

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Sussex		
Unit of Assessment: 21 – Sociology		
Title of case study: Tackling sexual harassment and violence in higher education		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Alison Phipps Liz McDonnell Gemma North	Professor of Gender Studies Senior Research fellow Research Fellow	2005 – present 2004 – present 2016 – 2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 Aug 2013 – 31 Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact Phipps' research on lad culture and sexual violence in higher education has helped inspire and define national policy for Universities UK (UUK), the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and the Office for Students (OfS), initiated a National Union of Students (NUS) intervention programme, and supported initiatives to create change at over 75 institutions in the UK and overseas. At least partly because of this, UUK has recently said that the sector has seen a 'profound change' in how it deals with sexual violence; this is reflected in a rise in reported incidents, indicating systems are improving and violence is no longer being tolerated.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research In 2006, Phipps conducted an unpublished pilot study of sexual violence at the University of Sussex, which revealed many students had experienced but not reported it. This was shared with NUS Women's Officer Kat Stark, as part of discussions about an NUS response. Phipps was then invited to give academic input to the 2010 NUS study 'Hidden Marks'. This was the first national survey of women students' experiences of sexual violence and revealed that 1 in 7 had experienced a serious physical or sexual assault and 68% had been sexually harassed. Phipps published the research as an academic paper in 2012 (co-authored by Geraldine Smith, policy officer at NUS who led on 'Hidden Marks'), making the case for action (R1).</p> <p>Based on this work, Phipps was invited to lead 'That's What She Said', the ground-breaking 2013 NUS study of lad culture in higher education (R2, co-authored by Isabel Young), which provided the basis for further academic publications (including R3 & 4). Through interviews and focus groups with female students, the research established that 'laddish' cultures were common in university environments, especially societies and sports clubs, and explained why lad culture created a conducive context for sexual violence. Taken together, Phipps' collaborations with NUS and resulting academic publications provided the HE sector with new prevalence data on sexual violence and an understanding of how it was framed by particular forms of masculinity.</p> <p>Following 'That's What She Said', Phipps' research continued in collaboration with Liz McDonnell, Gemma North, Gillian Love and Jess Taylor, focused on the neoliberal institution and how this also frames harassment and violence. Starting in 2015, this became 'Changing University Cultures' (CHUCL), which has developed the innovative methodology of Grounded Action Inquiry (R5,6). This involves a 'deep dive' into institutional culture through the collection of qualitative data, which is used to inform 'action inquiry' (a reflection/discussion-based process of organisational development). CHUCL has fulfilled commissions at Imperial College, Sussex, and 2 other universities which do not wish to be named (R5). Across these analyses there is a common thread based on Phipps' academic work: neoliberal universities operate with significant</p>		

power imbalances that exacerbate harassment and violence, and tend to conceal these issues as reputation is prioritised over student and staff wellbeing (R6).

Between 2016 and 2018 Phipps co-led, with Pam Alldred (Brunel), 'Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence' (USVReact), a major pan-European intervention with 7 partner universities and 16 associate partners (universities and other organisations) across 6 European countries. This research – the first of its kind – developed, piloted and evaluated sexual violence disclosure training for university staff across the entire partnership, to build capacity and create more supportive institutional cultures (R6, S9b). Phipps' role was to lead the research elements of the project (Workstream 2). This involved developing a theoretical framework focused on how the neoliberal institution both creates the conditions for violence and inhibits disclosure, and how to create cultural change through fostering openness and empathy (R6, S9b pp16-17)). It also involved leading a policy audit and good practice review, and creating evaluation principles, for each partner to build on as they devised their unique training models. After USVReact, Phipps co-led a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)-funded project with Vanita Sundaram (York) and Tiffany Page (Cambridge) 2018-19, which produced sector-wide guidance on applying intersectionality in disclosure and other training, to ensure *all* survivors are supported (S9c).

3. References to the research

- R1** Phipps, A and Smith, G (2012) 'Violence Against Women Students in the UK: time to take action', in *Gender and Education* 24(4), 357-373 (Phipps lead author, 75% contribution). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2011.628928>
- R2** Phipps, A and Young, I (2013) 'That's What She Said: Women students' experiences of "lad culture" in higher education'. London: NUS. <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/thats-what-she-said-full-report> (Phipps lead author, 75% contribution; Google Scholar citations 86)
- R3** Phipps, A and Young, I (2015) 'Neoliberalisation and "lad cultures" in higher education', in *Sociology* 49(2), 309-322 (Phipps lead author, 75% contribution). In REF2.
- R4** Phipps, A (2016) '(Re)theorising laddish masculinities in higher education', in *Gender and Education* 29(7), 815-830. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1171298>
- R5** Phipps, A, North, G, McDonnell, L, Taylor, J, and Love, G (2018) 'We call it the Sussex Way: a study of Sussex University's institutional culture'. CHUCL project report. <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=chucl-report-4-july-2018.pdf&site=291> (Phipps lead author, 50% contribution)
- R6** Phipps, A (2020) 'Reckoning Up: sexual harassment and violence in the neoliberal university', in *Gender and Education* 32(3), 227-243 (out via OnlineFirst in 2018). In REF2.

Funding includes European Commission: 'Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence (USVSV)', 03/16-02/18, Lead: Alldred at Brunel. £94,909 to Sussex, where PI: Phipps. [JUST/2014/RDAP/AG/VICT/7401](https://www.just.gov.uk/just/2014/RDAP/AG/VICT/7401).

4. Details of the impact

Phipps has been a pioneer in a movement raising awareness of sexual violence in HE, developing initiatives to tackle it and combating institutional resistance. Her research initiated an NUS programme that catalysed a wave of activism and policymaking. Her collaborative projects have influenced policy and funding frameworks at UUK, HEFCE and OfS, created training for 1248 staff at 21 European institutions, affected the environment and culture at four UK universities, and informed initiatives at over 50 others. As a result, UK and European universities are better informed about sexual violence and are starting to address it.

Stimulating debate and policy action

Phipps and Young's NUS report 'That's What She Said' (R2) was launched in 2013 with endorsements from Diane Abbott MP, Laura Bates of Everyday Sexism and UUK Chief Executive Nicola Dandridge (S5a). This report sparked a lively media debate on lad culture and sexual violence in HE. The issues were mentioned in more than 470 newspaper and magazine articles and blogs 2013-19, and Phipps' ongoing research in over 160 (S1). This raised awareness and eroded institutional resistance, establishing that the issues were sector-wide and

holding universities accountable. It also influenced policymaking and regulatory bodies, starting with the OIA. In its 2014 Annual Report, the OIA said that following NUS' intervention (R1,2), lad culture 'should be of concern to everyone working and studying in higher education' (S2b, p20). Later on, in a keynote at a 2016 Westminster Briefing event Phipps chaired, OIA Chief Executive Rob Behrens said: 'We need to pay tribute to the small band of researchers, including Alison Phipps, our Chair today, for relentlessly and rigorously drawing our attention to the issues' (S2a, p1).

Phipps contributed to the 2015 End Violence Against Women briefing 'Spotted', circulated to all vice chancellors, which argued universities had obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty and Human Rights Act to tackle sexual violence (S4). She also presented at a 2015 Equality Challenge Unit roundtable, convened in response to her NUS research (and the 'significant press coverage') and 'Spotted', which included representatives of UUK, NUS and AMOSSHE (the student services organisation) (S12a). Soon after, UUK established a taskforce on violence against women, harassment and hate crime. The 2016 taskforce report cited Phipps' research with NUS (R1,2) and subsequent media debate as key to the taskforce's context and evidence base (S3b, p1,14,18-19). Phipps acted as expert informant to the taskforce (S3b, p64), and between 2014 and 2018 worked closely with UUK Policy Manager Fiona Waye, who has said: 'Professor Phipps provided me with insightful analysis based on her research at both strategic and operational levels. This was used to support UUK in its work to provide guidance for the sector and drive continuous improvement in preventing and responding to harassment' (S3a).

Improving provision for students

NUS Women's Officer 2012-14 Kelley Temple has said: 'It is due to [Phipps'] research in this area that students have been able to change the discussion on campus sexism (and hopefully in time) the reality of students' lives' (S5b). NUS Women's Officer 2014-16 Susuana Amoah has said: 'the "That's What She Said" report...led by Alison Phipps, provided the conceptual and empirical foundations for the NUS Women's Campaign's National Lad Culture Strategy' (S5c). Phipps was a key member of the expert group overseeing this strategy (S5b,c). One of its main initiatives was a 'lad culture audit' (2014-15), which assessed 35 students' union policies, training and support services and created a national benchmarking tool to improve them. Another was 'Stand By Me', a toolkit designed with Rape Crisis to facilitate partnership with local services. The innovative 'I Heart Consent' training was also part of the strategy Phipps oversaw (S5c). This was delivered at 20 students' unions (2014-15): of 333 students trained, 91% reported gaining a better understanding of consent (S5d, p5). Consent training is now good practice across the sector, with 65% of UK universities offering it (S3c, p36).

Phipps research (R1-4) has also improved provision for students through a workshop she developed for university staff and managers. This was toured 2015-16 to Bath, Roehampton, De Montfort, Leicester, York, and UCL. 84% of participants said it had helped them develop ideas for tackling sexual violence (S6a). The workshop was a catalyst for the Leicester University initiative 'Standing Together' (S6b), cited in the 2019 OfS report 'Catalyst for Change' as an exemplar (S10, p3). At De Montfort, the workshop was a catalyst for the 'Mandala Project' (S6c), featured in the 2017 UUK directory of case studies that followed the taskforce report (S3d, p12). The University of Strathclyde/Scottish government project 'Equally Safe' also made use of Phipps' work in its theoretical framework and research tools. Project lead Melanie McCarry has said: 'It would not be an exaggeration to state the ground-breaking significance of the work of Professor Phipps and colleagues in the field of gender-based violence, "lad culture" and the higher education context' (S6d). In 2019, UUK stated that 'Equally Safe' had acted as a 'strong impetus' to cross-institutional collaboration around sexual violence in Scottish universities (S3c, p61). Phipps' research also underpinned the 2015 North East regional summit on lad culture, after which Northumbria University and students' union developed a coordinated approach (S6e).

Evolving institutional cultures

As a result of her work with NUS, Phipps was personally commissioned to conduct research at Imperial College in 2015 on sexism amongst students and staff. This developed an analysis of

institutional culture which led to the formation of the CHUCL collective. CHUCL has now fulfilled commissions at four universities, helping them understand their cultures and how these frame issues such as bullying, harassment and violence (R5,6). Although cultural change is a long and difficult process, CHUCL has prompted developments at Imperial: an independent impact report commissioned in 2019 found that an Assistant Provost for Diversity and Inclusion had been appointed, and an inclusion strategy and senior leadership action plan developed (S7, p2). Much work remains and serious issues continue to be brought to light, but Head of HR Louise Lindsay has said: 'what [CHUCL] opened up was a different way of thinking that we could take forward...and a way of engaging with the community' (S7, p2). In 2017, CHUCL was commissioned to conduct research at Sussex (R5). This shaped the Sussex Strategy 2025 and new institutional values (S7, p5). The research was also leveraged by then Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor for Equalities & Diversity Claire Annesley, for initiatives including a Dignity & Respect policy. Annesley said: 'it helps me drive change...CHUCL is our evidence base for the need for the change and the scale of change that needs to happen' (S7, p4-5).

Phipps' research on institutional culture (R5, 6) has also been influential in shifting the sector's focus away from 'bad apples'. Fiona Waye (UUK) has said: 'Professor Phipps' evidence-based research on what is meant by institutional culture, and the important role that institutional culture plays in tackling sexual harassment, was critical in UUK's messaging' (S3a). The 1752 Group (the UK's first lobby group on staff-student sexual harassment) has said: 'the work coming out of the CHUCL project – both public reports and academic work – provides an essential tool in thinking about the importance of culture as both a barrier to, and enabler of institutional change, and how culture change can work in practice' (S11a). In 2019, Phipps' work on institutional culture (R5,6) was heavily cited in a UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) bullying & harassment evidence review, which informed a 2020 position statement, safeguarding policy and update to grant awarding terms & conditions, designed to tackle sexual harassment (S8a,b).

Alongside the research at Imperial and Sussex, Phipps was co-lead of the 2016-18 EU-funded 'Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence' (USVReact) partnership, which created more supportive institutional cultures through building staff capacity and improving reporting. It delivered disclosure training to 1248 staff in 21 institutions across 6 European countries, and audited policies and reporting mechanisms (S9a,b). The training resources are available online and have been disseminated via mainstream and social media to an approximate audience of 15 million people (S9a), which significantly increases the potential beneficiaries. USVReact has been named as a case study of good practice by UUK (S3b, p105). Building on USVReact, Phipps co-led a project on making training more intersectional to support all survivors. The guidance produced, now hosted on the OfS website, was also included in a toolkit by Igualtatsconnect, which aims to implement intersectionality in public policy in Spain (S9c,d).

'A profound change... across the sector'

The intersectionality project was funded in the first of three HEFCE/OfS catalyst funding calls 2017-18, launched to support implementation of the UUK taskforce recommendations (S10, p1). These calls totalled £4.7 million (with £5.3 million in institutional match funding) for 119 projects across the UK, creating support structures, training and other initiatives (S10, p1). This multimillion-pound investment was due in no small part to the movement of activists and scholars who held the sector to account. While credit must be shared, a line can be traced from the funding calls, to the UUK taskforce, to Phipps' pioneering NUS research.

NUS has now shifted its focus to staff-student sexual misconduct, largely thanks to the work of the 1752 Group. This group has drawn extensively on the CHUCL model and on Phipps' theorisation of sexual violence in the neoliberal university (R5,6). Its leaders Anna Bull and Tiffany Page have said: 'Alison Phipps' work on sexual violence and institutional change within higher education has been an indispensable intellectual and practical influence on our work' (S11a). Phipps gave input to the 2018 NUS/1752 Group report 'Power in the Academy', the first study of students' experiences of staff sexual misconduct (S11b, p7). This led to a UUK working group, for which Phipps helped Fiona Waye define the scope and terms of reference (S3a).

In 2019, UUK reported the results of a progress review of 95 institutions. It found that 87% had a working group on sexual harassment, violence and/or hate crime and 76% had secured senior leadership buy-in (S3c, p27). 81% had delivered disclosure training using USVReact or other models, and 78% had developed/improved reporting mechanisms (S3c, p36,44). Crucially, it found there had been 'an increase in the reporting of incidents' (S3c, p52), a finding echoed in evaluation of the HEFCE Catalyst Fund initiatives (S10, p3; S12b, p7,44). The UUK report concluded there had been 'a profound change in the initiatives and ideas that are now available for sharing across the sector', and that 'over time, this will help facilitate cultural change at both institutional and sector level' (S3c, p60). There is much more to do to tackle sexual violence in HE, and barriers remain. However, Phipps' pioneering research has been foundational to raising awareness, holding institutions to account and developing good practice, and has been built on by many others in the journey towards making UK higher education safer for students and staff.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1 Indicative bibliography of media sources

S2 Office of the Independent Adjudicator: a) Rob Behrens keynote transcript; b) OIA annual report 2014 (<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/1803/oia-annual-report-2014.pdf>)

S3 Universities UK: a) Fiona Waye statement; b) 'Changing the Culture' report (<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/changing-the-culture.pdf>); c) 'Changing the Culture two years on' (<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/uuk-changing-the-culture-two-years-on.pdf>); d) UUK directory of case studies (<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/changing-the-culture-harassment-case-studies.pdf>)

S4 End Violence Against Women, 'Spotted' (<https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Spotted-Obligations-to-Protect-Women-StudentsEy-Safety-Equality.pdf>)

S5 National Union of Students: a) 'That's What She said' endorsements; b) Kelley Temple statement; c) Susuana Amoah statement; d) 'I Heart Consent' evaluation report (<https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/i-heart-consent-pilot-report>)

S6 UK universities: a) Workshop evaluation data; b) Emily Davison statement/emails (Leicester); c) Sarah Hilder statement/emails (De Montfort); d) Melanie McCarry statement (Strathclyde); e) Northumbria University materials - email from Sue Abbott, Sue Abbott conference slides, Northumbria University 2016-17 Equality and Diversity report (<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/-/media/corporate-website/new-sitecore-gallery/services/human-resources/equality-and-diversity-report-201617-final.docx?la=en&hash=74E2BAB92B61B439B236A4ABCA2DC2B9C796B3FC>)

S7 Independent CHUCL impact analysis report

S8 UKRI: a) Bullying & harassment evidence review (<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-020920-BullyingAndHarassmentEvidenceReview.pdf>); b) Bullying & harassment initiatives (<https://www.ukri.org/our-work/supporting-healthy-research-and-innovation-culture/bullying-and-harassment/>)

S9 USVReact: a) Final Technical Report; b) Final Project Report (http://usvreact.eu/wp-content/resources/USVreact_Report_2018_ENG.pdf); c) Intersectional training guide (<http://usvreact.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/intersectional-approach-to-training.pdf>); d) Igualtats Connectades toolkit [in Spanish] (<http://igualtatsconnect.cat/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Publicacion-Igualtats-Connect-ES.pdf>)

S10 OfS report 'Catalyst for Change' (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/a012d727-7262-421b-ad2b-1f4fc9f75135/catalyst-for-change.pdf>)

S11 1752 Group: a) 1752 Group statement; b) 'Power in the Academy' report (<https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/nus-staff-student-sexual-misconduct-report>)

S12 Advance HE: a) Equality Challenge Unit roundtable agenda; b) Report on Catalyst Fund projects (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/e3c0bd5e-7e03-4235-941a-f933da269728/catalyst-evaluation-summative-report.pdf>)