

<b>Institution: University of Sussex</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA 23 Sociology</b>
<b>Title of case study: 'Lad culture' and violence in higher education</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>This case study focuses on two related areas: the issue of violence against female students and how this is framed by 'lad culture' in higher education (HE). It documents five areas where Alison Phipps' research has either directly led or indirectly contributed to change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work with the National Union of Students (NUS) which has informed their policies and interventions;</li> <li>• improved public and policy understanding of the issues of violence against female students and 'lad culture' in UK HE;</li> <li>• Students' Unions and other groups adopting 'zero-tolerance' policies in relation to sexual harassment and abuse and attempting to tackle aspects of 'lad culture';</li> <li>• institutions developing procedural frameworks around reporting and addressing violence against female students; and</li> <li>• governmental, public and third-sector organisations including students as a key demographic in their policies and initiatives around violence against women.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Violence against female students in HE is an issue of national and international significance, which has appeared on the agenda in the UK partly as a result of Phipps' research conducted in the Sociology Department at Sussex. Although gender equality in HE has been a long-held ideal and is now a requirement under the Gender Equality Duty, this research suggests that universities are far from equitable institutions and that female students are suffering discomfort, sexual harassment and occasionally violence as the result of the growth of student 'lad culture'. This feeds into a number of different debates: around violence against women and girls, the so-called 'crisis of masculinity', and the role, values and responsiveness of our HE communities.</p> <p>The impact in this case study is underpinned by research carried out between 2008 and 2013, which initially focused on UK sexual-violence policy and criminal-justice procedures [see Section 3, R1, R2], and highlighted a need for more emphasis on prevention and under-served groups in relation to criminal justice and support. Phipps' expertise in this area, and her developing interest in students as an under-served population, led the NUS to ask her to work with them on the <i>Hidden Marks</i> project [R3], a survey of over 2,000 female students in UK further and higher education, focused on their perceptions of safety and experiences of stalking, sexual harassment and physical and sexual violence. Phipps gave feedback on drafts of the survey instrument, guidance on analysis of the qualitative data and comments on several drafts of the report [R3]. The report found that 14 per cent of respondents had experienced serious sexual or physical violence while at university, and 68 per cent sexual harassment. Ten per cent had reported their experiences to the police and 4 per cent to their institution. The <i>Hidden Marks</i> report was widely disseminated and discussed in media and policy circles and, following its publication, Phipps co-authored a paper comparing the situation in the UK to that in the US, where the issue has been high on the public and policy agenda for decades and where federal laws mandate universities to take action [R4].</p> <p>The success of this work with the NUS led directly to Phipps' commission by the organisation to conduct a study on 'lad culture' in HE with researcher Isabel Young. This project consisted of an extensive literature review, qualitative interviews and focus groups with 40 women from England and Scotland on their experiences of university life, and 'lad culture' in particular. It found that, although the preserve of a minority of men, 'lad culture' was felt to dominate the social side of university life. Respondents described it as being characterised by sexist and sexualised 'banter' and other activities, which could easily spill over into sexual harassment and violence. The report, entitled <i>'That's What She Said'</i> [R5], linked this to the so-called 'crisis of masculinity' and</p>

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encroachment of economic values into UK HE, and argued that accelerating privatisation could exacerbate such cultures through its perpetuation of competitive and individualistic values, and threaten support services through outsourcing and the rationalisation of pastoral care.

### 3. References to the research

- R1** Phipps, A. (2009) 'Rape and respectability: ideas about sexual violence and social class', *Sociology*, 43(4): 667–683.
- R2** Phipps, A. (2010) 'Violent and victimised bodies: sexual violence policy in England and Wales', *Critical Social Policy*, 30(3): 359–383.
- R3** Phipps, A. (2010) *Hidden Marks: A Study of Women Students' Experiences of Harassment, Stalking, Violence and Sexual Assault*. London: National Union of Students, (contribution detailed in the acknowledgements).
- R4** Phipps, A. and Smith, G. (2012) 'Violence against women students in the UK: time to take action', *Gender and Education*, 24(4): 357–373.
- R5** Phipps, A. and Young, I. (2013) *'That's What She Said': Women Students' Experiences of 'Lad Culture' in Higher Education*. London: National Union of Students, acknowledged as authors on pp. 5 and 28 (Phipps and associated funding: grant of £9,000 from NUS, awarded 29 August 2012).

Outputs can be supplied by the university on request

### 4. Details of the impact

As summarised above, this research has had direct and indirect impacts in five areas:

- **Work with the NUS which has informed their policies and interventions**

Phipps' work in the area of sexual-violence policy led the NUS to ask her to provide consultancy for the *Hidden Marks* report (detailed in Section 2). This was launched at the 2010 NUS Women's Conference, and the debate on its recommendations led to the NUS 'zero tolerance' campaign detailed below. The other main recommendation (for students' unions and universities to develop cross-institutional policies to tackle violence against women) has been more difficult for the NUS to implement, although some successes are detailed below. The NUS Women's Campaign subsequently adopted the issue of violence and objectification towards women students as its lead campaign [see Section 5, C1], and Phipps' contribution to *Hidden Marks* was a major factor in the award of the grant to conduct the *'That's What She Said'* study [C2a]. This was launched at the 2013 NUS Women's Conference, where delegates adopted a number of policies such as a national 'zero-tolerance' charter and motions against street harassment and rape apology on campus, as well as 'pimps and hos' parties, slut-dropping and the Uni Lad website [C1]. It was also debated at the NUS National Conference, where President Liam Burns welcomed its findings and stated that it highlighted a need to introduce gender balancing across NUS committees [C1].
- **Improved public and policy understanding of the issues of violence against female students and 'lad culture' in UK HE**

Phipps' research has been extensively covered by the British media and has been read, cited and disseminated by policy-makers and third-sector organisations, informing their knowledge of the issue and current and planned interventions. *'That's What She Said'* was featured in over 40 separate articles in various tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, magazines and student publications – for instance *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Times*, *The New Statesman*, *Times Higher Education*, the *Telegraph*, *Glamour* magazine and *The F Word* [C3]. It also featured in a number of blogs and there were lively discussions on many of the news articles [C3], as well as a 'Tweetathon' hosted by the *Everyday Sexism* project in which over 300 men and women posted [C3]. Statements were made in response to the report by high-profile individuals such as Diane Abbott MP, Polly Williams (Senior Policy Adviser, Equality Challenge Unit) and Nicola Dandridge (Chief Executive of Universities UK) [C3] and by YWCA England and Wales [C3], and the NUS have been in discussions with ministers and organisations such as the Equality Challenge Unit about a potential summit on the issues [C2]. The NUS have stated: 'The media and

public interest in the research has already facilitated our efforts to put the recommendations into practice' [C2]. The media and public debate built on earlier responses to the *Hidden Marks* report, for example from Sandra Horley OBE (CEO of national domestic violence charity Refuge) [C3] and journalist Julie Bindel (whose piece sparked a lively discussion) [C3].

- **Students' unions attempting to tackle problems associated with 'lad culture' and adopting 'zero-tolerance' policies in relation to sexual harassment and abuse**

Phipps' work with the NUS has led directly to a number of students' unions adopting 'zero-tolerance' policies or putting in place other initiatives to address problematic 'laddish' behaviour. In an informal survey of 75 students' unions conducted by the NUS in 2012, 96 per cent had engaged with the *Hidden Marks* report in some way (passed policy in their union relating to it or otherwise tried to take forward the recommendations), and 75 per cent had run a 'zero-tolerance' campaign [C2a] in line with the model developed by the NUS, which requires unions to take measures including awareness-raising, training for union staff working in bars and at events, instituting clear reporting procedures, developing relationships with local police, engaging with sports clubs and societies, and doing an audit of potentially sexist union-sponsored events [C2b]. There have also been other responses from student groups: for instance, in response to '*That's What She Said*', the Oxford University Rugby Club launched *GoodLad*, a campaign which involves providing gender workshops for players, which sits within a broader Oxford Students' Union campaign entitled 'It Happens Here' which aims to address issues of sexual violence and harassment primarily through targeting sports clubs and drinking societies [C4]. In addition to their zero-tolerance campaign, the University of Birmingham Guild of Students teamed up with the local branch of *Hollaback*, a global movement which aims to end street harassment, to tackle harassment on campus [C4]. The Sussex Students' Union zero-tolerance campaign was also set up following '*That's What She Said*', and runs alongside an initiative within the University to develop a clear process of reporting and to ensure a consistent level of support and signposting for survivors of sexual violence [C5].

- **Institutions developing procedural frameworks around reporting and addressing violence against women students**

Although prompting institutional responses has been difficult, there are examples of universities responding positively to Phipps' work with the NUS. For instance, in Autumn/Winter 2012 she gave substantive input to the drafting of the Sexual Assault policy at Corpus Christi College Oxford and continues to give advice as it is implemented; if this is successful, the policy will be rolled out to other Oxford Colleges [C6]. In response to '*That's What She Said*', Durham University instituted a group to review discipline procedures [C7] and Glasgow University Senate are also investigating 'lad culture' within the institution [C8]. There were broad discussions amongst faculty and students at Sussex University following the publication of *Hidden Marks*, with the Students Against Sexual Harassment Campaign being set up in response; a Sexual Violence working group was also set up as a collaboration between the institution and students in 2012, aiming to establish a clear process of reporting and ensure a consistent level of support and signposting for survivors of sexual violence. To date the University has funded training to all key front-line staff in the University and Union on how to support survivors, and has started working on draft guidance for all University staff on supporting survivors and signposting them to specialist services [C5].

- **Governmental, public and third-sector organisations including students as a key demographic in their policies and initiatives**

In response to the *Hidden Marks* report, the Home Office agreed to add information on violence against women and girls to its '*Student Survival Guide*' published in partnership with the NUS, to make links with the NUS on their 'This is Abuse' campaign targeted at teenagers and to engage with the Association of Chief Police Officers to try to improve advice given to students on violence [C9]. There are also a number of examples of local governmental and non-governmental bodies acting on the intelligence in *Hidden Marks* and '*That's What She Said*'. For instance, in response to *Hidden Marks*, Lincolnshire Police produced a specific factsheet on students and domestic abuse [C10], and the Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum began working in partnership with students from the University of Nottingham on an awareness-raising campaign [C10]. In response to '*That's What She Said*', the Scottish White Ribbon Campaign started a collaboration with NUS Scotland on a series of postcards, aiming to inspire a national dialogue around sexist banter [C10]. As a result of both reports, the national End Violence Against Women Coalition have now taken steps to broaden their successful prevention work in schools to include universities, with a pilot project, on which they will work with Phipps, planned for early 2014 [C11]. Phipps has also been

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asked to sit on Brighton and Hove City Council's Sexual Violence Reference Group (subsequently the Senior Officers Strategy Group on Sexual Violence and Abuse and the Violence Against Women Programme Board), specifically to feed in intelligence on issues around students. She was directly involved in drafting the city's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, and continues to work closely with the Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioner on liaison between the council and student groups [C12]. She also acts as advisor to the Board of Trustees of local rape crisis centre 'The Survivors' Network', giving input specifically to their work with students [C13].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- C1** NUS Women's Campaign website; NUS National Conference 2013 – list of adoptions; Radcliffe, R. (2013) 'NUS National Conference 2013 – as it happened', *The Guardian*, 8 April.
- C2** a) Statement from Research and Policy Officer, NUS; b) Excerpt from NUS document *Becoming a Zero Tolerance Union*.
- C3** Media report available from dept. including articles, examples of blogs, details of online discussions, examples of tweets, NUS press release on '*That's What She Said*', Platform 51 statement on '*That's What She Said*', NUS press release on *Hidden Marks*, Bindel, J. (2011) 'Female students must be made safer', *The Guardian*, 16 June (518 comments).
- C4** Students Union activity: 'Lads aren't us' in the *Tab Oxford*, 23 April 2013; 'Student rugby club campaign to kick out lad culture', *The National Student*, 25 April 2013; University of Birmingham Guild of Students' response to '*That's What She Said*'.
- C5** Sussex Students' Union press release on '*That's What She Said*' and statement from Welfare Officer 2011–13.
- C6** Statement from Equal Opportunities President of Corpus Christi College.
- C7** Durham Students' Union Zone report, *Does Durham Have a Problem with 'Lad Culture'?*
- C8** 'NUS: *That's What She Said*!', *Glasgow Guardian*, issue 6, 5 April 2013.
- C9** Email from Violent and Youth Crime Prevention Unit.
- C10** Local governmental and non-governmental activity: Lincolnshire Police factsheet; Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum – female students' experiences of violence; White Ribbon Campaign – tackling sexism on Scotland's campuses.
- C11** Statement from Director, End Violence against Women Coalition
- C12** Statement from former Commissioner for Violence against Women & Girls Services, Brighton & Hove
- C13** Statement from former Chair of Trustees, Survivors' Network.