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The Influence of Magazines on Men:

Normalizing and Challenging Young Men's Prejudice with 'Lads' Mags'

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Social psychologists have argued that popular UK and USA men's magazines known as *lads' mags* have normalized hostile sexism among young men. Three studies develop this argument. First, a survey of 423 young UK men found that ambivalent sexism predicted attitudes toward the consumption of *lads' mags*, but not other forms of direct sexual consumption (paying for sex or patronizing strip clubs). Second, Study 2 (N = 81) found that young men low in sexism rated sexist jokes as less hostile towards women, but not as either funnier nor more ironic, when those jokes were presented within a *lads' mags* context. These findings refute the idea that young men readily read *lads' mags'* sexism as ironic or 'harmless fun.' They show instead that placing sexist jokes in *lads' mags* contexts makes them appear less hostile. The third study (N = 275) demonstrated that young men perceived *lads' mags* as less legitimate after attempting to distinguish the contents of *lads' mags* from rapists' legitimations of their crimes. Implications for contemporary studies of masculinities and consumption are discussed.

### The Influence of Magazines on Men:

#### Normalizing and Challenging Young Men's Prejudice with "Lads' Mags."

In 1994, the publication of the first issue of the UK men's magazine *Loaded* was a cultural event. With its strapline 'the magazine for men who should know better,' *Loaded* was the first of several *lads' mags* that defined themselves against existing men's magazines such as *Arena* and *GQ* which had focused on appearance, fashion, and taste. These new lads' mags promoted "[hard] images of masculinity, characterized by laddish behavior such as drinking to excess, adopting a predatory attitude towards women and a fear of commitment" (Jackson, Stevenson, & Brooks, 2001, p.20; see Taylor, 2005 for a systematic study). *Loaded's* dramatic commercial success in the 1990s changed marketers' aspirations for successfully selling magazines to young men. Existing men's magazines followed its lead by shifting their content toward the new and successful lad mag norm. *For Him Magazine* began publishing as *FHM* in 1994, and two cheaper 'weekly' lads' mags, *Nuts* and *Zoo*, were launched successfully in the UK in 2004 (Mooney, 2008). *Maxim* became a regular feature in the USA market. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, UK and USA sociologists had extensively discussed shifts toward 'lad culture,' particularly among young men. These magazines featured persistently in their analyses (e.g., Attwood, 2005; Benwell, 2003; Jackson, Stevenson, & Brooks, 2001; Krassas, Blauwkamp, & Wesselink, 2003; Nixon, 2001; Stevenson, Jackson, & Brooks, 2003; Taylor, 2005, 2006).

Currently, the commercial success of lads' mags is fast declining, but 'lad culture' and 'guy culture' remain concerning, particularly on university campuses (Kimmel, 2009; Phipps & Young, 2015a, b). Since 2003, feminist groups in the UK have argued that open sales of lads'

mags in the UK both objectify women and harm children who see sexually objectifying images of women (Object, n.d.). The campaign *Lose the Lads Mags* convinced many retailers to confine lads' mags to the 'top shelf', to cover them in black 'modesty' covers, or to risk sexual harassment claims from their employees (Lose the Lads Mags, n.d.). Sales figures for lads mags have declined in recent years (Ponsford, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014). *Nuts* and *Arena* have ceased both print and online publication (Magnanti, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014). *Maxim* has ceased print publication, but maintained an online presence. In 2012, the original editor of *Loaded* published regrets about mainstreaming pornography for a generation of young British readers (Daubney, 8 June, 2012). In 2014, *Loaded* was re-launched, with a dramatic reduction in sexualized imagery of women and declining sales figures (Turvill, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014). Despite the re-launch, *Loaded* published its last printed issue on March 26<sup>th</sup> 2015 (Sweney, 2015). UK men's hostility to women remains visible in online discussions of these recent events (Garcío-Favarró & Gill, 2016).

This paper examines this changing social context to develop a social psychological analysis of how sexism can be normalized among young men. Young people consistently look to magazines as sources of normative influence about sexuality and relationships (Walsh & Ward, 2010), and psychological research on the effects of popular media's exposure to men has responded to commercial trends over historical time. Following the legalization of pornography, research from the 1970s and 1980s repeatedly tested the hypothesis that exposure to pornography incites rape proclivity among men (Hald, Seaman, & Linz, 2014). Subsequent to the rise of the market in men's lifestyle magazines in the 1990s, researchers increasingly examined the effects of muscular male ideals on young men's self-image (see Ferguson, 2013 for a recent review). Recently researchers have bemoaned the lack of research examining the ways that media socialize young men towards sex and relationships. Using a three-wave panel study, Ward,

Vanderbosch, and Eggermont (2015) found that consumption of lads' mags and pornography lead to increased gender stereotypical beliefs about courtship. In one recent study, Italian men exposed to TV clips in which women were seen as objects were more likely to tell sexist jokes to a female conversation partner online. This effect was moderated by men's increased endorsement of masculine norms such as dominance, aggression, and non-relational attitudes toward sex (Galdi, Maass, & Cadinu, 2014). In sum, media can make sexist norms accessible to adult men and lead men to increased sexism, and the present studies also examines how media change norms in regard to men's sexist attitudes and behaviors.

Lads' mags have promoted themselves as sources of normative influence and have been promoted as such by others. One report by the UK Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) even described lads' mags as 'a positive source of information for young people' (OFSTED, 2007, see Coy & Horvath, 2011). These constructions of lads' mags as normal, healthy sources of social influence are particularly troubling in light of concerns that exposure to pornographic magazines can engender support for violence against women via objectification of women (Taylor, 2005, Wright & Tokunaga, 2016; see also Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997 on objectification), and that lads' mags can lead young men to self-objectify (Giles & Close, 2008). Effects of sexualized media on men's sexist attitudes are far more robust than any direct effects on violent behavior (see Ward, Reed, Trih & Foust, 2014 for a review of the effects of sexualized media). Accordingly, we focus here not on objectification of women per se, but on how lads' mags, by virtue of being *normalized* media sources, in turn contribute to the normalization of readers' prejudice. As such we also draw on prejudice norm theory, which argues that the expression of a prejudice is closely tied to its normalization as acceptable, and that such normalization can change over historical time (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002).

In particular, we focus on young men's *hostile sexism* towards women (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and acceptance of myths about sexual assault (Gerger, Kley, Bohner, & Siebler, 2007).

### ***How Lads' Mags Change Men***

Hostile sexism, along with *benevolent sexism*, makes up a widespread ideology of ambivalent sexism toward women. Whilst benevolent sexism is positive in tone and often escapes detection as prejudice altogether, hostile sexism consists of blatantly negative and hostile beliefs about women (Glick & Fiske, 2011, 2012). Hostile sexism and sexual violence are related. Young men's acceptance of myths about sexual assault is more strongly correlated with hostile sexism than with benevolent sexism in both the USA and the UK (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012). Hostile sexist men identify more with the perpetrators of rape about whom they read in vignettes, and benevolent sexist women and men are more likely to blame victims of acquaintance rape described in such vignettes (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003). In relatively egalitarian countries, such as the UK and the USA, hostile sexism levels are lower than benevolent sexism levels because social norms proscribe hostility to women more than benevolent forms of sexism (Glick et al, 2000; see Glick & Fiske, 2011, 2012 for discussion). The free circulation of magazines in British culture that promote hostile sexism could seem to present a puzzle to ambivalent sexism theory. However, the popularity of lads' mags has risen and fallen in recent historical time. Moreover, closer examination of how lads' mags first normalized sexism and later became challenged can help to explain how social norms promoted in these magazines affected the sexism of individual men.

Researchers have pointed to several ways that lads' mags might have normalized sexism in spite of widespread egalitarian norms. First, these publications long avoided classification and marginalization as pornography by including images of topless women rather than fully nude

women (Coy & Horvath, 2011; Krassas, Blauwkamp, & Wesselink, 2003). We note that this social demarcation between media may not always make a psychological difference, as exposure to fully and partially nude models appear to have similar effects on men's objectification of women (Wright & Tokunaga, 2015). Second, lads' mags often described their contents as speaking to, and for, a majority of men, often by appealing to evolutionary theories about men's innate or essential desires (Gill, 2003). Most distinctively, lads' mags contained a lot of disparaging jokes about women (Jackson et al., 2001; Taylor, 2005). Disparaging sexist humor may not only reflect sexism but also promote it, by creating local social norms that render other forms of sexist discrimination more acceptable (Ford, Boxer, Armstrong, & Edell, 2008; Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Hodson, Rush, & MacInnes, 2010). Some lads' mags editors have argued that the sexist humor in their magazines is not a cause for concern because "readers are sophisticated enough to see that it's handled in an intelligent and amusing way... with a degree of irony" (Jackson et al., 2001, p.69). Accordingly, lads' mags editors have dismissed feminist critics of their sexist humor as lacking insight into the magazines' true ironic meaning (Benwell, 2003; Jackson et al., 2001).

As ambivalent sexism theory might predict, these legitimations began to falter as the hostile sexism in lads' mags has become apparent to wider segments of UK culture beyond their intended young male readers. In 2010, broad public attention was drawn to one lads' mags advice columnist (known as an 'agony uncle') when he advised a young male reader to cut his ex's face so that she would be undesirable to other men as an act of revenge for a break up. The magazine in question blamed the text on a 'production error' (Busfeld & Sweney, 2010). A similar controversy followed in 2012 when the online lads' mag *Unilad*, published an article titled 'Sexual Mathematics' which advised young men how to evade conviction after committing

sexual assault (Sherriff, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012). Such examples have suggested to a wider public that the contents of lads' mags can at least occasionally be deliberately hostile in ways that appeals to irony cannot easily rationalize. Sociologists in the UK argue that on university campuses lad culture remains 'one of multiple potential masculinities' that students 'may dip in and out of, but that have far-reaching impacts on their identity construction and experience' (Phipps & Young, 2015b, p. 4).

The current studies develop the social psychological analysis of lads' mags' normalizing influence begun by Horvath, Hegarty, Tyler, and Mansfield (2012). These authors drew from eight quotations from issues of UK lads' mags published in 2010, and eight quotations from interviews with convicted rapists (c.f., Sussman & Bordwell, 2000). In one study, young men reported identification with the quotations in one of three conditions. The quotations were attributed either to the correct sources, were not attributed to any sources, or were deceptively attributed to the incorrect source. Participants identified with quotations drawn from either source least of all when they were attributed to rapists, somewhat more when the quotations were not attributed, and most of all when the quotations were attributed to a lads' mag source. Men's levels of identification with both sorts of quotations were positively correlated with hostile and benevolent sexism, rape myth acceptance, and the authors' own measure of the perceived legitimacy of lads' mags. This finding may suggest that UK lads' mags contain particularly hostile sexist content. Taylor (2006) found no correlation between college men's magazine use and rape myth acceptance in a USA campus study.

In a second study, young women and men ranked the same 16 quotations for their relative sexism, and attempted to guess their original sources. Think-aloud protocols showed that several participants relied on the assumption that lads' mags might print 'normal' sexist content whilst



only rapists' would voice 'extreme' sexism. This assumption was a poor guide during the sorting task; participants ranked the two kinds of quotations as equivalently sexist, and identified their sources correctly only slightly better than chance would predict. Horvath et al. (2012) concluded that lads' mags might influence some men to consider sexual violence more acceptable. In support of this concern, Romero-Sanchez, Toro-Garcia, Horvath and Megias (2015) found that men who score high on rape myth acceptance and who consider lads' mags to be legitimate showed higher rape proclivity in hypothetical situations after exposure to the covers of lads' mags.

### *Current Studies*

We build on Horvath et al.'s (2012) findings here with three new empirical studies. Study 1 was a cross-sectional survey of young UK men's consumption of lads' mags and sexism conducted prior to Horvath et al.'s (2012) studies. Horvath et al.' (2012) observed strong correlations between endorsement of quotations drawn from lads' mags, sexism and rape myth acceptance. However, commentators such as Clark (January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012) questioned whether the findings could be generalized beyond the sample of young male students in the experiments. The survey reported in Study 1 specifically examined the association between attitudes toward the consumption of lads' mags and various measures of sexism among a larger and broader sample of men. To better understand how magazine consumption and sexism were correlated, Study 1 included several measures of sexism, and items measuring attitudes towards two forms of *direct sexual* consumption; attending lap dancing clubs and directly paying for sex. Study 1 thus also allowed a test of alternative hypotheses about which forms of sexism predict magazine consumption and with predict direct sexual consumption.

As humor is so central to debates about lads' mags, we conducted Study 2 to investigate how young men interpreted the sexist humor in lads' mags when it was taken out of context. Against the view that lads' mags routinely lead young men to interpret their sexist jokes as ironic, Jackson et al. (2001) concluded that some young men have ambivalent reactions to sexist humor in lads' mags, and that such men have their ambivalence silenced by the norms of hostile masculinity promoted in these magazines. Study 2 examined whether taking sexist jokes found in lads' mags out of context would lead young men to consider those jokes less funny or less ironic, suggesting that the magazine context did lead to their construction as harmless ironic fun. We tested this hypothesis against the alternative, suggested by Jackson et al.'s (2001) analysis, that less sexist men would tolerate sexist jokes most when they were presented within a lads' mag context which normalized the jokes' hostility.

Finally, Study 3 examined if lads' mags could be de-legitimized by making the similarity of their discourse to rapist discourse salient to young men. In Study 3, Horvath et al.'s (2012) sorting task was re-deployed as an intervention and was conducted in the USA. Our hypothesis that engagement with Horvath et al.'s sorting task might intervene in the normalization of sexism was informed by the literature on campus rape prevention programs in the United States, which hold men accountable for challenging social norms. Such programs first increase men's empathy with female victims, then challenge men's social norms and scripts, and finally encourage 'bystander interventions' to challenge sexist behaviors (e.g., Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkeback and Stark; 2003; Garrity, 2011; Gidycz, Orchowski, & Berkowitz, 2011; McMahon & Baynard, 2012; Stewart, 2014). Effective programs engage men deeply in thinking about sexist scripts, allowing for elaborate processing of the educational material (Gidycz et al., 2011, see also Petty, Caccioppo, & Goldman, 1981). Relatedly, educational debriefing in experiments

on the effects of violent pornography have been shown to mitigate effects of exposure (Allan, D'Alesso, Emmers, & Gebhart, 1996). In Horvath et al. (2012, Study 2), participants unthinkingly assumed that lads' mags printed 'normal' sexism, and the rapists' quotations would be 'extreme.' Participants were surprised when this schema did not help them to determine the source of the quotations. We predicted that participants who were exposed to this task in Study 3 would consider lads' mags less legitimate as a result. To examine additional proximal effects of this intervention we also measured changes in men's attitudes towards pornography after the intervention. To examine more distal effects, we examined changes in other measures of prejudice and masculine identity.

In sum, the three studies test the breadth of an association between the endorsement of lads' mags and sexism (Study 1), the power of lads' mags to normalize disparaging humor (Study 2), and the possibility of leading men to question the legitimacy of lads' mags by confronting the difficulty of distinguishing their contents from more extreme expressions of sexism (Study 3).

### **Study 1: Sexism and Lads' Mags Consumption Among Young Men in the UK**

Study 1 examined the association between several measures of sexism, magazine consumption and direct sexual consumption among young British men. Men's attitudes toward consumption were assessed using an ecologically valid measure of men's self-reported consumption of lads' mags and willingness to consume lads' mags in the future.

#### ***Method***

##### ***Participants.***

Four hundred and twenty-three men were recruited through adverts placed in free newspapers in five UK cities (London, Manchester, Cardiff, Glasgow and Nottingham), three

internet sites (*Facebook*, *Gumtree*, and *Craigslist*), and distributed through Google AdWords. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 30 years ( $M = 21.99$  years,  $SD = 3.69$ ). Participants identified their ethnicities as *White* ( $n = 376$  or 88.8% of sample; *White British*,  $n = 341$ , *White Irish*,  $n = 11$ , *White Other*,  $n = 24$ ), *Asian* ( $n = 23$  or 5.4% of sample; *Asian*,  $n = 7$ , *Indian*,  $n = 9$ , *Bangladeshi*,  $n = 4$ , *Chinese*,  $n = 3$ ), *Black* ( $n = 6$  or 1.4% of sample; *Black African*,  $n = 4$ , *Black Caribbean*,  $n = 2$ ) or *Mixed Race* ( $n = 18$  or 4.2% of sample; *White and Asian*,  $n = 8$ , *White and Black Caribbean*,  $n = 6$ , *Mixed Race*,  $n = 3$ , or *White and Black African*,  $n = 1$ ). Our sample somewhat overrepresented White respondents and mixed race respondents and somewhat underrepresented Asian and Black respondents, these four groups respectively making up 86.0%, 2.2%, 7.5% and 3.3% of the population of England and Wales at the 2011 census (Office of National Statistics, n.d.). They identified their sexualities as heterosexual ( $n = 343$ ), bisexual ( $n = 41$ ), homosexual ( $n = 36$ ) or as another sexual orientation ( $n = 3$ ; *asexual* = 2, *attracted to animals* = 1). Participants received no compensation for their participation.

### **Materials.**

Prior to completing the principal items, participants reported their gender, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation. They next completed individual items recording their attitudes toward consumption of men's magazines and attitudes toward purchasing sexual experiences with women. Participants were asked about ten magazines aimed at young men (*Nuts*, *Zoo*, *FHM*, *Loaded*, *Esquire*, *GQ*, *Bizarre*, *Front*, *Maxim*, and *Stuff*). In each case, participants first responded to a binary forced-choice item asking if they had ever read the magazine or not. Participants who indicated that they had read the relevant magazine answered a follow-up question that asked whether they had read it *once*, *occasionally*, *monthly*, or *weekly*. Participants who responded that they had never read the magazine answered a follow-up question that asked

if they *would read* it in the future, *would maybe read* it or *would never read* it. For each magazine this set of three questions was used to construct a 7-point *attitude to consumption* scale (1 = would never read, 2 = would maybe read, 3 = would read, 4 = has read once, 5 = has read occasionally, 6 = reads monthly, 7 = reads weekly). Two similarly structured sets of items assessed attitudes toward two forms of direct sexual consumption; *attending strip clubs* and *paying for sex*. Both were coded similarly as 7-point items.

Finally, participants completed three standard measures which assessed four different variables, all of which concerned sexist beliefs. First, a 24-item Attitudes Toward Women scale was presented (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973). Items were presented as 4-point scales, and reverse coded such that high average scores indicated high sexism (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.90$ ). The 30-item English version of the *Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA)* scale (Eyssel & Bohner 2008; Gerger et al., 2007) next measured agreement with contemporary myths regarding sexual violence (e.g., "Alcohol is often the culprit when a man rapes a woman"). Items were presented with 7-point response scales ranging from 1 ("Completely disagree") to 7 ("Completely agree"). Appropriate items were reverse coded and averaged to create a reliable measure (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.93$ ). Finally, the *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory*, which consists of two 11-item sub-scales, measured participants' *Hostile Sexism* and *Benevolent Sexism* (Glick & Fiske 1996). Specifically, the Hostile Sexism subscale measured men's endorsement of hostile and negative beliefs about women (e.g., "Feminists are seeking to have more power than men") and the Benevolent Sexism subscale measures endorsement of positive but disempowering beliefs about women (e.g., "In a disaster, women ought to be rescued before men"). All Ambivalent Sexism items were presented with response scales ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). Appropriate items were reverse coded and

averaged to produce reliable measures of Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.90, .73$  respectively).

### ***Procedure.***

Recruitment announcements solicited "Men aged 18-30 needed for online survey about lads' mags. To take part visit [University URL Address]." Participants were briefed that the survey would take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Before completion, participants provided a unique identifying number that they could use to request that their responses be removed from the dataset. No participants exercised this option. All data were collected between November 2009 and May 2010.

### ***Results***

We first conducted a factor analysis examining men's attitudes toward consumption of all ten men's magazines, and both forms of direct sexual consumption (i.e., patronizing strip clubs and paying for sex). An unrotated factor analysis yielded four factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1 (see Table 1). Attitudes toward consumption of all ten men's magazines loaded greater than Stevens' (1992) conventional cut-off of 0.4 on the first factor. In contrast, neither of the two direct sexual consumption items loaded less than 0.4. These loading suggest that these two forms of consumption be treated as separate variables. A single reliable measure of *attitudes toward magazine consumption* was constructed by averaging attitudes toward consumption of the ten magazines (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ). 346 men reported attitudes toward all ten magazines. Forty-three men left one item blank and their scores were calculated by averaging responses to the other nine items. Thirty-four men who left more than one item blank were excluded from further analysis.

We next examined demographic and psychological correlates of attitudes toward magazine consumption. Attitudes toward magazine consumption were more positive among older respondents,  $r(388) = .363, p < .001$ . One-way ANOVA revealed no differences in attitudes among men who identified as White ( $M = 2.93, SD = 1.05$ ), Asian ( $M = 2.70, SD = .96$ ), Black ( $M = 3.83, SD = .50$ ), or Mixed Race ( $M = 2.85, SD = .91$ ),  $F(3, 385) = 1.91, p = .13, \eta^2 = .02$ . In contrast, one-way ANOVA revealed differences by sexual identity,  $F(3, 385) = 3.27, p = .02, \eta^2 = .03$ . Tukey's post hoc test confirmed that heterosexual and bisexual men both held more positive attitudes toward magazine consumption ( $M_s = 2.98, 2.84, SD = 1.03, .92$  respectively), that men who identified as neither heterosexual, bisexual or gay ( $M = 1.47, SD = 0.15$ ). The attitudes of gay men were not different from any of the other three groups ( $M = 2.62, SD = 1.17$ ). All four sexism measures were significantly correlated with each other. The older ASI measures was significantly correlated with AMMSA, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism,  $r(388) = .51, .48, .58$  respectively, all  $p_s < .001$ . AMMSA was significantly correlated with both hostile and benevolent sexism,  $r(388) = .51, .20$ , both  $p_s < .001$ . Hostile and benevolent sexism were significantly correlated,  $r(388) = .13, p = .01$ . Attitudes towards magazine consumption were significantly positively correlated with hostile sexism and benevolent sexism,  $r(388) = .176, .170$ , both  $p < .001$ , with AMMSA scores,  $r(388) = .103, p < .04$ , and with Attitudes Toward Women scores,  $r(388) = -.135, p = .008$ .

To examine whether direct sexual consumption and magazine consumption, a second composite measure of *attitudes toward direct sexual consumption* was created. We averaged men's correlated attitudes towards visiting strip clubs and paying for sex to construct this measure,  $r(409) = .323, p < .001$ . Attitudes toward consumption of magazines and direct sexual consumption were positively correlated,  $r(377) = .279, p < .001$ . Two linear regression models

were calculated predicting attitudes toward consumption of men's magazines and direct sexual consumption (See Table 2). The predictor variables in both models were age, participant sexual orientation (coded as 1 for heterosexual and bisexual men, and 0 for gay men and others), hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, AMMSA and Attitudes Toward Women. The models explained significant proportions of variance in attitudes toward magazine consumption,  $F(382, 6) = 15.07, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .18$ , and attitudes toward direct sexual consumption,  $F(371, 6) = 10.37, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .13$ . Age and heterosexual interest emerged as unique predictors in both models. However, whilst hostile and benevolent sexism predicted unique variance in attitudes towards consumption of men's magazines, only Attitudes Toward Women explained variance in attitudes toward direct sexual consumption. In other words, both forms of consumption were predicted by sexism, but each was predicted by a different kind of sexism. Direct sexual consumption was predicted by the older Attitude Toward Women measure and magazine consumption was predicted by the Ambivalent Sexism measures.

### *Discussion*

Study 1 addresses the concerns that Horvath et al.'s (2012) finding of an association between ambivalent sexism and identification with lads' mags contents was an anomaly, created by their recruitment of a non-representative sample of college men (see Clark, 2012). Four of the five magazines that had an 'excellent' loading on the measure of attitudes toward magazine consumption were sampled in Horvath et al.'s (2012) studies; *Nuts*, *Zoo*, *FHM*, and *Loaded*. Attitudes toward consuming such magazines were predicted by measures of sexism over and above demographic predictors. The kind of sexism that predicts unique variance in attitudes towards consuming magazines and direct sexual consumption differed. The former were predicted by the modern ambivalent sexism inventory, and the latter by the old-fashioned



attitudes toward women measure. Given that the market for men's magazines grew rapidly in the 1990s whilst direct sexual consumption has a longer history, it is not surprising that consumption preferences were predicted by these particular measures. These results give greater confidence that there was a generalizable association between ambivalent sexism and lads' mags consumption than do the Horvath et al.'s (2012) studies alone.

Whilst Study 1 addressed concerns about the existence of such an association beyond existing campus studies, Studies 2 and 3 were designed to develop understanding of how lads' mags normalized sexism in other ways. Study 2 developed Horvath et al.'s (2012) claim that lads' mags normalize sexism and extended it to consider two different claims about the effects of placing sexist humor in a lads a lads' mags context.

### **Study 2: Taking Sexist Humor Out of Context**

In Study 2 we took sexist jokes found in lads' mags out of their usual context. Recall that some lads' mags editors have argued that young male readers perceive sexist humor as 'ironic' when it is presented in a lads' mags context. Arguing against this idea, sociologists Jackson et al. (2001) have argued that lads' mags might render sexist humor more acceptable. In their interviews with young male readers of these magazines, some men who felt ambivalent about sexist humor reported that they felt the lads' mags context rendered their resistance to this humor illegitimate. Men who score higher on measures of hostile sexism and who endorse myths about sexual assault have been found to consider sexist jokes to be funnier (Greenwood & Isbell, 2002; Romero-Sánchez, Duran, Carretero-Dios, Megias, & Moya, 2009; Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998; Thomas & Esses, 2004). Such findings suggest that men who score low on these measures would be more likely to experience the ambivalence toward sexist humor described by Jackson et al. (2003). In Study 2, we examined these two competing hypotheses; that lads' mags render

sexist humor more ironic, and that lads' mags make sexist humor appear less hostile, particularly to less sexist men.

### *Method*

#### *Participants.*

Eighty-one men were recruited on a UK university campus through approach at public campus venues (n = 44), snowball sampling (n = 20), and posters and emails advertising the study (n=17). Participants were between 18 and 50 years of age ( $M$  age = 25.21,  $SD$  = 6.49). They identified their ethnic origins as 'White' (n = 68), 'Asian British' (n = 5), 'Black/African/Caribbean/Black British' (n = 2), 'mixed/multiple ethnic groups' (n = 3), or 'other' (n = 3); their sexual orientation as 'heterosexual' (n = 78), 'bisexual' (n = 2), or 'pansexual' (n = 1); and their relationship status as 'single' (n = 70), 'in a relationship' (n = 6), 'married' (n = 4) or 'in a civil partnership' (n = 1).

#### *Materials.*

The information sheet introduced a "study on relationships between men and women" and briefed participants that the "statements and scenarios might be offensive or distressing." The first page presented eight jokes that were published in the UK online student-oriented lads' mag *Unilad* in 2012. The study had two conditions. In the *lads' mag* conditions, the statements were shown in a magazine-style lay-out (see Figure 1) and presented as "taken from the personal advice section on sex and relationships in a lads' mag such as *Loaded*, *Nuts*, or *FHM*." In the *out of context* conditions, the jokes were simply listed and their source was unspecified.

The jokes were re-presented on each of the next three pages of the materials. On separate pages, participants were instructed to rate each joke for *hostility*, *irony*, and *humor*. The perceived hostility items were anchored at 1 ("This statement is very hostile towards women")

and 5 (“This statement is not hostile towards women at all”). The perceived irony items were anchored at 1 (“I do not interpret this statement as ironic at all”) and 5 (“I interpret this statement as ironic”). The perceived humor items were anchored at 1 (“This statement is not funny at all”) and 5 (“This statement is very funny”). The order of presentation of these measures was also manipulated. Participants completed the items in the order hostility-irony-humor, or in the order irony-hostility-humor.

Next, three measures addressing four individual differences variables were presented. First, we presented Horvath et al.’s (2012) four-item measure of the variable Perceived Legitimacy of Lads’ Mags (e.g., “Lads’ mags are a positive way of learning about sexual relationships”). This scale ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Second, Glick and Fiske’s (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) was presented. All items were presented as 5-point Likert scales anchored at 1 “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree.” Separate subscales were calculated for the two variables Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism, with higher scores indicating higher sexism. Finally, Gerger et al.’s (2007) measure of Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Assault (AMMSA) was presented. To calculate each of the four individual differences variables, appropriate items were reverse coded, and items were averaged to form reliable scales (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.86, 0.88, 0.82,$  and  $0.95$  for Legitimacy of Lads’ Mags, Hostile Sexism, Benevolent Sexism, and AMMSA respectively). Demographic items were presented last.

***Procedure.***

Participants were invited to participate in “a study on relationships between men and women” and were either emailed the 10-page questionnaire in a Word-document to be completed “page per page, without screening the whole document first” ( $n = 32$ ), or were administered the

paper questionnaire in person by the female experimenter ( $n = 49$ ). Completion of the survey in person took 10-20 minutes. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental condition. Upon completion of the study, participants were debriefed as to the study's design and purpose.

## ***Results***

### ***Preliminary Analyses.***

G\*Power analysis guided the decision to recruit 80 participants to achieve a study with a power ( $1-\beta$ ) of .80 to detect medium size effects ( $d = .3$ ) when  $\alpha = .05$ . Initial t-tests confirmed that participants who completed the survey on-line or face-to-face did not differ significantly in their ratings of the jokes' hostility, irony or humor, or their scores on the four sexism measures; lads' mags legitimacy, benevolent sexism, hostile sexism and AMMSA (all  $ps > .05$ ).

### ***Effects of Taking Jokes Out of Context.***

The effects of taking lads' mags humor out of context were tested with three two-way between-subjects ANOVAs with context (lads' mag vs. out of context) and order (irony-hostility-humor vs. hostility-irony-humor) as between-subject factors. We examined the effects of these variables on perceived humor irony, and hostility. We did not predict that the experimental manipulations would affect the four moderator variables. We conducted similar two-way ANOVAs with these moderators as dependent variables to check this assumption. No significant main effects or interactions were observed, all  $ps > .10$ .

Participants rated the jokes as moderately funny ( $M = 2.51$ ,  $SD = .85$ ). The manipulation of context had no effect on the perceived humor of the jokes,  $F(1, 77) = .21$ ,  $p = .65$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ . We observed an unexpected order effect. The jokes were perceived as funnier when they had been rated for irony first and hostility second than when they had been rated for hostility first and irony second ( $Ms = 2.71, 2.30$ ,  $SD = .88, .77$  respectively),  $F(1, 77) = 4.84$ ,  $p = .031$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ .

This order effect did not interact with the framing manipulation,  $F(1, 77) = .11$ ,  $p = .73$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ . Similarly, the framing manipulation had no effect on the perceived irony of the jokes,  $F(1, 77) = .217$ ,  $p = .64$ ,  $\eta^2 = .003$ . The jokes were perceived as moderately ironic over all ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .92$ ), and a non-significant trend was observed for the jokes to be perceived as more ironic when they had been rated for irony first and hostility second than when they had been rated for hostility first and irony second ( $M_s = 3.14, 2.8$ ,  $SD = .89, .93$  respectively),  $F(1, 77) = 2.64$ ,  $p = .11$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$  (see Table 3). Again, these two independent variables did not interact,  $F(1, 77) = .03$ ,  $p = .86$ ,  $\eta^2 < .001$ . These similar ratings of irony and humor across condition refute the hypothesis that sexist jokes are perceived as particularly funny or ironic in lads' mags contexts.

Next we examined perceived hostility. The jokes were perceived as somewhat hostile overall ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = .79$ ), and as less hostile in the lads' mag condition than in the out of context condition ( $M_s = 3.23, 3.71$ ,  $SD = .78, .73$  respectively),  $F(1, 77) = 8.45$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ . There was no main effect of order on the perceived hostility of the jokes,  $F(1, 77) = .11$ ,  $p = .744$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . However, the effect of the context manipulation was marginally greater when the jokes were rated for hostility first than when rated for irony first, but this interaction did not reach traditional significance levels,  $F(1, 77) = 2.60$ ,  $p = .11$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . The jokes were perceived as less hostile when they were attributed to lads' mags than when taken out of context.

### ***Sexism and Ratings of Sexist Humor***

We examined correlations between sexism and the dependent variables by condition next to test the hypothesis that less sexist men particularly changed their ratings of the jokes across context conditions. Consistent with past studies on sexist humor, we found that hostile sexism and AMMSA scores correlated negatively with the perceived hostility of the jokes read out of context,  $r(40) = -.64, -.57$  respectively, both  $p < .001$ . However, in the lads' mags condition,

perceived hostility was not correlated with either hostile sexism or with AMMSA,  $r(40) = .02$ ,  $p > .05$ , both  $p$ . The differences between the correlations with perceived hostility in the two conditions was significant for both hostile sexism,  $Z = 3.37$ ,  $p < .001$ , and AMMSA,  $Z = 3.02$ ,  $p < .002$ .

Men's scores on hostile sexism, AMMSA and perceived hostility across the two conditions of the experiment are shown in Figure 2. We calculated two linear regression models to examine if men's sexism and the manipulation of context interacted to affect men's perception of the jokes' hostility. In the first model, perceived hostility and hostile sexism scores were grand mean centered, and hostility was regressed on three factors; hostile sexism, experimental condition (coded as -1 for the out of context condition and +1 for the lads' mags conditions), and the interaction term. In the second analogous model, AMMSA scores were centered and analyzed similarly. In both models, all three predictor variables predicted unique variance in the perceived hostility of the jokes (see Table 4). The two planes of Figure 2 represent the significant main and interaction effects in these models in regard to hostile sexism and AMMSA respectively. In both cases, relatively lower-sexism men were affected more by the experimental manipulation than were relatively higher-sexism men.

### *Discussion*

Study 2 tested the claims of lads' mags editors that the lads' mags context made sexist humor appear more ironic and funnier. Refuting this hypothesis, the jokes were not perceived as more ironic or more humorous when presented in or out of a lads' mags context. Study 2 also tested Jackson et al.'s (2001) idea that less sexist young men have their opposition to sexist humor stifled by the norms evoked by lads' mags. This idea received more support, as less sexist young men considered the jokes to be less hostile when encountered in a lads' mags context than

taken out of context. In Study 3, we examined the effects of confronting this normalizing context more directly.

### **Study 3: Challenging the Legitimacy of Lads' Mags with a Sorting Task**

Study 3 was conducted in the United States and explored the sorting task used by Horvath et al. (2012) as an *intervention* into the normalization of lads' mags. As noted in the introduction, this study was informed by campus rape prevention programmes which have effectively challenged men's normalization of hostile sexism. Study 3 included a large number of measures designed to assess the proximal effect of the intervention on attitudes toward pornography and more distal effects on prejudice and identity.

#### ***Method***

##### ***Participants.***

Participants were 275 male undergraduate students in the northeastern USA who participated for partial fulfillment of a course requirement. Participants' ages varied between 17 and 30 years, ( $M = 19$  years,  $SD = 1.29$  years). Participants were 73% White/European American, 9% Black/African American, 11% Asian/Asian American, 3% Latino/Hispanic American, 2% with other ethnicity, and 2% did not report their ethnicity. They also reported their family's socioeconomic status: 2% poor, 5% lower middle class, 60% middle class, 30% upper middle class, 2% wealthy, and 2% did not report their family's socioeconomic status.

##### ***Materials and Procedure.***

Participants completed both waves of the study online. They completed the pre-test measures. Two weeks later, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions described below and completed the post-test measures.

Several measures were administered at pre-test and post-test as 7-point items ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). First, we presented the primary dependent variable, Horvath et al.'s (2012) *Perceived Legitimacy of Lads' Mags* measure, which was reliable at both time 1 ( $\alpha = .76$ ) and time 2 ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Items were adapted from the original UK study to refer to *FHM* and *Maxim*, two men's magazines that were freely available in the USA market at the time of this study.

Second, to assess whether the delegitimation of lads' mags impacted attitudes towards pornography, participants completed Træen, Spitznogle, and Beverfjord's (2004) attitudes toward pornography measure. This measure includes four subscales measuring pornography as a means of sexual enhancement (8 items, e.g., "Pornography leads to greater openness about sexuality."; time 1  $\alpha = .70$ , time 2  $\alpha = .77$ ), pornography as a moral issue (6 items; e.g., "Pornography should be forbidden."; time 1  $\alpha = .69$ , time 2  $\alpha = .79$ ), social climate (2 items, e.g., "I can talk about pornography with my friends") and the belief that pornography leads to sexual violence (1 item, i.e., "Pornography does not lead to more sexualized violence in society"). Participants indicated their agreement with these items using 7-points scales ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). This last item was reverse scored.

Third, participants were asked about their own intentions to consume pornography with four items scaled from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*); "I watch pornographic videos on the internet;" "I intend to watch pornographic videos on the internet," "I consume pornographic material such as videos, images, or stories," and "I intend to consume pornographic material in the future." This scale demonstrated good reliability at time 1 ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and time 2 ( $\alpha = .95$ ).



The experimental materials for the sorting task were the 16 quotations derived from interviews with convicted rapists and from lads' mags used by Horvath et al. (2012). In the *no exposure* condition ( $n = 97$ ), participants did not see the quotations or the tasks. In the *exposure* condition ( $n = 89$ ), participants read the 16 quotations from Horvath et al. (2011). In the *sorting task* condition ( $n = 89$ ), participants read the same 16 quotations, and completed three tasks as in Horvath et al. (2012, Study 2): a *continuum* task, a *categorization* task, and a *source detection* task. In this third condition, participants first ranked the quotations on a continuum of how degrading they were to women from 1 (*least degrading*) to 16 (*most degrading*). Participants next categorized the quotations as either (a) degrading to women or (b) not degrading to women. Finally, participants were told that eight quotations came from men's magazines and eight quotations came from convicted rapists, and were asked to identify the source for each quotation.

After the experimentally manipulated materials, we presented several other measures to assess whether the intervention had any effects on broader social attitudes. These were the 4-item social dominance orientation scale (Pratto et al., 2013), hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), and a 14-item measure of identification with men (Leach et al, 2008). SDO demonstrated acceptable reliability at time 1 ( $\alpha = .67$ ) and time 2 ( $\alpha = .81$ ), as did hostile sexism (time 1  $\alpha = .87$ ; time 2  $\alpha = .91$ ), benevolent sexism (time 1  $\alpha = .78$ ; time 2  $\alpha = .82$ ), and identification with men (time 1  $\alpha = .87$ ; time 2  $\alpha = .90$ ).

All participants were debriefed and thanked after completion of the post-test measures. We told participants that we were examining the effects of revealing similarities between men's magazines and convicted rapists on compelling people to be more critical of what they read, and explained the full experimental design. We normalized the experience of having difficulty with the sorting task by mentioning that people typically cannot distinguish the quotations between

the two sources. Finally, we told participants that their participation helps us to develop consciousness-raising activities that can benefit society.

### *Results*

As in Horvath et al. (2012), the participants failed to sort the quotations by source effectively, correctly identifying the source of only 8.10 out of the 16 quotations, and performing no better than chance predictions. To test the effects of the interventions, a series of mixed effects ANOVAs were conducted. For all dependent measures, time of test (pre-test vs. post-test) was treated as a within-subjects effect, and experimental condition (*no exposure* vs. *exposure* vs. *sorting task*) was treated as a between-subjects effect. The interaction term was entered as a within subjects effect. We explored interaction effects with multiple comparisons of pre-post differences within experimental conditions using Bonferroni correction in all analyses. In Study 3 we had the opportunity to gather a large sample and to conduct a statistically powerful study. Post hoc power analysis showed that the achieved power ( $1-\beta$ ) of this ANOVA design to detect medium size effects ( $d = .25$ ) with 275 participants was .99 with  $\alpha$  set at .05.

We examined the perceived legitimacy of lads' mags first. The main effects of time,  $F(1, 263) = 1.90, p = .17, \eta^2 = .01$ , and experimental condition,  $F(2, 263) = 1.85, p = .16, \eta^2 = .01$ , were not statistically significant. However, a significant interaction emerged,  $F(2, 263) = 5.06, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$ . The pre- and post-test legitimacy of lads' mags scores did not differ significantly in the exposure condition,  $M_d = .03, SE(M_d) = .13, p = .80, d = .03$ , or the no exposure condition,  $M_d = -.15, SE(M_d) = .13, p = .25, d = -.14$ . However, men in the sorting task condition reported believing that lads' mags were less legitimate after engaging in the sorting task than at pre-test,  $M_d = .42, SE(M_d) = .13, p < .01, d = .40$  (See Table 5). This finding supports our main hypothesis that leading men to think deeply about lads' mags contents challenges the magazines' legitimacy.

Next, we examined the four sub-scales of the beliefs about pornography scale, beginning with the belief that pornography leads to sexual enhancement. The main effect of experimental condition on the belief that pornography leads to sexual enhancement was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 263) = 2.33, p = .10, \eta^2 = .02$ . However, the main effect of time,  $F(1, 263) = 17.02, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$ , and the interaction effect,  $F(2, 263) = 3.70, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ , were statistically significant. Participants in the exposure condition showed no difference between pre-test and post-test,  $M_d = .03, SE(M_d) = .09, p = .78, d = .04$ . However, participants in the sorting task condition and in the no exposure condition showed reduced belief that pornography was a means of sexual enhancement,  $M_d = .26, SE(M_d) = .09, p < .01, d = .36, M_d = .36, SE(M_d) = .13, p < .001, d = .47$  respectively. Second, there was no effect of the intervention on the belief that pornography was a moral issue. We found no effects no main effects of time,  $F(2, 263) = 2.52, p = .11, \eta^2 = .01$ , or experimental condition,  $F(2, 263) = .63, p = .53, \eta^2 = .01$ , or interaction effect,  $F(2, 263) = 1.53, p = .22, \eta^2 = .01$ . Similarly, the intervention did not affect scores on the social climate subscale of the attitudes toward pornography scale. A significant main effect of experimental condition indicated that men were more comfortable talking about pornography with their friends in the sorting task condition ( $M = 5.18$ ) than in the exposure ( $M = 4.75$ ) or No Exposure ( $M = 4.77$ ) conditions,  $F(2, 262) = 3.24, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$ . However, the main effect of time was marginally significant,  $F(1, 262) = 2.97, p = .09, \eta^2 = .01$ , and the interaction effect was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 262) = .76, p = .57, \eta^2 < .01$ .

Next, we examined the single item assessing belief that pornography leads to violence against women. The main effects of time,  $F(1, 261) = 6.57, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ , and experimental condition,  $F(2, 261) = 4.21, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ , were statistically significant, and were qualified by a statistically significant interaction,  $F(2, 261) = 5.31, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$ . Pre-test and post-test

scores did not differ significantly in the exposure condition,  $M_d = -.32$ ,  $SE(M_d) = .21$ ,  $p = .13$ ,  $d = -.19$ , or in the no exposure condition,  $M_d = .17$ ,  $SE(M_d) = .20$ ,  $p = .39$ ,  $d = .11$ . However, men who engaged in the sorting task reported significantly greater belief that pornography engenders violence at post-test than at pre-test,  $M_d = -.76$ ,  $SE(M_d) = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -.46$ .

The scale assessing intentions to consume pornography was examined next. The main effects of time,  $F(1, 263) = 2.58$ ,  $p = .11$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , and experimental condition,  $F(2, 263) = .14$ ,  $p = .87$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ , were not statistically significant, but were qualified by a marginally significant interaction,  $F(2, 263) = 3.01$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . Again, pre-test and post-test did not differ in the exposure condition,  $M_d = .02$ ,  $SE(M_d) = .18$ ,  $p = .90$ ,  $d = .02$ , or in the no exposure condition,  $M_d = -.05$ ,  $SE(M_d) = .17$ ,  $p = .78$ ,  $d = -.03$ . Men reported lower intentions to consume pornography after completing the sorting task than at pre-test,  $M_d = .51$ ,  $SE(M_d) = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .36$ . The intervention lead men to consider pornography more harmful and less desirable (see Table 5).

Finally, we examined if the intervention affected any of the more general individual differences measures. SDO increased significantly from time 1 ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) to time 2 ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ),  $F(1, 263) = 8.35$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . However, the main effect of experimental condition,  $F(2, 263) = .38$ ,  $p = .69$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ , and the interaction,  $F(2, 263) = .29$ ,  $p = .76$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ , were not statistically significant. Hostile sexism decreased from time 1 ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) to time 2 ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ),  $F(1, 263) = 6.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . Again, the main effect of experimental condition,  $F(2, 263) = 2.90$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ , and the interaction effect,  $F(2, 263) = .64$ ,  $p = .53$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ , were not statistically significant. Benevolent Sexism was not affected by time,  $F(1, 263) = 3.24$ ,  $p = .07$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , experimental condition,  $F(2, 263) = .62$ ,  $p = .54$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ , or their interaction,  $F(2, 263) = .83$ ,  $p = .44$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ . Similarly, identification with men was not affected by time,  $F(1, 263) = 3.48$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$

experimental condition,  $F(2, 263) = .24, p = .79, \eta^2 < .01$ , or their interaction,  $F(2, 263) = .72, p = .49, \eta^2 < .01$ .

In sum, the effect of engagement with the sorting task was to render lads' mags less legitimate. A secondary effect of this intervention was to increase men's belief that pornography was harmful and to reduce their interest in consuming it. These effects occurred independent of several other variables and had no effects on those variables, including men's beliefs about the morality of pornography, its role in sexual enhancement or their willingness to entertain pornography as part of the social climate, their overall levels of prejudice, and their identification with men.

### *Discussion*

Study 3 showed that engaging with Horvath et al.'s (2012) task of sorting the contents of lads' mags from quotations from convicted rapists reduced the legitimacy of lads' mags. The intervention had secondary effects on men's attitudes toward pornography but no discernable effect on general measures of sexism. As similar changes were not observed among men who were merely asked to read the quotations from Horvath et al. (2012), we conclude that these changes occurred among the men in the sorting task condition because they alone were forced to conceptually consider what was and what was not a legitimate and acceptable expression of sexism. We discuss the implications of all three studies below.

### **General Discussion**

The studies reported here demonstrate how a concrete source of social influence – lads' mags – can shape the expression of a prejudice that is typically considered unacceptable in an egalitarian society. Sexism and the consumption of lads' mags have been correlated among young men in the UK (Study 1). Lads' mags normalized sexist jokes among young men who

would otherwise consider them hostile (Study 2), but young men de-legitimized lads' mags and pornography consumption when the hostility of their discourse is made clear (Study 3).

### *Sexism and Social Norms*

These findings have implications for understanding how social norms that circulate through popular culture interact with individual psychologies. Ambivalent sexism theory assumes that the expression of hostile sexism in egalitarian countries such as the UK and the USA is counter to social norms (Glick & Fiske, 2011, 2012). Lads' mags demonstrate how such counter-normative attitudes can become legitimized in an important sub-group. Whilst such counter-normative attitudes appear to present a puzzle for ambivalent sexism theory, we note that sociologists such as Benwell (2003) and Jackson et al. (2001) who closely scrutinized the magazines' contents in the early 2000s did not describe the kind of prescriptive hostile content examined by Horvath et al. (2012). The lack of attention to such hostility in their careful work, which was often informed by feminism, suggests that such content only emerged in the mid-2000s. Moreover, once the hostility was exposed - by the *Zoo* and *Unilad* scandals, by feminist collective action, or by the Horvath et al. (2012) studies - lads' mags were subject to more frequent critique, sales figures fell, and titles closed (Garcío-Favarró & Gill, in press). Study 3 is a microcosm of this social process in that young men came to de-legitimate lads' mags when the extremity of the hostility of their discourse was made inescapably obvious by the sorting task. Further systematic study of lads' mags over the 1994-2014 period could have enduring theoretical value by providing a yet thicker description of how hostile sexism can be normalized within a sub-section of an egalitarian society.

Humor has long been a pivotal feature in academic and popular discourse on lads' mags. Lads' mags often informed their readers that they were knowing insiders to a clever ironic joke.

However, the results of Study 2 are more in line with some sociologists' conclusions as to how young men experience the humor in lads' mags contexts. Study 2 found the strongest effects of taking quotations out of context on less sexist men, suggesting that the lads' mags context normalizes jokes that would otherwise be considered hostile to women by these men (Jackson et al., 2001). It would be possible to mis-read these results as being in some tension with Ford and Ferguson's (2004) disparagement humor findings. In their experimental research on disparagement humor, men are exposed to sexist jokes, which are shown to suspend egalitarian norms to behave in non-sexist ways. Under these conditions, sexist men 'release' sexist behavior that is more usually suppressed and are less likely to give money to support a women's organization (see Ford et al., 2008). However, we have examined humor as a dependent variable and not as a cause of local norms. As such, the aspects of the normalization process captured here and in research on disparagement humor are distinct. In combination, both processes studied may produce a reciprocal causal relationship between young men's actions and their acceptance of the sexist humor to which they are exposed.

### *Limitations*

Some limitations of these studies might temper acceptance of our argument about how lads' mags have been normalizing sexism. With the exception of Study 1, we have used college samples here. Measures of sexism might be vulnerable to social desirability effects, and our sampling from lads' mags contents in Study 2 was aimed at capturing appropriate quotations to test our hypotheses and was not guided by any attempt to sample contents at random or to achieve representativeness. As lads' mags are becoming less legitimate, the value of these results should not simply be judged by their generalizability or replicability. Indeed, as the status of lads' mags as mainstream sources of influence is declining, we might expect that some of these

studies will not be strictly replicable. Rather, these studies have theoretical value because they contribute to the analysis of situational and generational shifts in the acceptance of particular styles of masculinity.

### *Changing Norms for Men and Masculinities?*

As historians have argued, psychologists' accounts of nature and nurture fail to capture how norms, practices, and discourses related to sexuality shift because of events that occur over time frames that are longer than those captured in our intervention experiments here, but far slower than evolutionary time (Pettit & Hegarty, 2014). Indeed, by studying lads' mags we have examined an aspect of how the history of sexuality is lived out in young men's social psychology. A very different story about psychology has been told within the pages of the lads' mags themselves. Here, young male readers were given a stable diet of one version of evolutionary psychology which purported to explain what readers really wanted from sexuality and relationships (Gill, 2003). Within the discourse of lads' mags, an understanding of laddishness as culturally constructed was occluded by such appeals to 'naturalness.' These studies contribute to the psychology of men and masculinities not only because they emphasize that masculinity is culturally constructed. They also point to the importance of understanding how different ideas about the 'nature' of sexuality have circulated and been lived out in different ways across historical time, and in ways that evolutionary accounts of gender and sexuality fail to explain.

We are writing at a time when lads' mags' stock has visibly declined in the popular market, even since these studies were conducted. As such, it behooves us to end this study of lads' mags by considering what might be changing and what might be staying the same with regard to masculinity, consumption, and sexism. Sociologists have long debated whether the



emergence of lads' mags represented both a demand for continual change in scripts for masculinity in capitalist culture (Nixon, 2001) as well as a more sinister patriarchal move (e.g., Benwell, 2003; Gill, 2003). Our psychological analysis demonstrates clearly that laddishness is more than one-more script for masculinity. Set against the modern 'hipster' who appears to celebrate gender equality, good taste, and ethical consumption, 'lads' appear decidedly backward (see Arsel & Thompson, 2011). Yet, some commentators have pointed out that hipster masculinities, remain committed to ironic detachment, including the 'ironic' use of racist and sexist humor that renders them more similar to the 'lads' that they are superseding (Wallace, 2012). A second concern pertains to the extent that lads' consumption of hostile sexism is now less visible because it occurs online, through pornography consumption, for example. Surveys have shown for a decade that pornography consumption is near ubiquitous among teenage boys (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005). Whilst, rape and sexual violence are not the dominant theme of free online pornography (Vannier, Currie, & O'Sullivan, 2014), a significant minority of teenage boys have seen such acts depicted in online pornography (Sabina, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2008). Moreover, exposure to online pornography led to increases in hostile sexism in one recent study (Shim & Bryant, 2014).

In closing, we aim these results to also inform applied efforts to intervene to make young people's experiences of sex and relationships more satisfying. In their original statement, Horvath et al.'s (2012) argued that the correct policy response to lad's mags is effective sex education that equips young people to engage critically with the range of materials about sexuality and relationships that they will encounter. This approach to sexualized media is supported by empirical evidence that taking hostile contents out of lads' mags contexts (Study 2, Horvath et al., 2012) and juxtaposing those contents with illegitimate sources of influences

(Study 3) lead young men to read the magazines' contents more critically. Laddishness may be less prevalent on supermarket shelves than a few years ago, but remains relevant on campuses, on and off-line (Phipps & Young, 2015b). Our findings may be useful in applied attempts to engender critical thinking among young men in such contexts where equal treatment of women is a social norm, but sexism remains relevant to young men's sexual socialization.

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Table 1: Factor Loadings of Attitudes to Consumption Items (Study 1).

Factor	1	2	3	4
<i>Attitude Item</i>				
Loaded	.792	-.130	-.058	-.077
Zoo	.750	-.333	-.288	.110
Nuts	.742	-.339	-.336	.164
Maxim	.734	-.011	-.032	.031
FHM	.700	-.016	-.264	.282
Front	.620	.016	.082	-.355
Bizarre	.551	.138	.218	-.537
Esquire	.499	.638	.175	.195
Stuff	.446	.275	.002	-.465
GHQ	.404	.675	.146	.411
Attend Strip Clubs	.380	-.289	.638	.198
Paying For Sex	.165	-.412	.677	.122
Eigenvalue	4.24	1.45	1.24	1.02
% Variance Explained	35.4	12.1	10.4	8.5

Table 2: Regression Models Predicting Attitudes Toward Consumption of Men's Magazines and Direct Sexual Consumption (Study 1).

<u>Attitude Object:</u>	<u>Consuming Men's Magazine</u>			<u>Direct Sexual Consumption</u>		
<i>Statistic</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>p</i>
Age	.36	7.85	<.001	.34	7.10	<.001
Sexuality	.11	2.34	.02	.10	1.96	.05
HS	.13	1.94	.05	-.06	-.89	.38
BS	.12	2.47	.02	-.02	-.29	.77
AMMSA	.00	-.04	.97	.08	1.04	.30
<u>ATW</u>	<u>.00</u>	<u>.55</u>	<u>.58</u>	<u>.13</u>	<u>.26</u>	<u>.009</u>

*Note:* *HS* = Hostile Sexism, *BS* = Benevolent Sexism, *AMMSA* = Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Assault, *ATW* = Attitudes Toward Women.

NORMALIZING SEXISM

Table 3: Correlations between Ratings of Sexist Jokes and Sexism Measures In and Out of Lads Mags Context (Study 2).

Variable	Hostility	Irony	Humor	Lads' Mags Legitimacy	Hostile Sexism	Benevolent Sexism	Rape Myth Acceptance
Hostility		-.02	-.16	-.19	.02	-.08	.05
Irony	.06		.08	.06	.24	.28	.14
Humor	-.49**	.41**		.62***	.47**	.23	.43**
Lads Mags Legitimacy	-.32*	.26	.20		.16	.22	.27
Hostile Sexism	-.64**	.15	.48**	.35**		.41**	.70***
Benevolent Sexism	-.13	.29	.31*	.31	.20		.52**
Rape Myth Acceptance	-.57***	.24	.54***	.42**	.36*	.73***	

Note: Lads' mags context condition correlations are shown above the diagonal and out of context condition correlations are shown below the diagonal. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



Table 4: Regression Models Predicting Perceived Hostility from Context Condition, Hostile Sexism, Myth Acceptance and Interactions (Study 2)

Statistic	B	t	p
<i>MODEL 1</i>			
Condition	-.278	-3.58	.001
HS	-.025	-2.51	.014
Condition x HS	.026	2.71	.008
<i>MODEL 2</i>			
Condition	-.256	-3.25	.002
AMMSA	-.01	2.40	.019
Condition x AMMSA	.013	2.86	.006

Note: *HS* = Hostile Sexism, *AMMSA* = Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Assault.

Table 5: Mean (and Standard Deviations) on Dependent Measures by Time and Condition (Study 3).

Condition	No Exposure	Exposure	Sorting Task
<i>Lads Mags Legitimacy</i>			
Pre-Test	3.35 (1.06)	3.18 (1.06)	<b>3.47 (1.05)</b>
Post-Test	3.49 (1.05)	3.14 (1.04)	<b>3.05 (1.26)</b>
<i>Pornography as Sexual Enhancement</i>			
Pre-Test	<b>4.39 (0.73)</b>	4.38 (0.81)	<b>4.56 (0.84)</b>
Post-Test	<b>4.03 (0.80)</b>	4.35 (0.79)	<b>4.30 (0.86)</b>
<i>Pornography as a Moral Issue</i>			
Pre-Test	3.16 (0.73)	3.22 (0.89)	3.14 (0.90)
Post-Test	3.16 (0.80)	3.27 (0.99)	3.43 (1.01)
<i>Social Climate</i>			
Pre-Test	4.89 (1.41)	4.99 (1.48)	5.20 (1.27)
Post-Test	4.65 (1.49)	4.62 (1.80)	5.17 (1.29)
<i>Pornography and Violence</i>			
Pre-Test	3.80 (1.79)	3.82 (1.57)	<b>3.08 (1.43)</b>
Post-Test	3.62 (1.53)	4.14 (1.35)	<b>3.84 (1.37)</b>
<i>Intentions to Consume Pornography</i>			
Pre-Test	5.02 (1.48)	5.12 (1.39)	<b>5.37 (1.10)</b>
Post-Test	5.06 (1.36)	5.09 (1.30)	<b>4.86 (1.48)</b>

Note: Significant pre-post test differences within conditions shown in bold.

Figure 1: Magazine-Style Layout of Jokes (Study 2).

If your girl is making a face that seems forced during sex, then she's pretending to enjoy you, but if she looks like she's just been punched in the kidneys, she's in the moment.

Unfortunately, it's easy to mix up a chubster for a preppers, so you could possibly end up prodding a poor innocent fetus with your giant willy. At least you'll finally be able to claim a threesome.

If the girl you've taken for a drink [...] won't 'spread for your head', think about this mathematical statistic: 85% of rape cases go unreported. That seems to be fairly good odds.

**QUICKIE TIPS FROM NOBLE LADS ON THE STREET**

Consider the following: You see a man dressed like a policeman, you assume he's a policeman. You see a guy dressed in old, dirty rags, you assume he's a homeless man. You see a girl dressed like a hooker, you assume she's a decent, intelligent and successful woman. Wait...

My girlfriend said she wants to start seeing other people. I don't see how that will work unless I let her out of the cellar.

I'm often asked, "Can you laugh a woman into bed?" Yes. The hard bit is three minutes later, when you're trying to laugh her into a taxi home.

After you pass the chubster and the whore, into your vision will strut Sussex Barbie. Unless you can convince her to engage in a night of only reverse-cowgirl and doggy-style (if you manage this, you are a Sex God) you're going to have to stare at that ugly mug for as long as it takes you to get in and out of there. So paper-bag it. If you succeed: you are a legend.

Go for sporty birds. All the horse riding, tennis matches, and country rambles will have toned up that tight little body into something flexible and hot enough to ensure you very much enjoy yourself in the sack. Score.

Figure 2: Perceived Hostility of Jokes from Lads' Mags by Hostile Sexism, Acceptance of Myths about Sexual Assault (AMMSA) and Framing Condition (Study 2).

