified lads (Dempster, 2009). Although there is no statistical relationship between perpetration and experience of sexual violence and laddism, questionnaire findings do imply a relationship between laddism and whether sexually violent behaviours are perceived as problematic. Responses confirm that harassment of women is commonplace in universities, and sexual violence is varied, and prevalent. Significant findings indicate that there is a correlation between identifying with laddism and considering sexually violent behaviours to be less problematic. This goes some way to explaining a relationship between sexual violence and lad culture and answering **R.Q.2.2.** on what motivates lad culture. It may be that because sexual violence is viewed as less problematic, this is seen as justification for sexually violent behaviours, though it is impossible to judge causation on the basis of correlation. Moreover, identifying as a lad does not necessarily mean that someone perpetrates sexually violent acts, but that the norms and attitudes within lad culture serve to make sexual violence seem less problematic, less harmful, more acceptable. The practices which support this will be discussed in detail in chapter 7.

There are some findings which are inconsistent with prior research on laddism. For example, anti-schoolwork behaviours were not significantly associated with laddism, contrary to findings in secondary schools (Jackson, 2002) and in universities (Jackson et al., 2014). This may be owing to the difference in methodology between this project and prior work, as participants were asked to self-report on their engagement in these behaviours, as compared with observations of in-classroom interactions. When also looking at the mean ratings of behaviours perceived as laddish, it could be argued that playing sport is less central to laddism than other behaviours. While previous work has seen sport as a focal point of lad culture (Phipps & Young, 2013) or has specifically used sporting contexts as a framework for understanding laddism (Dempster, 2011; Nichols, 2018a), the questionnaire findings presented here imply that engagement in sports might not be the most laddish social behaviour. It is worth reiterating that with the small number of participants who identify as lads within this sample, some of the non-significant findings may be as a result of Type II errors, which may be improved using a larger sample. This may be an unavoidable element of conducting research with a group who have previously been identified as disengaged from schoolwork; voluntarily completing a 17-minute questionnaire may be low on the list of priorities for SILs. As will be explored in the next chapters, interview findings reveal a broader range of behaviours and attitudes associated with lad culture. Further, questions which would have been beneficial to include in the questionnaire, such as asking participants to indicate their race or class background, were discussed in some interviews. Additionally, in the next chapters participants' responses to open-text questionnaire items will be considered. These too offer more detailed and nuanced explanation of how lad culture is perceived, though largely from the perspective of non-lads, as these were the majority of respondents.

There were a number of questionnaire items which could not be analysed, including those relating to practices on nights out, getting ready for nights out, membership of sports clubs and other societies. For these items, too few SILs answered, making results impossible to generalise. For example, only 2 lads responded that they were a member of a society. Further, some items were intended to capture any differences between lad culture enacted by university students and that outside the university. The majority of responses refer to the relevance of lad culture to university experience, therefore these data have not been deemed worthy of further analysis.

5 'A bit of a lad': Laddish identity construction in relation to an ideal laddish subject

5.1 Introduction

Although data analysed in section 4.2 did not reveal significant differences between the demographics of non-lads as compared with SILs, qualitative data do indicate that there are characteristics which are commonly identified as laddish by research participants. This chapter will answer **R.Q.1.** by considering how laddish identity is constructed among SILs and non-lads. Considering the hegemonic configuration of masculinity in the western context (Connell, 1995) and the notion of an ideal 'neoliberal self' (McGuigan, 2014) I will argue that there is an idealised subject which is commonly associated with lad culture.

Participants characterised the laddish subject as male and masculine, heterosexual, white and young. There was discussion of, but no consensus on the social class of the ideal laddish subject, though laddism was seen to differ between working-class and middle-class performances. The subject therefore has intersecting social identities/positions, almost all of which are privileged by structures, systems and institutions in the West (Crenshaw, 1991), such as heteropatriarchy (favouring masculine heterosexual men) and capitalism (privileging the middle-class). The laddish subject therefore occupies a position of privilege and power within universities, and beyond. This privilege informs the way that they behave in the social context of the university, with one questionnaire participant defining lad culture as "males in groups who think they are ultimately powerful." This will be investigated in more detail in chapter 6.

This position of privilege is maintained, as with hegemonic masculinity, through dominance, subordination and marginalisation (Connell, 1995). Further, the ideal laddish subject is not necessarily the identity experienced by SILs who participated in this research project, in fact SIL interviewees often diverged from this ideal. Yet, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 841) recommend, when investigating hegemonic masculinity, we must also note "the relationship of those ideologies to the daily lives of boys and men—including the mismatches, the tensions, and the resistances". This section will therefore also consider the ways in which SILs who do not match the ideal are nevertheless complicit in reinforcing the ideal, by discursively positioning themselves as exceptional to it.

This chapter concludes with an acknowledgement that demographic data collected in this project did not include items pertaining to race and class and consideration that use of the term 'lad culture' for analysis of university laddism is problematic.

5.2 Lads as Male and Masculine

One of the most common assertions about lad culture from questionnaire participants was that lads are men: 'men', 'males' or 'boys' were referred to in twenty-six of the fifty-six open text questionnaire responses. The idea that being a lad is a male experience is referred to by SIL John who opined "to be a lad specifically, I would say you probably would have to be seen as a guy yeah." In using the word "specifically", it seems as though John is discounting similar terms, such as laddish, or the common feminisation 'ladette', and speaking only about the lad subject. Though it is not necessarily a requirement of laddism to be male, this is "probably" the case. Another SIL, Lawrence, explained that male dominated contexts of any kind can be a site of lad culture:

> I think any spaces where it's like male concentrated, so for example if you're like a tradesman or something then it's cos you're with men all day, or if you go to an all boys' school and that, then that's like definitely a thing. (Lawrence, SIL).

He essentialises laddish identity to maleness, stating that lad culture is a natural result of male homosocial spaces. In addition, the reference to "tradesmen" (working-class profession) and "all boys' school" (more commonly grammar and public schools, and thus middle/upper class boys) suggests that lad culture exists across class groups, with maleness being the commonality. Phipps (2016, p. 5) has described a postfeminist "neoconservative backlash" in which gender essentialising discourses are drawn upon, as a challenge to the progressive notions of gender and sexual fluidity (McRobbie, 2007). Lawrence's proposal that lad culture exists wherever men are the majority seems to suggest that this postfeminist discourse of biological determinism is relevant to lad culture. The essentialising of laddism to maleness is not universal, however, some questionnaire participants indicate that women can be/are lads. Responding to the Q.42. Defining Lad Culture, participants said:

> I believe that to be a lad you do not necessarily have to be male

> Women can also participate in 'lad culture.'

In both examples, the responder is indicating that while maleness may be the norm within lad culture, women are nonetheless able to identify with and participate in it. Lawrence struggles over referring to a woman as a lad, saying that "a girl can be described as a 'bit of a lad', but obviously not, but she is a bit of one." He is willing to dub her "a bit of a lad" but not more, and immediately counters with "obviously not". His indecision in speaking could be because of the perceived insult of calling a woman a lad given the association with masculinity, or in the discomfort with allowing a woman space in the laddish group. In spite of this, he later went on

to say that while he "thought male was a given … actually it's not." One of the SIL interviewees, Georgina, is also a self-professed female lad. She belongs to a women's rugby team and described only female members of a laddish friendship group during the interview. When asked what she wished others knew about lad culture, Georgina responded:

> They're not all male. I know I keep harping on about that, but some of us feel a lot
> more accepted in a lad culture than they do being forced into "Oh my God, I love this
> handbag, but I can't afford it, cos my boyfriend won't buy me it". I just feel like some
> of us do get a little bit judged for being a lad but being female. (Georgina, SIL).

She reiterated throughout the interview that SILs need not be male. She explained that for "some" of the female lads she knew, lad culture was preferable to compulsory ("forced into") femininity and the compulsory heterosexuality therein (Rich, 1980). Her identification with laddism seems to be both masculine identity and a repudiation of femininity (as in Reay, 2001). She discursively positions femininity as less important than masculinity through the suggestion that other (heterosexual) women are mostly concerned with fashion and financial dependency on partners. By drawing on discourses of femininity as powerless and superficial, she positions her own (marginalised) masculinity above it (Paetcher, 2006). Her identification with lad culture seemed to be both an identification with masculinity, and with being a non-heterosexual woman; which she seemed to conflate. For example, at the end of the interview she referred to her own undergraduate research on ring finger length and sexual orientation, asserting that "females tend to be more masculine if they're gay". Although a subject position with which she strongly identifies and occupies with others ("some of us") being a female lad is not without issue. It's unclear whether Georgina feels judged by other male lads or by women who expect her to be feminine, but she does feel as though being a female lad is met with being "a little bit judged".

Georgina also drew a distinction between her femaleness and femininity, seeing her laddish identity in contrast to the latter but not the former. She voluntarily addressed the topic of her gender identity, seemingly something she felt needed justifying:

> I wouldn't say I'm like gender curious or whatever, I'm very much female, I'm very
> much proud to be a woman. I'm a massive feminist, surprisingly, but I don't identify
> as being a 'girl' if that makes sense. I'd say I definitely identify with being a lad, I
> always have done. (Georgina, SIL).

Of particular note is the way she presents her feminism as something surprising – she suggests that strangers may find her identification with lad culture as a sign of a postfeminist sensibility. In doing so, she implies that her identity as a lad may not support the goals/values of feminism. She constructed her reasons for identifying as a lad as rooted in childhood, being referred to as

her father's "little boy" or "little lad", or in having "grown up wearing football kits." Lad culture could be seen therefore as masculine, rather than male.

In questionnaire responses, a significant positive correlation was found between self-reported laddism and masculinity (n= 72, r_s = 0.643, p<0.001), reiterating the idea that lads are masculine. The idea that lad culture is related to masculinity rather than maleness was also common in qualitative findings, appearing in twelve open text responses. One open-text response described lads as "hypermasculine men", indicating that the ideal laddish subject is a heightened version of masculinity. What's more, some of these responses used the adjective "toxic" or "harmful" to describe the particular kind of masculinity of lad culture. Comparatively, SIL Georgina viewed masculinity as a joining force between herself and other lads:

> instead of it being a male thing because I'm not male I'm female, it's more of a, as you
> say, it's a culture. It's more of a being, and a togetherness and a kind of masculinity
> but not necessarily in the male sense - if that makes sense? (Georgina, SIL).

Camaraderie and relatedness with other lads is clearly more important to Georgina than the gender of members of her laddish group, but masculinity is still reiterated. Though this may be because her laddish group is mostly comprised of (gay) women. It's uncertain how connected she feels with male laddism. However, Lawrence described that in some circumstances, a girl might be deemed a lad, without being masculine:

> she wouldn't even have to be masculine - but all the rest of the other things I think -
> like not taking yourself too seriously, erm like interests. (Lawrence, SIL).

Displaying neoliberal subjectivity, such as through disaffection, as well as having similar interests to lads, is seen here as more important than masculinity. Lawrence describes lads as those with "typically masculine interests", a category he finds difficult to elaborate on as he is aware that different configurations of interests might be equally masculine, i.e. when comparing lads who have an interest in football or in rugby. All the same, the idea that lads are masculine is reiterated, regardless of the specific interest associated. It is clear that while women may be considered lads, may self-identify as lads, and may engage in laddish practices, the default laddish subject is male. This aligns with the configuration of masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in western contexts, where masculinity is often seen as tied to male bodies (Connell, 2005), though not exclusively (Halberstam, 1998). Where women are accepted as lads, this may be through adherence to norms of masculinity in general, or through adherence to neoliberal values.

5.2.1 Relationship to femininity

Connell (1987) indicates that one of the foundations of all masculinities is that they are constructed as relational to femininity - lad culture is no different. In section 6.3, the positioning of masculine/men over feminine/women will be discussed as it relates to misogynist banter, but here I discuss more generally how the laddish subject is discursively constructed in opposition to femininity. Questionnaire respondents' self-reported laddism was significantly negatively correlated with self-reported femininity (n=72, r_s = -0.344, p=0.003). As in Stevi Jackson's work on gender order (e.g. 2005, 2006) femininity is not only positioned as opposite to, but also as inferior to masculinity. This perception of lad culture is evident in an open-text response (Q42. Defining Lad Culture) which describes lad culture as:

> The behaviour that a group of males feel is acceptable because they occupy a privileged position in society and think that they can treat girls however they want. (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).

Speaking to the notion of male privilege over females, this comment refers to lads' place in the gender order as above that of women. Female SIL Georgina positions her masculinity as different from femininity; describing a laddish approach to arguing with friends compared with a feminine approach:

> like instead of bitching about it for 3 years you just beat the living daylights out of each other and get over it. (Georgina, SIL).

The use of the word "bitching", as well as discourses about women's conversational styles, implies that she is favourably comparing her way of solving issues with that of 'feminine' solutions. Additionally, when referring to her girlfriends' friends - and their discomfort with the way her laddish group communicate - Georgina shows her distaste for feminine interests:

> And they'd be like "Oh my god as if they'd just say that" but then they'd comment on stupid things like their shoes, whereas we don't care about things like that. (Georgina, SIL).

In her impression of the friends, she raised the pitch of her voice, to indicate the femininity of the speakers in contrast to herself. By describing the topics that these women talk about as "stupid things" and indicating that her and her friends "don't care", she positions her own femaleness as different from, and superior to, feminine women. She is a masculine lad, and she perceives this masculinity as relational, and superior to, femininity. Although the hierarchical relation between masculine and feminine is not unique to lad culture, these data confirm that laddism exists in line with norms of hegemonic masculinity.

5.3 **Lads as Heterosexual**

An essential part of maintaining the hegemony of one form of masculinity is in positioning other forms of masculinity as 'less than'. In Connell's (2005) definition of hegemonic masculinity, this is done through subordination of non-heterosexual masculinities. This subordination is enacted in a multitude of ways, including through the presumption of and valorising of heterosexuality and through homophobic language and abuse: all evident in lad culture. Heterosexuality is therefore compulsory for lads (Rich, 1980). This might be gleaned from the fact that in spite of not asking about sexuality, three open-text questionnaire responses specifically refer to lad culture as related to being straight. In one open-text questionnaire response, lad culture is described as a "predominantly 'straight' collection of behaviours", listing homophobic language as an example of such behaviour. Further, questionnaire responses referred to lads as often "try[ing] to get with lots of girls" or as people who "just want to get with as many girls as possible." While it should not be assumed that men who have sex with women are necessarily heterosexual identified, there is certainly an association for many between lad culture and opposite-sex sexual pairings: an assumed heterosexuality.

The assumption that lads are straight is also evident in interview data, with Matthew describing that "one of the aims of lad culture is to be able to sleep with as many women as possible." In this statement, heterosexuality is listed as a central driving force for lads, and also as competitively motivated. The relationship between casual sex and laddism, as well as the notion of competitive casual sex, will be examined in more detail in section 7.3.2. Regarding heterosexuality, Georgina notes that although this might not be a criterion for being a lad "you never normally get like one or two gay lads in with a group of straight lads." Being a gay male member of a laddish group is not ruled out but is certainly seen as an exception. In this way, the ideal laddish subject is confirmed as heterosexual, and homosexuality is constructed as an alternative to this ideal. She jokingly draws a comparison between two types of homosocial group, saying "instead of a gang of lads you get a gaggle of gays." In doing so, she discursively positions gay men as completely removed from laddish forms of masculinity, with different language and connotations conferred onto each group. For lads, the word gang evokes organisation, violence and assumed masculinity, whereas the word gaggle implies a disorderly, disorganised and effeminate group. This echoes the description of laddism by female students as a 'pack culture' (Phipps & Young, 2013), evoking imagery of predatory and violent animals.

However, Georgina notes an exception of "a gay only men's rugby team" in the Salford area, owing to the high population of gay men in the area ("because it's Manchester in general"). When describing this group, she assumes a differentiation between these men and the straight lads, which is evident in her assertion that "they're basically a group of lads now", implying that

they would not already be considered lads. Again, being gay and a lad is constructed as an exception to the heterosexual laddish subject.

Lawrence explains that although gay men can be lads, that "the two people I know that are gay are also very feminine", reiterating the idea that lad culture is specifically masculine. Judith Butler (1990) argued that sexuality, gender and sex are constructed as within a 'heterosexual matrix' wherein heterosexuality is seen as a necessary requirement of masculinity, and vice versa. Lawrence does suggest that being gay wouldn't matter "if the other criteria was met." In doing so, he implies that non-heterosexual identified lads must possess many other features of the laddish subject in order to be intelligible as lads. Being identified as a lad is therefore dependent on one's 'masculine capital' (de Visser et al., 2009). This emphasises that the ideal laddish subject is heterosexual.

Subordination of homosexual men through the discursive valorisation of heterosexuality was less commonly discussed in the data, but is alluded to by Lawrence:

> I thought it was just my friends . . . in circles how they would talk about their own girlfriends. There's this sort of triumphalism of sexual action. (Lawrence, SIL).

In this case, the desire to have sex with many different women isn't being discussed but taking pride in heterosexual sex is normalised within the laddish friendship group. He goes on to explicitly state that this behaviour is part of lad culture:

> the only people I know that talk so much about their sex lives are 3 lads that play football... So I do think, yeah, lads and laddy environments. (Lawrence, SIL).

Homophobia is also a frequently enacted subordinating practice. The open text response introduced at the start of this section referred to lad culture as "predominantly 'straight' collection of behaviours" and argued that these "may include using homophobic language as banter - i.e. 'that's gay' as an insult." In this instance, a direct link is drawn between heterosexuality and homophobia (this will be discussed in more detail in section 6.3.2.2). Nevertheless, the lens of hegemonic masculinity does little to account for the experience of non-heterosexual lads, as two of the interviewees in this research project are. For example, SIL Richard, who indicates "I'm bi myself", and SIL Georgina who in describing her friendship group notes that "all of us are gay." Georgina even suggests that identifying as gay may benefit female lads:

> It [being gay] wouldn't prevent them, I think in females it wouldn't. I think in females it'd probably assist it [having a laddish identity]

> I've found out that females tend to be more masculine if they're gay. Or it's a
> stereotype anyway. And that then helps go into the typical masculine male lad
> culture. (Georgina, SIL).

Therefore, although heterosexuality is presumed and homosexuality is denigrated, being heterosexual was not, in itself, perceived as necessary to be a member of the laddish group. Nevertheless, sexuality and gender are constructed as existing within a heterosexual matrix, wherein being gay is seen as aligning a person with traits of the "opposite" gender. Thus, as the laddish subject is ideally masculine, so too is it heterosexual if male, but homosexual if female.

5.4 **Lads as White**

Although race wasn't explicitly asked about in the questionnaire (see section 3.3.1, and section 8.4.3 for discussion), many responses to Q.42. Defining Lad Culture referred to whiteness:

> Over-entitled white boys who think they can do what ever they want.

> The culture of men (usually white) …

> A culture that encourages young men (usually white, straight, cis)…

In these descriptions of lads, whiteness is often paired with other identifying features of the ideal laddish subject, such as heterosexuality and gender. It is clear that the laddish subject holds many intersecting identities which are privileged. The first of these definitions couples whiteness with entitlement, and an attitude that lads' wants are prioritised. This indicates that being white is not simply an identifying feature of a lad but is also related to privilege. For example, university activist David described lad culture as "celebrating being a white - a privileged white man", indicating that whiteness is associated with privilege, and that lads benefit from, and "celebrate" their privilege.

Although all five of the SIL interviewees were white (or could've been white passing (Piper, 1992) as their race and ethnicity were not asked about), all seemed to resist the idea that one must be white in order to identify as a lad. Perhaps the reason for a lack of racial diversity in the sample is as a result of the predominantly white population at The University. Nevertheless, the discussion of race by SILs implies that the ideal laddish subject is constructed as white, and lads of colour are seen as exceptional to this. For example, SIL John opined:

> I would say that race isn't necessarily a divider in like a laddish group…. so long as
> they're friends with the other lads in the group. (John, SIL).

Perhaps John's perception that there is no division within lad culture on the grounds of race, was because of his own racial privilege. The implication is that SILs of colour are tangential to

the main laddish group of white men, and that while race may not be "*necessarily* a divider", this may be the common practice in lad culture. The idea that SILs of colour would need to be friends with the other (assumedly default white) lads, implies that lads of colour are exceptional, and require relationships with more easily recognised members of the laddish group. Another questionnaire participant seems to refer to the white ideal laddish subject, explaining of the term 'lad culture' that:

> It evokes images of white males to me, but is not exclusive to white males. (Q.42.
> Defining Lad Culture).

SIL Lawrence indicated that whilst race may not be a deciding factor in whether or not a person is considered/may identify as a lad, lads may group together on the basis of race:

> you don't have to be white…. not exclusively but more like there is like a lot of
> segregation… And that sort of typical lad. Not necessarily, but like they'd have their
> own version of it. (Lawrence, SIL).

He suggests each racial group might "have their own version" of a "typical lad" or ideal laddish subject. This implies that men of colour are separated from the ideal lad and must adopt a marginalised version of lad culture. This distancing also further emphasises the norm of lad culture as white. Phipps (2016, p. 8) has argued that perceptions of race and laddism may intersect with discourses of hegemonic masculinity wherein men of colour are constructed as "less 'manly'" or "more disorderly" (depending on the racial stereotypes applied) than white lads and "white laddism [is seen] as a consummate masculine behaviour." Therefore, the construction of the ideal laddish subject as white can be seen as a result of racist discourses and the marginalisation of men of colour, as well as the reiterative positioning of white men as the hegemonic masculine ideal (Connell, 2005).

5.5 Lads and Class

Social class was referred to many times in the qualitative data, though consensus on the class most associated with lad culture was not reached. For one questionnaire participant, lad culture involved "being a large group of predominantly white, straight middle-class men." Again, class is associated with the other identifiers of the laddish subject, including whiteness, heterosexuality and maleness. Although not referring directly to class, one questionnaire participant defines lads as those possessing privilege:

> they tend to have lived quite comfortable lives, coming from backgrounds that mean
> they have never had to experience any kind of harassment or discrimination. (Q.42.
> Defining Lad Culture).

Contrastingly, SIL Lawrence was involved with student societies/campaigns to support working-class students at The University and spent much of our interview discussing the relationship between lad culture and being working-class. For him, the recent NUS campaigns to tackle lad culture (2015) seemed to be targeted at working-class men: "When I first heard it like people slagging off lad culture, I took that as a personal insult." He felt as though anti-lad culture sentiment was directed towards football fans ("us in the terraces") and this rhetoric led to him feeling as though "a whole part of British culture [was] being disregarded."

It was clear that Lawrence found the association between working-class men and the (sexual) violence of lad culture to be an offensive conflation. He described a recent interaction with a woman who commented on his love for football:

> I was talking to someone and I said I liked football, and she said "Oh you like football, I think differently of you now". And it's like there's, she said it in a nice way, but it's like, people are wrong to feel intimidated or threatened, I think that's quite like a snobbish thing. Like people do, it'll be snobbery, but then they'll use the "oh no it's cos they're threatening." But they wouldn't feel threatened by like aggressive well-spoken boys from Hertfordshire. (Lawrence, SIL).

For SIL Lawrence, the reaction to his interest in football was based on classist "snobbery" about working-class men, which he felt would be unlikely to be levelled against middle-class men. Phipps (2016) contended that the term 'lad culture' has been operationalised as a means of derogating working-class masculinity in some media reports, but that university laddism was usually enacted by middle-class men as a practice of privilege. When asked whether lad culture was more related to middle or working-class students, he responded:

> I'd say working-class. Not universally because, you get, in boarding schools you get like a different breed, but [it's] the same kind of thing. It's just in the middle-class you're more likely to find people who like the theatre and read books and stuff like that. (Lawrence, SIL).

The concept of lad culture does have historic ties to the working-class; Willis' (1977) foundational investigation of lads, focused on the anti-school attitude of working-class boys, whose masculinity was constructed in relation to their and their fathers' manual labour. Lawrence, although arguing that lad culture is a working-class phenomenon, recognises that middle-class forms of laddism exist. Their practices are viewed as "the same kind of thing" even if the interests of the lads themselves differ. There was some suggestion from Lawrence that middle-class men may "adopt" or even "fetishise" working-class masculinity:

> my cousin goes to [secondary school] which is like a very nice school in London, and he's like this "geezer." Yeah, to be fair a lot of people have adopted it - like you see

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people wearing vintage track jackets and that, from very middle-class backgrounds, it definitely has been - I would say fetishised. (Lawrence, SIL).

Lawrence implies that the laddish practices of middle-class men, are disingenuous. Compared with working-class men, these lads are unable to be met with "snobbery", and are certainly able to afford to adopt practices as a trend (e.g. "vintage track jackets"). In Jefferies' (2019) interviews, middle-class laddish participants often compared their experience of university laddism with the seemingly more authentic laddism of their working-class friends who remained in their hometown. The main distinction drawn between the two laddish experiences, was of approach to school, with working-class lads perceived as more likely to eschew academic work and take up work in skilled trades. Nevertheless, working-class lads are met with prejudice and experience oppression (such as the "snobbery" Lawrence describes), where middle-class lads do not. Phipps (2016, 2018b) argued that this is the distinction between working-class and middle-class lad culture, that working-class men behave in reaction to oppression, whereas middle-class lads behave in reaction to *felt* oppression. The majority of university lad culture is enacted by middle-class white men (Phipps & Young, 2015a), who are privileged compared with their working-class counterparts – therefore university lad culture may be considered a performative reinstating of privilege.

For Georgina class distinctions amounted for the biggest differentiation between forms of lad culture. She describes lad culture as "a straight, white, masculine, middle-class or lower class or working-class, kind of people." While the majority of features of the ideal laddish subject she lists are uncontended, she points out that lads may be either middle-class or working-class. She explains that "the two class differences are massive, like you don't really get an inter-class group", emphasising that while there may be multiple forms of lad culture, these do not mix. Similarly, a questionnaire response relates that lad culture "changes across class e.g. working-class and middle-class." Although studies of lads have interviewed middle-class men in the majority (Dempster, 2007; Jefferies, 2019) both Lawrence and Georgina indicated that they were working-class – though this was not explicitly asked about in the questionnaire or interviews. This was evident from Georgina's statement that in her female rugby team "we've got one really posh girl but she's very much the exception." From her point of view, then, being middle-class is exceptional to lad culture, in contrast to the majority of research on university lad culture which implies that middle-class men are the enactors of laddism. It is clear that middle-class laddism exists within universities, but these findings challenge the extent to which this is the only form of lad culture. Nevertheless, these only represent the views of two members of my sample. Where middle-class lad culture does exist, this is associated with privilege.

5.6 **Lads as Young**

Another identifying feature of the laddish subject, is youth. Questionnaire respondents (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture) frequently referred to lads as being young, with some giving rough age ranges:

> … often among younger age groups, 18-25…

> … mainly of ages 16-30…

Given that the target population of the questionnaire was university students, and they are typically referring to lad culture within university contexts this is perhaps unsurprising. Nevertheless, SIL Georgina seems to indicate that similar cultures are less common among older populations overall:

> it's not really like, you don't really get like two generations mixing together sort of
> thing. It's generally not the older generation. (Georgina, SIL).

SIL Matthew indicates that although lad culture may exist outside of university (as with Nichols' 2018a study of a rugby club) the context of university is an important site of laddism:

> I don't think this is limited to university, but that a large part of the university
> experience is touched by this (especially in student night clubs)[14]. (Matthew, SIL).

University activist Emma suggests that while lad culture may exist outside of universities, the context of universities (and specifically the average age of students) may encourage lad culture:

> It seems to me that lad culture is not exclusively found at Universities but that [The
> University] campus creates a microcosm of the outside world where mob mentality
> and the average age of those at university allows the behaviour associated with lad
> culture to thrive. (Emma, University Activist).

Therefore, as well as being in a university context, laddism is associated with being young. Youth may be associated with physical strength and virility, which are facets of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), but it is also associated with a lack of responsibility and recklessness for some participants. In this way, the laddish subject possesses similar traits to the emphatically individualised 'neoliberal subject' described by McGuigan (2014). This figure is hedonistic and focused on their own fun experience, to the extent that they are unable/unwilling to consider the experience of others. This may be a function of the privilege of

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[14] As the interview with Matthew was conducted via email, the brackets are retained from the original.

these subjects, that they are able to be indifferent to the needs of others because their needs are typically met. SIL John describes the relationship between age and lad culture:

> J: I'd say definitely, it's definitely centred on university and a specific age group, 18-22 or 23 or whatever, but I think that some of my housemates have said that part of the reason they're going out a drinking and doing all these kind of things, is that they'll never get another opportunity, further down the line… once they left university, they might settle down, might take a step back from the laddish life, maybe start a family or
>
> A: So it's associated with being young
>
> J: And having no responsibilities I'd say.

In this extract, John indicates that lads are young (typical university age range) and that the desire to engage in laddish practices stems from the knowledge that these may not be acceptable once one has adult responsibilities. Capraro (2000) wrote that the excessive drinking of male college students was in part as a result of discourses which constructed university years as an adventure. In this context, university laddism may be viewed as opportunistic hedonism, having as much fun as possible while young, before responsibilities kick in. A questionnaire response explains further:

> Lad culture to me usually indicates a lack of responsibility for one's actions and generally making a nuisance of yourself. (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).

"Making a nuisance" which impacts on other students, and behaving irresponsibly, are seen as laddish practices. Another questionnaire respondent described lad culture as "stereo typically [sic], a young lads' playground so to speak." Youth, hedonism and lack of care for others are interwoven in the ideal laddish subject, with university as the milieu which allows for this. This will be discussed more in relation to specific laddish practices, such as binge drinking and banter in the next chapter.

Additionally, youth was considered by participants as not only a context for agentic deresponsibilised actions, but also as a form of vulnerability. Young men entering university may be unaware of their beliefs, or the potential consequences of their actions. If so, the 'pack mentality' of lad culture, may be overwhelming, and result in young men going along with practices that they do not agree with. This is certainly the perception of SIL Matthew, who explains:

> Specifically, when it comes to university, a lot of the men that come in are very naïve 18 year olds, and they don't necessarily have the confidence to stand up for

themselves (or indeed, they may not know whether they disagree with what is happening at all). (Matthew, SIL).

This suggests that individual lads may not themselves agree with the norms and values of lad culture but may be complicit in upholding the ideal laddish subject by not challenging laddish practices. Warin and Dempster (2007) found that many undergraduate men utilised the framework of lad culture to affirm their masculinity during the transition period of entering university, but that many rescinded/reduced their connection with laddism in the later years of their degree. They suggested that gendered practices were temporarily utilised by male undergraduates to find comfort, and generate bonds with peers, in the early stages of their degree. Being young then, is seen as an important element of laddish subjectivity.

5.7 **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated the overlapping identifying features of the ideal laddish subjectivity, which is a hegemonic masculinity within UK universities. University students, in particular male undergraduates, construct their identities in conformity or resistance to this ideal. It should be noted that the majority of participants were students at The University which has a majority middle-class, white, young and heterosexual-identifying population. Many other participants also attend universities with similar student demographics. Therefore, although these factors have been identified as features of lad culture more widely, it may be possible that these are common because of the bias of the population sampled. Nevertheless, the ideal laddish subject is not necessarily reflective of the university community in which it is valorised, as this is simply an ideal. Future research should be careful not to interpret this ideal as representative of all lads (it is not even representative of the participants in this study). Further investigation of the relationship between lad culture, race and class must be a priority for future research as the findings here were predominantly based on participant-directed responses, rather than being explicitly referred to in the questionnaire or interview schedule. For example, questionnaire participants were asked to provide their gender and age, but were not asked about their race, social class or sexual orientation. Nonetheless, the traits that are valued in ideal lad, are also those enshrined in structures (such as heteropatriarchy, capitalism and white supremacy) and systems and institutions (such as higher education and government). Therefore, as Crenshaw (1991) has argued that women of colour are marginalised by intersecting structural oppression, the ideal lad is reinforced and glorified by overlapping structural support. Additionally, the positioning of an ideal lad as being a young man is not only tied to assumptions about the physical stamina and virility of youth, but also to notions of lads' harmful practices as juvenile and not to be taken seriously. By insisting that lads are young men, participants' responses are

reminiscent of discourses that 'boys will be boys', often used to trivialise acts of sexual violence. These discourses have even been found to pervades victims' own narratives of their experience of sexual violence (Weiss, 2009).

Given the bias within the sample, and the omissions in demographic data collected, the validity of the concept of 'lad culture' may be called into question. Many, including Phipps and Young (2015a), Jackson and Sundaram (2020) and myself (Stead, 2017), have asserted that the term is problematic. Firstly, the term may be operationalised to refer to so many facets of UK student culture that it loses meaning, and potentially trivialises the profoundly negative practices associated with lad culture, such as sexual violence. Second, the inherent gendering of the term 'lad' implies that this is only enacted by male students, when it is clear that this is not the case. Nevertheless, lad culture remains gendered. Third, use of this term in mainstream media has often lacked critical analysis of the relationship between laddism and privilege – particularly in relation to class status. Notwithstanding these issues, the term, and the conceptualisation of an idealised laddish subject, are useful in considering the ways in which privilege informs subjectivity, and potentially practice. Further, the notion of an 'ideal' subject, rather than simply assessment of demographic data, can account for the variation of SILs, whose experience of laddism is constructed as exceptional to the norm, but remains an important part of their identity. In addition, this conceptualisation of an 'ideal' laddism offers a lens for understanding why SILs who do not meet the ideal are seen as less authentic, or experience harm within lad culture. These include female lads whose repeated exposure to rape jokes and misogynistic banter positions them as sexual objects or potential victims, rather than bona fide lads in their own right. Also, the assumed and repeatedly practiced compulsory heterosexuality of lad culture – and related homophobic banter – imply the exclusion non-heterosexual men from laddism. Further, gender and sexuality are conflated by SILs: that female homosexuality may be seen as acceptably masculine whereas gay men are perceived as too feminine to be included in lad culture. The ideal laddish subject should be considered not simply an archetype of the typical lad but is an ideal against which SILs position their experience. In this context, many self-identified lads interviewed did not consider themselves to be properly lads, and discursively distanced themselves from more harmful practices of lad culture.

6 'Doing' laddism: Laddish practices as performative of hegemonic masculinity and neoliberal discourses

6.1 Introduction

As discussed in chapter 5 lad culture is understood as masculine, and is positioned as hegemonic through domination, subordination, marginalization and complicity (Connell, 1987). This chapter will expand on this to consider the specific practices which are commonly associated with lad culture and the way in which these practices relate to hegemonic masculinity, answering the **R.Q.2.** *What are the practices of lad culture?* In interrogating the relative importance of laddish practices, this chapter draws on content analysis of qualitative questionnaire responses. This discussion is based on the understanding that studying the practices of a gendered subjectivity (in this case the idealised laddish subject) is essential to understanding the discourses which impact it. Butler's (1990) theory that gender is not a fixed identity but is performative – gendered subjectivities are evident in practices and discourses surrounding those practices, rather than a static entity – underpins the exploration of laddish practices herein. Laddish practices can be considered acts of 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) through which self-identified lads (SILs) perform their masculinity. The extent to which laddish practices are evidence of hegemonic masculinity is investigated in this chapter.

In addition, through investigation of laddish practices it is evident that laddism is embedded in and supported by neoliberalism, and in particular the neoliberal university. In Connell's theorisations (1987, 2000) 'hegemonic masculinity' refers to the most valued configuration of masculine practices with a hierarchy of masculinities. This is therefore a dynamic concept, which is influenced by contemporary social norms. Since 1980s, the proliferation of neoliberal economic and social policy and neoliberal discourses has influenced masculine configurations. Nevertheless, masculine ideals are varied and contradictory (such as the ideals of being physically violent and stoic). So too, are the influences of neoliberal discourses on subjectivity – as will be discussed in this chapter – which can promote the seemingly antithetical competition and disaffection. The two discourses (of idealised hegemonic masculinity, and of neoliberalism) are separate, but may overlap in some instances. For example, Connell (2013) indicates that the marketisation of university education depends on the existence of a hierarchy of, and competition between, institutions – just as hierarchical

masculinity depends on competition between men. This chapter will analyse the distinct, overlapping and sometimes contradictory influences of these discourses on SILs. Lad culture – and the ideal laddish subject presented in chapter 5- can be considered a neoliberal subjectivity. This will be addressed through combining McGuigan's (2014) 'neoliberal self' and Gill's (2007, 2017) postfeminist sensibility. McGuigan (2014) identifies a number of indicators/facets of the 'neoliberal self' – fiercely *individualistic*, motivated by/interested in *consumption and competition*. His work on 'cool capitalism' (2006, 2007) indicates *disaffection* as a factor of the neoliberal subject – one must care about competition and coming out on top but *appear* disinterested. Whilst performed disinterest (in relation to schoolwork) has been investigated in relation to lad culture in a secondary school (Jackson, 2002; Jackson, 2006a) and university contexts (Jackson & Dempster, 2009), this discussion relates disaffection to a broader range of laddish practices. Gill's (2007) concept of the postfeminist sensibility, which she saw as a form of gendered neoliberalism, involved the discursive prioritisation of individual choice, agency and autonomy rather than considering structural power and privilege. Postfeminism values meritocracy – the idea that success is based on merit and individual choice – and encourages competition between women. She talks of the 'affective/psychic life' of postfeminism, indicating that there is pressure on women to be bright and happy – this is somewhat evident in lad culture's insistence on confidence and being carefree.

Both theoretical frameworks have previously been applied to university lad culture: Phipps and Young (2015a) and Phipps (2016, 2018b) identify laddism as indicative of/influenced by neoliberalism, citing *competition and consumption* (particularly of women) as indicators of this. They also point to the postfeminism of lad culture, arguing that the retro-sexism in banter and casual sex is evidence of a 'backlash' to improved rights for women – particularly in the university. They argue that the increased importance of lad culture to undergraduate masculinities is a reaction to the perceived threat to male privilege of feminism, and that it uses ironic humour and competition to reify sexist norms. Nevertheless, as Phipps and Young (2015a) indicate, there is importance of group culture, of camaraderie, within lad culture; lads are individualistic but not individuals. Therefore, lad culture may be seen as related to neoliberalism in two ways. Firstly, that neoliberalising discourses in the university encourage competitive, disaffected individualism among students, particularly those invested in the hegemonic masculinity of lad culture. Second, that in this context, developing close and privileged bonds with a group who have similar experiences may feel like a necessity. This may account for the importance of membership to the laddish group which was evident in interviews with SILs. This chapter will also consider the extent to which each of the laddish practices considered is evidence of the importance of neoliberalism in UK universities. Competition, consumption, individualism and disaffection will be addressed where relevant to each practice.

While these elements of neoliberal subjectivity are not all equally relevant to each laddish practice, the combination of hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism demonstrates the importance of each practice to lad culture.

Lad culture must be understood by combining theoretical frameworks of performative hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism, to understand the idealised laddish subject (as in chapter 5) and the ways in which laddism is understood as important by SILs. These overlapping frameworks will be related to three key laddish practices: binge drinking, banter, playing sports. In each section I will consider the importance of the practice to laddism, the extent to which these are constructed as hegemonically masculine and neoliberal (consumption, competition, individualism and disaffection). Each section also relates the qualitative data to the quantitative findings discussed in chapter 4. This chapter will briefly introduce the laddish practice of casual sex, which will be addressed in more detail in chapter 7, as it relates to sexual violence. Further, the conclusion of this chapter will consider the extent to which anti-schoolwork attitudes, which have been commonly associated with lad culture in prior research, are evident in the findings of this research project.

6.2 Binge Drinking

This section will explore the laddish practice of binge drinking (identified in the literature and in the results chapter as an important element of lad culture) as discussed by participants in qualitative data. This will address how binge drinking is discursively constructed as an expected practice of laddish masculinity, with those who do not engage in the practice seen as exceptional, and in need of alternative forms of masculine capital to justify their inclusion within lad culture. Further, binge drinking is seen as related to the ideal laddish subject as a neoliberal subjectivity, through the importance of consumption and competition, and individualism and disaffection.

6.2.1 Importance of binge drinking

Drinking was mentioned in all interviews with SILs, as well as in multiple qualitative questionnaire responses. In response to the Q.42. Defining Lad Culture, drinking, binge drinking and alcohol consumption were mentioned in almost half of the fifty-six responses (twenty-four). In interviews with university activists , where participants were also asked to give their own understanding of lad culture, alcohol consumption was often referred to, for example, when discussing the atmosphere on buses leaving campus after 9pm on student club nights. Binge drinking was also rated as central to lad culture by questionnaire participants (as discussed in section 4.3.1) (Mean rating = 78.33 out of 100). For SILs, binge drinking (Mean rating = 86.63

out of 100) was the behaviour seen as most central to lad culture. However, there was no significant relationship between the frequency of engagement in binge drinking and identifying with laddism.

A reason that binge drinking may be prominent within lad culture, is that binge drinking is often seen as a staple of broader 'student culture in the UK (J Gill, 2002; NUS, 2016). This particular difference has been noted in the aforementioned Dempster paper (2011) where he explained that binge drinking among male undergraduates "is partially motivated by discourses that position drinking as a 'normal' part of studenthood, but also by discourses that reinforce drinking as a laddish behaviour or a male preserve" (p. 635). Dempster found that University laddishness and alcohol use are intrinsically linked, with heavy drinking being a requirement of being labelled as a lad. Interviewees identified those groups that drunk the most/were most explicit in their public drinking as the "proper lads". These were typically seen as those who participated in University sports and the related "socials" and were defined as such even by self-identified lads, suggesting a continuum of laddism.

For many respondents, drinking was referred to in tandem with other laddish behaviours, most commonly: playing sports, having sex with women and being loud or "shouty". This is helpful in considering the ways in which laddish practices overlap or are seen as necessitating one another – e.g. those who play sports are expected to binge drink.

6.2.2 Binge drinking as hegemonically masculine

Binge drinking is referred to by multiple participants as an important aspect of lad culture: SIL Georgina sums up the relationship between lad culture and binge drinking: "I'd say it's not an essential thing, but it kind of comes along with it all." Richard also noted that engaging in binge drinking was a pseudo-requirement of lad culture, explaining that being a member of a laddish group while a non-drinker was "possible" but that not drinking was seen as "definitely a limiting factor". Similarly, John commented that although he did not frequently engage in drinking, this was considered a requirement of lad culture for others:

> for my first year housemates, who definitely all saw themselves as lads, all the boys,
> for them it was always going out into town drinking. (John, SIL).

Consuming alcohol is commonly thought of as a laddish behaviour, and is considered so by both SILs and non-lads. In many of this project's questionnaire responses, the use of alcohol is explicitly related to masculinity. For example, one participant remarks that lads can be defined as young men who:

> ...stereotypically exhibit masculine behaviour such as acting aggressive, heavy
> drinking and banter... (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).

The association between drinking and masculinity has been heavily researched in fields such as media and advertising (Townes et al., 2012), health (deVisser & Smith, 2007) and sociology (Gefou-Madianou, 1992). In her concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1987, 1995, 2005) theorises that there are multiple, hierarchical configurations of masculinity which each are made up of patterns of behaviours, attitudes and attributes. While the zenith of these masculinities (the hegemonic position), is recognised to be flexible, dynamic and – to an extent – culturally/geographically specific, some behaviours are commonly understood as being part of the hegemonic position. In western contexts, alcohol consumption is one such behaviour. Indeed, many have considered alcohol consumption as a masculine venture in and of itself (Landrine et al., 1988; West, 2001). In particular, male college students (Capraro, 2000) and both male and female college students (Iwamoto et al., 2011; Peralta, 2007) commonly understand public alcohol consumption as a masculine behaviour, or method of creating/'doing' a public masculine identity. Therefore, drinking being considered masculine and a norm for lads, supports the conceptualisation of the ideal laddish subject as masculine (in section 5.2). Alcohol consumption and binge drinking are specifically seen as central elements of laddish masculinity; notably in the work of Dempster (2011) whose interviews with male undergraduates gave insight into the expectations on young men to binge drink in order to be recognised as a lad. The relationship between alcohol consumption and a laddish masculinity has been noted in prior research (Gough & Edwards, 1998; Phipps & Young, 2013; Thurnell-Read, 2011). Binge drinking is, then, a laddish and masculine practice that undergraduate students can undertake in order to 'do' laddism. Furthermore, the consistent performance of this practice by lads, reifies the practice as laddish and masculine.

Another way in which binge drinking is positioned as a laddish masculine norm, is through the discursive presentation of those who do *not* drink as exceptional. Georgina describes her non-drinking friend within the laddish group (her name has been pseudonymised):

> I wouldn't say it's [drinking] essential because one of my like most laddish friends
> I've ever met ever, she's called Pamela and she's the best person you'll ever meet, she
> doesn't drink whatsoever. But I'd say she's kind of an exception. (Georgina, SIL).

The fact that there are lads who don't drink is not what is interesting here, but the mechanisms through which this difference is accepted, i.e. why Pamela is still considered a lad, in spite of failing to meet a common criterion. Georgina's descriptions give some insight: "she's just full of banter", "she'll play football" and when friends are challenging a member for leaving the night

out too early (or "pussying out"), "she joins in" with the ribaldry. In many ways, Pamela is compensating for not drinking, by being a shining example in other laddish practices (banter, playing sports).

These findings echo the research of deVisser and Smith (2007) who found that young men's perception of other men as masculine depended on a number of criteria, and that lacking in a particular area (such as not drinking alcohol) might be justified with adherence to other masculine traits or practices. Focus group participants (men aged 18 to 21) described how masculine competence could be traded from one area to another, explaining that while rugby star Jonny Wilkinson's tee-total status would render him emasculated, his position in the English rugby team and attractive girlfriend "lifts him back up again" (p. 603). Pamela displays enough 'masculine capital' (de Visser et al., 2009) to be considered one of the lads in spite of her lack of alcohol consumption.

Georgina also noted that Pamela typically joins the group while they drink and go on nights out but opts for soft drinks instead of alcoholic ones. When asked if she would be as readily accepted if she didn't go to the pub or club, Georgina agreed that this helped matters. Therefore, it is not simply the consumption of alcohol which is laddish but the social performance of binge drinking within sites of alcohol consumption. Part of the reason that Pamela is condoned within the laddish group is her willingness to participate in the practice of social drinking, even though she is not consuming alcohol.

In a team sport setting, SIL Matthew noted that there were "several members who did not attend socials, and still made it onto the team, specifically because they were good at rugby. However, these tended to be mature students." In explaining the inclusion of non-drinking members to the team, he distances these students from the ideal laddish subject as a young man (as in section 5.6), Matthew indicates that fellow lads' masculinity may be judged on criteria other than their willingness to drink. He gives the justification that they excel at sport, which is the key criterion for inclusion in the Rugby League team. Sporting prowess is thus used as masculine capital, to substitute for the lack of alcohol consumption.

SIL Richard described himself as the exception to the rule of binge drinking within lad culture, having as a teenager stopped drinking for mental health reasons. He described lads' perception of him and behaviours towards him as unchanged, though recognised that this may have been because he "was already ingratiated into" the laddish group. He noted that while he had known others who'd struggled to make their way as a lad without drinking, his being "something of a strong personality, that I [he] was always a part of the club." Alcohol consumption may not be a prerequisite for inclusion in lad culture, but it may aid ingratiation, or may be substituted with charisma. He referenced that in playing sport at university, team socials revolve around binge drinking, and that in order to be involved, he had to "make a

deliberate effort" and be in a social setting where the concept of his abstinence was frequently questioned. Again, the social context of drinking is an important element of being part of the laddish group.

In addition to the conceptualisation of alcohol consumption as masculine in and of itself, another reason that (excessive) use of alcohol is considered a common element of hegemonic masculinity, is that the behaviour can facilitate demonstrations of multiple facets of masculinity, e.g. physical and mental strength, heterosexuality, risk-taking and being carefree. For example, 'holding' one's drink, in spite of overconsumption, may be seen as a practice through which physical strength is demonstrated. SIL Matthew depicts the use of alcohol as a tool for humiliation/gameplay within his university Rugby League team's social events:

> There was a senior player who had turned up late, and as a result he was 'fined', and had to drink a bottle of wine in one. (Matthew, SIL).

Here, forceful binge drinking (the average bottle of wine has at least ten units of alcohol) is both a means of 'catching up' a player who arrived late and punishing a team member for lack of loyalty. The act of drinking an entire bottle of wine at once is also an act which on the one hand would be an impressive physical feat, if drunk without stopping or vomiting, and on the other hand a potential source of humiliation. The inherent risk of binge drinking – that one may not be able to hold their drink, may vomit or lose consciousness – means that excessive alcohol consumption may be used to indicate a lad's masculinity through their willingness to take risks with their physical health and social status.

Binge drinking may also be considered as part of a configuration of laddish practices, in that excessive alcohol consumption may lead to lower inhibitions which may allow SILs to act in laddish ways. For example, a common definition of lad culture by questionnaire participants and SILs is that lads are confident and loud, for example:

> Lad culture refers to a culture of loud, boisterous, hypermasculine men who want to drink, shout and play sports. (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).
>
> So yeah, you wouldn't be a lad if you were, quite quiet. (John, SIL).
>
> You'd be confident but you wouldn't have to be. Like even just a presentation of confidence, like even if you're doing it out of shyness, like you're talking a lot. (Lawrence, SIL).

Given this expectation then, it may be difficult for those who do not possess natural confidence to feel that they are connected to lad culture. This is made clear in other examples:

> If like you're a bit introverted, it would be hard to be in those environments and not drink. (Lawrence, SIL).

> maybe they [unconfident lads] drink to become more confident and outgoing (Richard, SIL).

Being drunk may then be considered a behaviour which is both performative of masculinity in its own right, and which also allows SILs to be more laddish as a result of being uninhibited. This may also facilitate risk-taking, which is considered a masculine activity and is sometimes associated with lad culture. As an example one questionnaire participant rated an open-text behaviour item "doing 'daring' things" at 81 out of 100 on its centrality to lad culture. The use of inverted commas to describe the behaviours as daring implies that these may be seen as daring by those undertaking them, but perhaps as reckless by those observing. Additionally, the drug use referred to by Georgina is a more extreme version of alcohol consumption in that it offers similar masculine credence as well as an opportunity to get 'out of it'. It also represents a greater risk-taking performance as a result of the illegality of use of certain drugs in the UK. Two open-text behaviour items also referred to drug use (quotes show the phrase they filled into the open-text item, and the number score they rated this at out of 100):

> Illegal drug use (75)

> Cocaine or party drugs (80)

The use of drugs may offer similar relationship to hegemonic masculinity as evident in binge drinking but offers the additional potential risk of being found to have broken the law.

6.2.3 Efficient consumption and competition

Discourses of efficient consumption were often associated with lad culture. University activist Ann, a Student Support Worker, described a weekly drinking event at one of the colleges[15]: in this weekly event – of which there are two concurrent groups split by gender - drinking games are played for several hours before heading into the city for clubbing. Participants submit an agreed amount of money to a drinks' 'master' each week, who purchases cheap spirits and fruit juice, which are mixed in a storage container from which every participant fills their cup. The 'master' is also in charge of ensuring that all participants drink in line with the rules of the drinking games and can dole out forfeits to any participant who does not drink as instructed.

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[15] This was an event which I had knowledge of prior to the interview. When University Activist Ann referred to the event by name, I indicated that I was aware, and she dispensed with details of the event. Therefore, the description provided is not taken from the interview, but from my own knowledge of the event, which was a long running college tradition which I had witnessed first-hand.

Ann describes the climate as one which demands binge drinking, and turns social drinking into a competition:

> that they're basically bullying or like peer-pressuring people into drinking as much as they could possibly (Ann, University Activist).

Through this co-ordination, the aim is to gather enough communal income to bulk-buy alcohol. Further, each participant forgoes personal preference in flavour/type of communal drink created, again aiming to reduce the cost of multiple spirits and mixers. While these actions could be argued to reflect the low disposable income of students, these same students routinely progress from the drinks event to nightclubs in the city centre, where a single drink is typically sold for the same amount that they put into the communal pot. Instead, the purpose of this venture is to ensure the maximum amount of alcohol per pound spent for each participant, with the intention of guaranteeing that each person is thoroughly drunk before they leave the event. Through my own experience of this event, I was already aware of the extremes to which the drinking was pushed, having heard of two incidents of male undergraduates passing out in college buildings following the drinking game, including one who was hospitalised.

This attitude towards alcohol, that one must consume as much as possible no matter how unpleasant, unnecessary or unsafe the quantity, is indicative of neoliberal discourses. In a context of 'free market' competition, and individuals as consumers, one must ensure one receives the best value-for-money on any purchase (Shaw & Aldridge, 2003). Through Ann's perspective as a member of staff at The University, these weekly instances of extreme binge drinking were viewed as problematic, and indicative of the influence of/existence of lad culture in the university community. Within these laddish groups, the pressure to consume alcohol, in competition with others, was pervasive.

Qualitative data responses also flagged binge drinking is frequently engaged in competitively within lad culture – the aim is to consume as much alcohol as you can, often directly competing with other lads to consume the most. University activist Marie, a student activist, commented on the pressure to consume alcohol felt throughout the student community, referring to the ways in which (especially first year) students "feel forced to drink because everyone's drinking". Therefore, binge drinking can be considered as important to university students outside the norms of lad culture. Nevertheless, the importance of competition within lad culture – through the combined discourses of the hegemonic masculinity and idealised neoliberal subject – meant that binge drinking holds particular weight within lad culture. The notion of 'free markets' and the importance of competition between individuals is evident in the laddish milieu, for example, Georgina describes the laddish approach to binge drinking:

> it's kind of who can drink more, and what's the worst drink that you can drink.
> (Georgina, SIL).

Only one lad can have the top position in each social group, and binge drinking is described not simply as a regular activity of lad culture, but also as a medium for competition. Further, the competition to drink the "worst" drink; though I didn't ask for clarification here, the implication is either the most alcoholic drink, or the most disgusting drink, or indeed a drink which encompasses both elements. In drinking the "worst drink", a lad can win the respect of the peer group, as this act allows for the display of multiple facets of lad culture and masculinity. For example, the physical strength/stamina required to consume a great amount of alcohol without becoming too inebriated, pertains to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity (Connell, 1995). The relationship between drinking prowess and social status in the laddish group, is exemplified in this exchange between me (A) and SIL Georgina:

> A: The more you can do the higher up in the group or more you're respected?

> G: That's it, that's kind of the whole feeling of it all

It can be seen, then, that lad culture, is reflective of the efficient consumption and competition of the 'neoliberal self', and that this is tied to understandings of masculine capital within lad culture.

6.2.4 Individualism and disaffection in binge drinking

Binge drinking can be further taken as evidence of the neoliberal laddish subject as the practice is individualised. Although binge drinking is done socially in the laddish group, and often in competition with one another, this practice is undertaken with little care for the impact that it may have on others. This is individualistic in some ways (prioritising one's own fun over that of others') but it also serves the purpose of building homosocial community.

Participants frequently referred to lads as those who were disruptive in social contexts. In a large number of questionnaire responses, being "boisterous" (2 responses), "rowdy" (1 response), "loud" (6 responses) or "intimidating" (3 responses) were referred to as staples of lad culture. SIL John describes that "to be a lad is to be a lot less reserved in social spaces, to be a bit more outlandish." Disruption can also be applied to the treatment of property, as SIL John answered that he'd "definitely classify those as lad things. Or things associated with laddism" when asked about vandalism. Being disruptive was often referred to in relation to binge drinking, or alcohol in general – that lads would be drunk and disorderly.

It could be argued that this is as a result of the disinhibiting effects of alcohol and owing to the importance of binge drinking to laddish masculinity, it would follow that lads are more

likely to be boorish in social settings. Being disruptive is seen as quintessential lad culture SIL Matthew describes particular instances as being typical of laddism, including "singing as loudly as possible in college bars." The purpose of singing as loudly as possible, seems to be manifold; one could indicate their inclusion in the laddish group, could be raucous and have a good time, and could intentionally bother other students who were in the college bar – these multiple aspects of this practice are considered next.

Homosociality, a concept which refers to non-sexual relationships between persons of the same sex (Lipman-Bluman, 1976), is clearly important to SILs, lad culture was frequently described by questionnaire respondents as being carried out by groups of lads. Additionally, as shown in section 4.3.2, having a large group of single-sex friends was rated highly as an attribute of laddism, being scored at an average of 69.46 out of 100 by questionnaire participants and higher by SILs (Mean = 74.00). These data reflect previous findings that homosocial groups are utilised for performative hegemonic masculinity (Thurnell-Read, 2012) and that behaviours rewarded in such groups are used to "help perpetuate a system that subordinates femininity and nonhegemonic masculinities" (Bird, 1996).

For SIL John it was simple: he valued lad culture because of "a feeling of like a belonging to a group". Within the group, receiving praise or recognition from other group members was considered a way of gaining masculine status and of bonding with others: University activist Arthur, an SU sabbatical officer, explained that lad culture was:

> to do with behaviour where you're trying to impress other people. Maybe not
> thinking about the consequences on people who aren't part of your in your group.
> (Arthur, University Activist).

This is similar to the findings of Hall et al. (2021), whose assessment of online forum responses to 'upskirting' videos demonstrated the importance of group dynamics. Expressions of gratitude and respect from viewers were used to confer status onto men who shared their videos with the group. Arthur argues that part of lad culture is the competition between lads, and the lack of interest in others' experience of your behaviour. Therefore, although it may appear that binge drinking within lad culture only offers a homosocial collective experience, this practice is also individualised. Individual lads are in competition with one another to consume the most alcohol (as above) and the enjoyment of the laddish collective is prioritised over the experience of those in their vicinity. SILs value their own fun significantly more than that of the group, and that of the group more than that of other people. While it is true that this is the case for almost any group, in that people tend to value those closest to them over strangers, for SILs the relationship between the laddish group and other groups can also be antagonistic. SILs may prioritise their own fun to the detriment of others'.

The individualistic prioritisation of one's own pleasure over that of another's, can sometimes be at odds with the need for homogeny within the homosocial group. Within lad culture, the individualistic neoliberalism and homosocial hegemonic masculinity are both influential on the practices of individual lads. For example SIL Matthew's story of a student being "fined" for attending a social late, with being pressured into drinking a bottle of wine in one. In this case, the amusement of the person administering the "fine", and assumedly the amusement of other group members, is deemed more important than the health and safety of the "fine" recipient. The lad made to drink the wine does not benefit from this individually, but submits to it for the amusement and homogeneity of the homosocial group. At the same time, the lad "fining" is doing so assumedly to position himself as dominant and compete for top status within the group. Further, the consistent finding that lads are rowdy, loud or intimidating in social settings, indicates the prioritisation of the laddish group ahead of those outside the group. This confirms Phipps and Young's (2015a, p. 316) characterisation of lad culture as "a form of 'groupthink' which does not recognise itself as such and offers freedom of choice and expression in pre-packaged and predefined ways" and contrast between the discursive individualism of lad culture, and the lads who do not act as individuals. The tension between individualism and homosociality is therefore sometimes overlooked through the discursive positioning of lad culture as an individual choice. I also posit that binge drinking, especially in the context of a laddish group, may be intentionally engaged in as a practice which offers the opportunity to justify one's disorderly behaviour.

Further, engaging in binge drinking as part of lad culture can be seen as a performance of disaffection (a cool reaction to the potential risk of binge drinking) and deresponsibilisation. Lad culture was defined by a questionnaire participant as:

> Generally hooliganism, being loud and being up late and partying and that kind of
> thing. General messing about, a lot of kind of childish nature (Q.42. Defining Lad
> Culture).

Partying (and the implied binge drinking therein) is linked to "messing about", being disruptive and disorderly, as well as "childish nature." Binge drinking, and the lack of inhibition that this offers, allow lads to shrug off responsibility, engage in fun, and behave childishly. Lads can performatively indicate disaffection, for the consequences of their actions, the opinion of others and the risk to their health. For example, the regular college drinking event continued weekly, even following the hospitalisation of one of the attendees mid-term. Lads were undeterred by risk of harm to themselves, or to members of their social group, as the main objective is individual enjoyment. Further, this implies an assumption that any person who is harmed by binge drinking is to blame for their own misfortune. Binge drinking offers both a connection to

other lads and individualised pleasure, and individualised harm, with a lack of care about those outside the laddish group.

6.3 **Banter**

This section addresses the laddish practice of banter – the jocular discourse wherein lads criticise one another and others– as it relates to hegemonic masculinity and neoliberal subjectivity. First the prevalence of banter will be acknowledged, particularly misogynist and homophobic banter, before considering the importance of banter as an 'organising principle' through which lads can assert their hegemonic masculinity. Most notably in relation to women, and to non-heterosexual men – banter is constructed as a joke but is used by those with power/privilege to police the boundaries of their privilege. Banter is then considered as a postfeminist and thus neoliberal gendered project (Gill, 2007) which is individualist and ignorant of structural inequalities. Further, banter is related to disaffection, in that lads must at once dismiss the potential harm of banter and must maintain a 'thick skin' when the subject of banter themselves. Finally, the extent to which banter may be used to combat neoliberalised individualist expectations is investigated, by considering participants' explanation of banter as a tool for communicating emotions.

6.3.1 Importance of banter

Banter was considered in the Results chapter (4) using the item 'Poking fun at friends'. Those who engage in poking fun at friends most often did have significantly higher self-reported laddism; banter is more common among SILs. Further, poking fun at friends was seen as central to lad culture by questionnaire participants, with a mean rating of 75.78 out of 100. All SIL interviewees referred to use of banter within their laddish groups. For most, this revolved around making jokes about one another's appearance, with particular reference to a person's weight or clothing choices coming up in 2 of the interviews. They also referred to instances of misogynist, homophobic and transphobic banter, which will be discussed later in this section. For some interviewees this was seen as a central practice of lad culture:

> I think lad-culture often revolved around taking the piss out of people as much as possible, while not ever accepting that what you are doing could be interpreted as hurtful. (Matthew, SIL).

Matthew indicates the importance of banter to laddism, as well as the competitive element of this practice, that this must be done "as much as possible." Further, his explanation of the impact of banter on others points to a resistance to consider the feelings of others, rather than a

lack of understanding of the potential harm caused. Qualitative questionnaire responses show much less focus on this laddish practice than on binge drinking, with only 5 out of 56 respondents using the term banter or referring to this form of poking fun when describing lad culture. In the few instances where this term is used, by non-lads for the most part, the perception of banter is that it is a negative practice, disguised as humour:

> … claims of banter that are often direct insults... (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).

Given that the majority of questionnaire participants (136 out of 144) did not identify themselves as SILs, the negative impact of banter may have been more prevalent in these responses. In fact, 'harassment' is mentioned more frequently than banter, appearing in 13 out of 56 responses. E.g.

> … harassment on social media by individuals, team and societies, verbal and physical harassment… (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).

The responses encapsulate the findings from interviews with female students presented by Phipps and Young (2013), whose participants described banter "which was often sexist, misogynist and homophobic" (p. 28). When considering banter, then, one must consider the ways in which humour is used to reinscribe structural inequalities, often practiced by those who are privileged by the same structures (typically white, heterosexual men as discussed in chapter 5). Furthermore, that the discursive positioning of this language as humorous often serves to diminish the harm that such jokes can do. This allows lads to make such jokes with impunity, under the pretence that they do not mean what they say, even though they are aware of the potential impact.

6.3.2 Banter and hegemonic masculinity

Banter is a practice through which hegemonic masculinity is performed and the hegemonic position of laddish masculinity is (re)produced. As Connell (1987) theorises, this masculine configuration is discursively valorised through hegemony, subordination, marginalisation and complicity. Banter is used to position lads above women, other men (particularly non-heterosexual men) and relies on lads taking part, no matter their personal comfort level with the humour. Connell (1995) argues that while violence may not be necessary to hold a dominant position, hegemonic masculinity may often utilise violence to subordinate women and non-heterosexual men, and to marginalise men of colour and working-class men. Verbal forms of discrimination (such as diminishing banter) should be recognised as similar to acts of physical violence, as methods of ensuring the privilege of men.

6.3.2.1 Hegemony through banter

Banter uses humour to position masculinity above femininity, and laddish masculinity above other configurations, thus positioning laddish masculinity as hegemonic. SIL Richard stated that lads use banter to:

> …keep our personalities in check, is that kind of battle for hegemony and being like the biggest lad. (Richard, SIL).

One participant identifies lads as those who "exert their manhood" via banter, indicating that banter is performative of hegemonic masculinity:

> I think it refers to a culture in which lads deem it acceptable and 'funny' to act in ways which exert their manhood and confidence, often involves jokes and behaviours at the expense of women and other individuals who are alone and/or vulnerable. Often sexual. (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).

This suggests that banter is an act of dominance, of (re)positioning laddish masculinity as hegemonic. The response also indicates that this is targeted at women (and those who are vulnerable), explaining that laddish banter is used to reinscribe the privilege of lads. Banter and misogyny were often related in interviews. For example, SIL Lawrence commented on the extent to which misogyny was "very much still on the table", in contrast to other forms of discrimination such as racism and homophobia which he considered less salient in laddish banter. When I suggested that misogyny I'd heard of in other SIL interviews included the use of the word 'pussy' and asked whether he thought misogyny was common in lad culture, he paused then said that "anyone who would say no just hasn't realised what is [misogynist]". Therefore, misogyny is so evident in lad culture that it could be considered invisibilised by its ubiquity. Lad culture was seen as closely linked to misogyny in responses to Q.42. Defining Lad Culture:

> Condoning or encouraging certain misogynistic or harassing behaviours

> … the acceptability of sexist, often abusive behaviour

University Activists also identified lad culture as centring around banter, which is often misogynist:

> It thrives from banter which frequently involves the ridicule and degradation of women. (Emma, University Activist).

Questionnaire participants also rated making jokes about women as central to lad culture (Mean rating = 79.28 out of 100). The specific use of humour as an 'organizing principle' by which lads assert their authority, while diminishing others, has also been recognised in secondary schools

(Kehily & Nayak, 1997). In their ethnographic study of schoolboy lad culture, the authors found that sexist humour was also used to perform heterosexual masculinities and perpetuate patriarchal dominance. This explanation of banter has also been found in more recent studies of higher education. For example, in their study of university staff understandings of lad culture, Jackson and Sundaram (2020) found that staff descriptions of banter "centred on particular performances of masculinity and related to establishing power, control, and dominance over other men and/or women" (p.48). Therefore, banter can be understood as a behaviour through which laddish masculinity is reiteratively positioned as hegemonic.

Plester (2015) found that derogatory humour, such as banter and prank-pulling, was used in a corporate workplace to reify hegemonic masculinity and justify and trivialise sexual harassment. Additionally, it was found that women condone and/or perform this masculinity in order to avoid being the object of ridicule and attain power in the workplace. This is also evident in the experience of Georgina (SIL) who notes in her interview that within lad culture, the word "pussy" is used to refer to those who don't join in with laddish pursuits. She says "I hate using this term", indicating an internal struggle between taking part in the misogyny of lad culture, while also being a woman. Georgina elaborated that the derogatory nature of this term was unavoidable:

A: As you're saying with lots of these, like "I hate that word", "I hate that", the language of it, is that an essential part of it as well?

G: Yeah. And it's always, it's always derogatory. It always is.

A: Even when it's women using it?

G: Yeah, exactly.

For her, the use of misogynist language was essential to lad culture, regardless of the gender of the person using the language. While some may argue that the inclusion of women within laddish spaces represents a broadening of laddish masculinity, that it is more inclusive than in the past, these findings indicate that while female SILs may be included, they are not empowered. University activist Ann also referred to this terminology as a specific example of where banter crosses over into harassment:

Yeah, so not necessarily just stuff that was sexual it was like very racist, very homophobic, very like "you're a pussy" yaknow gendered. (Ann, University Activist).

Additionally, SIL Georgina made frequent comparisons between the feminine friendship group of her girlfriend, and her own laddish group, comparing the humour norms of each as equally baffling to outgroup members. She referred to her girlfriend's group discussing shoes (which her and her friends found dull) in contrast with her friends' jokes about beer, football or sex (which the other group found unpleasant). When discussing her girlfriend's friendship group, Georgina did mock their femininity. She raised the pitch of her voice, to indicate the femininity of these women in comparison to herself, and derided the conversation of the group, indicating that "they'd comment on stupid things like their shoes". In doing so, she positioned banter and masculine interests or forms of communication as more valuable than feminine conversation. These utterances are reminiscent of Connell's (1987) conceptualisation of the gender order, whereby masculinity is not constructed in a vacuum, but in relation to femininity as a mutually exclusive pairing - whatever is masculine, is not feminine and vice versa. Richard also considered banter as a form of solely masculine humour:

> Even men who aren't necessarily laddy, are more likely to have that kind of
> depreciating humour towards their friends, because it's something that we're taught
> isn't as serious as we teach women it is. (Richard, SIL).

He explained that while patriarchal society may socialise women to be conscious of themselves and their bodies, men do not necessarily find these discourses offensive. Although SILs referred to limits on which jokes are permissible as laddish banter, misogyny and jokes about sexual violence (addressed in detail in chapter 7) are prevalent and normalised.

Nevertheless, Richard resisted the idea that misogyny was common among lads he knew, which he seemed to think was specifically true in the context of an elite university:

> especially in a predominantly female university, you'd have to be something of a
> moron to think that you're above women, because you're surrounded by women who
> are going to excel you everyday. (Richard, SIL).

He seems to imply, then, that those who do use misogynist banter are idiotic, or that this banter is not reflective of the held beliefs of lads, as they are aware that women excel them. The use of humour as a vehicle for delivering misogyny can be considered as evidence of the dynamic configuration of hegemonic masculinity. Connell states that hegemonic masculinity does not refer to an archetype, or individual men, but to the "configuration of gender practice which embodies the *currently accepted* [emphasis added] answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy" (Connell, 1995, p. 77). In the context of furthering of women's liberation, and the #MeToo movement, it may no longer be acceptable to make sexist/misogynist comments directly. However, with the insistence that these comments are jokes, lads are able to continue making sexist remarks without discipline (for the most part). In accounts from university staff,

the misogyny expressed through banter was seen as unrepresentative of the views held by lads, and was considered harmless fun (Jackson & Sundaram, 2020). Consequently, through presenting discriminatory language as humorous, or as pastiches of ideals of the past, the use of such language is allowed to continue and the associated harm, and assertion of power performed through this practice is thus perpetuated. In short, the configuration of masculinity has adapted to maintain power, while also adhering to current cultural context/norms.

6.3.2.2 Subordination through banter

Banter was also used by lads to subordinate non-heterosexual men through homophobic jokes. Four open-text responses refer directly to homophobia when defining lad culture (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture), e.g.:

> … which has sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic, and generally insensitive to minority groups "humour" under the guise of "banter"

> They often engage in harassment that is sexist, misogynistic, homophobic etc

Many others may have been considering this when referring to "harassment" more broadly - though it is impossible to know. Nevertheless, it is clear that non-lad questionnaire participants view homophobic banter as a feature of lad culture, and a form of harassment.

SIL Richard also reflected that homophobia was a frequent feature of lad culture, contrasting with misogyny "Homophobia's a different one, that is *definitely* present." He describes, in his role as captain of a college football team, that he needed "to have very serious talks with someone about homophobic behaviour on the pitch", described as "name-calling, very aggressive stuff". Rather than the common suggestion that laddish banter is mainly humorous, Richard indicates that this is a form of language which he needs to challenge. His position relative to the *heterosexual* idealised laddish subject (as in section 5.3) as a bisexual man, means that he perceives this normalised behaviour as violent, whereas it is implied that other lads do not. He further described homophobia within his laddish group, through a recurrent issue with one team member who "just described everything as gay – 'those shoes are gay, this kit looks a bit gay'". An implication which Richard did not state per se (and having experience of the use of 'gay' in this way) is that this person was using this language pejoratively or to diminish the shoes or football kit - indicating that "gay" is synonymous with having low value. This tendency was also noted in a questionnaire response, where the participant wrote that lad culture "may include using homophobic language as banter - i.e. 'that's gay' as an insult." Homophobic banter,

then, is a practice which is evident within the laddish group, serving to subordinate gay men, such that heterosexual lads gain and retain hegemony[16].

6.3.2.3 Complicity in banter

Another way in which banter positions laddish masculinity as hegemonic, is through complicity. Connell (1987, 1995) argues that men who do not exemplify hegemonic masculinity still discursively support this configuration as dominant. The SILs interviewed in this project frequently referred to the ways in which they were not exemplars of hegemonic laddism (as in chapter 5), which meant that they often felt complicit in supporting laddish masculinity. Further, the presentation of discriminatory language (such as misogyny and homophobia) as humour means that those outside the laddish group feel unable to challenge this, meaning that this language is used without reproach.

Complicity is evident in SIL Lawrence's representation of the potential dissent within a laddish group, he noted that "in those groups you will get some where like that annoys them", referring to a lack of consensus among lads about what is considered appropriate to joke about. He indicates that while some lads may be uncomfortable with the line of joking, they feel unable to resist this banter. Lawrence also describes the difficulty in withdrawing from laddish behaviours which are not agreed with, using the example of a friend's experience.

> Even my friend who does these RAF things on a Friday, he was showing me some of
> the songs he sings which he don't [sic] even like vibe with, but all the other parts of it
> he does really like. (Lawrence, SIL).

It is not clear what the songs entail, though this was mentioned immediately following the reference to lads describing women as 'slags', and prior research indicates the use of misogynist and sexually violent chants/songs in the military (Burke, 2004; Maxwell, 2010). Further, these songs being difficult to "vibe with", rather than causing outright harm, implies that the friend holds a privileged position. Lawrence implies that in order to reap the benefits of lad culture, one must participate in elements which are not agreed with; complicity is key. SIL John referred to lad culture as having "a type of group mentality", as though decisions are made to benefit the group, rather than individuals – or that SILs feel pressured to act in line with the group.

When comparing himself to other lads, SIL Richard also indicates that different lads will have different "barriers" at which banter is seen as unacceptable, but that his does not align with others':

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[16] The ways in which homophobia relates to sexual violence and privilege are discussed in more detail in section 7.3.2.2.

> Everyone has that barrier, for some people that barrier's much too far along and it
> should be brought back. (Richard, SIL).

Although Richard does not agree with the limits of banter that other lads have, he can feel pressured to go along with the jokes. He did recognise that he held a privileged position in the laddish group (as captain of the football team) and was therefore able "challenge" banter which he saw as inappropriate. Richard explains that while he is able to resist the sexist banter of lad culture, this is not true for all lads, and may be dependent on the extent to which they successfully perform hegemonic masculinity:

> I'm quite a strong character, I can handle that, I can handle a bit of backlash for it. But
> I think there are definitely other people in there who find it uncomfortable but can't
> say because they don't feel like they're high enough inside the social hierarchy or
> they're not confident enough in themselves to pull away from the group (Richard,
> SIL).

He again confirms that lads are not homogenous, but that there are prevailing discourses which can be difficult to resist. Resistance is possible, only if a lad holds privilege in the social group, or holds enough masculine capital. The majority do not feel "confident enough" to resist. Nonetheless, those who do not display complicity, as Richard didn't while football captain, are subject to "backlash" from other teammates. Lawrence (SIL) also indicates that his discomfort with sexism makes him the target of banter from laddish friends who attend another university which has a strong focus on sports. He describes these lads, who he knows from his hometown, as having similar interests to him, but that "most of them are actually now quite misogynistic or like purposefully un-PC like to get a reaction out of me." He cites examples of this rhetoric as mockery of self-identifying (most commonly associated with transgender students) and misogynist language: "'I identify as a toaster', like that kind of thing, and refer[ring] to women as 'slags.'" In identifying that this language is used "to get a reaction", he implies that this humour is not necessarily routine for lads, but that it serves the purpose of othering those who hold progressive politics. If those with left-leaning beliefs are constructed as the object of humour, it is implied that inclusivity is not common among lads. That is, one can either be complicit in discriminatory banter that they do not approve of, or subject to subordinating policing from other group members.

6.3.2.4 Marginalisation

The marginalisation of working-class men and men of colour was not specifically asked about in interviews, so this cannot be discussed in detail. Nevertheless, the references made to lads of

colour were few, with whiteness presented as the norm of lad culture (as in section 5.4). SIL Lawrence did refer to a laddish friend who began using an outdated racialised term:

> when his friends came to uni, started saying like "coloured" and that. And when they pulled him up on it, he was like "Why does that offend you?" (Lawrence, SIL).

The use of the term, as well as the questioning of the offence experienced by those hearing it, point to the potential marginalisation of men of colour in lad culture.

6.3.3 Banter as postfeminist and neoliberal

This section will consider the extent to which the practice of banter is evident of the impact of neoliberalism on subjectivities. Drawing on Gill's (2007, 2017) neoliberal postfeminist sensibility, I will argue that the presentation of banter as 'just a joke', and harmless, is based on an assumption that misogynist and homophobic jokes are ironic references to discriminatory language of the past. Furthermore, the jokes are presented as separate from the structural context in which they are made. That is, they are individualised: those telling the jokes are simply seeking individual entertainment, and those offended by the jokes are choosing to be offended. In addition, McGuigan (2014) argues that the neoliberal self is disaffected; banter is presented as something not to be taken seriously, and lads as those who do not take life seriously. There is some evidence in the data that banter is approached as a competition, though binge drinking, casual sex and playing sport are practices where this element is more evident. Finally, this section will conclude with the suggestion that banter is utilised as a method of emotional communication in a context where emotional displays are policed. Banter can therefore be seen as a somewhat escape from the neoliberal – an opportunity to be affected.

Firstly, the discourse of banter as 'just a joke' is evident in examples from questionnaire data (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture):

> …claims of banter that are often direct insults and a lack of considerations, or regard for others' feelings

> …making insulting comments which are presented as jokes, and therefore which the victim/recipient isn't allowed to object to

These both refer to the enshrining of potentially discriminatory language within humour as a method of justifying intentionally offensive language. SIL Lawrence describes the humour of some laddish friends:

> Most of them are actually now quite misogynistic or like purposefully un-PC (Lawrence, SIL).

The laddish group therefore offers space in which to flout the norms of political correctness; where one may make jokes without concern, where hegemony is maintained. Gough and Edwards (1998) found that when a male friendship group drank together at home, conversation contained examples of homophobia, misogyny and racism. They suggest that speakers recognise these elements to be socially unacceptable, but that they relish the opportunity to drink with homosocial group(s) in order to "let off steam" (p. 413) in this way. The authors demonstrate that lads are aware of the implications of their jokes but enjoy being able to make offensive statements in the haven of the male social group. It's uncertain whether laddish behaviours are adopted within a group in order to intentionally contravene notions of political correctness, or that behaviours are undertaken because each individual expects that this is the norm of the group, but individually does not hold these beliefs.

Positioning such comments as ironic imitations of the past belies the fact that the language, delivery and wider context of the jokes are similar. The belief that the use of misogynist humour can be ironic, rather than representative of misogynist discourses and patriarchal power, relates to discourses of postfeminism in popular culture (McRobbie, 2004). Such discourses assert that the goals of feminism have been achieved, that women and men hold equal power, and that misogyny is so far past, that its use must constitute satire. Some have argued that this actually represents a 'backlash' against the successes of feminism (Faludi, 1991), though this may be too simplistic. University activist David argues that this underlies laddish behaviours:

> [lad culture] seems like that is something which was almost created as an attempt to reclaim "being a man" from feminists and it was just kind of meant to be "oh well we're just lads, this is what they do" when they catcall or do all sorts of other horrific things... it's celebrating being a white a privileged white man. (David, University Activist).

Gill (2008) argues that postfeminist and anti-feminist discourses run in parallel, in that postfeminist rhetoric depends on at once believing that the goals of feminism have been met, thus feminism was valuable but is no longer needed, and that feminism is useless. Gill sees postfeminist sensibilities as a gendered expression of neoliberalism. Phipps (2016) has argued that the proposed increase in university lad culture is, in part, a result of the hegemony of neoliberalism, and in particular the marketisation of higher education. Neoliberalism began as an economic system and governance style in which the 'free market' is prioritised (Harvey, 2005) and in which public services are privatised, but has since been viewed as a pervasive system which produces individualised neoliberal subjectivities (Gill & Scharff, 2013).

In this context, social inequalities may be considered a result of individual choices rather than structural oppression, thereby justifying the use of misogyny and homophobia as simply jokes. Nevertheless, these jokes are routinely aligned with hierarchies of power:

> The culture of men (usually white) which has sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic, and generally insensitive to minority groups "humour" under the guise of "banter" so that they basically poke fun at people who are unlike them but claim that it is okay because they're only "having a laugh" and don't really mean it, even though those views can be widespread and widely held across society and also harmful. (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).

By defending banter of those with privilege "men (usually white)" discriminating against those in marginalised groups as "having a laugh", lad culture may be seen as a neoliberal project. This serves to minimise the harm caused by banter, thereby justifying harm to those in less privileged groups. This positioning also allows lads to act with impunity, as the defence of humour may be difficult to circumvent, owing to the subjective nature of humour.

6.3.3.1   Individualism – prioritising your own fun

In addition, banter is a practice in which the enjoyment of individual lads is prioritised over the feelings of others; banter is individualised. In prioritising individual experience, rather than social hierarchies, banter is constructed as nothing more than a group of friends making jokes. This discursively locates the jokes as time and context specific, as though they are not relevant to wider structural inequalities. This is often related to the privilege that lads have over those in other groups (that the laddish subject is privileged by many structures, such as heteropatriarchy and white supremacy as discussed in chapter 5). For example, this questionnaire response defines lad culture as:

> A culture that encourages young men (usually white, straight, cis) to behave in intimidating ways that disproportionately prioritise their own sense of fun/humour over everyone else's in the vicinity. (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture).

A link is being drawn between a laddish preference for having as much fun as possible and the associated problem that this can result in a lack of care for the feelings of others. Many other open-text responses pointed out this perception of lads as ignorant or "not aware of others", saying that lads are commonly found "acting like they don't care about the feelings of others." One participant rated their open-text laddish behaviour "ignorance in regard to others and difference" as 100% central to lad culture. Another qualitative response stated that lad culture involved showing "a lack of considerations or regard for others' feelings", seems to imply that

the sometimes hurtful actions of lads are a consequence of adopting an attitude that nothing is to be taken seriously. Both echo the difference in perception of banter between lads and non-lads discussed in the previous section, whereby lads characterise their jokes as fun, but non-lads frequently perceive this as harassment.

This lack of care for others' feelings in banter is also noted by staff in higher education, for example Jackson and Sundaram (2020) found that for banter: "The emphasis is on having fun, not taking things too seriously and not worrying about how others might view or be impacted by the behaviour." (p. 15). It is perhaps unsurprising that in a culture which valorises this individualism, little concern is paid to the issue of privilege, and the oppression of marginalised groups. This lack of concern is only possible because of the privilege that lads hold within the university – the jokes are simply jokes when they are not offensive to the teller. They are not offended by discriminatory jokes, because those discriminated against (women and non-heterosexual men) are not idealised in lad culture (see chapter 5). Nevertheless, although the jokes made within banter are positioned as though they are made without care for others, it is clear that this means without care for those who are not SILs. The jokes are indeed often made with the intention of amusing other lads, mocking other lads within the group in order to prove oneself and improve group status, or to police the norms of the laddish group by deriding those who don't find the jokes funny. Recent research (Bolton et al., 2021, p. 1) has found that groups of young men use sexual jokes and violence against women as a means of "cementing" their friendships with one another. Indicating that while individualism is evident within lad culture, so too is homosociality. Nevertheless, there are those within the group who do not find the jokes funny, or who are hurt by the jokes (such as non-heterosexual SILs being hurt by homophobia), so true collectivism is hard to identify among laddish humour (Johansson & Odenbring, 2021).

One questionnaire respondent goes as far as to say that lad culture involves "taking advantage of others," indicating that a potential extreme of not taking things seriously, is to prioritise one's own fun to the point that others' discomfort is exploited for fun. Further, this comment could be referring to taking advantage of others' bodies and might relate to a perceived relationship between lad culture and sexual violence - this association will be explored in more depth in chapter 7 – in that a culture which prioritises lads' own fun over the wants/needs of others might justify non-consensual sexual encounters.

6.3.3.2   Disaffection – not taking things seriously

Another example of neoliberal subjectivity which is evident in the laddish practice of banter, is disaffection. The performative 'fun' of banter, derisive humour used to police behaviours of those in the group and jockey for top position, means that lads must go along with banter or be the target of it. SILs are seen as those who do not take anything seriously. As one questionnaire

participant puts it: "They tend to think everything is a joke." In order to be a successful lad, then, one must receive banter without being offended. As SIL Matthew noted "the onus is on the receiver to be comfortable" with whatever banter is directed toward them, and crucially to "retort with something equally witty." This concept that effective lads are able to both give and receive banter is repeated in interview with SIL Georgina who says "you've got to be giving it back yaknow, you've got to be quick witted." SIL Richard argues that banter serves a positive role in managing the ego of SILs:

> [Banter can] help you keep your ego in check to remember that just as much as you
> can give out, people are more than willing to give to you. (Richard, SIL).

The required reciprocity of banter, that one must reply with something equally humorous, is used to imply that those who are offended by the banter they experience or who do not wish to retaliate are seen as the problem. In this way those who complain about being hurt are positioned as 'killjoys' (Ahmed, 2010). Similarly, though, those who only give banter but do not accept responses from others are seen as poor exemplars of laddism. One might be mistaken for thinking that a shared understanding of banter must therefore be at play within the laddish group, though this is not the case for one participant: Lawrence disliked banter because he'd "never had a thick skin", a point which he saw as to his detriment, rather than an issue with the form of humour itself. A SIL must be able to both take the practice of banter seriously enough to keep it up, but not take the jibes themselves seriously enough to be affected by them. In Connell's discussion of hegemonic masculinity, being stoic and unemotional are attributes which are valorised.

This attitude, which seems firmly based in the practice of banter, is often applied more generally the affective life of SILs. Gill (2017) asserts that the gendered neoliberal subjectivity of postfeminism has a cultural, affective and psychic life, and that the norms of this sensibility create pressure on women to experience their everyday lives in neoliberal ways. As such, Gill argues that they may adopt a 'positive attitude' and develop emotional resilience. So too, do the neoliberal norms of the idealised laddish subject become embedded in the emotional practice of SILs. However, the privilege held by masculinity in the patriarchal neoliberal milieu means that lads are encouraged to apply a 'cool capitalist' approach (McGuigan, 2011) and become disaffected.

Applying a disaffected attitude to banter, meaning that the idea that comments on any topic can be made/taken in jest, may be applied to general life. For example, when rating open-text items on the extent to which they were central to lad culture, three participants referred to this disaffection (quotes show the phrase they filled into the open-text item, and the number score they rated this at out of 100):

Claiming not to take anything seriously (100)

Pretending not to take anything or anyone seriously (100)

Not taking things seriously (76)

The former two responses indicate disbelief on the part of the participants that SILs truly take nothing seriously, but that this practice/attitude is performed in lad culture. SIL Lawrence also identifies the relationship between having an insouciant attitude and identifying as a lad, he notes that a laddish attitude "wouldn't be taking yourself too seriously, that's quite important." Being carefree is applied not only to one's experiences or pressures, but also to the self. This is perhaps a self-preservation tactic, given the expectation for lads to engage in banter. If a lad were to take themselves seriously and experience frequent jokes at their expense, which they find difficult to stomach, they may choose to adopt a carefree attitude. Alternatively, banter may have developed as an extension of holding a carefree attitude. SIL Matthew explains that the attitude is extended to all aspects of life, saying that a laddish attitude involves "taking as few things seriously as possible." He does specify that there are some things which cannot be approached with disinterest, "where they coincide with key lad behaviour", giving examples such as attending rugby practice sessions, or socials. An entirely laidback attitude could result in low buy-in for laddish practices, especially those which can be socially difficult, such as banter, or the potential humiliation of extreme binge drinking. In fact, Matthew articulates that "It isn't possible to maintain behaviours for both a sportsperson and a lad", referring to the expectation of commitment and focus to be an effective sportsperson which stands at odds with the laissez-faire attitude associated with lad culture. This may be understood as a contradiction between the influence of neoliberalism (which promotes disaffection) and the norms of laddish hegemonic masculinity (which demands competition and loyalty to the laddish group).

SIL Georgina argued that not taking things seriously is the prime attitude of lad culture:

> it's just a bit of like, carefree and brush it off your shoulder, you've gotta have fun (Georgina, SIL).

She elaborates on the underlying reasoning for adopting this attitude, stating that one has "gotta have a good time cos we're only here for a short time kinda thing." Here, she applies the laissez-faire attitude which she associates with lad culture to life itself, taking an opportunistic approach to having as much fun as possible in one's life. The response speaks to a somewhat individualistic desire to get what you can from life, to take advantage of all opportunities for fun (potentially at the expense of others' fun). SIL John also notes the sense of freedom associated with the carefree disaffected attitude of lad culture, that to be within lad culture meant "feeling like you could let loose a little bit." Although the permission to be carefree is characterised as a

positive aspect of lad culture by SIL interviewees, having an attitude that things are to be taken with levity might have insidious consequences. Indeed, lad culture was often described by non-lads as not simply carefree, but actually intentionally *careless*.

Tied in with the perception that lad culture is related to not caring about anything, is the claim that lads are emotionally insensitive. This could be viewed as the epitome of disaffection. Along these lines is an open-text rating questionnaire response, where a participant rated "seeing emotionality as weakness" at 89 out of 100 on the centrality of this attribute to lad culture. SIL Richard explicitly referred to this in our interview:

> one thing that people generally perceive to be laddish is emotional insensitivity... [his teammates] in ways they're very emotionally insensitive, like they don't really think about how their actions are. (Richard, SIL).

Nevertheless, he argues that this is an oversimplification of the nature of these lads, who he describes as willing to support one another through emotional hardships and help each other with anything.

6.3.3.3 Competition and banter

Some have argued that laddish banter is competitive itself, though this was not a frequent finding. Neoliberalism can be credited with the increased importance placed on self-surveillance and market position; in this context, competition thrives, as evident in relation to binge drinking in section 6.2.3In terms of banter, the need to 'one up' other lads in order to be the funniest, or most outrageous, may lead to the telling of increasingly discriminatory jokes. One university activist feels that this is not done for the purpose of being discriminatory, but in order to be daring and shock fellow lads. Edward, who works in Student Support, said:

> But I also think lad culture is about the shocking yaknow, thing which they know are shocking to shock, as a sort of outlet of "when can you say that anymore?, when can you shock people?" (Edward, University Activist).

The idea that lad culture involves intentionally flouting the maxims of social acceptability has been prevalent in laddish media (Gill, 2003), beginning with the tagline for *loaded* magazine (since May 1994) which claimed to be "For men who should know better." This section has argued that while banter may be positioned as ironic and just a joke, that the SILs interviewed are aware of the privilege that they hold in making such jokes, and they know that their jokes are discriminatory.

6.3.3.4 Banter as emotional communication

Although the prior sections refer to the individualism and disaffection of laddish banter, many participants referred to the use of this jocular discourse as a means of developing emotional relationships within the laddish group; that the use of humour to demean, may be considered a method of including all members of the group. This echoes findings from Nichols' (2018b) study of a Rugby League club, which found that banter was used as a means of communicating emotions among lads. Therefore, although there is significant evidence to suggest that banter may be harmful to those outside the group, and that banter is a means of organising the laddish group in relation to the idealised laddish subject, we must consider why banter remains popular for those who participate in it.

Banter was described by SIL Georgina as "a comfort thing" wherein the limits are understood by members of the laddish group, so that even comments which may appear offensive to outsiders are acceptable to group members, because "we all know exactly how people are and not to pick on certain things cos they're like touchy subjects". In SIL Matthew's interview, he made reference to having been called a "shit lad" by his university Rugby League team, a term which he explained:

> it was only a half-insult, as by having a nickname like this (in rugby we called them call-signs), it meant that you had become accepted as part of the group. (Matthew, SIL).

In this example, use of a potentially hurtful term was, among team members (and the laddish group), seen as a positive practice, used to create a sense of belonging. Matthew is being directly compared to the idealised laddish subject in this case. Nevertheless, by calling him a "shit lad" his teammates are indicating that he is considered a lad. The importance of being seen as part of the group should not be understated, especially in the competitive neoliberal context of higher education. The policing of group membership and discriminatory humour against those who do not measure up to the idealised laddish subject can be damaging, but for those who *do* measure up, the acknowledgement of that is affirming.

A potential positive of banter, and the jokey nature of laddish friendships, is that it allows for the easy discussion of emotional topics. SIL Georgina discussed the way that humour may be used:

> If you've got big news to tell someone, you'll bring it up as a joke first (Georgina, SIL).

In this way, the use of humour may be considered a method of developing affective bonds with other group members – something which may prove difficult in the competitive individualistic context of neoliberal lad culture. SIL Georgina describes the connection, saying:

> It's a very push and push and push environment. So there's always someone to
> counter balance you, but there's always someone to make sure you're OK. (Georgina,
> SIL).

She seems to be suggesting that within the competitive neoliberal context of lad culture, that the laddish group may also offer a saving grace for those who are included in the group. Although the practice of banter is influenced by neoliberalism, the same practice may also provide solace for those who are supported in the group.

There is some suggestion from SIL Richard that homophobia may be used ironically to indicate resistance to homophobia:

> So like my closest friends will, on occasion, take homophobic jabs at me, but it's
> always in the context that I know they're not homophobes. It's almost the thing
> they're laughing at is the homophobic belief or the absurdity of the homophobic itself.
> Whereas, with people I don't know as well, I wouldn't tolerate that kind of thing. I
> suppose because I don't know, or I can't be sure that they don't actually mean it.
> (Richard, SIL).

In describing these instances as occasional, and acceptable when delivered by only those closest to him, Richard implies that laddish homophobia most often does not follow this pattern. By indicating that he "can't be sure" that homophobic lads do not mean what they say, he indicates that while homophobic banter may be discursively positioned as "just a joke", that this does not ring true for him. Although there is the potential for banter to be ironic, and make jokes at homophobia, within lad culture, this is not the norm. Homophobia in lad culture is more often used to subordinate non-heterosexual men.

Further, SIL Lawrence suggested that the norms of banter have shifted, that some forms of discriminatory language are no longer deemed acceptable:

> … it doesn't have to be intrinsic. For example so racism, at one point might have been
> intrinsic to what it was like in football terraces, now you rarely see it. (Lawrence,
> SIL).

Of course, his perception may be influenced by his privilege as a white man, as recent reports suggest that racism among football fanatics is prevalent (Bassam, 2020).

Although, banter may be positioned as a method of challenging discriminatory language, as with SIL Richard's challenging of homophobic language, it is difficult to rationalise banter as a positive force within lad culture. For example, SIL John referred to the fact that jokes made among lads were understood as being unacceptable outside of lad culture. He described his friends having a group message thread where one friend frequently made politically incorrect

statements. Among the group they joked that they were recording these statements for blackmailing this friend if he ever ran for a political office.

> Like we'd often say, we'd all be screwed if anyone saw like this book or this Facebook messenger chat. That's kind of I guess you could say there was some element of what happens in there stays in there. (John, SIL).

Rather than a transformative potential of humour, John seems to be referring to an understanding among the group that the jokes made are socially unacceptable and discriminatory, but that they can be justified in the context of the laddish group.

While espousing misogynist or racist beliefs among friends is not comparable to acts of violence and hate crimes, when considered on a continuum (such as Liz Kelly's continuum of sexual violence (1987)), it can be inferred that laddish behaviours may give rise to such acts. Certainly, by acting out misogynist, racist or homophobic banter, although individuals may not support those views, the group is potentially condoning hate speech and other forms of harassment. Further, there is an assumption that those within the group are not harmed by the banter, reiterating the implication that the idealised laddish subject is the norm of lad culture. If SILs are harmed, it is because they do not measure up to the 'ideal', not because there is something inherently harmful about such banter. More extreme behaviours are implicitly condoned by the lack of intervention by group members. While lads may not physically harm outgroup members, people who are in the outgroup (i.e. not in the laddish group) are derided by the lads. By insisting that women, people of colour and LGBTQ individuals are worthy of disdain or mockery, a tolerance of such behaviour is implied. These discursive practices confer powerful status onto cisgender, white, able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual men and repudiate or under-represent all those outside of these privileged identities. The enactors of harassing and violent behaviours (whether members of the laddish group or not) may consider the dominance of lad culture in universities as an indication that these behaviours are 'normal'. In this way, they feel shielded from repercussions. Alternatively, the laddish group may result in individual members feeling pressured into action. The question becomes not how laddism is adopted or perpetuated, but how the troubling extreme behaviours are rationalised by the majority of non-violent participants.

6.4 Playing Sports

Playing sports is frequently understood as a laddish practice in prior literature (see section 2.4.3). However, in the questionnaire, this was not rated highly as a behaviour which was central to lad culture (see section 4.3.1), with playing sport only rated at an average of 55.09 out of 100 on its centrality to lad culture. Further, those that play sports at least some of the time

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did have significantly higher self-reported laddism, but the relationship between laddism and playing sport is not linear. This could be because very few participants engaged in sport or rated themselves as highly laddish.

This section considers references to sport in qualitative data, considering the importance of playing sports to identifying as a lad first. Then, the extent to which the practice of playing sports is performative hegemonic masculinity will be discussed. The practice will then be explored as it relates/does not relate to neoliberalism or may act as a haven from neoliberalism.

6.4.1 Importance of playing sports

Qualitative data do support a relationship between lad culture and sport, with 10 of the 56 questionnaire definitions of lad culture referring to sport in some way. For some, this was specific to "football hooligans" or those "often involved in sports like rugby and football" but the majority just referred to lads as those who play sports. This was also made clear in the interviews with SILs, 4 out of 5 of whom played sports regularly, 3 of these on college or university teams. SIL Georgina went so far as to say that:

> with my mates we're kind of *always* active, we're always doing something … [we usually] play football, like kick a ball around. (Georgina, SIL).

Similar to Georgina, Lawrence's relationship with sport extended beyond team membership. He described playing football:

> not like for a team or anything, just like whenever there's an opportunity to.
> (Lawrence, SIL).

Engagement in sport therefore seems almost a requirement for laddish identity, though this does not need to be playing on a college or university team to count. SIL Lawrence, though not a member of a sports team, was a keen fan of his hometown football team, an interest which he felt was one of the factors identifying him as a lad. He felt that national anti-lad culture initiatives, such as that of the NUS (the aforementioned Tackling Lad Culture Hub (NUS, 2015)) were targeted at football fans, that they "were referring to us, like in the terraces." He seems to intimate that it was the rise of anti-lad culture rhetoric (in national media for example) that caused him to partially identify with the term lad, as he saw the comments as being in contrast to his experience of football fanaticism. He took the anti-lad culture statements "as a personal insult" and although acknowledging some truth in the claims that lads used discriminatory language, for example, he felt that in anti-laddism arguments "a whole part of British culture [was] being disregarded."

Only SIL John said that he wasn't particularly involved with sports, and began his interview saying that he wasn't sure he fit in with the identity of lad for this, among other, reasons. He did specify that there were particular sports with a reputation "like traditional laddish sports like rugby or boxing or football". Sport is certainly associated with lad culture, in part because of the relationship between playing sports and hegemonic masculinity, which is relevant to the idealised laddish subject.

6.4.2 Sports and hegemonic masculinity

Playing sports may be considered a hegemonically masculine practice, as it allows participants to display many of the traits valorised in hegemonic masculinity. For example, physical strength is endorsed in Western masculinity, and playing sport allows lads to demonstrate their physical strength. The use of physical strength is clearly important for SILs, as SIL Georgina noted that different team sports have different levels of associated laddishness, particularly for women's teams. When comparing women's football and netball teams with her own rugby team, for example, she stated "there's a little bit more rough and tumble than your general female sports." It seems that the extent to which a sport is deemed laddish is based on the extent to which it requires strength/violence; to which the participant displays embodied masculinity.

Further, sporting contexts are a site of other hegemonically masculine practices. Binge drinking was often associated with sports teams in discussion of lad culture. In particular, SILs referred to "socials", drinking events for members of a sports team to bond together. These are often seen as a requirement of inclusion in the laddish group, as those who do not attend are seen as less a part of the team. The relationship between binge drinking and hegemonic masculinity has already been established (discussed in section 6.2.2). Research by Partington et al. (2013) found that those who play university sports were more likely than those who didn't to binge drink, drink more often and have issues with alcohol consumption. This was particularly true for those who engaged in team sports, as compared with those engaging in more individual sports.

Sporting contexts were often associated with discriminatory banter, which has also been linked to hegemonic masculinity (section 6.3.2). SIL Richard noted the use of homophobic language directed at an opposing team, such as "name-calling, very aggressive stuff". Owing to his position of power as the captain of the college football team, he felt able to challenge the derogatory language. When describing his conversation with the teammate about homophobic language, he did justify referring to an opponent as a "prick" but reasoned that "he's not a prick because of his sexuality, he's just a prick that happens to be gay." Although Richard did find the homophobia unacceptable, in part because of his position as a bisexual man in the group, the

use of disparaging language in the context of sporting rivalry was acceptable. SIL Richard indicated that this was specific to the sporting arena:

> there are two or three of them with whom I'd happily sit down and talk but you put a
> pair of football boots on and some - we're just awful to each other. (Richard, SIL).

Engagement in sports therefore offers a social context in which the practice of banter is taken to a justified extreme. Nevertheless, SIL Lawrence described football terraces as both "a breeding ground of a lot of hateful stuff" *and* a context with "a sense of camaraderie." Sporting contexts are associated with harmful banter then, or outright harassment, but for SILs this may be counter-balanced by the importance of the group dynamic. These findings reflect the hegemonic masculinity 'package' of sport, theorised by Dempster (2009), with heavy drinking, physical violence and sexualised behaviours.

6.4.3 Sports and neoliberalism

This section will consider playing sports as a practice which is influenced by and contradicts neoliberalising discourses. Although competition is an intrinsic element of team sports, which is evident within lad culture, the individualism of neoliberalism is not well matched to a pursuit which requires collaboration. Playing team sports provides SILs with a ready-made group, which depends on teamwork and connection. This environment may be viewed as a haven from the expectations of individualistic lad culture, a source of comfort for SILs, or a potential site of peer pressure.

6.4.3.1 Competition

Sport was central to SIL Richard's conceptualisation of himself as a lad, when asked to describe a moment where he felt most like a lad, he described playing football with his college team, and the way in which his team related to the opposing team:

> It's tribal honestly ... We, twenty-two university educated men, descend into animals.
> (Richard, SIL).

This explanation seems to distance SILs from their actions when engaged in sporting competition. The idea that they are animalistic implies a lack of control which SILs do have. The relationship to other members of his team, and their competition with a rival team were notable factors which cemented the idea of this scenario as laddish in his estimation. Being a member of the team was related to animalistic behaviours, as with Phipps and Young's (2013, 2015a) findings that female university students referred to lad culture as a 'pack mentality'. The idea

behind this was that lads in groups acted in ways that individual lads would not. The importance of the team dynamic was discussed as extending beyond the sporting context:

> As part of the rugby team, there was a further element to this, which was that anything you did, you did as part of a team. This could be really dangerous, as you knew that if you got into any trouble (physical or otherwise, including relationship), that the other members of the team would be almost obliged to help you. The competitive part of lad behaviour combined with this group mentality meant that there was a sort of pleasure in doing the most extreme things possible. This included personal hygiene, drinking, etc. (Matthew, SIL).

The spirit of competition from team sports can be seen extended to the affective life of SILs, to sometimes "really dangerous" consequences, including physical violence. Indeed, one open-text response for behaviours which are central to laddism rated "Picking fights or deliberately causing arguments" at an 85 out of 100. The impact of the neoliberalised competition is a desire to do "the most extreme things possible" for enjoyment, or to come out on top in the laddish group.

This may be applied to any area of life, for example, SIL Georgina describes the attitude of lads as "competitive all the time" stating that "you've always gotta one up someone." SIL Matthew also referred to an environment of "constant competition" among the laddish group. Similarly, a questionnaire response defines lad culture as "Everything is a competition or a challenge to be beaten", indicating the pervasiveness of a competitive attitude, in that it can impinge on everything. SIL Richard also refers to the way that this attitude can be present outside the parameters of the laddish group:

> I can't stand losing, even at things that I know don't matter, it really annoys me. Like my girlfriend and I were playing Scrabble, it's immaterial really who wins. (Richard, SIL).

Certainly, then, the need for self-surveillance and constant competition between lads, or of lads with others, underlines much of laddish behaviour. This is related to sport, but extended to all aspects of life, as a result of neoliberalising discourses.

6.4.3.2 Individualism and disaffection in sports

Elements of the neoliberal self which are not clearly related to the practice of playing sports are that of individualism and disaffection. Success in team sports requires collaborative teamwork, a shared goal and investment in winning. This means that there are contradictions in the idealised laddish subject, as with hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1990) investigated the case study of an "iron man" athlete, who was considered an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity

because of his physical strength and prowess but who could not take part in masculine pursuits such as binge drinking, fighting or casual sex. She used this as an illustration of the contradictory nature of the ideal, in that it would be impossible for one to be both an exceptional athlete and a man who engaged in frequent binge drinking. This same contradiction is evident in the laddish subject, who takes nothing seriously (as discussed in relation to the practice of banter in section 6.3.3.2) but is also keenly interested in sports. SIL Matthew addresses this in interview:

> Taking as few things seriously as possible, except where they coincide with key lad behaviour. However, coupling this with the rugby team, a key attitude was taking training and games seriously. It isn't possible to maintain behaviours for both a sportsperson and a lad, and in this case (and in most cases, I imagine), the sports behaviours were preferred during the specifically sporting periods. (Matthew, SIL).

He also describes that the sports team he was a member of was less popular among new students than other teams, and recognises this as an issue for the standard behaviour of lad culture:

> If the senior members of the squad had been rubbish people to the new recruits, then they would not have come back, so there may have been a limiting factor on how much laddism would be feasible. (Matthew, SIL).

In drawing this distinction, he positions laddism as involving being "rubbish people" to new students in a sports team. Although there is no further elaboration on the kinds of behaviours that would be entailed here, it can be assumed that - from Matthew's point of view - being in a more established sports team at university, where laddism is practised with fewer "limiting factors", would be a negative experience for incoming students. He therefore argues that being a lad and a sportsperson are contrary subjectivities, expanding on the literature which draws a direct link between the two. There is a link between playing sports and hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism, which are important to understanding the idealised laddish subject. But playing sport is not unilaterally related to the neoliberal self.

6.4.3.3 The importance of being part of a group

Alternatively, playing sports and being part of a sports team, can be considered a kind of antidote to the individualising discourses of neoliberalism, in that this offers SILs a community. The importance of the laddish group was made clear in many SIL interviews. Some referred to the camaraderie of being a member of their sports team, others were referring to their friendship group, and for some the two were somewhat indistinguishable. Being a member of the group gave participants a sense of belonging, and a network of friends to lean on for

personal support. For some participants, it even provided a feeling that they had not experienced elsewhere.

SIL Matthew also "very much enjoyed being involved and being accepted as part of the group" in his experience of team sports, indicating the positive affect associated with being considered a group member. SIL Georgina describes her rugby team experience in similar terms, as "companionship, camaraderie and like a sense of being together". She goes on to specify that the feeling is associated with the team's goals: "being in it together for like a one goal, like being in it together for one thing". Again, there's an explicit link made between the competitive element of being in a sports team, and the associated sense of belonging. This parallels findings of lad culture as a 'pack mentality' where connection to the group, and the groups' enjoyment, is prioritised over those outside the group (Phipps & Young, 2013).

Members of university staff (interviewed for Jackson & Sundaram, 2015, p. 3) also considered the positive impact of lad culture, with regard to the "role it might play in creating strong social and emotional bonds between men". For SIL Georgina in particular, the laddish group represented a novel circumstance. She enthused: "I haven't felt friendship like it." It is worth reiterating that for Georgina, her laddish community is a women's rugby team, and her friendship group a subset of the team who are predominantly queer women. Therefore, to some extent, it could be argued that her feeling of acceptance and affinity with the laddish group may be as a result of the shared experience of sexuality, as well as their shared laddism.

Additionally, being a member means being supported by the group, as in Richard's comment that "if you asked them they'd help, it wouldn't put them back, they're willing to be there for you." SIL Georgina also counter-acted the implication of individualism in lad culture:

> …even though it seems like they don't care about you at all, everybody's always at the centre of everybody's thoughts. (Georgina, SIL).

But it was acknowledged by some, that if taken to the extreme, the relationship to the group could have negative consequences. For SIL Matthew, the laddish group is both positive and negative:

> I think lads represent a support network, made of people who don't necessarily know what a support network is meant to be (specifically at university). There are exceptions to this, but when the group dynamic is significantly made up of people competing with each other, then there can be very unhealthy consequences… This said, there are definitely positives to being part of this group of people- it is selective, so by being part of it, you can feel somewhat special. You know that when it comes to external members, you will almost always be preferred, which is a very positive thing to think about. (Matthew, SIL).

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Inclusion in the group means that SILs feel connected to one another, feel "special" and are supported. But the competitive element of individualistic laddism means that even those in-group are vying for top spot. In addition to the constant competition between lads, SIL Matthew points out that the requirement of the group to support one another can be problematic. When asked about the relationship between sexual violence and lad culture he reasoned:

> At the least offensive, it makes me think of young men (often members of sports teams) acting in a way that makes women feel helpless. This is then compounded by the idea that they have friends that will immediately back them up if they get in trouble. At the most offensive, it is a particularly horrific experience for women. (Matthew, SIL).

In this description, the laddish group may be used as a support for SILs "in trouble" for having harassed women. Milgram's theory of agency (1974) proposes that individuals are more likely to commit an act they find morally reprehensible when they feel that the decision to act has been made for them. In the case of the laddish group, the perceived norms of the group may act as an authority which individual members feel they must obey. Furthermore, members may acknowledge that the behaviours are unacceptable but feel protected from retribution by group membership. In this sense, the group can be expected to maintain secrecy and support the perpetrator if they are member of the group.

Evidence of this existing in universities comes from fraternities in US colleges. Sanday (1992) investigated rape-supportive attitudes among fraternity members, and the significant impact that this had on prevalence of sexual violence. More recent research from Franklin et al. (2012) found that perceived group secrecy directly predicted sexual assault, with fraternity membership being an indirect predictor given the related alcohol and drug use of members. Therefore, being a member of a laddish group, or sports team, while supportive in the sense that it provides a sense of belonging, may mean reciprocally supporting those who have committed acts of violence. Though SILs may still acting individualistically (prioritising their own enjoyment over the safety of the women they harass) their actions may be supported by the laddish group.

6.5 Casual Sex

Although not a significant finding in the quantitative items of the questionnaire, an association between casual sex and lad culture was made clear in much of the qualitative data collected, such as the explanation from one questionnaire respondent who said that lad culture is defined by "engaging in casual sex with multiple women". The practice of casual sex, and the associated commodification of sex, is discussed in detail in section 7.3.2. As such this section presents an

overview of the ways in which the practice of casual sex relates to hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism.

It is not surprising that an emphasis on sex, specifically heterosexual sex, is present in a culture which is an exemplar of masculinity, given that a common trope of hegemonic masculinity is virility. Connell's works on masculinity shed light on the heterosexual expectations of hegemonic masculinity in western contexts, and the way that non-heterosexual men are marginalised or branded as feminine. At the heart of this expectation is a conflation of gender and sexuality, described by Butler (1990) as the 'heterosexual matrix', and by Rich as 'compulsory heterosexuality' (1980), whereby women are seen as feminine when attracted to men and men as masculine when attracted to women. SIL Richard described lads as those who are:

> …sexually promiscuous normally very forward at least, with people they find
> attractive, confident in themselves sexually usually have a bit of an inflated ego of
> their own sexual prowess, stuff like that. (Richard, SIL).

SILs frequently engage in casual sex with women and discuss their encounters with one another in a discursive display of heterosexuality. This is bolstered by use of homophobia to subordinate non-heterosexual men and misogyny to denigrate women.

In addition to the requirement of heterosexuality in order to be seen as masculine, the practice of casual sex is affected by neoliberalism. Phipps (2016) has written on the way in which lads compete for sexual 'points' in the neoliberal university, and women are positioned as commodities to be consumed or acquired. Further, rating of sexual partners (through retelling of encounters, and using sites such as RateMyShag.com) indicates the level to which sexuality has become audited. SIL Richard described that "it is just numbers" for some lads, that finding a sexual partner attractive does not impact on the decision to engage in a sexual encounter and that "they'll brag about how unattractive the girl that they slept with last night was." This statement illustrates the extent of objectification in lad culture, that women are seen as commodities to collect regardless of attractiveness. The desire to score points and demonstrate one's heterosexuality is prioritised to the point that one's own and one's sexual partners' desires aren't considered. The competition, consumerism, individualism and disaffection evident within the practice of casual sex create a conducive context for sexual violence within lad culture, as will be addressed in chapter 7.

6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has shown the extent to which laddish practices are indicative of laddism as a hegemonic masculinity in university contexts and are influenced by neoliberalism. Binge

drinking, banter and playing sport were addressed in detail; the practice of casual sex among SILs will be discussed in chapter 7.

Binge drinking is undoubtedly an important element of lad culture, understood by university activists, SILs and non-lad questionnaire participants. Although binge drinking is common among UK university students, binge drinking is a practice understood as performative of hegemonic masculinity (Dempster, 2011), to the extent that those who do not participate are seen as exceptional. A lack of engagement in binge drinking can be justified in those who possess other forms of masculine capital, indicating the perceived importance of this behaviour to laddish masculinity. Binge drinking, through disinhibition, may offer SILs who feel they lack masculine capital an opportunity to perform laddism (Lemle & Mishkind, 1989). Additionally, binge drinking in lad culture can be seen as an articulation of neoliberalism, in that competition and value-for-money consumerism are evident in this practice. Individual enjoyment is sometimes prioritised over the comfort of others, though often binge drinking is used for homosocial bonding. SILs appear disaffected by the potential risk of extreme binge drinking and dominate social spaces with their disorderly behaviour.

Although banter was frequently discussed by SILs and non-lads alike, the perception of banter from SILs is positive, whereas non-lads frequently perceive this as harassment. Banter aligns with Connell's (1987) assertion that a certain configuration of masculinity retains its hegemonic position through the valorisation of hegemonic traits, subordination of non-heterosexual men and complicity of men who stand to gain from its dominance. Not all men are exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, but they uphold this configuration, as they benefit in the form of male privilege, and the patriarchal dividend. Similarly, lads may not agree with every behavioural and attitudinal norms of lad culture, but the dominance of this culture within universities (and elsewhere), as well as the camaraderie provided by membership within a laddish group, were seen as preferable to resistance. The practice of banter is influenced by postfeminist and neoliberal discourses, which are used to position retro-sexist humour as ironic and therefore above reproach. Additionally, the prioritisation of individual enjoyment and disaffection from the feelings of others are also evident in the practice of banter. For some SILs, the comfort of banter, and the inclusion within laddish banter, offer a safe haven from the competitive nature of lad culture. Though whether this feels safe does depend on SILs having a "thick skin". Indeed, banter can be harmful to those *within* lad culture as well as non-lads.

Playing sport is commonly related to lad culture and offers a 'package' of performative practices which serve to position lads as hegemonically masculine, such as binge drinking, banter and competition (Dempster, 2009). Furthermore, the competition traditionally associated with playing sport is discursively extended to the affective lives of SILs, suggesting that neoliberal self-surveillance is a prominent experience of laddish subjectivity. Yet,

individualism and disaffection, although markers of laddism, do not comply with sportsmanship and cannot be understood as related to this practice. Rather, SILs extend the team relationships of sports teams to the wider laddish group and cherish this aspect of lad culture. Even so, the perceived importance of the laddish group, paired with constant competition, mean that the group is not always a safe haven for SILs, or for the women they encounter.

One practice which did not feature prominently in SIL interviews, but is commonly associated with lad culture in prior research, is that of an anti-schoolwork attitude. There are minor references to this in interviews, such as SIL Georgina's comment on attitude to schoolwork among lads in the broader context of the laddish disaffection, she mimics other lads saying "oh I haven't like thought about revising for next week's exam", though acknowledged that she doesn't fit with this norm. Disaffection from schoolwork, or creating the impression that one is disaffected, has been found to be a facet of secondary school lad culture, used as a self-worth protection strategy (Jackson, 2002, 2003). Working class boys perform disaffection from schoolwork to avoid the appearance of being unintelligent or of being feminine – as caring about one's studies is associated with femininity (Epstein, 1998; Renold, 2001). SIL Matthew does make explicit reference to anti-schoolwork rhetoric a central tenet of his experience of lad culture:

> … not caring about academics (although, in [University] this could only go so far) (Matthew, SIL).

He notes that as a member of an academically prestigious university, there were limits to the extent that this attitude could be acted upon. This aligns with Jackson and Dempster's (2009) finding that male undergraduates often find a tension between performing apathy and the importance of success in hegemonic masculinity. Overall, the analysis of data presented in this chapter does hint at what has been found in previous research, that there is a relationship between lad culture and anti-school attitudes/behaviours, but this behaviour is certainly not represented as being equally important to lad culture as others. Though again it should be noted that participants of this research project may not reflect the dominant discourses of lad culture, owing to their positions within their laddish groups, or their attendance at a particularly academically rigorous university.

What is clear from considering these practices, is that many involve the dominance of lads: over other lads, over women, over gay men, over anyone other. This takes place in physical spaces, through humour, through sex and objectification, through sportsmanship. That jockeying for hegemonic position is the key element of lad culture. This relates to neoliberal rationalities, which value meritocracy and

competition, implying that being on top is a signal of personal value. Further, adopting a postfeminist sensibility is relevant to this, as lad culture can be understood as a backlash to the perceived reduction of privilege of men as a result of feminism. University activist Arthur summarised laddish practices in a similar way:

> I think a lot of lad culture is "look at me I'm the dominant one in the group and I'm the powerful one in the group and I'm doing these actions because I'm the coolest, and I'm gonna be the leader of the group". And that's to do with power and also showing power maybe over other people in the way they act towards them. (Arthur, University Activist).

Therefore, laddish practices must be understood as related to the power and privilege that SILs hold in universities, and the western context.

7 Interrogating the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence

7.1 Introduction

Very few studies have investigated SILs' understanding of the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence, which will be addressed in this chapter, answering **R.Q.3.** *Is there a relationship between lad culture and sexual violence?* This chapter will argue that there is a relationship between lad culture and sexual violence, but that this is more nuanced than simply a positive association. Instead, I present evidence that the practices of lad culture, scaffolded by hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism, create a 'conducive context' in which sexual violence may occur with more frequency and in which empathy for survivors of sexual violence is limited. Therefore, how lad culture may facilitate sexual violence in universities must be understood more broadly than simply the perpetration of sexually violent acts by SILs.

This chapter begins with an acknowledgement that sexual violence was frequently defined as central to lad culture by university activist and non-lad questionnaire participants. Though no SILs referred to their own perpetration of sexual violence, some do recognise that lad culture may support those who do commit acts of sexual violence. Analysis will then turn to the ways in which laddish practices (as identified in chapter 6) frame student experience, normalise and trivialise (sexual) violence and cause harm to female and queer SILs as well as those outside of lad culture. Kelly first proposed the concept of a conducive context for (sexual) violence following field work in Central Asia which investigated the factors affecting human trafficking in the region (2005). Her thesis was that overlapping social, economic and political oppression left some people particularly vulnerable to trafficking. In contexts where people were disadvantaged in *multiple* ways, such violence was so ubiquitous that staff working in the field suggested that "everyone has a story" of the trafficking of someone they have known (pp. 101-3). While experiences of sexual harassment in universities are not directly comparable to experiences of trafficking, the omnipresence of misogynist humour (Stanton, 2014) and sexual violence in university contexts (Smith, 2010) illustrates the utility of this concept for analysis of student communities. Kelly noted the relevance of 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1991) as a way of demonstrating why women who are marginalised by multiple intersecting structures are most at risk of harm and least supported following victimisation (Kelly, 2016). In this chapter, I contend that lads' practices are performative of the subordination of women and discursively position such subordination as harmless or normal. The hegemony of lad culture in universities and the reiterative performance of laddish practices create a discursive context conducive to the perpetration of sexual violence and reduced empathy for survivors. The dominance of laddish

practices, which create this context, is upheld by the structural privilege of the laddish ideal (chapter 5).

The laddish practices which create the conditions for sexual violence are banter, heterosexism and binge drinking. For the first of these, I will specifically focus on misogynist/sexualised banter within lad culture. The example of 'rape jokes' banter will be considered as both itself a form of sexual violence - in that women are verbally harassed and harmed by this – and a practice which lays the foundation of sexual violence. Analysis will draw on the concept of sexual violence as existing on a continuum (Kelly, 1987) and will assert that banter trivialises and normalises sexual violence. The reiterative construction of misogyny as a joke, and banter as a postfeminist 'ironic' repurposing of discriminatory language (as seen in lad culture), positions the violence of rape jokes as harmless and positions lads as unimpeachable. Additionally, some SIL participants recognised that, in the use of such jokes, the privilege of the teller was central.

The next section will discuss the 'heterosexism' of lad culture – a term used here to refer to the combination of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980), the prevalence of homophobic banter, and the competitive nature of casual sex within lad culture. The valorisation of heterosexuality as an assumed trait of hegemonic masculinity (and laddism as in section 5.3) is initially considered. While the presence of non-heterosexual SIL participants could suggest that lad culture is somewhat inclusive, it is clear that heterosexism remains the norm of lad culture. As this project is the first to interview non-heterosexual SILs, analysis of their perspectives on laddish homophobia is unique in the study of lad culture. Finally, an examination of the influence that neoliberal marketisation has on subjectivities, and the ways in which this encourages acquisition of sexual capital through competitive casual sex, will be presented. It will be concluded that in these ways, casual sex is frequently divorced from desire within lad culture, which contributes to sexual violence.

Binge drinking is presented as a practice which is frequently understood by SILs as a social context through which lads engage in casual sex. This is related to broader social norms of 'hooking up' among college/university students, indicating that consumption of alcohol is discursively connected to casual sex. In addition, nightclubs are recognised as a site of competitive alcohol-fuelled casual sex in lad culture, a context in which sexual violence is almost ubiquitous for female students. Finally, the construction of sexual violence as trivial within lad culture has far reaching consequences in the use of alcohol in sexual violence perpetration, as narratives of drink spiking are positioned as jokes gone wrong.

This chapter will conclude with analysis of the ways in which the discourses performatively reinforced by laddish practices overlap, and are supported by institutions. In particular, the institutional context of universities, and the investment that HEIs have in

maintaining a positive reputation, are addressed. Finally, the potential for challenging laddish discourses and practices – through the creation of university communities which are conducive to supporting survivors of sexual violence (as recommended in Kelly, 2016) – is analysed.

7.2 **Sexually Violent Lads**

While there may be no questionnaire participants who both self-identify as lads, and admit to having perpetrated sexual violence, many participants refer to examples of harassment or violence perpetrated by lads. For some university activist participants , the perpetration of acts of sexualised violence is synonymous with lad culture:

> When I go out or when I experience people shouting or being like sexually harassed or groped or the pictures like at the ball [of male students miming sex acts with a blow up doll], I would see this is lad culture. (Marie, University Activist).

> It's also increasingly scary as lad culture leaves the sleazy zone of excessive groping in clubs and into the realms of sexual assault with no real acknowledgement, rather an encouragement of rape apologism (see anti- consent lessons movement at Cambridge & practically everything in The Tab). The statistics on sexual assault at Universities are disgusting & I believe that lad culture is a huge reason why. (Emma, University Activist).

For many, sexual violence was not only central to lad culture, but also indicative of - and a logical conclusion of - misogyny within lad culture, as with the following four questionnaire responses to Q.42. Defining Lad Culture:

> A set of ingrained behaviours and attitudes, mostly to do with the perception of women in relation to their sexuality. It manifests itself in ways such as catcalling, on campus sexual violence, harassment on social media by individuals, team and societies, verbal and physical harassment, assault and rape.

> Boys getting drunk, normalising behaviours of harassment and assault, aim is to have as much sex as possible because that makes you cool, *consent is irrelevant* [emphasis added], men who have lots of sex with different people are cool, women who have lots of sex with different people are bad/sluts, relationships are boring.

> It's characterised by being loud; drinking; casual misogyny/sexual harrassment [sic] of women…

> I also understand lad culture to be a source of the continuation of sexism, misogyny and the viewing of women as sexual objects.

In the first response, the participant also describes some of the multiple forms and contexts of sexual violence perpetrated by lads, addressing what Kelly describes as "the extent and variety of sexual violence" in her definition of sexual violence as a continuum (Kelly, 1987 in Hanmer & Maynard, 1987, p. 48). The second respondent describes lad culture as "normalising behaviours of harassment and assault", before going on to refer to non-consensual sexual activity ("consent is irrelevant"), also speaking to Kelly's continuum between frequent normalised misogynist behaviours and acts of violence. Similarly, in describing "casual misogyny" the third definition implies that misogyny is both frequently used by lads and normalised within lad culture to the extent that it is done without forethought. Further, by equating this with "sexual harassment of women", the response speaks to the way in which sexually violent behaviours may be downplayed within lad culture. In all four statements lad culture is also defined by its heterosexual opposition to women, especially in relation to harassment and violence. Further drinking is linked to casual sex in multiple responses (see section 6.2.2), indicating the potential importance of alcohol to sexual harassment. When adding their own laddish behaviour (and rating it on a scale of 0-100) another participant also specified that lad culture involved:

> speaking about women in a degrading way (usually sexually) – 100

The importance of normalising misogyny, heterosexism and binge drinking are crucial to the understanding of lad culture as a conducive context for sexual violence within universities. These factors will be addressed in detail in section 7.3.

Additionally, SILs *themselves* acknowledge the relationship between sexual violence and lad culture in interview data. SIL John opined "Yeah, I think that's a fair thing to say, that there's an association there", though didn't elaborate on the nature of the relationship, or the prevalence of sexual violence within lad culture. When asked "What does it mean to you to be a lad?" Georgina aligned herself with "a being, and togetherness" over what she saw as the more problematic associations with the culture:

> I think most of it does come with negative connotations and I try and not be part of
> that side of it. But yeah, I wouldn't say I typically go round and go to clubs and like
> grope women and stuff like that… I think a lot of lads, or like "Lads" kind of do stuff
> like that, whereas me and my friends kind of don't. (Georgina, SIL).

Although distancing herself from perpetration of sexual violence, Georgina recognises that this reputation is not without substance, acknowledging that she believes other lads do commit these acts. Sexual violence is, for her, undoubtedly linked to lad culture. The specificity of not being the one to "go to clubs and like grope women" suggests that she is aware of both a common location and form of sexual violence enacted by lads, though as a female student this may be as a result of first-hand experience. The NUS Hidden Marks survey found that groping in

nightclubs is a common form of sexual assault for female students (Smith, 2010). Phillip also describes having confronted lads who have behaved in this way, in this context indicating the prevalence of such actions.

> I've yaknow, got in my fair share of sort of tussles with bigger lads than me and bigger people than me by sort of going "that wasn't ok, you just slapped my friend on the arse and she didn't ask you to." (Phillip, University Activist).

Sexual harassment in nightclubs is, then, seen as a laddish practice. When asked to elaborate on the negative connotations, and the existence of sexual violence, of lad culture SIL Georgina reiterated that this was common among male rugby teams.

> A: Is that something that you see amongst lads that you know?
>
> G: Definitely, definitely. It's a bit disgusting. I know of a few things that have happened, not with my rugby team but with like some of the lads in the boys' teams.

Her indication that groping and sexual violence are "definitely" carried out by lads, in addition to John's acknowledgement of the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence, are unique within the field of study. The majority of research on university lad culture depends on data from those outside of the culture (Phipps & Young, 2013; Sundaram & Jackson, 2018), focuses on specific facets of lad culture (e.g. sport (Dempster, 2009); drinking (Dempster, 2011), academic work (Jackson et al., 2014)) or avoids reference to sexual violence (Jefferies, 2019). Nevertheless, this admission is not without caveat, as when asked how she feels about sexual harassment in lad culture, Georgina argues that sexual violence is not limited to lad culture:

> G: It makes me feel sad but only because it's quite true in my experience. Yeah I'd say I understand why people bring it up because it's (oh I can't explain it) it's very common. It's kind of like a hook that anybody can talk about because they know it's like a trigger like it always brings up loads of discussion. Because it's always talked about. But I think we often ignore the fact that sexual harassment happens outside of lad culture.
>
> A: Yeah, it does
>
> G: Yeah well that's it. It's equally prevalent inside, as it is outside. But just cos it's prevalent inside, means that we talk about it.

While it is true that sexual violence occurs outside of the university context, and outside of lad culture, Georgina does agree that the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence is "quite true" in her experience. Therefore, while global gender norms may account for sexual

violence in the wider world, attention must be paid to the specific university context. For example, Craig (2016) has found that involvement in lad culture was positively associated with acceptance of sexual assault. Further, Richard indicates that whether lads themselves are committing acts of sexual violence, they may be complicit in allowing sexually violent acts to occur, and that avoiding discussing the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence is indicative of the privilege of lads (discussed more in section 7.3.1.3):

> I would say pretty much every man that I know has been in a context where they've been around someone who is being sexually aggressive or has expressed sexual aggression and they've either turned a blind eye to it or perhaps not done everything they could've to make that stop. And so I think to sit in your ivory tower and to say that this discussion demonises you when you're not the victim here is something we should stop. (Richard, SIL).

Therefore, it can be argued that sexual violence is a manifestation of laddism, and that lad culture in UK universities provides a context in which sexual violence can occur.

7.3 Lad Culture as a 'Conducive Context' for Sexual Violence

In the previous section, it was established that sexual violence occurs within lad culture, perpetrated by lads against female students. While lads may not be the only male students perpetrating sexual violence, as suggested by Georgina (SIL) above, the practices of lad culture explored in chapter 6 serve to make lad culture a conducive context for sexual violence. In this section, laddish practices of Banter, Heterosexism and Binge Drinking will be considered as they relate to sexual violence in universities. This analysis will again draw on the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism.

7.3.1 Banter

As discussed in section 7.2, many questionnaire participants defined lad culture as involving/contributing to sexual harassment and violence in universities. In this way, and in line with Kelly's (1987, 1988) conceptualisation of a continuum of sexual violence, misogyny and sexist banter may be considered an act of sexual violence in and of themselves. Misogynist jokes can cause harm to listeners, especially those for whom gender-based violence may be a reality. Further, the suggestion that such language is humorous, may trivialise the harm that hearing misogynist comments can have on female (and non-binary) students.

Additionally, several of the questionnaire definitions referred to lads' misogyny, and the relationship between this and sexual violence. A distinction between laddish banter and the potential effects of it is noted by a participant in Owen's (2020) study who said "there's no way

that you can link you and your friends having friendly banter to pushing a man towards sexual assault" (in Owen, 2020, p. 664). In this student's explanation, jokes (no matter how sexist or violent) cannot be said to contribute to acts of sexual violence. Contrary to this, university activist Phillip indicated that what may begin as banter, could result in (sexual) violence.

> I think it can be sexual harassment and it can also be like jokes that get out of hand
> that become harassment. (Phillip, University Activist).

Additionally, through the repeated use of and/or exposure to humour which positions men as dominant, and women as subordinate, violence perpetrated against women may be more likely to be seen as acceptable. For example, exposure to sexist jokes has been linked directly to proclivity to rape (Thomae & Viki, 2013). Using the specific example of 'rape jokes', I will continue to explore the way in which banter is used to perpetrate, invisibilise and normalise sexual violence. I will also address the relationship between rape jokes and the privilege held by those who tell these jokes.

Jokes about sexual violence were commonly referred to as a part of the misogynist banter of lad culture, by SIL and university activist interviewees alike. For example, SIL Georgina located this as not only common, but also a guaranteed source of amusement:

> G: I know groups of friends, groups of lads that I've been in, that's like a hot
>   topic kind of thing
>
> A: Yeah, you can just say that?
>
> G: It's not like you can just say it, that's like if you wanna get a laugh, that's it.

The reference to the prevalence of rape jokes echoes findings from the NUS *Lad Culture and Sexism Survey* wherein 62% of students surveyed indicated that they had heard jokes about sexual assault or rape at university (Stanton, 2014). Laddish media outlet *UniLad* published an infamous "sexual mathematics" joke which stated "85% of rape cases go unreported. That seems to be fairly good odds" (as cited in Phipps & Young, 2015a[17]). In a more recent case, at the University of Warwick, use of rape jokes gained national media attention (Lee & Kennelly, 2019). Group chat messages between male undergraduates, such as "What do we do with girls? RAAAAAAAAAPE!" and "Sometimes it's fun to just go wild and rape 100 girls", were leaked to a student newspaper (The Boar, 2018). Clearly, jokes about sexual assault, and lads telling them, are a common feature of university experience in the UK. In some of the Warwick messages, specific threats of rape were made against named female students, an act which caused harm to

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[17] The original source is no longer available.

the women who read these messages. Consequently, jokes about rape may be seen as a form of sexual violence in their own right.

The frequent use of these jokes within lad culture and locating them as a "hot topic" guaranteed to get a laugh, trivialises the harm caused by sexually violent acts (and indeed the retraumatisation caused by discussing sexual violence). Indeed, in her 'composite ethnography' of her work with universities aiming to challenge cultures that support sexual violence, Alison Phipps notes that "The notion of banter was also seen by participants as key to minimising or denying the harms of sexual harassment" (2018b, p. 232). Rape jokes in laddish banter create a culture in which sexually violent behaviours are trivialised and normalised, justified or implicitly condoned.

7.3.1.1 Banter trivialises and normalises sexual violence

In the repeated trivialising of sexual violence, lads become desensitised to acts of sexual violence, only identifying extreme acts as harmful. In two SIL responses, participants implied that they had witnessed instances where boundaries were crossed but shied away from characterising these as acts of sexual violence.

> I haven't really seen anything where I've been like 'right this is on the border of - like illegal' (Lawrence, SIL).

> It's usually not direct sexual harassment I don't think (John, SIL).

Lawrence's statement insinuates that although he hasn't seen non-consensual activity which borders on the illegal, he has witnessed acts which were non-consensual. John's suggestion that the sexual harassment he sees is not usually "direct", implies that he does witness sexual harassment, but wouldn't necessarily categorise it as such. John later distinguished between a laddish group and one with women in it, perhaps implying that within an all-male group, sexually aggressive language about women is shared, but that he does not consider sexual harassment "direct" if not said to/in front of women. However, it seems to suggest, as with Lawrence's statement, that some lads are engaging in non-consensual sexual behaviours. These responses may speak to the positioning of sexual violence as an extreme, which is not present in lad culture. Matthew also points to this distinction:

> In terms of sexual violence (as separate to, and more extreme than sexual harassment), I think that would be a breaking point in most lad groups, and the members would be ostracised for it (at the least). (Matthew, SIL).

In these discussions then, sexual harassment – although illegal and harmful – is constructed as within the self-applied boundary of acceptable behaviour from SILs. Therefore, acts of

harassment are not seen as, or related to, sexual violence. In this context, these acts may be positioned as 'unwanted advances', rather than existing on a continuum of harmful practices.

When asked about the relationship between sexual harassment and lad culture Matthew (SIL) reasoned "I can only answer hypothetically here on both fronts, but I'm not sure I would say it [sexual violence] is common." This is contradicted by the wealth of evidence that sexual violence is commonly experienced by female students, and that this often attributed to lad culture (including the acknowledgement from SILs in this research). He went on to explain that in his experience of socials where his male rugby team was paired with a female sports team that he "never saw any unwanted attention" presented with the caveat "I know that this is difficult to be sure of." In doing so, he demonstrates some of the key issues of asking lads themselves about sexual violence: that sexual violence is often rendered invisible (Towl & Walker, 2019) and that male college students are often unable to determine sexual consent from female students (Humphreys, 2007). In part, owing to the discursive practice of making jokes about sexual assault, sexual violence is assumed to be only that which is extreme and visible and understood as illegal. In reality, sexual violence is frequent in university settings, and often takes the form of 'low level' incidents such as groping and verbal harassment (as presented in section 4.4.2.2). Sundaram and Jackson found that for Student Union staff "unwanted sexual attention and touching were reported to be so ubiquitous that students saw it as normal, it was not something they talked about and certainly not something they reported" (2018, p. 10). The use of rape jokes, and laddish banter more generally, therefore, contributes to a university culture in which commonplace 'low level' sexual violence is not acknowledged.

7.3.1.2 Banter justifies or condones sexual violence

Further, the use of rape jokes contributes to a rape-supportive culture, in which sexual violence is normalised and victims are blamed for their experience of violence. In this context, sexual violence is seen as a fault on the part of the victim, rather than the perpetrator. Activists Chandra & Cervix (2018), working on behalf of *11th Principle: Consent!* - a programme of the non-profit organisation *Enthusiastic Consent Initiative* - published a 5th version of the Rape Culture Pyramid (Figure 11) which visually represents the relationship between normalised sexist attitudes and forms of sexual violence. Positioning survivors of sexual violence as the object of humour may lead to reliance on rape myths, where victims of violence are assumed to be to blame for their experience (Burt, 1980). Research with college students has found that exposure to sexist and rape supportive jokes was correlated with rape myth acceptance for those with high self-reported hostile sexism (Sriwattanakomen, 2017). In this way sexual violence against certain people may be seen as justified, as evidence of a fault with the survivor rather than the perpetrator.

Figure 11. The Rape Culture Pyramid.

The Rape Culture Pyramid:

Rape Culture

11th Principle: Consent!

Rape
Drugging
Molestation
Stealthing (Covert Condom Removal)
Contraceptive Sabotage
Victim Blaming & Shaming
Coercion/Manipulation   Threats
Revenge Porn   Safe Word Violations
Groping   Non-Consensual Photo or Video
Flashing & Exposing   Unsolicited Nude Pics
Catcalling   Unwanted Non-Sexual Touch   Stalking
Sexist Attitudes   Rape Jokes   Locker Room Banter

Assault - Degradation - Normalization

Tolerance of the behaviors at the bottom supports or excuses those higher up. To change outcomes, we must change the culture.
If you see something, say something!
Start the conversation today.
www.11thPrincipleConsent.org

7.3.1.3 'Rape jokes' and privilege

> It's [lad culture] related in some way to 'rape culture' in the sense that a load of laddish behaviour allows for rape jokes, for certain behaviours that wouldn't be accepted outside that culture. (Marie, University Activist).

Marie indicates that laddish culture condones the use of rape jokes, in a way that is not common elsewhere. As suggested above, this may be because of the intersecting relationship between hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism, in which competition and dominance thrive. Although jokes about sexual assault may also be common in other milieu, such as the field of stand-up comedy, it has been recognised that similar structures are in place in these settings. For example, stand-up comedy is male dominated (Mitchell, 2015; Chicago Reader, 2018), sees certain forms of masculinity dominate (white, heterosexual men), and involves intense competition for paid comedy jobs. Stand-up comedy therefore bears many of the same hallmarks as university lad culture. One element which makes the telling of rape jokes more accepted in these contexts, in undoubtedly the privilege that hegemonically masculine lads have, as compared with those most likely to experience sexual violence (e.g. women and gender non-conforming people). Stand-up comic Cameron Esposito, who released a special 'Rape Jokes'

from her perspective as a survivor of sexual assault, described the relationship between the privilege of the teller of a rape joke, and their telling of the joke. She said that the term 'rape joke':

> always meant a joke that is told by somebody who is not a survivor, that's generally like dismissive of the concept of rape. And that [rape] was usually brought up as a sort of taboo punishing word that would just get a laugh, based on the comic being brave enough to speak it. (Cameron Esposito on PBS Newshour, 2018).

Although not explicitly naming the gender of those making rape jokes, she reasons that rape jokes are most commonly told by those who have no personal experience of sexual violence and implies (through the teller's being "dismissive of the concept of rape") that the tellers do not fear sexual violence. Therefore, that there is a relationship between privilege and use of rape jokes in lad culture.

Conversely, a common discourse on the topic of rape jokes, and banter more generally, is that these are simply jokes. Either that they are not perceived to be harmful, because they are seen as humorous, or that they are irrelevant to wider structural inequalities. In this way, rape jokes may be used to deny structural oppression. Lockyer and Savigny (2019) found that newspaper reports of rape jokes often defended these as comedy, and the gendered context of the jokes was not acknowledged. Jackson & Sundaram (2020) also found that in university staff narratives of laddish banter, the hierarchical position of lads (having privilege in regards to gender, sexuality, race etc) was not discussed. In Perez and Greene's (2016, p. 265) study of the discourses employed by college students to rationalise the use of rape jokes by a stand-up comic, discourses through which the hegemonic position of masculinity and of neoliberalism is supported, "dominant patriarchal framing", are common. The importance of the intention with which the jokes are told was one such discourse, with male students in particular arguing that if a joke was made with the intention of making harmless fun, that harm is mitigated. The authors noted that this was a function of privilege of the students, as women of colour were less likely to attribute good intentions to tellers of rape jokes and are more likely to be the victims of sexual violence (Perez & Greene, 2016).

The suggestion of banter as a playful method of communication has also been a feature of theorisation of lad culture. Further, Nichols (2018a) has suggested that lads must be considered as agents who knowingly use sexist humour as a way of 'doing' masculinity and re-establishing gendered hierarchies. Yet she also claims that lads use banter to both construct and deconstruct sexism, and that laddism is best understood as one form of 'mischievous masculinity'. Whilst it is certainly true that some of the SILs interviewed were aware of the relationship between their jokes and sexism, these participants did not refer to the

deconstruction of sexism. On the contrary, jokes about sexual violence are understood by lads as related to the subjugation of women within a patriarchal gender order (Connell, 1995) as Richard describes:

> R: But there are things that I personally don't engage in, and I challenge
>   whenever I see them. I don't find any jokes about sexual assault funny.
>
> A: But would you say they're common?
>
> R: Yes, incredibly. Erm it punches down a lot, the humour, a lot of it is
>   predicated towards violence towards the weak. It's yeah. We have a bad rep
>   and it isn't entirely undeserved.

That the rape jokes "punch down" implies the position of lads hierarchically in relation to the subjects of their jokes – that lads have dominance over women. Further that the humour "punches down *a lot*", implies that banter is seldom used to deconstruct sexist discourses within lad culture. The jokes 'do' the punching down too, they create and perpetuate patriarchal and heterosexual dominance, while mocking those who are Other than this norm. Rape jokes can be therefore viewed as "everyday, micro-level, interactions, and assist in the production and maintenance of inequalities at the macro-level" (Lockyer & Savigny, 2019, p. 437).

Richard's explanation of his avoidance of, and challenging of, rape jokes within lad culture, can be seen as confirmation of Nichols' suggestion that a monolithic understanding of lad culture does not account for the attitude or behaviour of all lads. Nevertheless, he indicates that in spite of his abstention, rape jokes remain common. His ability to challenge these jokes may have been dependent on his position in the group. While privileged as the captain of his football team, and a white man within lad culture, his non-heterosexual orientation also positioned him as the subject of homophobic banter. Therefore, his ability to intervene may have been dependent on the risk of experiencing retaliatory violence himself (Page et al., 2019).

As Richard has stated, there is a possibility to resist these norms, to "challenge whenever [you] see them." It is possible to self-identify as a lad, without subscribing to or condoning misogynist banter, confirming Warin & Dempster's (2007) theorisation of laddism as a continuum. Nevertheless, Warin and Dempster note the lack of credible 'alternative masculinity' subject positions offered by male undergraduate respondents and indicate the hegemony of laddish discourses within university communities. This suggests that although it is possible to diverge from laddish norms, it may not be probable or preferable for male students. Richard indicates that his resistance to rape jokes (and homophobia) has won him "a bit of a reputation for being the fun police", recounting that in response to his challenges "they'll [other lads] be like 'Here comes [Richard], fun police again.'" This resonates with Sara Ahmed's

exploration of the figure of the 'feminist killjoy' (2010), wherein feminists who challenge that which is problematic are constructed as wrong for shedding light on a problem. The construction of Richard as policing fun indicates that he is at odds with the affective community of the other lads, whose fun is derived from making jokes about sexual assault. Further, as Richard is a prominently queer SIL, and challenges homophobia too, referring to him as "the fun police" can be seen as a tool for othering him, as well as a preference for retaining the homophobia and sexism of lad culture as opposed to the 'inclusive masculinity' purported by Anderson (2009). It is ironic that Richard is accused of policing lads, in discourses through which his own laddism is being policed.

Through interviewing a female SIL, a difference in approach to rape jokes can be seen across lad culture, in relation to the privilege of the lad. For example, within a female rugby team Georgina indicates of sexual assault, "that's something we don't joke about" owing to the knowledge that as women, they are potential victims of sexual violence:

> But in our group it's kinda like well don't be laughing cos it could be you kinda thing.
> (Georgina, SIL).

Far from the use of banter to deconstruct sexist hierarchies, this implies that rather than simply humorous, rape jokes are related to the privilege of the joke teller, and their relationship to sexual violence. As the majority of lads are heterosexual men, they are more likely to be the perpetrators of sexual violence than the victims. Consequently, the use of rape as a punchline is seen as the equivalent of speaking a taboo word aloud, compared with the potential relationship to victimhood experienced by female lads. This is consistent with Richard's characterisation of a fellow team member's view of rape:

> R: There are certainly people in the club, like one of them said "Rape - It's not as big of a deal as people make it out to be." And these are people in other contexts who are very emotionally sensitive, they're good people, but act like monsters some of the time, and say stuff like that.
>
> A: Do you think he meant, it's not as common?
>
> R: No, he doesn't think it's that big of a deal.
>
> A: OK so it's not as important?
>
> R: He's from a very affluent background, I don't think he's really experienced much in the way of suffering just in general. And so he, his argumentation was that people have been raped since the beginning of time, why is it an issue now?

This lad's assessment of rape is assumedly based on having not experienced sexual violence himself, nor anticipating this experience in his future, thus indicating his privilege. Further, his response implies a lack of understanding of the harm caused by sexual violence (Kelly, 1988). Richard also points to the intersecting privileges of this lad, addressing his "affluent background" as an explanation of the rape-minimising rhetoric employed. This "argumentation" described by Richard seems to be at odds with Lawrence's suggestion that rape jokes are "Off the table" in lad culture. He reasons that these are less common in university, owing to the preventative education experienced:

> Because we're like 19, we had PSHE lessons in school and then consent classes at the
> start of uni. So it does make sense, that's not something we'd joke about. (Lawrence,
> SIL).

Lawrence indicates that rape is not joked about, but (as discussed earlier) acknowledges that misogyny is prominent in laddish banter. Although his description points to variation in banter, depending on the laddish group, and of some heterogeneity among lads, the existence of misogynist banter still contributes to lad culture as a conducive context for sexual violence in universities.

7.3.2 Heterosexism

In Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity, the dominant position of heterosexual men is maintained, in part, through homophobia and strict heterosexist norms:

> Hegemonic masculinity is emphatically heterosexual, homosexual masculinities are
> subordinated. This subordination not only involves the oppression of homosexual
> boys and men, sometimes by violence, it also involves the informal policing of
> heterosexual boys and men. (Connell, 2000, p. 102).

In the next two sections I will argue that lad culture employs discourses which position laddish masculinity above others. First, the dominance of heterosexuality, through heterosexual performances, will be discussed. Then, I will consider the processes by which homosexual masculinities are subordinated.

7.3.2.1 Emphatic heterosexuality

Data from my participants certainly indicates that lad culture includes emphatic heterosexuality and policing of heterosexual men, and prevalent homophobia. In two extracts from Matthew's (SIL) email interview, both the importance of casual sex, and the expectation that this is heterosexual are referred to:

> Certainly sexual elements come up often in conversation and banter, and being
> sexually active is an element of lad culture that is rewarded by the group.

> One of the aims of lad culture is to be able to sleep with as many women as possible.

Similarly, one questionnaire participant (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture) defined lad culture as simply "Lads drinking and trying to meet girls." For many participants, then, lad culture and heterosexual casual sex go hand in hand. A lad's heterosexual identity is performative, in that lads are understood to be heterosexual not because of internal identity, but through the repeated 'doing' of heterosexual acts, such as having, and talking about having, sex with women. For example, Lawrence refers to a way in which one his friends was policed for not having had sex as quickly as the rest of the group, "there's one person we still call him virg, cos he was the last person to - so I think there is a pressure." By maintaining a diminution of 'virgin' as a nickname for someone who has now had sex, the other lads reinforce the hegemonic position of masculinity wherein casual sex is valorised. In this way, those who do not conform to the hegemonic position, even if heterosexual, are policed.

Another method of performing heterosexual masculinity is through the retelling of sexual stories, demonstrating one's heterosexuality within the homosocial group. For Lawrence, this was an essential part of lad culture; he recognised that "no one else talks about shagging except for lads." He went on to specify that this 'talk' involved the recounting of sexual experiences:

> Well I think so, the only people I know that talk so much about their sex lives are 3
> lads that play football, and they'll like tell stories about it and that, which no-one else
> does. (Lawrence, SIL).

From his experience, this use of sexual stories was not limited to lads who engaged in casual sex:

> ...like in circles how they would talk about their own girlfriends and that. There's this
> sort of triumphalism of sexual action. Which I thought was juvenile, which you expect
> when people are like 16 - but the fact it's still carrying on. (Lawrence, SIL).

Even lads with longer term female partners engage in the performative reinscribing of their heterosexual identity. Holding a hegemonic position in comparison to other forms of masculinity requires maintenance and reiterative engagement in masculine practices. Further, Lawrence articulates that this behaviour appears "juvenile", the preserve of teenagers, yet acknowledges that it persists into adulthood (this relates to discourses of lad culture as youthful as discussed in section 5.6). Perhaps this use of storytelling by those with partners, is an attempt to maintain a carefree and youthful subject position, in contrast to their adult

relationship (as in Phipps & Young, 2013). Nonetheless, it is clear that lad culture glorifies heterosexuality, and patrols the behaviour of heterosexual men. Ford (2018) has argued that these discourses serve to encourage male college students to have unwanted sex.

7.3.2.2 Homophobia

The domination of one configuration of masculinity over others, is a central tenet of hegemonic masculinity. The subordination of non-heterosexual men, through homophobia, is recognised as taking multiple forms including legal and political discrimination, as well as verbal harassment. In previous chapters the predominant forms of heterosexism in lad culture, were recognised. These took the form of homophobic language (section 6.3.2.2), coding homosexuality as feminine and the exclusion of gay men from lad culture (section 5.3). As discussed in section 7.3.1.3, the construction of banter as a form of ironic humour, allows for the reiteration of long-standing prejudices. Further the influence of neoliberalism has the effects of both producing competition between lads - to be the most offensive or most outrageous - and individualising homophobia as a hedonistic game, rather than locating this within structures of oppression. The homophobia of lad culture creates a conducive context for sexual violence in two ways: firstly, through violence against non-heterosexual men (and women), and secondly in perpetuating a 'compulsory heterosexuality' which pressures lads to engage in heterosexual sex, regardless of their individual desire.

Richard describes an experience of being hurt as a result of the homophobia of another lad:

> We had a lad join the club, he was from Essex, so quite well off and a bit sheltered,
> and he just described everything as gay – 'those shoes are gay, this kit looks a bit gay'.
> It really pissed me off, and so I made deliberate efforts to say 'look, I know you don't
> mean this in a homophobic way, but you don't get to decide what is and isn't
> offensive to other people, or particular groups that you aren't part of.' (Richard, SIL).

In this anecdote he relates that he felt 'pissed off' as a result of homophobia and implies that he finds the derogatory use of the word 'gay' offensive. Homophobia harms those who are non-heterosexual, including SILs. Richard makes a number of allowances, suggesting that when challenging this behaviour, he reasoned with the lad that this was probably not intended to be homophobic, as well as describing him as "a bit sheltered." The implication then, as with university staff understandings of lad culture, is that the potentially harmful and offensive behaviours of lads do not reflect the true nature of the lads engaging in them (Jackson & Sundaram, 2020). As with misogyny, the relationship between discriminatory behaviour and privilege is made clear by his description of the lad as "quite well off." Similarly, in a

questionnaire response, the relationship between the heterosexuality of lads and their use of homophobia is described:

> I also understand it as a predominantly 'straight' collection of behaviours, which may include using homophobic language as banter - i.e. 'that's gay' as an insult (Q. 42. Defining Lad Culture).

Here, as with hegemonic masculinity, heterosexuality is seen as synonymous with the subordination of gay men. And homophobia is seen as a manifestation of the privilege held by those taking part in it. Richard recognised the importance of his sexuality as somewhat exceptional within the social context of lad culture and indicates that he took measures to display his sexuality more prominently, noting "when I was president of the football club, I made deliberate effort to queer myself… I think two or three people before that knew." It could be assumed that this was in part to make visible his non-heterosexual identity (while in a relationship with an opposite sex partner) such that other team members might avoid using homophobic remarks in his presence. Helms and Waters (2016) found that participants reported unfavourable attitudes towards gay and bisexual men more than gay and bisexual women, and that bisexual men were least favoured of these groups. It would therefore stand to reason that in lad culture where homophobia is present, Richard might have anticipated hearing biphobic comments. There was also clearly an aim to alter the culture, through representing non-heterosexuality to his team-mates, in tandem with challenging homophobia, e.g. "I've had to have very serious talks with someone about homophobic behaviour on the pitch." Nevertheless, he described the persistence of homophobia within lad culture:

> I would've said this time last year that I think I had a positive impact on that. But with me moving on and a new president coming in, that's just gone straight back (Richard, SIL).

While Anderson's (2009) concept of 'inclusive masculinities' may be supported by the inclusion of a bisexual man (Richard, SIL) within lad culture, it is clear that he still witnesses and is harmed by homophobia in these spaces. Further that the inclusivity of these spaces is dependent on the presence and/or position of non-heterosexual men within them. A common critique of Anderson's work, is that it presumes that the concept of hegemonic masculinity cannot account for the changes in masculinity over time and cultures. However, this is founded on a misunderstanding of hegemonic masculinity as an archetype, single subject position or even personality type, when in fact this is defined by Connell (1995) as a dynamic and non-transhistorical configuration of practices.

This is vital, as it may be the case that what Anderson calls "inclusive" is just another hegemonic strategy for some heterosexual, white, middle-class men to legitimately maintain economic, social, and political power in the wake of gay rights. (De Boise, 2015, p. 324).

In section 7.3.1 I argued that in the Western context it is less socially acceptable to espouse misogynist views than it has been in the past. Similarly, it is no longer legal, nor as socially acceptable, to harass those who are out as gay. Homophobia in lad culture is not always direct, it may be couched in humour, but does still exist. There is certainly a tension between the non-acceptability of homophobic language directed towards non-heterosexual men, and the ubiquity of using 'gay' in a derogatory manner. This is implied by Lawrence:

you might say that something's gay, but you wouldn't like just if someone was gay - if someone was acting in a - if someone was gay you wouldn't wind them up about that. Like if someone did something kind of embarrassing you might call them.. [changes subject]. (Lawrence, SIL).

He does not finish the sentence about homophobia but goes on to answer another prior question about racism. He clearly states that homophobic abuse of a fellow lad who was out as gay would not be acceptable in lad culture. And refers to using 'gay' to describe objects but doesn't finish the thought which seemed to imply that a lad may be called gay for doing "something kind of embarrassing." It seems, therefore, that the derogation of homosexuality is a key element of lad culture. Homophobia (as well as sexism, racism, classism, ageism and religious intolerance) is correlated with rape myth acceptance; the prevalence of homophobia within lad culture may be related to tacit acceptance of rape (Aosved & Long, 2006). Further, repeated exposure to homophobia from lads, may cause internalised homophobia for victims. Murchison et al. (2017) found that internalised homophobia is a predictor of risk of unwanted sex (and sexual assault) for LGBQ college students. Homophobia is therefore conducive to sexual violence.

7.3.2.3 Competition for sexual capital

Phipps (2015; 2018a) has argued that the neoliberalisation of higher education has infused the social milieu of universities, resulting in increased self-evaluation and market-like monitoring of social practices. These influences result in the competition to have the most casual sex, ratings of sexual encounters and viewing sexual partners as commodities. Further, where (hetero)sex is constructed as masculine, there is competition to be the most masculine, then competition to have sex is common.

Questionnaire respondents defined lads as those who "often try and get with lots of girls" or "get with as many girls as possible." Certainly, there is a perception that casual sex for lads gratifies not only sexually, but in supporting one's social standing as a lad. In some cases, this association between engaging in casual sex frequently, and boosting one's laddish status is made explicit. One questionnaire respondent said that the "aim is to have as much sex as possible because that makes you cool", and another that lad culture "gives points to sexual encounters". As with binge drinking, lads not only compete to have sex the most often, but this behaviour is considered one of the criteria for being perceived as masculine/laddish and can be used to "score points" in the masculinity marketplace. In this way, sexual partners – for the most part women – are presented as interchangeable, unimportant and dehumanised. Indeed, the objectification of women is commonly associated with lad culture, even being described as a 'lad norm' in recent research of undergraduate lads (Jeffries, 2019, p. 8). This, as well as a prevailing discourse of deresponsibilisation, may give rise to careless casual sex. For example, Richard (SIL) describes those who strictly adhere to the laddish configuration of masculinity:

> there are some people I know, the ones who I think are their entire personality is that
> they are a lad, for them it is just numbers. Like they'll brag about how unattractive
> the girl that they slept with last night was. (Richard, SIL).

Here, the heterosexual performance of story-telling is pointedly careless towards the lads' sexual partner. In addition, "the girl" is not seen as desirable, but simply a number. Similarly, a questionnaire respondent defined lad culture as not only including pressure to have sexual encounters, but "having sex irresponsibly or disrespectfully (not being considerate of the person you sleep with or bragging about it afterwards)." There is also status granted to those who are unemotional about sex, who see sex as a commodity. Based on focus groups with female students, Phipps and Young (2015b) found that this pervades broader student culture, such that "There was a sense of pressure to engage in a high frequency of sexual activity and disdain towards committed relationships" (p. 7). Richard (SIL) refers to a friend of his stating that he wanted to be more "sexually aggressive with women." This implies that that as sexual point-scoring is valorised, that this lad wishes to be able to instigate sexual encounters more often. This demonstrates that heterosexual aggression is valued within lad culture. Of note, is that Richard questioned his friend's choice of words and sentiment, which he described as a problem of language: "think about how even the language that we use puts us in this kind of schema of where we are allowed to be aggressive towards women- which is not ok." This indicates that although sexual aggression may be part of the dominant model of masculinity, not all men subscribe to it.

Within this context, attention to one's own desires, or that of one's sexual partner are not foregrounded in laddish understandings of casual sex. Richard explains the tension between the expectation of having a lot of casual sex, and the true wants of lads:

> I think for a lot of my friends, less so than me, it does come down to sexual prowess. To be honest I think for them it's not even necessarily the extent to which they want sex, they just want to be perceived by everybody else to sort of be sexually active and desirable. I think, to be honest, if you gave most of them the option of sleeping with 15 girls or having everybody thought they've slept with 15 girls it would be a serious issue for them because a big part of it to them is like "Wow, look at [name], he's …" yaknow (Richard, SIL).

In his description, the lads he knows are under such pressure to be seen as engaging in frequent casual (hetero)sex that their desire to have sex is irrelevant. This dissonance between pressure and desire to have sex may also lead to lads engaging in unwanted sex and set the scene for sexual violence to occur. Enthusiastic consent to sex is dependent on actors understanding and articulating their desires, which is unlikely where desire is considered moot. Arguably, lads are under pressure to have had sex to the point that mutual consent was seen as an afterthought, rather than a prerequisite of sex. When discussing the pressure to 'hook up' at university more widely, and its impact on the kinds of encounters that university students might have, Lisa Wade said that "if the way you're supposed to engage with one another sexually is with carelessness and a lack of care, then it seems really obvious to me that we would have a sexual assault problem" (in Taylor, 2018, 18:11).

7.3.3 Binge Drinking

Binge drinking is valorised within lad culture and is frequently constructed as a site for engagement in (hetero)sexual activity. In section 6.2 the prevalence of binge drinking within lad culture was identified and theorised. It was explained that competitive and excessive use of alcohol is a practice used to perform hegemonic laddish masculinity, as this offers the opportunity to demonstrate physical strength and the actor's willingness to take risks. Further, the influence of neoliberalism on university communities has led to increased self-evaluation, and competition between students. In this context, lads aim to not only distance themselves from, and dominate, other male students, but also to be the best lad. Competitive binge drinking, to consume the most (or worst combination of) alcohol, is a practice through which lads can determine who is the best exemplar of lad culture. Further, the neoliberal focus on individual, deresponsbilised, fun means that lads prioritise their own experience of binge drinking, over the potential harm caused to others when drinking. Binge drinking may also aid in the performance

of 'being carefree' and not taking things seriously (see section 6.2.2), given the disinhibiting effects of alcohol. Being drunk creates a context in which it is (more) socially acceptable to engage in horseplay, risk-taking, chanting and generally being loud, and domination of some social spaces (such as college bars). This section will therefore argue that the prevalence and importance of binge drinking, in lad culture, creates a context which is conducive to the occurrence of sexual violence in multiple ways. Firstly, through the discursive pairing of casual sex with binge drinking, laddish masculinity encourages the excessive use of alcohol prior to sex, thus reducing the likelihood of gaining consent for sexual acts. Secondly, through the repeated positioning of lad culture as ironic, and humorous, acts of sexual violence may be constructed as harmless jokes.

In questionnaire responses defining lad culture, links are drawn between binge drinking and casual sex (Q.42. Defining Lad Culture):

> A typical lad drinks lots of pints and shags loads of girls- the more the better

> Lads drinking and trying to meet girls

These are discursively connected; binge drinking is constructed as the social context in which casual sex takes place. When asked which behaviours he considered central to being a lad, John (SIL) explicitly referred to locations of binge drinking as sites in which sexual encounters may begin:

> Definitely going out and drinking in pubs, flirting with girls in those pubs and clubs.
> (John, SIL).

The relationship between casual sex and binge drinking in universities has seen a lot of academic interest, typically under the moniker of 'hook up' culture. The term refers to a supposedly contemporary shift in styles of dating/courtship, whereby partners meet and engage in sexual acts in the same night, usually at a party or meeting in nightclubs. While attendance at parties/nightclubs need not require drunkenness, there is a social expectation that drinking will occur, and that drinking is associated with 'hooking up' (Flack et al., 2007). In fact, in the widespread survey of North American college students pertaining to 'hook up' culture, carried out by England et al. (2008) "The median number of drinks men had drunk the night of their last hook up was 6, whereas women had consumed 4" (p. 532). Binge drinking is consistently linked to 'hook ups' across gender (Grello et al., 2006; Paul et al., 2000), and the importance placed on binge drinking in lad culture suggests that laddism may promote 'hooking up'. Reasons for the relationship between alcohol and casual sex are explained in the findings of Vander Ven and Beck's (2009) analysis of "drinking stories" and interviews; they report that "college drinkers view alcohol as a disinhibiting force that elevates the potential for sexuality

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and that alcohol intoxication is also used as a resource to justify casual coupling events, before and after they occur" (p. 626). In this way, binge drinking among college students (and more broadly) facilitates the practice of casual sex. Within lad culture the requirement of performative heterosexuality, alongside the influence of neoliberalism, encourage competition for casual sex, which can lead to sexual violence (as discussed in section 7.3.2.3). The specific location of this within "nights out" as a site of binge drinking is noted by SIL Matthew:

> I think any element of sexual harassment surrounding lad culture needs to be stamped out. This is a particularly negative impact that comes out, often on nights out, where one of the aims of lad culture is to be able to sleep with as many women as possible. I don't think this is limited to university, but that a large part of the university experience is touched by this (especially in student night clubs). (Matthew, SIL).

He argues that the competitive nature of lads, in the context of nights out, is potentially the cause of sexual harassment and that "a large part of the university experience is touched by this." Graham et al. (2014) argue that nightclubs, and 'barroom culture', create a "culture of ambiguity that seems to sanction unwanted sexual acts" (p. 1421). By discursively coupling casual sex with binge drinking, and drinking sites, laddish masculinity encourages the performance of sexual encounters with ambiguity. There is a wealth of evidence that links alcohol consumption to the rates of sexual assault in US colleges (for review see Abbey, 2002). Abbey et al. (1998) proposed a conceptual model of the relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual violence, arguing that misperception of consent (from the point of view of the perpetrator) and of sexual intent (from the point of view of the victim) both contributed to the existence of sexual violence. When one or both parties in a sexual encounter is extremely intoxicated, discussion of consent becomes challenging. Heavy alcohol consumption is more common among those hook ups which include sexual violence and most cases (of violent and non-violent hook ups) alcohol was consumed by both the victim and the perpetrator. Further, there a curvilinear relationship between amount of alcohol that male college students consumed and the type of sexual assaults that they perpetrated (Abbey et al., 2003); drinking more is associated with more aggressive sexual violence, up to a point of incapacity. This is not to say that all those who binge drink are perpetrators of sexual violence, but that the hegemonic position of laddish masculinity, which centres on competitive binge drinking, encourages excessive alcohol consumption, and potentially more aggressive acts of sexual violence.

As discussed in section 7.3.1.3 laddish masculinity is constructed as a context in which ironic humour is valorised. Moreover, the individualising force of neoliberalism results in a prioritisation of one's own fun, sometimes at the expense of others' safety. An example of this,

concerning the use of alcohol, comes from Georgina's reply to a question asking whether there is a relationship between sexual harassment and lad culture.

> Definitely, definitely. It's a bit disgusting. I know of a few things that have happened, not with my rugby team but with like some of the lads in the boys' teams. [inaudible] is that a joke or is that rape? Little things like only giving themselves a half measure of what they're giving the girls that they're going out with… And spiking people's drinks and stuff like that. (Georgina, SIL).

She indicates her own apprehension over whether the drink spiking of female students is really harmless; in doing so identifying that this behaviour may be constructed as a joke by those perpetrating. In describing the act of spiking drinks with alcohol as "little things", she distances these from acts of sexual aggression. While discussing this, Georgina describes her own experience of drink-spiking, by a fellow female teammate:

> Actually, funny story - well not a funny story whatsoever - I was a fresher and, the only time I've like properly seen it in my environment, one of the girls that was in our group, she was an older girl, she spiked one of our girls' drinks, but they give it to me unknowingly and I ended up in hospital. (Georgina, SIL).

In determining why the older girl had behaved in this way, Georgina answered "It was either to like take the p- out of her, or to do something dirty to her, but I'm not too sure." She seems to be aware that drink spiking may be used to commit acts of sexual violence ("do something dirty"), but this experience is positioned very differently from the acts of male lads. She immediately retracts her description of this as a "funny story" and focuses on the harmful outcome of the action. The discourse of laddish behaviour as 'harmless fun' minimises the extent to which the action is taken as (sexually) violent, partially justifying the behaviour as a joke. As aforementioned, this can result in reduced empathy for survivors of sexual violence and tacit acceptance of sexually violent acts.

7.4 **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated that there is a relationship between lad culture and sexual violence, but that this is a nuanced relationship. While SILs draw on some examples of sexual violence that they've witnessed, or been aware of in their wider circle, most distance lad culture from the harms of sexual violence. There are admissions that sexual harassment is "definitely, definitely" (Georgina, SIL) seen within lad culture, alongside discursive dissociation from the lads seen as perpetrating these acts.

Additionally, this chapter has analysed multiple laddish practices which contribute to lad culture as a conducive context for sexual violence. The misogyny and rape jokes common to laddish banter reinforce hegemonic masculinity and trivialise and normalise sexual violence. These jokes are understood by SILs to be related to the privilege held by lads over women, making suggestions that these are ironic revision of sexist humour unconvincing. Sexist jokes and jokes about sexual assault are also forms of sexual violence themselves, in that they harm those who hear them. The compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia of lad culture also contribute to a sexually violent lad culture. Firstly, non-heterosexual lads may be harmed by homophobic jokes and the valorisation of heterosexuality. Secondly, neoliberal discourses of casual sex being used to "score points" position sexual partners (usually women) as commodities to be consumed. Combined, then, the heterosexism of lad culture reduces empathy with sexual partners and diminishes SILs' connection to their own desire, which are solid foundations for sexual violence. Lastly, the competitive and extreme binge drinking valued highly in lad culture is regarded as the site of sexual encounters. Sexual harassment is common in university barroom culture, and binge drinking and casual sex are frequently discursively paired in participants' definitions of lad culture. I am not arguing that binge drinking necessarily leads to sexual violence, or that lads engaging in both binge drinking and casual sex automatically suggests that such sex is coerced or non-consensual. Yet, the insistence on binge drinking to the point of being uninhibited, and with disregard for bodily comfort, may create social contexts in which sexual violence is perpetrated. Further, the normalisation of extreme drinking and construction of women as sexual objects may be used to justify acts of violence such as the drink-spiking referred to by Georgina SIL which is positioned as a joke by other lads. It must be recognised that these laddish practices and discourses exist in parallel and may influence SILs – and the wider university communities in which they dominate – simultaneously.

Further, discourses of heterosexism and misogyny are by no means limited to lad culture, therefore laddish practices may be supported by wider structural heteropatriarchy. Further, the pressure to maintain institutional reputation in a marketised higher education section may lead universities to engage in 'institutional airbrushing' (Phipps, 2019) in response to sexual violence. The potential loss of student fees that may result can encourage universities to minimise discussions of sexual violence. This has also resulted in often individualising responses to reports of violence, wherein a student or students may be removed from the university but the cultural context in which they acted remains largely unchanged. With this in mind, laddish practices and discourses which are conducive to sexual violence may align with broader victim-blaming discourses and within university communities which fail to challenge them.

It is important to note that the SILs interviewed for this project have described themselves as on the fringes of lad culture, therefore the findings here may not represent the 'worst of the worst' of laddish sexual violence. Much of the analysis in this chapter accounts for the lack of homogeneity in discussion of sexual violence. As some SILs refer to instances of sexual aggression or drink-spiking, so too do SILs argue that misogyny is "off the table". It is important to acknowledge the intersections within lad culture (as Phipps 2016 argues) and recognise that the small and potentially atypical sample studied here may not represent the extremes of laddism. However, the SILs interviewed (including a female and a non-heterosexual lad) spoke to the tensions between identifying oneself against an idealised laddish subject while also being the target of harmful banter. These lads were both surrounded by and participating in rape supportive lad cultures, and themselves victims of sexual violence.

This chapter also raises questions about how sexually violent cultures may be disrupted in university contexts. For example, the common discursive positioning of misogynist and homophobic banter as harmless or just a joke may be transformed by exposing the links between rape supportive humour and sexual violence. For example, university activists interviewed as part of this project referred to a university-wide quiz event which utilised research on laddish media sexual violence to illuminate the extremity of banter (discussed in detail in Stenson, 2020). The organisers created a quiz round where contestants had to determine whether a quote was taken from a lads' mag or from a convicted sex offender (based on research by Horvath et al., 2012) revealing the symmetry of sexual objectification in both sources. Kelly (2016) argues that where there are contexts which are conducive to sexual violence, we must create contexts conducive to supporting survivors of sexual violence as a counteraction. Laddish banter denies the harms of sexual violence and reiterates victim-blaming discourses. Therefore, creating policies and procedures which prioritise the needs of survivors of sexual violence and fervently demonstrating that survivors will be believed are essential actions for universities intending to challenge lad culture.

8 Conclusion

8.1 **Introduction**

This thesis was first situated in the context of a media frenzy about lad culture in universities and demands from national unions and the government that efforts be made to challenge (sexually violent) laddism in student communities. National media continue to use the term 'lad culture' to refer to incidents of sexual harassment and discrimination in universities (Edmonds & Tutchell, 2020; Somerville, 2019). In addition to frequent reports of misogynist group chats – for example at the University of Warwick (Lee & Kennelly, 2019) and Durham University (BBC News, 2020) – newer articles refer the efforts to challenge lad culture in universities. These efforts are often led by survivors of sexual violence, for example students at Oxford Brookes University set up a group 'Say It Loud' to support survivors dealing with the mental impact of sexual violence, which then went on to demand 'positive masculinity workshops' for all students (Brown, 2021). The Instagram account 'St Andrews Survivors' was set up in 2020 for survivors of sexual violence to share stories of their experiences while students and seek support in reporting experiences to the university or police (as reported in Taylor, 2020). These recent campaigns speak to the continued saliency of research on lad culture, as well as a move towards survivor-led approaches to tackling laddism in universities.

An examination of the literature on university lad culture revealed that although this is a burgeoning area of interest, there remains a dearth of empirical evidence collected from self-identified lad (Dempster, 2007; Jeffries, 2019). Therefore, this project offers a timely contribution to the field in its mixed methods approach which centred self-identified lads. Through specifically targeting SILs, this project contributed data on the 'lived experience' of laddism from participants who have otherwise not participated in research (e.g. female SILs, non-heterosexual SILs). Further, by quantifying engagement in laddish practice and asking participants to report their laddism on a scale, I was able to identify statistical relationships between identifying as a lad and engaging in laddish practices. The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the successes and limitations of this project in answering these research questions.

This conclusionary chapter is made up of three parts. First, I will review the main findings of the study as they relate to the research questions and prior literature, pulling quantitative and qualitative findings together. Then, the theoretical and practical implications of these findings will be discussed, relating the findings to improving attempts to challenge lad culture in universities. The importance of this thesis for informing feminist activism is emphasised. Thirdly, I will address the limitations of this project, notably the small sample size

and use of self-report data, and recommendations for overcoming these issues in future research. This section will also propose that a fertile avenue for future research is in creating and evaluating anti-lad culture interventions in universities, drawing on the large body of research evaluating sexual violence prevention programmes. This chapter ends with final remarks on the thesis.

8.2 Review of the Main Findings

The overarching aim of this PhD project was to more precisely define university lad culture, through answering three main research questions. **R.Q.1.** focused on laddish identity, and how the identity of a university lad was constructed. Sub-questions differentiated between the way a laddish identity was understood by self-identified lads and by non-lads who encountered lad culture in the university. **R.Q.2.** was concerned with the practices of lad culture, and the reasons for engagement in these practices. It was anticipated from the literature that binge drinking, banter, playing sports, casual sex and anti-schoolwork attitude would be practices central to university lad culture. **R.Q.3.** questioned whether there is relationship between lad culture and sexual violence and if so, what form does this relationship take? This section gathers findings from across the Results and three Analysis chapters to demonstrate how each of the research questions have been answered.

8.2.1 R.Q.1: The construction of laddish identity

Through this project lad culture was more precisely defined by identifying the ways in which subjective identity is constructed by SILs. This is achieved through discursively positioning the self in relation to an idealised laddish subject and through 'doing' laddish acts (discussed in next section 8.2.2). This subject is male and masculine, heterosexual, white and can be either working or middle-class. Findings suggest that this is a hegemonic masculine subject in universities against which students measure themselves, and that they are complicit in upholding although many SILs are not exemplars of this configuration. The SIL participants I interviewed do not adhere to all the norms of the construct. This finding both confirms Dempster's (2007) notion of 'degrees of laddishness', and that lad culture is a continuum which students engage with to a greater or lesser extent (Warin & Dempster, 2007). As in this prior research, my participants also positioned themselves as distant from lad culture in some ways, such as through indicating that they were only 'a bit of a lad'.

Through my mixed methods approach, I sought to understand how a laddish identity is constructed by those who identify as lads, *and* how laddish identity is understood by non-lads. University activists and non-lad questionnaire participants also identified maleness and

masculinity, heterosexuality and whiteness as central to laddish identity. As such, this idealised subject is upheld and influenced by structures such as heteropatriarchy, white supremacy and capitalism. Therefore, this thesis has shown that privilege is essential to understanding lad culture. While any student may identify with laddism, or may position themselves in relation to an idealised laddish subject, being viewed as an authentic lad is only available to those who hold privilege. This accounts for Phipps and Young's (2013) findings that some students are more likely to be lads than others and that lads are legitimated where individual experience matches up with structural privilege.

8.2.2 R.Q.2: Perception of, and engagement in, laddish practices

Identifying which practices are seen as laddish, by both SILs and non-lads, was also essential to defining lad culture more precisely. SIL participants performatively uphold the idealised laddish subject construct by 'doing' laddish practices of binge drinking, misogynist and homophobic banter, playing sport and casual sex. The relative importance of each practice to laddism was revealed in quantitative data which displayed that binge drinking, (misogynist) banter, homosociality, having casual sex and being assertive were the most salient practices (behaviours and attributes) of lad culture. The importance of alcohol echoes Dempster's (2011) finding that male undergraduates' drinking was influenced by discourses of laddism which held a hegemonic position in the university. Regarding the differential perception of lads' humour – as misogynist by non-lads, whereas as a good sense of humour by SILs – reflects prior findings that lads recognise banter as politically incorrect, but important and acceptable within the group (Nichols, 2018a; Jeffries, 2019). Participants in Jeffries' (2019) interviews understood that the jokes shared among friends could constitute bullying if directed at non-lads. While these findings could indicate that non-lads have misapprehended what is important to SILs, and that the most extreme examples of lad culture are not representative of the majority, these findings may instead be due to social desirability. SIL participants may wish to present lad culture as positive compared with its reputation in the national media and prior research. This interpretation is supported by NUS and Universities UK (UUK) survey data which found that misogyny and harassment are indeed prevalent in UK universities (Stanton, 2014; UUK, 2016).

Quantitative data were also used to answer Dempster's (2007) question of whether laddish identity and laddish practice are related. Participants' responses demonstrated that while laddish practices were evident in the wider student community, that there was a significant relationship between identifying as a lad and engaging in banter and playing sport with greater frequency. Owing to the small number of questionnaire participants identifying as laddish, these findings are not generalisable, but they do suggest that laddish masculinity is performatively embodied by university lads. This confirms findings from Wheaton's (2000)

study of windsurfers, which indicated that sport was used by lads to embody masculinity and demonstrate strength, even if not through formal competition. The lack of significant relationship between binge drinking frequency and laddism may be because of the small number of SIL participants. Lastly, quantitative data were used to answer **R.Q.2.2.**, interrogating SILs' perception of laddish practices as problematic. Significant negative correlations were found between self-reported laddism and perception of sexually violent practices as problematic, though causation cannot be inferred from these findings.

This research clearly shows that these laddish practices are performative of hegemonic masculinity. Binge drinking is constructed as so intimately linked to laddish masculinity that to be a non-drinker is viewed as exceptional. Those who do not drink are typically accepted if they can demonstrate another form of 'masculine capital' such as banter or assertiveness (deVisser & Smith, 2007). While some recent studies have indicated a reduction in the discrepancy between female and male college students' binge drinking (Edgerton & Roberts, 2016; Edkins et al., 2017) others have called for renewed interrogation of the importance of gender, rather than sex, to binge drinking. For example, Peralta et al. (2018) found that masculine gender-orientation is a better predictor of engagement in binge drinking than sex. Moreover, Hunt and Antin (2019) argue that the convergence of binge drinking rates among male and females tells us little about how binge drinking is understood by those taking part, which may still be explicitly gendered. Certainly, by participants in this study, binge drinking is understood as central to laddish masculinity, though not limited to men.

The practice of banter is used to valorise laddish masculinity while subordinating non-heterosexual men, marginalising men of colour and demanding complicity from lads who find the humour uncomfortable (Phipps & Young, 2013; Jackson & Sundaram, 2015, 2020). In these ways, banter is an 'organising principle' for creating a hierarchy of masculinities, wherein laddism is hegemonic (Kehily & Nayak, 1997). As well as outright homophobia, SIL participants indicated that the idealised laddish subject was heterosexual, suggesting that heterosexism is ingrained in lad culture. Rather than the suggestion that lads employ 'mischievous masculinities', which are knowingly misogynist but harmless (Nichols, 2018a), some SIL participants reported feeling frustrated or uncomfortable with the misogyny and homophobia of lad culture. Those that did resist laddish banter felt that their challenges were often fruitless. Lads did justify some forms of banter as acceptable among friends, positioned in comparison to discriminatory jokes, implying a differentiation between different forms of lads (Stentiford, 2019). Further, the importance of 'rape jokes' was discussed by participants, which can be understood as part of a continuum of sexually violent practices (Kelly, 1987) and as part of 'rape culture' (Sanday, 1981). Although some may defend rape jokes as simply jokes, Perez and Greene (2016) found that the dominant framing of rape jokes is often rooted in sexism and

supports hegemonic masculinity. They found that while college students were sometimes aware of an oppositional feminist framing of rape jokes, that this was far from routinely used.

Playing sport was also identified as a laddish practice which exemplified hegemonic masculinity, confirming prior research (Dempster, 2009; Phipps & Young, 2013). However, my participants also gave a broader definition of sporting practice. SILs were not only those who were members of university sports teams, but also keen fans of team sports considered themselves laddish. Although embodied masculinity through sporting prowess was important, participants also referred to playing sport as a social context which related to and supported binge drinking and homophobic banter. This counteracts recent accounts of 'inclusive masculinity' among university and other sportsmen (Anderson, 2009, 2015). Though the inclusion of non-heterosexual SILs within lad culture does imply that hegemonic masculinities are becoming less homophobic than in the past, participants were clear that their inclusion was limited to their ability to display masculine capital.

Casual sex was also a key practice of lad culture, through which hegemonic masculinity was discursively reinforced. Further, heterosexism was evident in the emphatic sexual story-telling of lads, and the careless and competitive casual sex perceived by non-lads and university activists. This corroborates findings that lad culture perpetuates a pressure to have casual sex (Phipps & Young, 2013) with 'pulling' prioritised over relationships (Jeffries, 2019). Interrogating laddish casual sex practices was essential to understanding the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence which is addressed below.

However, findings do not imply a relationship between laddism and anti-schoolwork behaviours in spite of prior research on this topic (see section 2.4.5 for review). These findings differ from the results of prior research which has found that anti-schoolwork attitudes within lad culture are recognised by university staff members (Sundaram & Jackson, 2018) and students who report repetitive class disruptions in university lectures (Jackson et al., 2014). Additionally, self-reported apathy for academic work from male undergraduates (Jackson & Dempster, 2009) implies that this would be found among SILs. Yet, participants may underestimate the extent to which their behaviour in teaching and learning setting is disruptive to classmates and teaching staff. This would explain the difference between these findings and that of research with university staff (Sundaram & Jackson, 2018) who described laddish behaviours in teaching and learning contexts.

This thesis has also contributed empirical evidence validating theorisations which argue that laddish practices are scaffolded by neoliberal discourses (Phipps, 2018b; Phipps & Young, 2015). Each laddish practice shows the impact of neoliberal discourses on subjectivity, through focus on consumption, competition, individualism and disaffection (McGuigan, 2014). For example, SIL participants prioritised efficient alcohol consumption and competition between

lads to drink the most alcohol causing university activists to comment that students felt pressure to binge drink. The disaffection indicative of 'cool capitalist' neoliberal discourses (McGuigan, 2011) was evident in SILs prioritisation of their own fun over the comfort and safety of others (when it came to binge drinking and banter). Further, banter was positioned as an ironic version of retrosexist views, implying that SILs adopted a neoliberal postfeminist sensibility (Gill, 2007, 2017). Laddish practices were also employed as means of counteracting neoliberalism in university contexts, as SILs found solace among the homosocial laddish collective. Camaraderie was essential to SILs' motivation to engage in laddish practices (Jeffries, 2019; Nichols, 2018a). Nevertheless, the laddish group's enjoyment was prioritised over others' safety, confirming Phipps and Young's (2015a) argument that while lads may not act as individuals, they are individualists.

8.2.3 R.Q.3: Lad culture as a 'conducive context' for sexual violence

This research project was the first to question SILs' understanding of lad culture and sexual violence, contributing valuable empirical evidence to substantiate the reports of female students' experience of lad culture, sexism and sexual violence (Smith, 2010; Stanton, 2014; Phipps & Young, 2013). Quantitative findings did not reveal a statistical relationship between laddish identity and perpetration of sexual violence, although this could be because of the small sample size and participants giving socially desirable responses. Nevertheless, non-lad questionnaire participants (predominantly women) reported frequent and varied experiences of sexual violence during their time at university, reiterating much prior research from UK contexts (Cambridge University SU, 2014, Goldhill & Bingham, 2015; Revolt Sexual Assault & The Student Room, 2018; Smith, 2010) and US contexts (Fisher et al., 2000; Gross et al., 2006; Krebs et al., 2016). In comparison to the results of the England and Wales Crime Survey (Flatley, 2018) the reports of sexual violence experienced are somewhat higher, but this difference could be attributed to the difference in sample and questionnaire items. The questionnaire respondents were most often women under the age of 25, a population which is overrepresented in sexual violence statistics, and were asked to disclose experiences of acts which they had "not agreed to" as compared with the less broad description in the Crime Survey. It is possible that because of the renaming of the questionnaire as *The Lad Culture Survey*, students who had experienced sexual violence may be more drawn to participate owing to the national discourse connecting laddism with harassment (as in chapter 1). However, the proportion of students reporting experiences of sexual violence was not *substantially* higher than in previous estimates, and underreporting of sexual violence is common. On balance then, the findings here are unlikely to be as a result of a self-selecting sample.

Crucially, interview findings indicate that sexual violence does occur in lad culture and is understood by SILs. This thesis argues that this is because lad culture is a 'conducive context' for sexual violence (Kelly, 2016) evident in and perpetuated through the practices of banter, heterosexism and binge drinking. Misogynist banter (and the particular use of rape jokes) is prevalent and insidious, which trivialises and normalises sexual violence (Phipps, 2018a). Rather than ironic jokes, these are understood by lads as relevant to structural patriarchy and the abuse of women (Faludi, 1991; Lockyer & Savigny, 2019). SILs also recognise that rape jokes harm those who hear them, including those within lad culture, thus the jokes themselves can be considered a form of sexual harassment (Kelly, 1987). The heterosexism present in lad culture - through emphatic heterosexuality and homophobic banter – also contributes to sexual violence. Although non-heterosexual SILs were accepted within lad culture (Anderson, 2009), the prevalence and persistence of homophobia both harms queer SILs and encourages disaffection from one's own desires, which may be conducive to sexual violence (Ford, 2018). Further, the competitive and extreme binge drinking within lad culture, and the hegemony of this form of masculinity in universities may mean that male students drink to the point of being uninhibited, and women are made vulnerable, confirming Abbey's (2002) findings that incidents of sexual assault among college students typically involved alcohol consumption of one or both parties. Moreover, quantitative findings indicated that SIL participants do significantly differ from non-lads in their appraisal of laddish practices as problematic. There was a significant negative correlation between laddism and rating sexually violent acts as problematic, indicating that SILs may hold rape supportive attitudes or accept rape myths. Rape myth acceptance has been shown to correlate with rape proclivity (for meta-analysis see Murnen et al., 2002) and the rape myth acceptance of friends predicts men's self-reported rape proclivity (Bohner et al., 2006). The existence of rape supportive attitudes among SILs, and the potential that SILs interviewed underreported their involvement in sexual violence, may mean that the findings here are only the tip of the iceberg. Further, the dominance of laddish discourses in UK universities, coupled with the neoliberalisation and subsequent 'institutional airbrushing' of higher education (Phipps, 2019) mean that students who do experience sexual violence may feel unsupported by universities.

8.3 Implications for Challenging Lad Culture

This project has contributed to prior knowledge of lad culture by more precisely defining who are considered lads, which practices lads perform and why, and the ways in which lad culture is a conducive context for sexual violence. Understanding lad culture, and what motivates students to self-identify as lads, is imperative to tackling laddism in universities. These finding have

significant implications for future attempts to challenge lad culture in universities, an approach which I argue must be holistic and cognisant of the need for community among SILs.

SILs construct their identity in relation to an idealised laddish subject, which is privileged by Western society and the university milieu. It is therefore essential that lad culture is understood in relation to structural privilege, and the ways in which the idealised laddish subject is supported by intersecting structures. With this understanding, any attempts to challenge lad culture must therefore invest in challenging structural inequalities and associated ideologies. For example, the National Union of Students' 2020-21 campaign #NUSDecoloniseEducation provides resources for students wishing to challenge systemic racism in UK universities, by exposing the colonialist history of higher education and imagining collectivist alternatives. Such a campaign demands the valorisation of alternatives to white male heterosexual privilege, which is the bedrock of lad culture. Students who hold less privilege may self-identify as lads, but they understand themselves as distant from the ideal laddish subject. This has implications for understanding the range of students who may feel connected to lad culture, such as female and non-heterosexual SILs, but who are nonetheless marginalised and subordinated. Challenges to laddism which do not account for the pervasiveness of this ideal will have little effect on university communities.

Lad culture is constructed in dialogue with neoliberal discourses; laddish subjectivities are reflections of and responses to the adversarial nature of UK institutions. This finding contributes nuance to theorisations of lad culture as supported by neoliberal discourses, demonstrating the multitude of ways in which laddish practices are performative of neoliberalism. The evidence of the impact of neoliberalism on lad culture illustrates the importance of offering alternatives to adversarial neoliberalism in universities. Student consumer identities have been particularly influential in recent discourses around online learning during Covid-19 restrictions in the UK. Fewer students rated their degree as having good value-for-money than in the past (Neves & Hewitt, 2020), in spite of reports that academic staff are experiencing 'burnout' (Flaherty, 2020). Universities must resist marketisation if any attempt to challenge lad culture is to be successful. This requires wide-reaching systemic change in the higher education sector, and may be achieved in some part through actions such as opting out of university league tables. Where student welfare is prioritised over institutional reputation, lad culture is less likely to thrive.

This thesis has shown that SILs may be motivated to identify with lad culture because of the sense of belonging that the laddish group offers, in the absence of alternative forms of community. Any challenge to lad culture must therefore offer communities to, predominantly male, students which do not rest on neoliberal values. Much organisation of student activities utilises competition to encourage participation or promotes consumerism through advertising

high value-for-money. Instead, universities and students' unions must foster supportive collective experiences which do not depend on competition and consumption as an antidote to lad culture. Although SILs are individualistic, they do not act as individuals; this project has shown the ways in which lads are complicit in supporting a culture, idealised subject, and practices which may harm other students. Therefore, approaches to tackling lad culture must look beyond penalising individuals who 'cross the line', and should instead aim for cultural transformation. Additionally, these findings have indicated that laddish practices are intimately connected, thus challenges to lad culture must take a holistic approach.

Laddism is one of multiple hegemonic masculinities in the local/regional context of UK universities, in that it legitimates men's dominance of women in these contexts. Within lad culture, women are positioned as subordinate to lads through misogynist banter, the insistence that ideal lad is male and/or masculine and through sexual violence. This also goes some way to account for the motivation among SILs to uphold the idealised laddish subject, in order to benefit from the patriarchal dividend. However, it is noted that the positioning of lad culture as a hegemonic configuration of masculinity may differ according to the make-up of the student population. Hegemonic masculinity is not a static archetype, but a dynamic configuration of practices, therefore lad culture may be transformed. Universities should valorise alternative masculinites and femininities. Challenges to lad culture should avoid reinforcing hegemonic masculinity, in contrast to men's health campaigns which recommended readers to "Man Up" (Fleming et al., 2014). By upholding non-laddish masculinities, interventions may reduce the privilege afforded to those who hold hegemonic masculine attributes, which means that students may feel less compelled to participate in lad culture.

This project contributed a combined theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism to understand lad culture. It is crucial to acknowledge that the dominance of neoliberalism in universities influences the hegemonic masculinity in this context, which may incorporate any practices which authenticate this configuration's claim to peak position. Therefore, interventions which challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism, hegemonic masculinity and systemic heterosexism, racism and classism are essential to counteracting lad culture in UK universities.

This project contributes to a wealth of research investigating correlates of sexual violence in universities, and work which evaluates the efficacy of anti-sexual violence policies, interventions and training programmes in universities in the UK and US. This research has shown that lad culture is a conducive context for sexual violence, therefore solutions to the problem of sexual violence in universities must take into account laddish practices. The competitive practices of binge drinking and the commodification of sex with women are performative of neoliberal discourses, which must be resisted in attempts to prevent sexual

violence. Lads' sexual advances were positioned as going 'too far' or being 'forward', which may trivialise and normalise sexual violence, along with frequent use of rape jokes. These examples speak to the pervasiveness of sexually violent practices, which may be overlooked when penalising individuals who commit extreme acts of sexual violence. Analysis of national sexual violence policies (Phipps, 2010) has shown that these tend to individualise, and have more focus on criminal justice than prevention of sexual violence. Effective sexual violence prevention programmes will focus on broader culture change, acknowledging that the widespread rape supportive attitudes (Sanday, 1981) which scaffold acts of sexual violence are indicative of misogyny and homophobia.

8.4 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This project has successfully expanded understandings of lad culture and validated prior findings. Nevertheless, the generalisability of these findings is limited by a small sample size which lacks diversity. Further, SILs may have over-emphasised the positive qualities of lad culture and underrepresented the extent of harmful practices. Future research could address these limitations and evaluate lad culture interventions which employ the findings of this project.

8.4.1 Sample size

This project combined findings from 15 semi-structured interviews (10 with University Activists, 5 with self-identified lads) and 144 questionnaire responses (of which 8 respondents identified themselves as lads). Although the aim of this feminist mixed methods project was not to be representative of all UK lad culture, it is acknowledged that the findings presented are based on a small number of SIL participants. This may be because of the name of the project, *The Lad Culture Survey,* which may have deterred many SILs who feel that the term 'lad culture' is used by those who consider laddism problematic. As SIL Lawrence suggested, "When I first heard it like people slagging off lad culture, I took that as a personal insult." The primary issue of a small number of SIL questionnaire respondents is that statistical analyses may display Type II errors; that significant differences between SILs and non-lads may not be found, even if these populations are significantly different because of the limited data. For example, this project did not find a significant relationship between binge drinking frequency and laddism, in spite of the wealth of qualitative references to the importance of binge drinking in lad culture. Nevertheless, this does suggest that the significant differences that *were* found between populations were stark enough to be evident in only a small dataset, implying that these are unlikely to be the result of chance. One method of improving participation would be to create a shorter

questionnaire. The survey designed for this project was estimated to take around 17 minutes to complete (Qualtrics analysis), owing to the exploratory nature of the questions, and high number of open-text boxes for qualitative data collection. The high proportion of incomplete responses (47%) suggests that the questionnaire was seen as too long by participants. Many did not yield useful data (e.g. sports society membership was very low for the whole sample), so these could have been removed to streamline the questionnaire.

As discussed in section 3.5.2 significant effort was made to recruit as many participants as possible, including targeted communication with university and collegiate sports teams and in-person recruitment at Freshers' Fairs at three institutions. While in-person recruitment of participants has been found to improve sample size in other fields of study (e.g. Haring et al. (2009) in healthcare research), it is possible that my presentation at these events positioned the research as a feminist queer project on lad culture, which may have deterred potential SIL participants. On the other hand, the two participants who were recruited via in-person interactions were those who identified as non-heterosexual, suggesting that my visible queerness encouraged them to participate in the research project. This population of SILs has not yet been represented in research on lad culture, meaning that findings presented here are unique in the field.

8.4.2 Self-report and social desirability

Owing to the negative connotations of lad culture in the press (Doughty, 2014; Young-Powell & Gil, 2015; Bates, 2014) and academic literature (Jackson & Sundaram, 2018, 2020; Phipps & Young, 2013) participants may have responded in ways which they saw as socially desirable, diminishing the problematic practices of lad culture and emphasising the positives. It is certainly true that SIL participants were keen to refer to the camaraderie and support felt in lad culture, with Georgina claiming "I've never felt friendship like it." Nonetheless, much of the interview data acknowledged practices which may be socially undesirable, such as homophobia and rape jokes. Further, this project was distinct in investigating the relationship between laddism and sexual violence, through both questionnaire and in-person interviews. In line with guidelines for conducting research with perpetrators of sexual violence (Jewkes et al., 2012), participants were informed prior to interview that any disclosure of illegal acts which named a victim would be reported to relevant authorities. SIL interview participants may have therefore underreported their involvement in sexual violence, because this is both socially undesirable and illegal.

Social desirability in questionnaire data was counteracted through the adaptation of valid and reliable questionnaire items; the items which asked students to report their experience and/or perpetration of sexual violence were adapted from the *Sexual Experiences*

Survey which was developed with university students (Koss & Oros, 1982). This instrument was tested both in self-report questionnaire form, and via in-person structured interviews, revealing a strong positive correlation between responses in the two forms (Koss & Gidycz, 1985) implying high reliability of the items. While it would have been possible in the questionnaire to include items which measured social desirability bias (e.g. Paulhus, 1984) which could then have been controlled for, the questionnaire was already prohibitive in length so these were not incorporated.

Further, SIL interview participants may have been unwilling to disclose their involvement in acts of sexual violence. While interviews did reveal the ways in which laddish practice may be conducive to sexual violence, no participants admitted that they had been sexually violent. In spite of the correlation between self-report and in-person use of the SES, Koss and Gidycz noted "a tendency among male participants to deny behaviours during interviews that had been revealed on self-reports" (1985, p. 423). Additionally, participants were forewarned in the information sheet (Appendix D) that any details of proposed or completed illegal activity would be referred to relevant authorities in line with Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) ethical guidelines (Jewkes et al., 2012), which may have deterred participants from disclosing having witnessed or perpetrated acts of sexual violence. Moreover, the phrasing of the questions about sexual violence was intended to introduce the topic of discussion, without appearing to accuse participants of having perpetrated sexual violence. This is because I did not wish to cause psychological harm to my participants, and desired to elicit rich detailed information from SILs on laddish practices without alienating them from the research. Future research could employ observations to collect data with high validity, as has been done successfully in similar contexts, such as Thurnell-Read's (2011, 2012) participant observations of 'stag tours' in Eastern Europe. While this would not be possible for a visibly queer female researcher such as myself to complete, this approach could be used to witness laddish practices first-hand, which may include sexually violent acts.

8.4.3 Intersections in lad culture

This project was unique in interviewing non-heterosexual participants of university lad culture, indicating a greater breadth of SILs in universities. However, the majority of the sample were white and in their 20s, therefore this sample may not be representative of the true diversity of SILs in universities. Although participants were not asked to disclose their race and ethnicity, all SIL interviewees passed as white. This may be because of the racial make-up of the institutions in which participants studied, which are both have a majority White British population. All participants were in their late teens to early twenties and studied at prestigious collegiate HEIs in the UK. Both institutions also have a high proportion of middle-class students, though several

SIL participants reported that they were from working-class backgrounds. Efforts were made to expand the reach of the study, including having a stall at the Freshers' Fair of a university with a higher proportion of mature students and Black and Minority Ethnicity (BAME) students. It is unclear whether the idealised laddish subject (chapter 5) construct is relevant to all lad culture, or whether it is a reflection of the experiences of lad culture at collegiate, predominantly middle-class, white institutions. Notwithstanding, the idealised laddish subject does bear characteristics of hegemonic masculinity in the regional UK context (and much of the Western world), which are structurally privileged. Yet, constructions of lad culture may be different among students at predominantly BAME and/or working-class universities, which warrants further investigation.

Furthermore, even though the aim of this project was to more precisely define university lad culture, including through understanding how SILs construct a laddish identity, questions identifying participants' race and class were not included in the questionnaire or interviews. For the questionnaire, this was because of the length of the survey which already included many exploratory items. Looking back, the inclusion of these questions would have been helpful in confirming whether lad culture was predominantly enacted by working-class students as it is in secondary schools (Jackson, 2002, 2003; Jackson, 2006a) or middle-class students (Phipps & Young, 2013). In addition, questions about race and class were not included in the structured interview schedule, though these were sometimes probed on in unstructured questions. With hindsight, asking these questions would have allowed me to locate the participants' constructions of the idealised laddish subject in relation to their own identities, meaning that the participants could be more readily understood as either exemplars of the subject, or distant from it. Subsequent examination could expand on the ways in which lad culture specifically relates to class and race.

8.4.4 Challenges to lad culture

As addressed in section 8.2 the findings of this project have practical implications for challenging lad culture in university contexts – through decolonising higher education, resisting neoliberalism and investing in transformative culture change. The original aim with this project was to examine the efficacy of anti-lad culture SU campaigns, but the paucity of research which investigated lad culture warranted expansion. Investigating the impact of such interventions on lad culture is a valuable avenue for future research, given the relationship between lad culture and sexual violence that this project has confirmed. Such programmes should reduce rape supportive attitudes, which were found to underlie use of rape jokes, and thus reduce the prevalence of sexual violence in universities.

Much research has already considered the efficacy of university programmes which aim to a) prevent sexual violence (Banyard et al., 2007; Fenton & Mott, 2018; Newlands & O'Donohue, 2016) and b) support victims/survivors of sexual violence (Martini & De Piccoli, 2020; Shannon, 2018). But the efficacy of interventions which focus on lad culture have not been investigated, in spite of the multiple SU campaigns to challenge lad culture in universities (as reviewed in section 2.6). This has been recognised as an issue in follow-up reports from Universities UK (Baird & Nash-Henry, 2018; Smail, 2019) which suggest that while much investment has been made in tackling sexual violence in universities, the same cannot be said for lad culture and hate crime. Given the linkages between lad culture, misogyny, homophobia and sexual violence, specific holistic challenges to lad culture must be invested in and evaluated.

8.5 **Final Remarks**

This thesis has contributed an in-depth analysis of the practices of lad culture from the perspective of self-identified lads. The findings demonstrate that lads 'do' laddism through an array of laddish practices, which reinforce laddish masculinity as hegemonic in university contexts and which are performative of neoliberal discourses. Lads themselves often report feeling pressure to behave in these ways or risk feeling disenfranchised by the norms of laddish practice. Conversely, lad culture is a source of comfort for students whose university experience, including their subjective social practice, is heavily influenced by free market rationalities. In this context the laddish friendship group is valued as a safe haven for students whose lives are intensely competitive and individualised. Future endeavours to tackle university laddism must be cognisant of the need to create communities where lads can be cared for, and in which harmful behaviours are challenged.

The 'ideal lad' is male and masculine, heterosexual and white construct which adheres to national and global structures of privilege. SILs construct their identity as lads against this ideal subject, often acutely aware of how their own experience positions them as less-than the ideal. This theorisation offers a way of understanding how those within lad culture discursively distance themselves from harmful practices while remaining complicit in upholding them. The recognised lack of diversity in the sample of this research project may be counteracted in future research, which should investigate the laddism of those marginalised by hegemonic masculinity – such as BAME and working-class lads.

Much recent research, and university activism, has focused on prevention of sexual violence and building empathy for survivors of sexual violence. In the future, such activism may holistically challenge lad culture by accounting for the array of students who identify with laddism to an extent but who see themselves as only 'a bit of lad. University activism should

work to destabilise structures which privilege the ideal lad, through decolonisation of higher education and transforming heteropatriarchy. Further, neoliberalism in universities must be resisted. Future research should map such activism going on across the world (based on suggestions by Krause et al., 2017), and develop alternatives to the hegemony of laddism in university contexts. The efficacy of anti-lad culture interventions can then be evaluated, and effective interventions may be embedded into university efforts to challenge lad culture.

9 Appendices

Appendix A

Full Project Information Sheet

<u>UK Universities Culture Survey: Full Project Information Sheet</u>

Dear Reader,

My name is Annis Stead and I am a doctoral researcher in the Department of Education at the University of York. I am currently carrying out a research project looking at the impact of gendered cultures at Universities across the UK. I am writing to request your participation in this project, and to enlist your help in attracting others to participate. Students and staff of any UK Higher Education institution are invited to participate.

What would this entail for me?

1. A short **online questionnaire** (can be done on mobile devices) suitable for both staff and students, the link for which is here: _____. When completing the questionnaire, please provide an email address if you are interested in participating in either interviews or focus groups.
2. **Interviews** may be conducted with interested participants either via email exchange or face-to-face and may be followed up with email or phone exchange. These will typically last less than 90 minutes and can be halted at any point.
3. At some institutions, **focus groups** of participants (staff or students) may be used to stimulate discussion. These will last no more than 90 minutes.

Participants interested in only participating in interviews/focus groups should contact me directly at as799@york.ac.uk as there are separate Consent Forms for these.

Anonymity and Data storage/use

The data that you provide (e.g. emails, audio recordings of the in-person interview) will be anonymised; although this project will compare institutions, your institution will also be anonymised in cases where this might make your data identifiable. Data will be stored on a password-protected device/software or in a locked file (if hard copy). Any information that identifies you will be stored separately from the data.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection:

1. You are able to halt the **interview**. You are able to abstain from answering any interview questions; please inform the researcher if you wish to move on. Once the interview has been transcribed you will be given the opportunity to comment on the initial written record of your interview. You may withdraw your data up to two weeks after the transcript is emailed to you.
2. **Focus groups** may be withdrawn from at any point during data collection, and up to 4 weeks after the group meeting, however transcripts will not be disseminated to group members as this could compromise the confidentiality of the responses.

Audio interview/focus group data will be kept for a maximum of 3 years after which time it will be destroyed. Transcribed data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years, in accordance with Research Integrity policy at the University of York. The data may be used for future analysis and shared for research or training purposes, but participants will not be identified individually. If you do not want your data to be included in any information shared as a result of this research, please do not sign this consent form.

Information about limitations of confidentiality

Please note: If we gather information that raises concerns about your safety or the safety of others, or about other concerns as perceived by the researcher, the researcher will be obliged to pass on this information. A disclosure of threat to any named person will result in local authorities being informed. This will be discussed with you as transparently as possible, and support can be provided.

At the bottom of this sheet is information about national support services which may be of use if participants feel distressed by topics discussed. You can email as799@york.ac.uk for direction to specific support services.

We hope that you will agree to take part. If you have any questions about the study that you would like to ask before giving consent or after the data collection, please feel free to contact me as799@york.ac.uk my research supervisor vanita.sundaram@york.ac.uk or the Chair of Ethics Committee via email education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk

Please keep this information sheet for your own records.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely

Annis Stead

 as799@york.ac.uk

Support Services

http://www.samaritans.org/   T: 116 123

http://www.thelisteningservice.org.uk/   T: 020 8429 5875

https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/ T: 08 08 1689 111

(Scotland http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk/ T: 0345 603 9213)

Appendix B

Original Questionnaire Information Sheet

This short **online questionnaire** (can be done on mobile devices) will ask about experiences/understandings of harassment and bullying in University settings. It should take no longer than **20 minutes to complete**.

Follow up **Interviews** and **Focus groups** will be conducted, if you are interested please provide an email address at the end of this survey, which will be stored securely and separately from survey responses. There are separate information sheets and consent forms available for these. Any participant who wishes only to be involved in Interviews or Focus Groups should email the researcher directly on as799@york.ac.uk .

Anonymity and Data storage/use

Anonymised data will be stored on password-protected devices indefinitely. While questionnaire data remain anonymous, behavioural trends at institutions may be disclosed to relevant staff.

As the questionnaire is fully anonymous, you may not withdraw your responses retrospectively. Answering **"withdraw"** in any open text question is the only way for partially completed questionnaires to be withdrawn. Incomplete questionnaires which do not state "withdraw" may still be used for data analysis. The findings may be used for future analysis and may be shared for research or training purposes. Anonymised data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years and may be used in freely available publications.

Continuing with this survey will be considered formal consent for your data to be used in the project. Queries may be directed to:

-the researcher as799@york.ac.uk

-research supervisor vanita.sundaram@york.ac.uk

-Chair of Ethics Committee education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk

Below is information about national support services which may be of use if you feel distressed by any of the topics discussed. For *regional* support services email the researcher or read the information sheet at the end of the questionnaire.

http://www.samaritans.org/   T: 116 123

http://www.thelisteningservice.org.uk/   T: 020 8429 5875

https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/ T: 08 08 1689 111

Appendix C

New Questionnaire Information Sheet

Thanks for following the link to this online questionnaire

My name is Annis Stenson, a PhD candidate in the Department of Education at the University of York. This questionnaire forms the main part of my doctoral research project, and will contain *questions about your experience and identification of 'lad culture', 'laddism' and 'laddish' behaviours in university*. It should take no longer than **20 minutes to complete** and most questions can be skipped past if necessary.

Who can take the questionnaire?

You must be **over the age of 18**, and **currently enrolled** at any UK Higher Education provider. Participants for individual **Interviews** and **Focus groups** are also being recruited, *particularly students who self-identify as 'lads'*. If you would be willing to be involved in Interviews or Focus Groups please email annis.stenson@york.ac.uk

What will happen to my data?

Anonymity	**Withdrawing Data**
All data will be stored anonymously on password-protected devices	Part-completed questionnaires will still be analysed
Results of the questionnaire will be stored by the University of York for at least 10 years	If you want your responses removing from the dataset, please answer "**withdraw**" in any text box
Findings will be used in academic and public presentations	

Ethical Approval

This project has approval from the Ethics Committee in the Department of Education. By clicking through to the next page, you are consenting to continue with the questionnaire.

Any questions can be sent to:

-the researcher annis.stenson@york.ac.uk

-research supervisor vanita.sundaram@york.ac.uk

-Chair of Ethics Committee education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk

Some of the questions refer to experiences of harassment and violence while at university. You do not need to answer these, unless you are comfortable in doing so. Below is information about national support services, for *regional* support services email the researcher or read the information sheet at the end of the questionnaire.

http://www.samaritans.org/   T: 116 123

http://www.thelisteningservice.org.uk/   T: 020 8429 5875

Appendix D

SIL Interviews Information Sheet and Consent Form

Thanks for expressing an interest in being interviewed

My name is Annis Stenson, a PhD candidate in the Department of Education at the University of York. As well as a questionnaire, interviews with self-identified 'lads' form a main part of my doctoral research project. Interviews will contain *questions about your experience and identification of 'lad culture', 'laddism' and 'laddish' behaviours in university*. The interview itself will last between **45mins - 1hr** and any questions can be skipped past if necessary.

Who can be interviewed?

You must be **over the age of 18**, and **currently enrolled** at any UK Higher Education provider. Participants can offer any perspective on laddism in university, but I am particularly interested in hearing from *students who self-identify as 'lads'*. If you would prefer, you may interview as part of a group/pair.

What will happen to my data?

Anonymity	Withdrawing Data
All data will be stored anonymously on password-protected devices	You can withdraw from the interview at any point, or skip any questions
Anonymised transcripts will be stored by the University of York for at least 10 years	You will be sent a copy of the transcript, which you will have up to 2 weeks to comment on or remove responses
Findings will be used in academic and public presentations	

Ethical Approval

This project has approval from the Ethics Committee in the Department of Education. If you are happy to continue with the interview process, please complete the consent form attached.

Any questions can be sent to:

-the researcher annis.stenson@york.ac.uk

-research supervisor vanita.sundaram@york.ac.uk

-Chair of Ethics Committee education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk

Some of the questions refer to experiences of harassment and violence while at university. You do not need to answer these, unless you are comfortable in doing so. Below is information about national support services, for *regional* support services email the researcher or read the information sheet at the end of the questionnaire.

http://www.samaritans.org/   T: 116 123

http://www.thelisteningsevice.org.uk/   T: 020 8429 5875

Lad Culture Survey: Interview Consent Form

Please tick next to each statement and sign below if you are happy to take part in this research.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information given to me about the above named research project and I understand that this will involve me taking part as described above.

I understand that the purpose of the research is to investigate Lad Culture in UK universities, asking some questions about experiences of harassment.

I understand that data will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected device/software accessed only by the researcher and research supervisors (see Information Sheet).

I understand that disclosure of information which identifies myself or others **as at risk may result in others being informed**.

I understand that my data will not be identifiable and the data may be used:

in publications that are mainly read by university academics

in presentations that are mainly read by university academics

in publications that are read by the public, University staff or Student Union staff

in presentations that are read by the public, University staff or Student Union staff

freely available online

I understand that interview audio files will be kept for 3 years after which they will be destroyed. Transcribed interviews will be stored for a minimum of 10 years by the University of York.

I understand that data could be used for future analysis or other purposes.

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to comment on a written record of my interview responses.

I understand that I can withdraw my interview responses at any point during data collection and up to two weeks after transcripts are disseminated.

First Name: Surname:

Signed: Date:

Appendix E

University Activist Interviews Information Sheet and Consent Form

Preliminary Investigation of Student-Facing Campaigns:

The University

Dear Reader

My name is Annis Stead and I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Education at the University of York. I am currently carrying out a research project with this initial study to identify the kinds of student-facing campaigns (particularly those related to gender and discrimination) that were carried out at **The University** *over the five year period, 2010-2015. The results will form research design for an investigation of effective student-facing campaigns in UK Higher Education institutions. I am writing to ask if you are able to take part in this preliminary study.*

What would this entail for me?

This preliminary study would require up to two hours of your time to answer questions relating to student-facing campaigns conducted at **The University**. *Interviews may be conducted either via email exchange or face-to-face and may be followed up with email or phone exchange.*

Anonymity and Data storage/use

The data that you provide (e.g. emails, audio recordings of the in-person interview) will be anonymised; which will also involve anonymising **The University** *as the subject of the research, as this might make your data identifiable. Data will be stored on a password-protected device or in a locked file (if hard copy). Any information that identifies you will be stored separately from the data.*

The data will be kept for a maximum of 3 years after which time it will be destroyed. The data may be used for future analysis and shared for research or training purposes, but participants will not be identified individually. If you do not want your data to be included in any information shared as a result of this research, please do not sign this consent form.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection, and are able to halt the interview. You are able to abstain from answering any interview questions; please inform the researcher if you wish to move on.

Once the interview has been transcribed you will be given the opportunity to comment on the initial written record of your interview. You may withdraw your data up to two weeks after the transcript is emailed to you.

Information about confidentiality

The data that we collect may be used in anonymous format in different ways. Please indicate on the following consent form if you are happy for this anonymised data to be used in the ways listed: research publications, academic presentations, University or Student Union training programs.

Please note: If we gather information that raises concerns about your safety or the safety of others, or about other concerns as perceived by the researcher, the researcher will be obliged to pass on this information, in accordance with confidentiality agreements at the University of York. This will be discussed with you as transparently as possible, and support can be provided.

We hope that you will agree to take part. If you have any questions about the study that you would like to ask before giving consent or after the data collection, please feel free to contact me as799@york.ac.uk my research supervisors sally.hancock@york.ac.uk or vanita.sundaram@york.ac.uk (from Jan 2016) or the Chair of Ethics Committee via email education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk

Please keep this information sheet for your own records.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely

Annis Stead

as799@york.ac.uk

Preliminary Investigation of Student-Facing Campaigns:

The University

Consent form

Please tick next to each statement and sign below if you are happy to take part in this research.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information given to me about the above named research project and I understand that this will involve me taking part as described above.

I understand that the purpose of the research is to determine the range of campaigns conducted at **The University** *between 2010-2015, in order to form research design for an investigation of student-facing campaigns at UK Higher Education institutions.*

I understand that data will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected device accessed only by the researcher and research supervisors (see Information Sheet).

I understand that my identity will be protected by use of a pseudonym.

I understand that disclosure of information which identifies myself or others as at risk may result in others being informed.

I understand that my data will not be identifiable and the data may be used

in publications that are mainly read by university academics

in presentations that are mainly read by university academics

in publications that are read by the public, University staff or Student Union staff

in presentations that are read by the public, University staff or Student Union staff

freely available online

I understand that data will be kept for 3 years after which it will be destroyed.

I understand that data could be used for future analysis or other purposes.

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to comment on a written record of my responses.

I understand that I can withdraw my data at any point during data collection and up to two weeks after transcripts are disseminated.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix F

Questionnaire Export from Qualtrics

Q1 Information Sheet

Q2 In which age group are you?

o 18 or over (1)o Under 18 (2)

Display This Question:
If In which age group are you? = Under 18

Q3 Thank you for your interest in this study, but students under the age of 18 are unable to take part. If you have any questions about the project, feel free to contact the researcher as799@york.ac.uk

Q4 The following questions ask about University spaces: your behaviour in and perception of them. A 'University space' might be described as any area in which members of your institution frequently meet.

If the following questions do not apply to your University experience, you can choose not to respond and move onto the next page.

Q5 At which institution are you a student?

_____

Q6 How frequently do you behave in the following ways in teaching and learning contexts (seminars, lectures, labs)?

If you answered <u>other than 'Never'</u>, please indicate if any of the below are reasons for your behaviour.
Please select all that apply.

	Frequency				Why?					
	Never (1)	Sometimes (2)	Often (3)	All the time (4)	Because other people do (1)	I don't understand the topic (2)	I find the classes boring (3)	It's just a joke (4)	It doesn't affect the teacher (5)	Other (6)
Use social media (1)	○	○	○	○	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Talk when teacher is speaking (2)	○	○	○	○	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Zone out (3)	○	○	○	○	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Regularly turn up
more than 5 minutes
late- without reason
(4)

Play games/pranks
with other students
(5)

Display This Question:
If How frequently do you behave in the following ways in teaching and learning contexts (seminars, l... : Why? = Other

Q7 You answered 'Other' as a reason for at least one of the behaviours listed above. What was your reason for behaving in this way?

_____

Q8 Describe the drinking culture at your institution

'Binge drinking' refers to consumption of more than 8 units of alcohol at one time.

○ Everyone seems to binge drink regularly (1)

○ Some people binge drink regularly but by no means everyone (2)

○ The majority of people do not binge drink regularly (3)

Q9 Describe your relationship to the drinking culture at your institution. Select any that apply.

☐ I feel pressured to drink more than I can handle (1)

☐ I feel pressured to drink to my limit (2)

☐ I sometimes feel pressured to drink more than I would (3)

☐ I don't drink, but I do feel pressured to (4)

☐ I don't feel pressure to drink more than I want to (5)

Q10 How frequently do you behave in the following ways when at University?

	Never (1)	Rarely (a few times per academic year) (2)	Sometimes (a few times per term) (3)	Often (a few times per week) (4)	Very Often (every day) (5)
⊗ Binge drink (8+ units of alcohol) (1)	○	○	○	○	○
⊗ Poke fun at my friends (2)	○	○	○	○	○
⊗ Rant about other students on social media (3)	○	○	○	○	○
⊗ Leave academic work until the last minute (4)	○	○	○	○	○
⊗ Have casual sex (5)	○	○	○	○	○
⊗ Play sports (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Q11 Which (if any) of the behaviours listed above do you consider to be problematic?

0 - not at all, 100 - extremely

   0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

Binge drinking ()	
Casual sex ()	
Interrupting teaching ()	
Playing sports ()	
Poking fun at friends ()	
Poking fun at others ()	
Ranting on social media ()	
Using social media in teaching and learning settings ()	

Q12 Looking at your responses above, why do you think these behaviours <u>aren't</u> <u>or are</u> problematic? Please answer with as much detail as you can.

○ Binge drinking (1) _____

○ Casual sex (2) _____

○ Interrupting teaching (3) _____

○ Playing sports (4) _____

○ Poking fun at friends (5) _____

○ Poking fun at others (6) _____

○ Ranting on social media (7) _____

○ Using social media in teaching and learning settings (8)
_____

Q13 Break

Q14 How often do you see groups behave in the following ways at your institution?

	Never (1)	Very Infrequently (5)	Infrequently (2)	Frequently (3)	Very Frequently (4)
Groups chanting (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Property damage (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Binge drinking (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Catcalling (shouting at people you don't know in the street) (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Dominating student spaces (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q15 How often do you witness groups behaving in the following ways <u>outside of</u> the institution?

	Never (1)	Very Infrequently (5)	Infrequently (2)	Frequently (3)	Very Frequently (4)
Groups chanting (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Property damage (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Binge drinking (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Catcalling (shouting at people you don't know in the street) (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Dominating public spaces (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q16 Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?

Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please identify a perceived threat if one comes to mind. Leave blank any that do not apply.

Categories	Sad	Somewhat Sad	Neutral	Somewhat Happy	Happy	Intimidation	Verbal Harassment	Physical Harassment
Student Union Bars (1)	○	○	○	○	○	☐ Intimidation	☐ Verbal Harassment	☐ Physical Harassment
University Catering Facilities (dining hall, café, bistro) (2)	○	○	○	○	○	☐ Intimidation	☐ Verbal Harassment	☐ Physical Harassment
Teaching and Learning Settings (3)	○	○	○	○	○	☐ Intimidation	☐ Verbal Harassment	☐ Physical Harassment

Public Transport to/from University (4)	○	○	○	○	○	☐ Intimidation	☐ Verbal Harassment	☐ Physical Harassment
University Library (5)	○	○	○	○	○	☐ Intimidation	☐ Verbal Harassment	☐ Physical Harassment
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, YikYak etc.) (6)	○	○	○	○	○	☐ Intimidation	☐ Verbal Harassment	☐ Physical Harassment
Non-University Nightclubs/Bars (7)	○	○	○	○	○	☐ Intimidation	☐ Verbal Harassment	☐ Physical Harassment

Display This Question:
If If Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Student Union Bars - Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Student Union Bars - Very Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... University Catering Facilities (dining hall, café, bistro) - Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... University Catering Facilities (dining hall, café, bistro) - Very Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Teaching and Learning Settings - Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Teaching and Learning Settings - Very Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Public Transport to/from University - Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Public Transport to/from University - Very Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... University Library - Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... University Library - Very Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, YikYak etc.) - Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, YikYak etc.) - Very Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Non-University Nightclubs/Bars - Unhappy Is Selected

Or Or Use the scale of faces to answer with how safe you feel in the following student spaces?Smile indicates feeling very safe, frown indicates feeling very unsafe. If you respond with a frown, please i... Non-University Nightclubs/Bars - Very Unhappy Is Selected

Q17 If not (or in addition to) <u>Intimidation, Verbal Harassment or Physical Harassment</u>, **what is it that makes you feel unsafe?**

_____

Q18 The next questions ask about sexual behaviour, which some participants may find distressing. You are able to answer as much or as little as you want, or can opt to <u>skip</u> these questions below.

◯ I'm happy to continue (4)

◯ I'd like to skip these questions (5)

 Skip To: Q22 If The next questions ask about sexual behaviour, which some participants may find distressing. You... = I'd like to skip these questions

Q19 How frequently have you engaged in the following behaviours whilst at University, when someone has <u>not agreed</u> to them?

Sexual dancing (grinding) (1)	▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)
Showed them graphic images (2)	▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)
Sexual touching (over clothes) (3)	▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)
Sexual touching (without clothes) (5)	▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)
Kissing (4)	▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)
Manual sex (with hands) (6)	▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)
Oral sex (7)	▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)
Penetrative sex (vaginal) (8)	▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)

Penetrative sex (anal) (9) | ▼ Never (1) ... I always behave in this way (5)

Q20 Through what means did these behaviours occur when the other person had not agreed to them? Select all that apply

☐ I didn't ask them if they wanted to (1)

☐ I threatened to end our friendship/relationship (4)

☐ I mocked them (2)

☐ I threatened to hurt them or others (3)

☐ I physically hurt them (5)

☐ I did this while they were unconscious (6)

☐ I did this while they were 'out of it' because of alcohol or drugs that they had taken (7)

☐ I got them drunk/high (8)

☐ I held them down (9)

☐ I had a weapon (10)

☐ There was more than just me behaving in this way (11)

Q21 If you have engaged in these behaviours, why did you behave in this way?
_____

Q22 Which (if any) of the behaviours listed above do you consider to be problematic?

0 - not at all, 100 - extremely

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

Groups making a lot of noise (e.g. chanting) ()	
Engaging in sexual acts without asking ()	
Catcalling (shouting at people you don't know in the street) ()	
Mocking someone who doesn't want to engage in sexual activity ()	
Groups dominating University spaces ()	
Engaging in sexual activity with someone who is "out of it" ()	
Arguing with others on social media ()	

Q23 Looking at your responses above, why do you think these behaviours <u>aren't or are</u> problematic? Please answer with as much detail as you can.

○ Groups making a lot of noise (e.g. chanting) (1) _____

○ Engaging in sexual acts without asking (2) _____

○ Catcalling (shouting at people you don't know in the street) (3)

_____

○ Mocking someone who doesn't want to engage in sexual activity (4)

_____

○ Groups dominating University spaces (5) _____

○ Engaging in sexual activity with someone who is "out of it" (6)

_____

○ Arguing with others on social media (7) _____

Q24 How often do you witness harassment on campus?
Harassment is defined as: any unwelcome comments (written or spoken) or conduct which: violates an individual's dignity; and/or. creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment

○ Never (1)

○ Rarely (a few times per academic year) (2)

○ Somewhat Often (a few times per term) (3)

○ Often (a few times per week) (4)

○ Very Often (a few times per day) (5)

Skip To: Q28 If How often do you witness harassment on campus? Harassment is defined as: any unwelcome comments (... = Never

Q25 Rank the forms of harassment, in terms of <u>prevalence</u> at your institution.

____ Racist (1)
____ Sexual (2)
____ Homophobic (3)
____ Transphobic (4)
____ Misogynist (5)

Q26 Describe those that you consider to be the most common perpetrators of harassment at your institution. Please give as much detail as possible.

_____

Q27 Break

Q28 The next questions refer to experiences of bullying, harassment and assault. If you do not wish to answer, or do not feel that these questions apply to your experience, answer below.

◯ Continue to questions (1)

◯ I would not like to answer these questions (2)

◯ I have not experienced bullying, harassment or assault (3)

Skip To: Q34 If The next questions refer to experiences of bullying, harassment and assault. If you do not wish t... = I would not like to answer these questions

Skip To: Q34 If The next questions refer to experiences of bullying, harassment and assault. If you do not wish t... = I have not experienced bullying, harassment or assault

Q29 Which of the following forms of harassment have you experienced, and in what ways were you harassed?

These may be based on actual or perceived facets of your identity. If you have not experienced any of the following forms of harassment, please skip this question.

	Verbal harassment (1)	Physical harassment (2)	Online harassment (3)	Serious physical assault (4)	Sexual harassment (5)
Homophobic (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transphobic (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sexist (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Racist (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Harassed as a result of a disability (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Harassed because of my body type (6)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Harassed because of my sexual behaviour (7)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Other (8)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Q30 The next questions ask about experiences of a sexual nature, and may cause distress to some participants. Please click below to <u>skip</u> these questions.

○ I am happy to continue (1)

○ I would like to skip these questions (2)

Skip To: Q34 If The next questions ask about experiences of a sexual nature, and may cause distress to some parti... = I would like to skip these questions

Q31 Answer with how frequently you have experienced the following behaviours whilst at University, when you have <u>not agreed </u>to them.

Sexual dancing (grinding) (1)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)
Showed me graphic images (2)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)
Sexual touching (over clothes) (3)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)
Sexual touching (without clothes) (5)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)
Kissing (4)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)
Manual sex (with hands) (6)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)
Oral sex (7)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)
Penetrative sex (vaginal) (8)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)
Penetrative sex (anal) (9)	▼ Never (1) ... Very frequently (almost daily) (5)

Q32 Through what means did these behaviours occur when you had not agreed to them? Select all that apply

☐ They didn't ask if I wanted to before behaving in this way (1)

☐ They threatened to end our friendship/relationship (4)

☐ They mocked me (2)

☐ They threatened to hurt me or others (3)

☐ They physically hurt me (5)

☐ They did this while I was unconscious (6)

☐ They did this while I was 'out of it' because of alcohol or drugs that I had taken (7)

☐ They got me drunk/high (8)

☐ They held me down (9)

☐ They had a weapon (10)

☐ There was more than just one person behaving in this way (11)

☐ I felt I couldn't say no (12)

Display This Question:

If Through what means did these behaviours occur when you had not agreed to them? Select all that apply = I felt I couldn't say no

Q33 If you are able to, please explain why you were unable to say no. You are able to skip this question.

_____

Q34 Being a member of a sports club or society is a really common University experience, the next few questions will ask about your encounters with this. Please select all that apply.

☐ Sports team (mixed) (1)

☐ Sports team (single sex) (2)

☐ Individual sport society (cycling, athletics, squash) (3)

☐ Academic/departmental society (4)

☐ Arts society (drama, music, magic, choir) (5)

☐ Liberation society (lgbtq, women's, BME, disabled students) (6)

☐ Special interest society (author, fantasy, gaming) (7)

☐ Drinking society (8)

☐ International society (9)

☐ Volunteering/charity society (10)

☐ Student Media (11)

☐ Faith group (12)

☐ Political society (17)

☐ Others (15) _____

Q35 Each group has different norms, answer with the group you are mostly likely to behave in the following ways with?

	Housemates (1)	Course friends (2)	Society members (3)	Sports team (4)	N/A (5)
Drinking alcohol (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Making mean jokes with each other (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Cooking together (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Singing or chanting (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Pull pranks (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q36 Going out clubbing is often seen as a large part of student culture, the next questions centre on your behaviour on a night out. This can be in University or local bars or nightclubs. Firstly, how often do you go out clubbing?

Selecting 'I don't ever go out clubbing' will <u>skip</u> these questions.

▼ I don't ever go out clubbing (1) ... Every night of the week (7)

Skip To: Q42 If Going out clubbing is often seen as a large part of student culture, the next questions centre on... = I don't ever go out clubbing

Q37 When getting ready for a night out, my friends and I usually...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Spend a long time making ourselves look good (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Have as many drinks as we can (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Meet as a group of more than 4 (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Play drinking games (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Take the mick out of each other (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q38 On our way out, my friends and I usually...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Sing songs or chant (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Continue to drink alcohol (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Dominate one area of the bus/train (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Make jokes about people we see (4)	○	○	○	○	○

Q39 On a night out, people sometimes behave in the following ways towards a stranger <u>without asking</u> in a public place (nightclub, bar, street). How often have you behaved in this way? Select all that apply.

	I have not behaved in this way (1)	I have done this whilst drunk (2)	I have done this whilst sober (3)	I do this regularly whilst drunk (4)	I do this regularly when sober (5)
Use sexual language (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Touch their buttocks (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Look at them continuously (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dance with your body against them (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kiss them (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Touch their genitals (might include breasts) (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q40 If you have engaged in these behaviours, why did you behave in this way?

_____

Q41 The next questions will ask about your understanding of specific student cultures.

Q42 What do you understand the term <u>'lad culture'</u> to mean? Please give as much detail as possible.

_____

Q43 To what extent do you consider these behaviours to be central to 'lad culture'?

0 - not at all, 100 - extremely

	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

Binge drinking (8+ units of alcohol) ()

Having a large group of single-sex friends ()

Catcalling (shouting at people you don't know in the street) ()

Poking fun at friends ()

Being assertive ()

Playing sports ()

Perpetrating sexual assault ()

Ranting about other students on social media ()

Making jokes about women ()

Leaving academic work until the last minute ()

Having casual sex ()	
Making jokes about being gay ()	
Add your own ()	
Add your own ()	
Add your own ()	

Q44 To what extent do you consider the following attributes to be 'laddish'?

Not really related to 'laddism'   'Laddish' but not central to 'lad' identity   Must have to be considered a 'lad'

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

Able to handle drinking a lot of alcohol ()	
Sporting prowess ()	
Misogynist ()	
Physically strong ()	
Homophobic ()	
Able to 'pull' attractive partners ()	
Able to 'pull' many partners ()	
Likely to push jokes further than others ()	

Stoic ()	
Good sense of humour ()	
Add your own ()	
Add your own ()	
Add your own ()	

Q45 The final questions will ask for your personal information, this will remain anonymous.

Q46 Answer with your type and year of study

	Type of study				Year of study			
	UG (1)	PGT (2)	PGR (3)	FE (4)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4+ (4)
Further Education /Undergraduate/Postgraduate Taught/Postgraduate Research (1)	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Q47 What is your age?

_____

Q48 What is your gender?

o Male (1)
o Female (2)
o Other (3) _____

Q49 Is this the gender you were assigned at birth?

o Yes (1)
o No (2)
o Prefer not to say (3)

Q50 To what extent do you consider yourself to be the following?

0 - not at all, 100 - extremely

    0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

Masculine ()	
Feminine ()	
'Laddish' ()	

End of Questions

Appendix G

SIL Interview Schedule

Preamble: Explain the nature of research and note that topic of sexual violence will be brought up. Remind students of their right to withdraw at any point. Give participant incentive voucher. Ask that participant read the information sheet and, if willing to continue, sign the consent form. Allow opportunity for any questions. Explain that interview will be recorded, then anonymised at point of transcription. Start recording.

Rationale: This thesis must determine how self-identifying lads consider themselves and their relationship to laddish behaviours, and the university - by finding out more about the individual experience of lads, we can more fully understand lad culture.

Self-defining Laddism

- At what age did you first use the term lad to describe yourself?
- What does being a lad mean to you?
- What kinds of behaviours do you think are essential to identifying as a lad?
    - Do you do these things at university?
- What kinds of attitudes do you think are essential to identifying as a lad?
    - Do you hold these attitudes?
- Can you tell me about a time where you most felt like a lad?

Others Identifying Laddism

- Which behaviours do you think other people consider to be 'laddish'?
- Which attitudes do you think other people consider to be 'laddish'?
- What do you wish people knew about lads?

The next question is about sexual violence, I want to remind you that you are able to skip these questions.

- 'Lad culture' is often referred to in debates about sexual harassment at university, how does that make you feel?
    - Is this something that you've witnessed in your laddish group?
- Is 'banter' an important element of being a lad?
    - What kinds of topics are off limits when it comes to banter?
- Do you have to drink to be one of the lads?

- What kinds of people are lads?
- Is being part of a group important to being a lad?

Post-interview: Stop recording. Remind participant of the ways in which their data will be stored and kept anonymous, including the opportunity to comment on their transcripts. Hand participant printed sheet of sources of support and encourage them to get in touch with researcher if wanted. Let them know I can stay if they would like me to.

Appendix H

University Activist Interview Schedule

Preamble: Explain the purpose of the research and remind participant of their right to withdraw. Ask that participant read the information sheet and, if willing to continue, sign the consent form. Allow opportunity for any questions. Explain that interview will be recorded, then anonymised at point of transcription. Start recording.

Rationale: This is a feasibility study to determine whether a PhD project investigating anti-lad culture campaigns can go ahead.

- What do you consider to be the biggest issue facing UK students at the moment?
- What do you consider to be the biggest gendered problem?
    - Explanation: When I say gendered I mean differing by gender, so that disproportionately affects women or men?
- Could you now tell me a little bit about the student facing campaigns that you've been involved in and how they've worked?
    - How does **[The University]** as an institution support you in this campaign?
    - What kinds of challenges have you faced in running student-facing campaigns?
    - What would you like to see in terms of campaigns?
- I'm actually doing my PhD on lad culture, and attempting to define lad culture, so my question to you is… what is lad culture?
    - Do you think that it's a problem at this institution?
    - What do you think can/should be done about lad culture?
    - What do you consider to be the difference between lad culture and misogyny/rape culture?

Post-interview: Stop recording. Remind participant of the ways in which their data will be stored and kept anonymous, including the opportunity to comment on their transcripts. Leave participant with copy of information sheet so that they have contact information to ask any additional questions.

Appendix I

Recruitment Materials

Email to Departments

Dear Students,

My name is Annis Stenson, a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of York. My doctoral research project aims to investigate the experience and identification of 'lad culture', 'laddism' and 'laddish' behaviours in universities in the UK. Participants can offer any perspective on laddism in university, but I am particularly interested in hearing from ***students who self-identify as 'lads'.*** The project consists of both an online survey and interviews with students who consider themselves 'lads', and more information can be found at www.annisstenson.wixsite.com/LadCultureSurvey. This is an exciting piece of original research, presenting the thoughts and feelings of university 'lads' for the first time.

This project does have approval from the Ethics Committee in the Department of Education. The questionnaire can be accessed using the link here: tinyurl.com/LadCultureSurvey

Alternatively, you can register to be interviewed during the Autumn term. **I will be conducting data collection in person between 8th Oct and 2nd Nov.** Register using this anonymous Doodle poll: **doodle.com/poll/7nt8vyrha33qvexk**

Thanks for considering this,

Annis Stenson

Doctoral Researcher

Department of Education, University of York

Berrick Saul Building, EDUC 02

Email to Sports Teams

Hello,

My name is Annis Stenson, a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of York. My doctoral research project aims to investigate the experience and identification of 'lad culture', 'laddism' and 'laddish' behaviours in universities in the UK. Participants can offer any perspective on laddism in university, but I am particularly interested in hearing from *students who self-identify as 'lads'*. The project consists of both an online survey and interviews with students who consider themselves 'lads', and more information can be found at www.annisstenson.wixsite.com/LadCultureSurvey

I am emailing you as President/Captain of a Sports team, to ask both for **your support in rolling out this research across sports teams at the university and to participate in the survey.** Although little is known about how 'lads' identify, hence the need for this original research, participation in sports is seen as related to 'lad culture' in both the national media and NUS research (see Phipps and Young, 2013 for more info). With this in mind, I am keen to speak to people who play sports from as many backgrounds and genders as possible.

I believe that with your role in the team, and the influence you have within the sporting community would mean that your support would be invaluable. **With your permission I could attend a team meeting or practice session and register people to be interviewed, or you can simply forward the below message to your team members.**

This project does have approval from the Ethics Committee in the Department of Education. The questionnaire can be accessed using the link here:

Alternatively, team members can register to be interviewed during the Autumn term using this anonymous Doodle poll:

lad culture

NOUN (s.)

(lad, laddish, laddism)   {lad}-{k^lt.er}

1. Attitudes and behaviour considered to be typical of a 'lad'. 2. British subculture arising in the 1990s, more recently present in universities. ***3. What does being a 'lad' mean to you?***

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

REQUIRED

tinyurl.com/LadCultureSurvey

10 Abbreviations/Acronyms

BAME	Black and Minority Ethnicity
GBV	Gender-based violence
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
Lads' mag	Lad's magazine
LSE	London School of Economics
MP	Member of parliament
NUS	National Union of Students
ONS	Office for National Statistics
SES	Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982)
SILs	Self-identified lads
SU	Students' Union
SVRI	Sexual Violence Research Initiative
VAW	Violence Against Women

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