Transcript

A Good Example of a Presentation

Hi, everyone. My name's Kitty and I'm going to talk to you today about my undergraduate dissertation in Sociology. So the title is there on the slide for you. And it was, re-imagining lad identities, introducing mischievous masculinities as a way for men to convey emotions. So what I'm going to do today is I'm going to give a broad overview of my dissertation covering the background, the methods, and then my key findings. Making some conclusions at the end and then leaving time for some questions. So, let's get started.

So my main interest was on lads. And I was particularly interested in the connection between lads and emotion. So lads have been written about fairly extensively in sociological studies over the last 15 years or so. And the quotation there at the top from Francis gives us a broad definition that's kind of agreed amongst most academics of what a lad is.

So lad culture and laddish behaviours have become synonymous in British culture. And we see the word lad ladism being used quite extensively in the media and it's been explored within academia too. So the definition provided by Francis there on the slide remains prominent within current understandings of the lad, even though that's a slightly dated quotation. And current understandings have been informed, as I said before, by things like the media, by the television, and also academic writing.

So previous research has shown that there are particular spheres of society in which lad culture is deemed to be more prominent than others. So we see things like sporting sites, like the workplace, like education sites as being key areas where lad cultures are seen to grow and develop and where men learn about this kind of particular identity. But a key theme in all the writing on lads and lad cultures, either positive or negative, is that ladism is deemed to be a particular way that men understand and do gender. So it's closely tied to ideas about gender identity.

Now, depictions of the lads suggest a particular version of masculinity. And this often doesn't consider emotion, and it's tied in terms of theory to ideas of hegemonic masculinity. So we see in society the most popular depiction of the lad being a guy that's tough, that has jokes, that doesn't show emotion, et cetera. And so this is the idea that's been pervasive and I think informs the way we think about lads today in this kind of era and moment in time.

Now, we've seen more high profile cases more recently about masculinity and emotion in society. Things like the princes Harry and William doing campaigns for awareness of mental health and men's emotional wellbeing. But previous research hasn't really covered this in much detail. And particularly, we've not thought much about the way that man show emotion. Rather, we've acknowledged that men might have emotions, but we've not thought particularly about how they might express them.

So this was really what my research was all about. I was really interested to   
explore the way that lads, which is, as I said, a particular form of masculinity, express and experience emotion. Rather than thinking about the impact of that   
which other literature might have done. So my dissertation, as I said, is an undergraduate dissertation. And it comprised of four months of observations, and 10 semi-structured interviews. Now, this was conducted with all men aged between 20 and 25. And my sample which was opportunistic did, it's important to note, contained mostly men who identify themselves as white British. All the participants were actively involved in sports activities at clubs at university, or external to university. And they were recruited via online methods.   
So mailing lists and social media sites.

Now, the reason it's important to note why that idea of sport is important is that, the context within which we understand lads is the institutions, as I mentioned before, such as education, et cetera, are prominent sites where lads develop. And sport is said to be by people like Anderson, and Whitehead, and Barrett. Sport is a key site where lads develop this identity. So that's why I use that area as a way to recruit my sample.

So data for the dissertation was recorded and transcribed, uploaded to a system called NVivo. And then I use thematic analysis to draw out my findings. What I'm going to do now is talk through different findings from my dissertation. And obviously I'm limited in my time and this can be explored more in the dissertation, but I'm just going to talk to you about the key issues and the most interesting things I found from my data.

So on the slide here, you can see a conversation between myself and a participant called Peter. Now, contrary to my expectations which was informed by the literature on men and emotions, it was quickly evident that men did display emotion. And did so frequently within their interactions. And the conversation that I had there with Peter was one of the early ones that showed me that that was in fact the case which contradicted and went against much of the previous research and writing that had been part of my literature review. So Peter sort of suggests that he does convey emotion, but he does this in a particular way using the tool of banter, which is an interactive device that used in conversation, which can be seen to be a form of joking.

So he used this tool, banter, which is synonymous with lads and lad cultures to express emotion. Which I found really interesting and that was really a catalyst for my thinking. So with this in mind, I started to think a little more in my research and then in my analysis chapters in my dissertation about the ways that men display emotion. So, this idea of banter became an important idea and concept that I decided to go a little bit further with.

So, Curtis, who was a 21 year old, provided us with the following quotations. So Curtis says, "We basically show our emotion through banter. The more I like you, the more banter you're going to get. I probably shouldn't make jokes all the time, but lads know what it is all about." Now, this was really interesting and I think this raised the point that lads were using the familiar tool of banter to express their emotions. Now, as I said in the previous slide, we know from existing research that banter is something that is synonymous with lads. But we haven't really thought before  
 about the way that they might use that same tool from that environment to   
start making changes and to start resisting or showing different versions of their masculinity. So as Curtis states, men are using that tool of banter to express   
their emotions. Proving again that emotions are present in a site which they haven't   
been seen before, and that they're part of that masculine identity that maybe have been taken for granted.

Now, quoting Levine, define agency in terms of the sense of responsibility an individual has for their actions. And this social theory, concept I found interesting because the lads in my research was showing that they had agency. Previous writing suggested that lads don't have any agency, that they don't think about their behaviours, they just do it as this kind of collective group. And that was perhaps the reason why were they were not able to show emotion. Now what Curtis and other participants say, which I think is really interesting, is that actually through this tool of banter, men are able to show agency to make choices and convey a side of their masculinity which has not been seen before.

So this meant the emotional expression was actually part of their everyday lives. Men admitted that they bantered all the time and that actually banter was a way that they were able to convey emotion. So this idea that men are inexpressive, which previous writers have talked about is perhaps problematic. And my research I think is really interesting because it starts to show holes and gaps in that previous knowledge.

So, moving towards the end of the presentation, I guess through my dissertation what I tried to do then with that data, with that information was think about maybe some kind of original contribution. Think about what I could, from my data, the conclusions I could draw and what I could say that might be new or interesting. So the thing that I thought about was this idea of mischievous masculinities. So Ryan, who's there on the slide, his quotation at the top says, "We're just a bit mischievous. There's no harm in it. I love these lads. I'm not serious when I mean, but I probably shouldn't banter them like I do, but everyone knows what it's all about."

So here he's implying that the men have this understanding that banter is the way that they interact. Banter is the way that they show emotion and that there's a mutual understanding of how that operates. So as I said previously, more recent work has acknowledged the capacity for men to make these choices within what we call these traditionally bound spaces such as sport. But there's little work which thinks about how this is done. And there's little work that positions this centrally to analysis and discussion. So that's where I think my research and this idea of mischievous masculinities can be useful.

So my participants, I think, were playing with their masculine identity. They were conscious of this process and they were aware of this constant and continual remaking and remodelling of masculinity. Using, as I said previously, these tools from lad culture that they already have to make changes to challenge the way masculinity is understood. So this is my idea of this mischievousness: they're aware of what they're doing. They're playing with their identity. And that I think is one of my original findings for my dissertation.

So to conclude, because this is just a short little overview of what the   
dissertation covers. The data encourages, I think, critical reflection of the way   
that lads interact and the tools adopted within everyday experiences to express emotion, and everyday lives to express emotion. So, using this original idea of mischievous masculinity, perhaps as an   
alternative or alongside existing conceptualizations of men, we can see that there are diverse forms of masculinity. And we can see that maybe we can move away from these dominant models, dominant theorizing such as the hegemonic model advocated by Conell.

So, mischievous masculinities allows, I think, for greater flexibility in terms of how we see lads, and particularly the way that we understand how lads deconstruct and negotiate the boundaries of gender identities and how they express emotions in ways that perhaps they weren't seen to before.

So those are my key concluding points in terms of what might come next. Because I think this researcher is interesting and can perhaps be extended. I think we need to do more work with men to understand the nuances of emotional expression. And maybe link this work to different fields within the social sciences, including health and wellbeing, and definitely work with wider groups of men of different ages and more diverse ethnicities. So if you have any questions, feel free to ask them. Thank you for listening. And if you want the references they're at the end of the slide there. Thank you.

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