

Written evidence from Professor Jonathan Parker [EOV0002]

This evidence represents a personal submission and is based on many years of working in higher education, where students have increasingly experienced violence and sexual assault predominantly from men (UK Parliament, 2022). It is observational and reflective and not based on empirical data, but is theorised from my position as a social scientist. I address the following question from the call for evidence:

- How effective is (a) the police service and (b) the criminal justice system at responding to these behaviours and offences and how might those responses be improved?

The responses made by public services (a and b above), can only ever be as effective as normative social and, thereby, professional mores will allow (Casey, 2023). In a society that has seen ‘lad culture’ proliferate and been celebrated (Phipps and Young, 2013; Ashencaen Crabtree and Savigny, 2014), an underlying and unquestioned acceptance of entitled and violent behaviours by men towards women becomes embedded in society. We cannot, therefore, address the question of effectiveness of the police and criminal justice system in isolation (which is a debated concept in itself), without fully grappling with structurally ingrained assumptions within society that allow such violence to occur and continue.

Therefore, to tackle these issues is not going to be effective through the simple targeting of organisations and systems but a root and branch shift addressing male violence and towards teaching and promoting respect, dignity, consent and non-violence towards women and girls from early years onwards throughout the education system – compulsory, tertiary and professionally. This is a long-term strategy that can be evaluated for its success and the changes promoted. It can work alongside systemic changes within individual organisations but the latter will not produce, on its own, the social changes desired. As with Baroness Casey’s (2023) report, we are not working to eradicate ‘bad apples’ in a crate of good fruit, but to ensure the fruit grows well and appropriately in the first place.

Professor Jonathan Parker
Bournemouth University/University of Stavanger

References

Ashencaen Crabtree, S. and Savigny, H. (2014). ‘It’s Only Banter!’: Lad Culture in University.’ Available at http://blogs.bournemouth.ac.uk/research/2014/10/03/its-only-banter-lad-culture-in-university-settings/?utm_source=digest&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily [Accessed 26/6/2023].

Casey, S. (2023) *Baroness Casey Review. Final Report. An independent review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service*. Available at: <chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/update-march-2023/baroness-casey-review-march-2023a.pdf>.

Phipps, A. and Young, I. (2013). *That's what she said: women students' experiences of 'lad culture' in higher education*. Project Report. National Union of Students: London.

UK Parliament (2022). *Sexual harassment and violence in further and higher education*. London: House of Commons Library.

August 2023