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Title: **'Laddism' in Higher Education**

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'Laddism' in Higher Education

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with Lucie Pollard (University of Greenwich)

Report by: Professor Carolyn Jackson

Project aims, research questions and methods as per our original proposal

The project's **aims** were to explore motives for 'laddish' behaviours among university students; focusing on students studying sports science in one post 1992 university.

The **research questions** were:

- What motives underpin 'laddish' attitudes and behaviours among these university students?
- What are the implications of 'laddism' for students (female and male) and lecturers?
- How may lecturers and universities begin to challenge and change problematic 'laddish' attitudes and behaviours?

The project's **methods** were: questionnaires, interviews and observations.

- *A Questionnaire* - to all Sports Science students (men and women) across the three years.
- *Interviews* – 12 semi-structured individual interviews (1 hour each) with students in each year group (36 overall; a mix of men and women), and with 5 members of staff.
- *Observations* – 4 classes per year group (12 classes overall).

The Project

The project's aims were met in full. We have generated a substantial and rich data set that has enabled us to answer our research questions. We have presented aspects of the research findings at two international conferences (in Gothenburg and Reykjavik) and have two more presentations planned for this year (see later for details). We made slight amendments to the project's methods, as outlined below.

Methods

- The questionnaires - were administered, as planned, to students in lectures thus ensuring a high response rate.
- The observations - were undertaken successfully. We opted to undertake fewer, but lengthier observations – we undertook 6 x 2 hour observations rather than 12 x 1 hour observations. This had two advantages - it enabled us to see the classes in full and to fit the observations into the fieldwork schedule.
- Interviews – were undertaken successfully. However, the process of interviewing was much more difficult and took considerably longer than we anticipated, and meant that most interviews were conducted by telephone rather than face-to-face. This was because, despite arranging appointments with students for interviews (initially face-to-face and then by telephone), and sending one or more reminders, many students failed to keep the interview appointment (usually without notice). This meant that we spent a considerable amount of time chasing students and rescheduling interviews. To encourage students to keep appointments we decided to offer a small incentive to be interviewed (a £10 voucher). We have completed the interviews, but the fieldwork period was considerably longer than we planned – interviews were still taking place in March of this year. However, there was an unexpected benefit from this: to enable

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us to reach our interview target, we also interviewed students who were first year students in 2012/13. These students were the first to be paying increased fees (introduced for students entering H.E in 2012/13), and the high fee levels emerged as a strong theme amongst these students when discussing 'laddism' on their course and approaches to learning. Thus, although the extended interview period caused delays to the project, and created more work for the project team, it did have the unexpected benefit of enabling us to get the views of this 'new generation' of university students.

Outputs

Papers from the project were presented at: 1) The Gender and Education Association Interim Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden, April 2012; 2) The Nordic Education Research Association Annual Conference, Reykjavik, Iceland, March 2013. At least two more papers will be presented this year; two already accepted will be presented at: 1) The Gender and Education Association Biennial Conference, London, UK, April 2013; 2) The British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Brighton, September 2013 – this paper will be part of a symposium organised by Jackson on 'Laddism in education'.

As per the application, we also plan to publish (at least) three articles in leading, high impact journals. The writing of these has been delayed owing to the protracted interview process outlined above. However, two of the three papers will be drafted and submitted by autumn this year. Jackson is on sabbatical until August 2013, so will be able to concentrate on publishing from the project. The SES has been acknowledged, and will continue to be acknowledged, in all presentations and outputs.

Jackson is currently working on a proposal to extend the work conducted in this pilot project. Such an application is very timely given the recent concerns about 'laddism' in higher education raised by the National Union of Students, and the very recent release of their report on women students' experiences of 'lad' culture in H.E: <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Campaigns/That%27s%20what%20she%20said%20full%20report%20Final%20web.pdf>

Indeed, one of the authors of the NUS report (Alison Phipps, University of Sussex) is involved in the BERA symposium organised by Jackson; thus we expect media interest in our BERA symposium.

Finance

The costs incurred were broadly in line with those outlined in the proposal. The extra costs incurred in giving each student a £10 voucher as an incentive to take part in the interviews were covered largely by savings made elsewhere in the budget (which meant that we spent, rather than exceeded, our budget).

Prof. Carolyn Jackson