

Location, libation and leisure: An examination of the use of licensed venues to help challenge sexual violence

Crime Media Culture

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Abstract

Anti-rape campaign messages have increasingly targeted men in order to educate them on the law of (sexual) consent. The 18–24 age demographic are at increased risk of experiencing sex offences, with over half of these crimes involving alcohol consumption. The interactions which culminate in alcohol-involved rape often commence in night-time venues, making intuitive sense for prevention campaigns to be based within licensed establishments. The Night Time Economy, however, comprises venues where people go to drink, have fun, take ‘time out’ and which are characterised and criticised for their promotion of sexism. This article therefore asks: how useful are licensed spaces in promoting rape prevention discourses amongst young men? To this end, the article analyses 41 students’ discussions (across six focus groups) regarding a rape prevention campaign that ran in one English city and that directed its prevention advice at males. In doing so, we argue that environments which incite narratives of loss of control and hypersexuality compromise the ability to counter sexual offending. We also argue that the presence of sexually violent advertising within licenced spaces undermines considerably the call to end gendered violence.

Keywords

Alcohol, gender, Night Time Economy, prevention, rape

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Introduction

The 18–24 age demographic are increasingly at risk of experiencing sex crime (Felts et al., 2012). Within this age range, research has debated whether student or non-student groups face differential levels of vulnerability. The first UK study examining tertiary students' experiences of sexual violence highlighted that one in four females had experienced a sexual assault during their time as a student (NUS, 2010). This is a slightly higher figure than national statistics which indicate 23 percent of women experience sexual assault as adults (HM Government, 2007). However, European and American research has more recently suggested that students are not inevitably at increased risk (Felts et al., 2012; Sinozich and Langton, 2014), with factors such as wider campus norms and whether living away from home for the first time mediating the sexual victimisation experience (Felts et al., 2012). In the current UK context, more research is required before firm conclusions can be drawn or a clearer profile developed of the specific student or non-student factors which may increase vulnerability.

Nevertheless, evidence indicates that, whether a student or non-student, those aged 18–24 who experience a sexual offence are more likely to see alcohol feature as part of that victimisation (Abbey et al., 2004; Myhill and Allen, 2002). The relationship between drinking alcohol in night-time spaces and experiencing sexual violence, either on licensed premises or later in the evening at someone's home, is well established (Abbey et al., 2004; Brooks, 2014). Testa and Livingston (2009) draw attention to this age bracket being associated with higher levels of drinking and higher numbers of sexual partners, relative to the older age groups, as a means of contextualising this relationship. Indeed, much alcohol consumption by young people takes place at home, prior to progressing into town and city centres. Up to 58 percent of young people drink an average of seven units before leaving for a night out (Hughes et al., 2008). Here, the desire to achieve drunkenness, extend the evening, avoid the high prices in bars and provide the courage required to approach a possible sexual partner, all motivate at-home drinking (Bellis and Hughes, 2011).

Those aged 18–24 (both students and non-students) have also been found to lack knowledge of the legal position on sexual consent, an issue made additionally complex when alcohol has been consumed (Beres, 2007; Gunby et al., 2012a, 2012b). Running alongside, it has been recognised that rape prevention work must move beyond offering risk reduction advice to women, to focus instead on the behaviours of men and the legal knowledge they should possess, in order to reduce sexual offending (Stern Review, 2010). Whilst multiple structural, personality, situational and pharmacological factors are associated with the likelihood of perpetrating sexual offences (see Abbey et al., 2004; Finney, 2004), primary rape prevention advocates argue that tackling legal knowledge deficits amongst all men aged 18–24 should feature as part of a wider effort to reduce sexual offending (Borges et al., 2008).

This article provides a critical examination of the use(fulness) of Night Time Economy (NTE) venues in one city in England in promoting sexual violence prevention messages amongst its male patrons. In doing so, the article analyses participants' awareness and interpretation of a campaign that ran in Liverpool-based bars and clubs to raise awareness around alcohol-involved rape. The authors are not aware of other UK research that has asked male Higher Education students about their perspectives towards rape prevention messages aimed at them, partly due to the sheer novelty of such campaign approaches. This study thus provides an original examination of the perceived relevance and impact of rape prevention advice directed at men, focusing specifically on the ways in which the NTE interacts with the communication of those messages.

The analysis that follows critically examines participants' discussions on the use of leisure spaces, the desire for hedonism and disengagement when frequenting those spaces, the impact of alcohol on attention and the 'hypersexuality' of 21st century night-time culture (Measham and Østergaard, 2009). In doing so, it is argued that for the current group of participants, housing rape prevention campaigns within bar and club spaces did not allow for their messages to be effectively communicated or taken seriously. Further, in some instances, their content was sexualised. We conclude that the presence of sexually violent advertising within NTE venues, to promote club nights and alcoholic drinks, produces competing and conflicting narratives that undermine rape prevention work. We therefore call for increased regulation around such imagery and advertising. Failure to do so would leave an irreconcilable tension between venues simultaneously endorsing, and condoning, sexual offending.

Before commencing further with a discussion of research findings and study methodology, we outline the literature that examines the gendered nature of the NTE, the purposes for which young people go out in the evening and the increased sexualisation of NTE environments. We consider how such sexualisation impacts women's participation on nights out, as well as the campaigns that have emerged to warn women about the risks they face. This discussion sets the context for the subsequent data analysis and teases out the factors which simultaneously make bar and club spaces seem logical venues for housing rape campaigns but which also bring together a set of dynamics that may undermine any such activity.

The Night Time Economy, sexual violence and prevention campaigns: Setting the scene

City centre club and bar venues have long been recognised to reflect the structural constraints of the wider society, with Skeggs (1997, 2005) acknowledging that NTE spaces are divided on lines of gender as well as ethnicity, age and class. Whilst women's conspicuous participation in night-life is now documented (Griffin et al., 2009; Measham and Brain, 2005), such participation remains closely regulated (Measham, 2002; Skeggs, 1997). Media discourses, for example, have long constructed alcohol consumption as a masculine endeavour with women who drink heavily being cast as failing to do their gender correctly (Day et al., 2004; Hubbard, 2013). The image of the 'ladette' and the 'drunk, fat and vulgar' hen partying female are omnipresent features of discourses on late-night culture (Skeggs, 2005: 965), implicating a continued pathologisation of women who spend time out at night drinking. Such depictions tap into wider anxieties around female sexual availability, vulnerability and respectability, with ethnicity and class having mediating roles to play (Skeggs, 1997). Men's alcohol consumption, by contrast, including excessive consumption, is typically understood as 'normal' male activity, a way of achieving masculinity and enhancing masculine identities (Hastings et al., 2010; Tomsen, 1997).

Running alongside, Measham (2004) describes the 'play spaces' of the 21st century NTE, where leisure is structured around pleasure and hedonism in a determined effort to find 'time out' from the surveillance of daily life. Such aspirations for leisure perhaps call into question whether young people in pursuit of escape will engage with (or notice) the surveillance of anti-rape campaign discourses. Indeed, within a context of finding 'time out', the practices of excess form an integral part of night-life (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007), with young people forming their identities in the marketplace via the process of consumption (Measham and Brain, 2005). Licensed premises are sites of consumption and within this

context drinking becomes a means through which identity is performed. As Christmas and Seymour (2014) argue, drunken nights out can facilitate intense social interactions, strengthen the collective identities of friendship groups and the retelling of stories from those evenings can allow for group bonding. In some cases, the desire to generate drinking stories motivates excessive consumption with the 'best' stories often being judged as those that involve forms of transgression including vomiting, hurting oneself and stripping (Tutenges and Sandberg, 2013). Within a culture of consumerism, the NTE becomes characterised by individuals on the hunt for transgression, instantaneous experience and pursuit of the 'new' – all sources of pleasure and identity that are typified in the production of intoxication and which will most likely take priority over engaging with the dynamics of rape prevention.

Measham and Østergaard (2009) have more recently critiqued the 'hypersexuality' of the 21st century NTE, due to the increasingly sexualised entertainment on offer. In accordance, night-time spaces have seen the proliferation of themed nights that centre on 'pimps and hoes', 'rappers and slappers' and 'tarts and vicars'. Bars and clubs increasingly see as commonplace stripping and pole dancing activities where female customers are encouraged to 'perform' under the spectra of the male gaze (Home Office, 2008; NUS, 2013). This move reflects a wider cultural shift towards what McNair (1996: 23) refers to as the 'pornification of the mainstream' via the commodification of pornography and an era of sexual consumerism which has pervaded, amongst other arenas, night-time leisure spaces. Such sexualisation again calls into question the suitability of these sites for challenging gender-based victimisation, in light of the inequality they ostensibly embody. Debates have emerged around how to theorise female sexual agency in such contexts, with research emphasising the potential for women to discursively redefine activities such as pole dancing, rhetorically disconnecting the dancing from the sex industry and reclaiming it as an empowering activity (Whitehead and Kurz, 2009). More recently, Griffin et al. (2013) have highlighted the tensions that exist for women when out drinking in the evening, where there is the expectation to perform a 'non-slutish' femininity alongside the call to always be 'up for it' and dressing and acting (hetero)sexually. A position that Griffin et al. (2013) argue is difficult to occupy, offers an insecure basis for empowerment and an evening out marked by the contradictory experiences of pleasure, fun and attempts to manage risk.

Accordingly, women's participation in night-life can be impinged by the role of 'sex object' she can be cast within and the subsequent harassment experienced (Hutton, 2004; Sheard, 2011). Christmas and Seymour (2014) have argued that unwanted 'lower-level' sexual touching/groping is becoming a norm within parts of the NTE. Whilst women often perceive such behaviour to be an unavoidable part of night-life, it frequently makes them feel angry and has the potential to ruin an evening. To a lesser extent, men have been found to experience unwanted sexual groping from women, although they are typically less likely to label the behaviour as unwanted or unpleasant (Ibid., 2014). NTE venues, however, are not homogenous and certain spaces can offer women the opportunity to construct more positive sexual identities. Hutton (2004), for example, distinguished between 'mainstream' clubs where men tended to sexualise women due to perceiving 'picking up' to be a priority of an evening out. By comparison, 'underground' clubs did not typically embody such conventional approaches to sex, enabling women to negotiate sexual encounters in ways that were not constrained by 'traditional', 'macho' scripts. The perceived dichotomy between 'mainstream' and 'underground' has, however, been problematised. Measham and Moore (2009) draw attention to the sanitisation of the NTE where the 'traditional' city centre pub has largely been replaced by the youth-focused chain bar. Thus, a shifting, quasi-mix of 'alternative' and 'mainstream' better reflects the nuances of late-night culture, where marketised attempts at distinction often camouflage an increasingly normative order (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007).

Research highlights that women are aware of their potential for vulnerability when out drinking at night, with such awareness being related, in part, to crime prevention messages (Brooks, 2011, 2014; Sheard, 2011). To date, much emphasis on risk reduction in the NTE has focused on safety advice for women (Brooks, 2011; Campbell, 2005; see Home Office, n.d.). Such advice has instructed females not to 'get so drunk you don't know what you're doing', 'don't go alone to a stranger's house when you're drunk' and 'don't accept a drink from someone you've just met' (a campaign sponsored by the Police Service of Northern Ireland). Other advice includes 'don't leave yourself more vulnerable to regretful sex or even rape. Drink sensibly and get home safely' (a West Mercia Police campaign). Such campaigns fit logically within a crime prevention discourse that has seen the responsibility for reducing risk shift from the state to the individual in line with an associated criminology of the self (Garland, 1996). They may also appear well targeted in light of the aforementioned potential for vulnerability when out drinking in the evening. However, they bring with them a 'morality of caution' where those who do not pre-empt personal danger run the risk of being constructed as 'foolhardy' (Burgess et al., 2009: 859). They also fail to engage with potential male perpetrators who, under the guise of 'picking up', may instigate encounters that result in sexual offences (Christmas and Seymour, 2014). Whilst women's responses to safety advice are complex, simultaneously adopting, resisting and 'switching-off' to such advice, it can serve to precipitate acts of self-surveillance. This includes monitoring drinks, only going out in a group, modifying what one wears and leaving venues in order to avoid harassment (Brooks, 2011, 2014; Sheard, 2011). Such prevention messages have thus been critiqued for feeding into a process of regulation that produces 'restricting regimes of the self' (Campbell, 2005: 120).

In this context, the Stern Review (2010), an independent appraisal of how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales, stated that rape prevention work must not focus solely upon the behaviour of women, but be designed to instead focus on the actions of potential male perpetrators. Although limited in number, such campaigns do exist in the UK context. In 2006 the Home Office designed a campaign to raise awareness amongst males aged 18–24 that sex without consent is an offence punishable by imprisonment (BBC, 2006). Evaluation indicated that a large number of people had seen the campaign and understood its content (Home Office, 2006 as cited in Temkin and Krahe, 2008). More recently, Rape Crisis Scotland has evaluated the impacts of their two-week campaign, 'This is Not an Invitation to Rape Me', a strap-line that accompanied a set of images that included women drinking together and a wife and groom on their wedding day. Evaluation again indicated that a sizeable group of people had seen the campaign and that its messages had been accurately interpreted (Progressive, 2009). However, an analysis of its impact on attitude and behaviour did not take place, a limitation that underpins rape campaign evaluations generally in the UK (Temkin and Krahe, 2008), unlike their US equivalents (Flood, 2011; Murphy, 2009). Despite these omissions, such approaches should be praised for beginning to engage men in the social labour of rape prevention – labour that has historically been reserved for women.

Developing and analysing the impacts of a rape prevention campaign aimed at men

The campaign this article considers ran in the NTE in 2012 (from January to March) in Liverpool, England. The campaign was designed by Liverpool City Council in conjunction with the advice of two of the article authors and encompassed four aims: firstly, to target men aged 18–24, both student and non-student NTE users, in recognition of men within this age range lacking legal understanding of



Figure 1. Campaign poster.

consent (Abbey et al., 2004; Beres, 2007; Felts et al., 2012; Gunby et al., 2012a, 2012b). Secondly, and related to this point, to clarify to the target audience that under English and Welsh law, engaging in sexual intercourse with someone unable to consent due to their alcohol intoxication constitutes rape. Thirdly, to reduce and prevent instances of rape and sexual assault and fourthly, to direct individuals who may have experienced rape after a night out towards support services.

The campaign consisted of posters placed in male toilets and beer mats that were displayed in multiple youth-focused city centre bars and clubs, as well as across the city's universities' Student Unions (see Figure 1). The campaign posters included the strap-line 'Can't answer? Can't consent – sex without consent is rape' whilst the tagline on the beer mats stated 'sex without consent is a crime'. A link to information detailing the legal position on rape (and contact information to support services) was included on both the mats and poster. The campaign materials were hosted on the websites of partner agencies, and there was a Facebook page and newspaper and radio adverts reiterating the messages of the campaign.

Assessing the impact of the campaign involved two strands: firstly, an on-street face-to-face survey led by Liverpool City Council. This was carried out in April 2012 with 321 male student and

non-student NTE users aged 18–24. The second strand, led by the article authors, involved six qualitative focus groups conducted October 2012 to March 2013. It is this latter, qualitative data which forms the basis of the following discussion.¹ Focus groups were selected for use due to their ability to encourage participants to express their opinions openly, especially if those perspectives are shared within the group (Morgan, 1997). To further encourage respondents to feel at ease in this forum, a male facilitator was used to guide discussion. Research indicates that men and women speak differently about sex and that the presence of females may act to inhibit the free flow of conversation amongst men (Beres, 2007; Lawrence et al., 2009). This is not to suggest, however, that identity will not be managed in the presence of other males. As Allen (2005) has argued, the focus group setting will inevitably see masculinity be negotiated, especially if engaging in discussions around sexuality, due to the public presentation of self. Within such contexts, 'lewd remarks or boasting about sexual conquests' should not be viewed as hindering the data collection process, but instead mimicking examples of how male sexuality is constituted, both in the real world and the research context (Allen, 2005: 53).

Ethical approval to conduct the focus groups was granted by Liverpool John Moores University in 2012. In recognition of the potential to engage with participants who had themselves experienced sexual offences, all recruitment materials were explicit about the nature of the research. Information sheets detailed contact telephone numbers for local support services, should participants wish to pursue specialist intervention post study. Links to websites designed to 'bust' rape myths and educate on the reality of the offence were also provided. Participants were encouraged to look at this information and contact the research team, should they wish to extend their knowledge, clarify misunderstanding or ask questions about the research.

Forty-one males were recruited to the six focus groups (with an average of seven participants per group), all aged 18–24. Participants were recruited via two means: those student and non-student participants who completed the on-street survey were asked if they would like to take part in a focus group at a later point, re-contacted and invited. Secondly, a non-probability sample of students studying across two faculties within Liverpool's two main universities were emailed and invited to participate. The article authors and a related point of contact emailed these students via institutional faculty distribution lists. All participants were incentivised by the offer of a £20 shopping voucher. Of those individuals who volunteered to take part, the majority were white and all were Higher Education students. It is recognised that it is a limitation of the research that only one half of the audience the campaign targeted is represented within the qualitative discussions. Indeed, men who do not fall into the white, student demographic (as well as those recruited via more randomised means) may endorse different perspectives in light of the way ethnicity, race and education impact on how people conceptualise and talk about sex (Lawrence et al., 2009; Nagel et al., 2005). It should not be assumed, however, that students are a homogenous group. The two institutions used to recruit participants comprised distinct, as well as overlapping populations. For example, in 2015, 88 percent of the undergraduates recruited by one of the study institutions were UK based (12 percent were international), 65 percent of whom had come directly from college/sixth form. Here, a sizeable proportion of the UK students were existent Liverpool residents. By contrast, the second study institution recruited more international students in 2015 (35 percent), fewer Liverpool-based residents and a greater number of school leavers (84 percent) (What Uni, 2015). These differences will influence the night-time cultures that students participate within, the attitudes they hold and, at times, will see their perspectives resonate with wider, non-student values.

Participants were asked if they had seen the campaign, if they could recall its messages, if those messages had been accurately understood, how they perceived the campaign to have impacted their attitudes (if at all) and what their perceptions of it were. Following discussions based upon unprompted recall, all groups were shown the campaign images in order to facilitate further debate. Thus, campaign knowledge, recall and perception were assessed, as opposed to whether exposure to the materials had changed behaviour in any tangible way. This is a further limitation of the research and, as discussed, a limitation more broadly of research which has tried to assess the impact of rape campaigns in the UK (Temkin and Krahe, 2008). It is acknowledged that future UK research should aim to answer questions around how exposure to prevention campaigns affected behaviour in the short and long term. It is also recognised, however, that such endeavours will require the allocation of appropriate resources.

The qualitative data were fully transcribed and scrutinised using thematic analysis, a systematic approach to the categorisation and consolidation of study findings (Howarth, 2002), in conjunction with the data analysis software NVivo. Broad themes and connections between the data were identified with specific subthemes emerging which were also coded, resulting in a hierarchical structure where lower order subthemes sat under higher level themes. For the purpose of the current analysis, participants' responses to the higher order theme 'the usefulness of the NTE to raise awareness, challenge attitudes and prevent sexual violence' have been subject to scrutiny. As such, the subthemes that emerged, and which are discussed below, are just one element of the wider study. These subthemes comprise: 'why use the NTE to raise awareness of sexual offences', 'concentration and attention in the NTE', 'concentration, sexualised imagery and prevention campaigns' and finally, 'having fun when out in the evening.'

Using the NTE to raise awareness, challenge attitudes and prevent sexual violence

Why use the NTE to raise awareness of sexual offences

A large proportion of participants argued, at first probing, that there were a number of merits in using club and bar spaces to raise awareness of sexual offences. These included the campaign being geared around addressing the role of alcohol in sex crime, with youth-focused night-time spaces being environments that were alcohol heavy: '... it's obviously geared around pubs and stuff where there's alcohol anyway, which is always good because it's really your target audience' (FG1). It was also appreciated that night-time environments were venues where individuals 'picked up' and which people specifically visited for this purpose. Hence, it was recognised that a sexual interaction which culminated in a rape might be one that commenced in a pub or club, again appealing to the logic that such a campaign in the NTE was well placed. Certain participants went even further to suggest that if they had 'pulled' in a club, and then saw the campaign as they exited a venue with that partner, it could provide the necessary impetus to make them think about their behaviour, or more specifically, make 'you think, oh, hang on a minute, is she too drunk?' (FG6). Hence, in principle, it was argued that the campaign promoted a message that had the potential to impact thought process and action in a positive direction:

I think the bathroom's actually a really good place to target because if you are in a situation where you think you are gonna get laid and you don't have a condom, you can go to the

bathroom and buy a condom ... and, you know, people quite often do that. So the fact that you have this poster right there next to it, I think that's actually a really good place to have it. (FG1)

The simplicity of the campaign message 'sex without consent is rape', combined with the transparency of the image, were also seen to be important elements of the campaign's potential effectiveness. A number of the focus groups highlighted as important the need to have a message and/or image that was 'short and snappy', 'straight to the point' (FG4) and that could be easily understood, especially when drinking:

I think one of the really good things about it is that you don't need to read anything. You don't need to be fully coherent or, you know, not under the influence. You can look at it and in a split second you know exactly what it's talking about. You see vulnerability and you see rape... (FG1)

In addition, participants argued that the campaign message, due to this level of simplicity, was one that could still be processed and acted upon even if participants were not paying full attention. This was considered to be an ideal scenario, when attention will inevitably be distracted when out in night-time spaces: '... you don't think you're looking at a beer mat but every time you pick your beer up, you see the beer mat. So you may be not necessarily reading it but you kind of subconsciously are, so it's kind of in the back of your mind ...' (FG5). Hence, on first reading, participants saw great value in housing a rape prevention campaign within the NTE, emphasising, however, that any campaign must be one that was 'simple' to understand in order for it to be effectively attended to.

Concentration and attention in the NTE

Despite the aforementioned, when analysing how participants actually attended to information when out in bars and clubs, it was clear that the impact of prevention messages may be undermined. It was argued that 'the lighting' in NTE spaces may impact the ability to clearly read any message, as did the simple fact that you'd be viewing it when drunk: '... plus if you're sort of drunk, you're not gonna really take any notice of it, probably ...' (FG3). Whilst it was argued that campaign messages could be processed when intoxicated, even if there was only a surface level interaction with those messages, it should be noted that the vast majority of focus group participants did not remember the campaign under consideration or recall it once presented with the campaign images.

The admission that 'none of us here really knew about it [the campaign]' (FG1), despite the related materials being placed in a large number of youth-focused licensed venues in Liverpool, is one that chimed across all of the focus groups. It is reasonable to assume that being intoxicated when viewing the campaign is one explanation as to why so few people were aware of it. As one focus group participant explained: 'I know when I get drunk, I'm not taking in anything except for I'm going to get drunk. Like any messages or anything on a board probably just passes me by' (FG1). Other participants more explicitly argued that: 'I'd only notice it [the campaign] when I was sober' (FG2). Research pays testament to alcohol's impairment of perception and the narrowing

of attention with increased quantities of alcohol (Jones and Vega, 1972; Steele and Josephs, 1990). As the alcohol myopia model predicts, when intoxicated, people attend to and encode fewer cues in their environment, with alcohol reducing the ability to process and extract meaning from the information and cues that are perceived (Steele and Josephs, 1990). All of which does not bode well for prevention messages being noticed in alcohol-heavy spaces, especially when young people enter the city centre already intoxicated from having consumed alcohol at home prior (Hughes et al., 2008). Despite the limitations of the current sampling frame, the finding that few participants were aware of the campaign intuitively undermines their previous claims that a campaign can be attended to even if only partially noticed. It perhaps also draws a distinction between what participants may believe campaigns are capable of achieving in principle, against the reality of attending to prevention information in practice.

A related argument raised by participants was that bars and clubs contain an array of competing promotional messages and advertising which inevitably distract from prevention discourses: 'I think like in a club kind of, you would be unlikely to kind of notice that [the campaign poster], like if it was next to like drinks posters – because they're normally really bright and colourful' (FG3). As Temkin and Krahe (2008) have argued, prevention posters in public spaces compete with a host of stimuli which can have detrimental impacts on the degree to which those posters will be processed. People are persuaded by campaign messages via two routes: a systematic route where the information will be carefully considered, and a heuristic route where the message is evaluated on the basis of shallower cues, such as the graphic nature of its content. Persuasion via heuristic route processing is shorter lived and based on superficial evidence, as opposed to the careful scrutiny of the message being promoted. Such processing, however, is increasingly likely in venues where multiple messages compete for attention (Temkin and Krahe, 2008). This again raises concerns around the extent to which prevention messages in busy licensed venues will be effectively noticed, processed and understood.

In a related vein, participants argued that young people are living in glossy-image focused times, perhaps contextualising why a subset of participants did not feel that the campaign materials did enough to grab attention: 'realistically, with the images you see now everywhere you go, this one's just ... it doesn't do enough to stand out' (FG3). Thus, it is difficult to disentangle here whether it is the impact of alcohol or the perceived inadequacy of the image which relates to the failure to notice the campaign.

Concentration, sexualised imagery and prevention campaigns

For a number of participants, the perceived need for a prevention campaign to 'stand out' related to its need to compete for attention with the hypersexual images, entertainment and products on offer in bar and club spaces (Home Office, 2008; Measham and Østergaard, 2009). Whilst almost all participants were happy with the strap-line text used in the campaign, they were less satisfied with the images, arguing that the campaign would 'work better if she looked prettier', if she wasn't as 'covered up' and if she was 'showing off more [skin]' (FG2). These perspectives emphasise the importance, for some participants at least, of a glossy, sexualised, advertising aesthetic to both enable viewers to better notice the campaign images but to also more effectively 'relate' to them. Murphy (2009: 119) warns, however, against the adoption of popular product advertising approaches within rape prevention campaigns. He argues that the use of young, thin and attractive

models can serve to 'reproduce many of the medium's most durable gender stereotypes', including the positioning of men as 'acting' and women as merely 'appearing'. Indeed, as one focus group discussed, by having the campaign model wear clothing that covered her up, it made the prospect of raping her 'not as appealing' (FG2). If, however, she had been presented in a more sexualised way, it was argued that this would increasingly make you 'joke, and go, I'd rape her, but because the way she's covered up and stuff, it's kind of not tempting' (FG2). Other participants in the focus group agreed with this statement, with it appearing to encapsulate the shared view that if a sense of '... you know, yeah, I would [have sex with her]' (FG2) could be elicited in response to the campaign image, this made plausible the possibility of others also wanting to have sex with the model. This in turn impacted upon the perceived credibility of the scene depicted and its status as a genuine rape, which demonstrates the existence of a significant tension. On the one hand, the campaign imagery appeared to contradict and consequently challenge participants' assumptions about the types of women that get raped; namely, women who are young, attractive, who dress revealingly and whose rapists are motivated by a sense of sexual attraction, as opposed to a desire for control. However, rather than recognise that the campaign was challenging such assumed dynamics of vulnerability and victimisation, participants struggled to accommodate the way in which the campaign model 'appeared' (Murphy, 2009) with their own interpretations of a rape victim, thus rendering it less credible.

Participants' comments about (not) raping the campaign model expose a level of normalisation around sexual violence that is reminiscent of marketing that has connected rape with night-time culture. For example, the freshers' week advertising at Cardiff Metropolitan University that featured posters bearing the supposedly humorous strap-line 'I was raping a woman last night and she cried' (Williams, 2013: para. 2), in the promotion of a student night. Similarly, the venue hosting the Leeds-based event 'fresher's violation' was closed in 2013 after a video promoting it featured a male student claiming he would violate the female fresher he was with by raping her (Collington, 2013). Although the current authors are not aware of research that has specifically examined the extent of sexually violent alcohol advertising, evidence indicates that such discourses are not uncommon across English bars and clubs (Home Office, 2008). Alcohol companies have themselves come under criticism for using marketing approaches that link their product with rape. Recent examples include 'Bud Light' featuring on their bottle labelling the statement: 'the perfect beer for removing "no" from your vocabulary for the night' (Richards, 2015: para. 1). The flippant way in which sexual violence is assimilated into such advertising may form part of the 'excess' that is associated with night-life and appeal to the generation of consumers in pursuit of stories and experiences marked by transgression and boundary pushing (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007; Measham and Brain, 2005; Tutenges and Sandberg, 2013). It could also be viewed as a contemporary example of the heteronormative sexuality which pervades certain youth-focused night-time spaces, and a mechanism through which such sexuality is policed (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Christmas and Seymour, 2014). The NUS (2013), for example, in their recent theorising on 'lad culture', have highlighted the ways in which humour and irony, colloquially referred to as 'banter', are used within NTE advertising and journalism to mock and minimise the nature of sexual assault. Such 'banter' is a form of humour that is difficult to respond to for fear of being positioned as humourless, opposing free speech and being unable to see the irony embedded within the representation (NUS, 2013). It is realistic to assume that such advertising in NTE venues plays a role in normalising women's experiences of sexual assault when in bars and clubs (Christmas and Seymour, 2014), as

well as acting to undermine any competing prevention message which aims to challenge the dynamics that foster sexual offending.

The presence of marketing which depicts sexual content, sexism and gendered norms of masculinity and femininity within on-licensed venues was one of the (many) drivers to the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 (Mandatory Licensing Conditions) (Amendment) Order 2014. This legislation, amongst other things, requires license holders to now ensure that 'irresponsible promotions' do not occur. Irresponsible alcohol promotions include: 'selling or supplying alcohol in association with promotional material (on or in the vicinity) that can be reasonably considered to condone, encourage or glamorise antisocial behaviour or refer to drunkenness favourably' (Order 2014, Article 3, 1(2)(d)). However, there is reason to assume that what is deemed 'irresponsible' will be narrowly focused on promotions that glamorise excessive alcohol consumption and will not restrict marketing which condones, encourages or links sexual violence with alcohol and/or intoxication (Popleston, 2014). Thus, it is unlikely that this legislation will eliminate the presence of sexually aggressive advertising, which, as argued, undermines significantly the call to end sexual violence.

Having fun when out in the evening

All focus group participants adhered to the idea that when out in bars and clubs 'everyone's sort of preoccupied' (FG3) with friends, having fun and thinking about sex. As one participant argued 'when I'm drunk on a night out I'm probably thinking about sex more than when I'm sober' (FG2). The NTE was recognised to be a space where people meet and 'hook up', with focus group participants offering up their own experiences of having 'gone back on a night out drunk, with a drunk girl, and had sex' (FG2). The use of bar and club spaces by men (and women) to drink, have fun, start relationships and meet sexual partners is well documented (Christmas and Seymour, 2014; Griffin et al., 2009). As argued, however, the prioritisation of 'picking up' by some men can restrict the expression of female sexuality in certain NTE spaces, due to the attendant objectification of women and potential for harassment (Christmas and Seymour, 2014; Hutton, 2004).

It was evident amongst participants that this focus on having fun and 'thinking about sex' was a preoccupation that distracted them from paying attention to, and indeed wanting to pay attention to, prevention messages when out. It was argued that discourses which focus on rape 'put a negative on the night' (FG4) and are 'just a bit like heavy' (FG6). Certain participants were explicit about not wanting to be confronted with such surveillance when the intention for an evening was to have a good time. Thus, discussions of rape were somewhat off limits during nights out '... it isn't really something people want to talk about, do you know, when they just want to have a good time' (FG1). Such perspectives resonate with Measham's (2002, 2004) argument that leisure spaces in the 21st century represent sites for the pursuit of pleasure, with evenings out being organised around such principles. Correspondingly, a 'controlled loss of control' is an increasingly sought after aspect of leisure time. Here, individuals make determined, albeit controlled efforts, to find the space needed to remove themselves from a culture of work, stress and risk – using the excitement and self-actualisation of alcohol consumption to do so. Hayward and Hobbs (2007) refer to a 'calculating hedonism', a state distinct from losing control and marked instead by a strategic detachment from constraint. Thus, heavy drinking becomes attractive in such contexts because it represents a break from the limits of the everyday, again raising questions as to whether rape prevention messages will be attended to by young people in pursuit of such escape.

NTE spaces, however, were not viewed as homogenous and neither were peoples' activities when in them. Participants in one focus group for example argued: '... If you're sitting in the pub, that's the atmosphere for discussion [of sexual violence], but like out on a night out, it's not' (FG6). Thus, a distinction was drawn between a 'night out' where the primary objective was to have fun and disengage from 'heavy' conversation and going out in the evening with friends for a few drinks where debates around topics such as rape could be had. In the context of wanting to promote social change, the importance of discussion and debate cannot be understated (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). However, if participants were likely to talk about the campaign, it was typically the consequence of two factors: finding the campaign message provocative, or with a sense of mockery.

In relation to the former, a minority of participants felt that 'a lot of males would look at that [the poster] and feel hard done by' (FG2) and argued it was 'quite harsh ... to have that aimed at you, even though you'd never think of doing anything like that' (FG5). The gendered nature of the campaign was also subject to criticism for being 'too gender specific, too heterosexually specific' (FG3). Thus, a proportion of participants stated that rape prevention should also be aimed at females. Discussions in four of the focus groups comprised some debate around how women 'need to be aware that they should be taking care not to ever let themselves get anywhere near that kind of situation [the situation as depicted in the campaign]' (FG5). As Brooks (2011, 2014) and Sheard (2011) have highlighted, women are aware of, and do respond accordingly to the safety advice directed towards them, simultaneously adopting and rejecting that advice. Such arguments amongst male participants encompassed a 'morality of caution' (Burgess et al., 2009: 859), with this position most likely being driven by several factors. For example, a possible sense of antagonism produced by the campaign; having internalised historic rape prevention discourses directed at women; the pathologising of drinking females for failing to do their gender correctly (Brooks, 2011; Day et al., 2004; Skeggs, 2005); or perhaps due to a genuine feeling of risk reduction being a shared responsibility. Whilst we explore this issue in further detail elsewhere (see Carline et al., in preparation), it should be noted here that the gendered nature of the campaign's content was viewed as one factor that could incite debate, albeit of a potentially negative nature.

The second factor likely to precipitate conversation around the campaign was if a joke was made about it. Participants in four of the focus groups made the point that the campaign may serve as a source of comedy, with it eliciting jokes directed at friends that included: 'that's [raping] the only way you're gonna pull a bird' (FG4). Such comments may appear problematic due to the moral and political dimensions associated with rape ever serving as a source of amusement. However, such 'banter' is perhaps unsurprising in light of the aforementioned use of humour within certain 'laddish' cultures that makes it difficult to talk about sexual offences except in mocking ways (NUS, 2013). Barnes (2012: 242) argues that 'getting and having a laff' is a chief way of policing and maintaining the boundaries of laddish masculinity, gaining group status and excluding those who do not conform. Thus, here, it is difficult to fully establish whether participants are using humour to undermine the campaign materials or to more specifically assert their discourse of masculinity.

Certain participants also argued that the use of humour was a means of introducing a serious topic to the conversation: 'like if you're down the pub, having a serious conversation about rape would be a bit hard. So you'd probably just start like sort of taking the mickey out of the content of it [the campaign]' (FG6). Cooper and Dickinson (2013) identify that humour can act as a 'gateway' to discussing taboo and private subjects, with Kramer (2011) also arguing that the framing

of a joke can transform a disturbing act into a humorous one without necessarily detracting from the disturbing nature of the act itself. However, there is legitimacy in suggesting that such 'taking the mickey' will be enhanced within the youth-focused night-time environment. This is, after all, a space where alcohol serves to disinhibit, where transgression and 'new' experiences (and stories) are sought (Tutenges and Sandberg, 2013) and where the suspension of boundaries is central to the experience of escape on a night out (Christmas and Seymour, 2014). As such, the practices of night-time excess may extend into 'inappropriate' joking becoming an end in its own right. Cooper and Dickinson (2013) identify that such joking can create tense environments that close down discussion completely, again raising concerns as to the extent to which rape prevention campaigns in bars and clubs will be attended to, taken seriously if noticed and their messages internalised.

It should be noted here that participants did not directly state that the campaign had been a source of entertainment for them whilst out (although this could be due to the lack of recognition of the campaign amongst participants). Rather, within the focus group setting it was hypothesised that the campaign may be something which would be mocked in an attempt to create an in-way into a conversation about rape. Or, as was more frequently the case, it was argued that mockery would occur because 'that is just what happens if you're out with a group of mates' (FG6). Again, appealing to the logic that banter, transgression and boundary pushing and suspension are important elements of night-time excess.

Conclusions

The campaign under consideration in this article made a strategic effort to target its rape prevention advice at men, an important departure from the focus of many previous campaigns. Discussions of how men perceive rape prevention, with a specific focus on the ways in which the NTE interacts with the communication of those messages, are absent from the literature. Indeed, current focus group participants saw value in having prevention discourses based in bars and clubs in Liverpool, suggesting that such campaigns were well targeted in light of licensed venues being spaces where people meet, drink and potentially end up having sex. However, in practice, few participants were aware of the campaign, despite it being widely promoted. We have argued that this may be the consequence of alcohol impacting on engagement with the campaign's messages and it being rendered invisible against the sexualised images and entertainment that comprise night-life (Home Office, 2008; Measham and Østergaard, 2009). Other explanations include participants' desires to have fun when on a night out and to make determined efforts to disengage from the discourses of risk and surveillance that underpin the day (Measham, 2002, 2004).

Whilst multiple participants were not aware of the current campaign, we still contend that bar and club spaces remain important venues for housing rape prevention discourses, due to the aforementioned; they are environments that capture the intended target audience. That is, young people aged 18–24 who are looking to have sex, a proportion of whom have been identified as lacking knowledge of the legal position on sexual consent (Abbey et al., 2004; Beres, 2007; Felts et al., 2012). In addition, a range of regulatory and safety responses currently operate within the various realms of the NTE (see Hadfield, 2015; Hubbard and Colosi, 2015; Transport for London, n.d.).

Therefore, continuing to promote rape prevention within NTE environments feeds into a process whereby safety discourses are reinforced across different, yet complementary, night-time contexts. This contributes towards a multi-pronged approach to NTE crime reduction which better sets the foundation for reiterating, and eventually having heard, those crime prevention messages (Flood, 2011; Murphy, 2009).

The most compelling explanation for participants' failures to notice the campaign was its perceived invisibility against sexualised drinks advertising and more explicitly violent advertising that links alcohol and intoxication with sexual offending. The latter form of advertising, we argue, undermines any competing rape prevention message. We would therefore like to see such advertising regulated to enable rape prevention work to be more visible, as well as to counter the role it plays in normalising sexual violence (NUS, 2013). Whilst the impacts of the Mandatory Licensing Condition of prohibiting 'irresponsible promotions' are yet to be seen, as we note, there is reason to assume it will not be interpreted broadly enough to include within the remit of 'irresponsible', marketing that condones, encourages or links sexual violence with alcohol (Popleston, 2014). We therefore recommend the development of a further Mandatory Licensing Condition that explicitly prohibits venue marketing from promoting or alluding to sexual violence. As argued, such advertising feeds into a climate that constrains nights out and helps to normalise unwanted sexual touching within licensed spaces (Christmas and Seymour, 2014). It undermines the call to challenge sexual offending, produces a tension between venues simultaneously endorsing and condoning sexual violence and distracts attention away from rape prevention messages initially.

We acknowledge that this move does not eradicate the reality that many participants may not have noticed the campaign because they were too intoxicated or too focused on the pursuit of escape and transgression (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007; Measham and Brain, 2005). Here, we point to participants' recognition that licensed venues are not homogenous and that certain bar environments may be more conducive to promoting the campaign. Such venues were understood to be spaces where friends went and could talk, as opposed to being environments where a hedonistic 'night out' was sought. These may be night-time environments that individuals enter having consumed less alcohol at home initially (Hughes et al., 2008), thus young people may be less intoxicated and better able to attend to/debate prevention messages within them. The call for recognition of 'better' bar and club spaces to promote rape prevention does not override the need to continue to identify non-NTE environments which could also be used to promote rape prevention messages, or which may be suited to promoting them in parallel with NTE venues. These arguments emphasise the need for further research to recognise the diversity of the NTE and the different purposes for which people go out in the evenings, even in a time when the sanitisation of the NTE is reported to have occurred. Such work may better identify the pub and club venues that are most conducive to promoting rape prevention discourses, with such venues leading on the promotion of gendered crime prevention.

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Note

1. Whilst survey questions asked participants whether they had seen the campaign, and whether they remembered it once prompted by the campaign images, no other items teased out how useful (or otherwise) the NTE was in promoting rape prevention. As such, we do not reference the quantitative data in this article.

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