To what extent is sexual assault occurring in the night time economy normalised?

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Abstract

The following dissertation seeks to discover to what extent sexual assault occurring in the night time economy is normalised. A mixed methodology approach was utilised consisting of an online survey and non-participant observation in the form of a Twitter analysis of the #MeToo movement. The online survey was distributed through social media and the sample included anyone over the age of 18 residing in the UK and received a total of 167 participants. A total number of 100 tweets were analysed as part of the non-participant observation.

This research has upheld the findings of a range of previous academic studies including the existence of notions such as rape culture and victim blaming. It has also provided new and valuable information including the environment of the night time economy can be seen to influence negative and misogynistic behaviour derived from rape culture, increasing the likelihood of a sexual assault occurring compared with during the day. Although the influence of drugs and alcohol on this issue is also notable, the night time economy as the setting for such activity to thrive, can be argued to be a facilitator of sexual assault. It also has a detrimental effect on the likelihood of reporting such an incident, not only through the repercussions of alcohol in terms of memory loss, but also as this type of behaviour is somewhat expected it hence goes unquestioned when it occurs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation examines to what extent sexual assault occurring in the night time economy (hereafter NTE) is normalised. This chapter will address the rationale for the conduction of this research and will define some of the key terms that will be used throughout. It will also outline the aims and objectives as well as giving a brief explanation of the utilised methodology. Further, it will give a synopsis of what each chapter will explore.

Rationale

There is limited research on sexual assault in the NTE currently existing autonomously without the influence of intoxication attached (which will be explored further in the following chapter). This research explores whether the environment of the NTE in itself creates a platform for the normalisation and acceptance of rape culture and what effect is has on the occurrence of sexual assault. Moreover, this topic is particularly relevant to the current cultural climate in which conversations about sexual assault are becoming increasingly vocalised, particularly through digital technologies (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2018). The conscious decision to utilise Twitter and the #MeToo movement is due to the fact that the movement can be labelled as one of the instigators of these conversations and one of the most high-profile examples of digital feminist activism (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2018). Thus, its importance must be appreciated.

It must be acknowledged that sexual assault victimisation is indiscriminate of gender however for the purpose of this dissertation, there will only be a focus on attacks on women. This can be justified as the majority of sexual assaults victimise women. In the UK in the year ending March 2017, 3.1% of women had experienced some form of sexual assault in the previous 12 months compared to 0.8% of men (ONS, 2018); unwanted sexual touching and indecent exposure was experienced by nearly three times as many women compared to men and 0.9% of women had experienced rape or assault by penetration compared to only 0.1% of men. 99% of perpetrators were identified as male. Therefore, it is fair and reasonable for this project to only focus on female victimisation.

Background and Definitions

There are four terms which will be used frequently throughout this dissertation and hence it is important to define them. These are: sexual assault, the NTE, normalised and rape culture. Sexual assault can be defined legally[1] as if a person (A) intentionally sexually touches another person (B) who does not consent to the touching and does not reasonably believe that B consents to the touching. However, academic definitions must also be taken into consideration for example Graham et al (2017,

[1] Section 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

p.243) define sexual assault as "non-consensual sexual contact completed via physical force or incapacitation". Overarchingly it can be stated to be some form of sexual contact when consent has not been established.

The NTE can be difficult to define however Wickham (2012) interprets it as economic activity occurring between the hours of 6pm and 6am. In this context it will be in relation to leisure activities based in pubs, bars and clubs; what Sheard (2011) refers to as 'urban nightlife'.

Normalisation is a concept key to this research; particularly in terms of the normalisation of rape culture. This term refers to the extent to which certain behaviours and attitudes go unquestioned and hence are accepted within society (Wilhelm, 2015; Gillett, 2018) including misogynistic beliefs or rape supportive attitudes.

Rape culture is another term with some degree of ambiguity attached to it, which could be due to the broad range of activities and attitudes it covers. Variations can be found in academic definitions with one stating rape culture "refers to multiple pervasive issues that allow rape and sexual assault to be excused, legitimized and viewed as inevitable" (Smith, 2004, p.174) while another states "the image of heterosexual intercourse is based on a rape model of sexuality" (Herman, 1988, p.46).

Aim and Objectives

Aim:

1. To identify whether the NTE contributes to sexual assaults and attitudes normalising such behaviours and whether movements such as #MeToo have an impact on these opinions.

Objectives:

1. To explore the opinions held by young adults involved in the NTE to discover perceptions of sexual assault (by distributing an online questionnaire to obtain primary data).
2. To examine whether recent movements challenging rape culture have influenced opinions (by analysing #MeToo on Twitter).
3. To provide practical solutions resulting from the research if appropriate.

Explanation of Methodology

Two methods of primary research were conducted with full ethical approval[2] in order to conduct this research. An online survey was distributed through social media in order to discover participants perceptions regarding sexual assault in the NTE and analysis of Twitter data was conducted,

[2] Proof of ethical approval can be found in Appendix 1.

specifically using the #MeToo hashtag to explore the themes in these opinions and particularly whether there is mention of sexual assaults within the NTE, in order to answer the research question.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation will be made up of six chapters inclusive of this introductory chapter. The next chapter will look to consider the relevant literature related to this topic, exploring it and highlighting where the gaps in the research are. Following this, the methodology will be discussed including the methods of data collection and analysis and the ethical approval obtained. The fourth chapter will consist of the findings attained from the two forms of primary research, presented both in quantitative and qualitative formats. Subsequently, a discussion will take place linking the literature explored in chapter 2 with the findings laid out in chapter 4. The concluding chapter will consist of a recapitulation of the main arguments presented throughout the dissertation in relation to the aims and objectives set out above. Limitations will be acknowledged and relevant recommendations will be made for future academic research and practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review the key areas of literature and theory surrounding sexual assault within the NTE and informing the #MeToo movement to provide an academic basis and justification for this dissertation. In recent years sexual violence and its prevention has been increasingly researched (Vera-Gray, 2018) excluding the area of linking sexual assault and the NTE together without other variables such as alcohol and drugs involved. The key areas of this research can be broken down into four themes: sexual assault, consent, the NTE and the #MeToo movement, which will provide the structure for this chapter.

Sexual Assault

As defined by section three of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, sexual assault is if a person (A) intentionally sexually touches another person (B) who does not consent to the touching and does not reasonably believe that B consents to the touching.

Powell (2010) found that women believe assertively saying no is not acceptable in relation to casual sexual encounters when they turn unwanted, particularly within the NTE, as they will face stigma for 'leading him on' or it will simply be ineffective. Simonson (2018) argues that males go out with the intention of not taking no for an answer whereas females are taught to be polite and friendly. Therefore, the opinions discussed in Powell's study not only come from a place of fear but also from how they have been taught to behave in accordance to their gender role, which is a certain set of socially constructed 'rules' applied to each gender that dictate appropriate behaviours; in essence what is 'feminine' and what is 'masculine' (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 2006). This clarifies that sex and gender are two separate entities; sex being biological while gender is based on social values. Furthermore, throughout her research, Powell (2010) found it was believed that only a violent response would enable an encounter to be perceived as truly unwanted (Papendick & Bohner, 2017). This corresponds with sexual social exchange theory (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Bastow & Minieri, 2010) which states that decisions are made on a cost-benefit analysis. The traditional Western dating template states that men pay for the date and women will repay him with sexual favours as female sexuality is deemed to have exchange value whereas male sexuality does not. Applying this theory to interactions within the NTE, it explains male feelings of entitlement to a sexual encounter with a woman for simply buying her a drink for example, and the aggression and use of derogatory language (Higson, 2018) and/or sexual assault as a result if she refuses to uphold her end of this unspoken agreement. This highlights an underlying theme of victim blaming which can also be described as a secondary assault when it occurs (Ullman, 2010). Women feel they are unable to say no without giving an explanation or excuse or are afraid of the backlash they will face so must conform to the way society

perceives a victim would act otherwise they will be blamed for the sexual assault if they did not act in the publicly recognised appropriate way to stop it.

As mentioned above, women often feel a sense of self blame when incidents of sexual assault occur, largely due to the lessons and norms they are taught and surrounded with growing up. This leads on to women therefore feeling the need to take responsibility for their own safety in everyday life but in particular when engaging in the NTE (Vera-Gray, 2018). This feeling of responsibility can be highlighted through the precautions they take when out including staying in groups, getting a taxi with friends rather than walking home alone, or walking with their keys between their fingers to act as a weapon (Sheard, 2011; Vera-Gray, 2018). This 'safety work' (Stanko, 1996) becomes routine and normalised behaviour for women to carry out. It also raises the question: if these precautions were not undertaken by women to protect themselves, would more rapes and sexual assaults take place?

Rape myths and rape culture help normalise sexual violence both in and outside of the NTE (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017). Rape culture is built upon the idea that women are the property of men who must prove themselves as 'men' through their dominance over women by ascribing to values such as control, anger and aggression (Herman, 1988). Victim blaming is largely interlinked with this and examples of such views include the idea that men have strong and uncontrollable desires which a woman's role is to satisfy; that women are in a constant state of sexual desire; rapes are only committed by strangers in the dark with the involvement of violence; and women frequently lie about being raped (Weiser, 2017; Simonson, 2018; Stubbs-Richardson, Rader & Cosby, 2018). Higson (2018) examines these types of attitudes within the context of American College Fraternities in which there is a sense of invincibility as their actions will very rarely have consequences no matter how severe they are and regardless of whether the victim reports to authorities. One example of this is the Stanford Rape case in which Brock Turner received a lenient sentence (Cossman, 2018) after being convicted of multiple felonies including sexual assault and intent to rape[3]. The Netflix documentary 'The Hunting Ground' (Dick, 2015) illustrates similar issues, clearly depicting the 'boys will be boys' attitude and the generally held notion that rape is an unfortunate natural phenomenon. These types of attitudes can be linked back to the concept of gender roles and what is appropriate and expected ways for men to behave, making their behaviour excusable. The terms 'girl hunting' and 'wingman', both commonly used in America and in the UK, paint activities carried out in the NTE involving sexual assault as a form of sport, again normalising it. Music, particularly hip-hop, a large part of the NTE, often involves

[3] The Judge was accused of misconduct as a result of the lenient sentence and as he stated Turner had less moral culpability due to his level of intoxication and his position as a Stanford University swimmer (Levin & Waters, 2016). Turners father also commented on the steep price his son had to pay for '20 minutes of action' (Levin & Waters, 2016).

sexually derogatory language towards women (Khan, 2017). One example is the song 'I Love It' (West, Garcia, Pineiro & Givens, 2018) which includes lyrics such as "You're such a fuckin' ho, I love it" and "I'm a sick fuck I like a quick fuck". These messages disseminated in bars and clubs not only normalises this type of language to be used towards women but also confirm the rape myths that women are in a constant state of sexual desire and hence cannot be sexually assaulted. Males engaging in this environment and listening to this music described clubbing as hedonistic and a status-orientated environment. This leads to the construction of a masculine performance that will often result in criminal behaviour (Anderson, Daly & Rapp, 2009), ranging from violence and aggression to sexual assaults. Laura Bates book 'Everyday Sexism' (2014) highlights normalised culture portrayed in the media, which when dissected reveals extreme levels of misogyny and the perpetuation of rape myths. This information is internalised and accepted, allowing it to continue.

Women do not often apply the labels of rape or sexual assault to their encounters and instead will use words such as 'pressure' or 'unwanted' (Powell, 2010; Thomas, Stelzl & Lafrance, 2017) when describing incidents. This is one example of how behaviour of this nature experienced by women is normalised. The relabelling of these acts withdraws the legal element, making it seem somewhat acceptable and reasonable. Kelly (1989) argues that there is not a clear line between what is consensual (heterosexual) sex[4] and what is rape but there is a continuum between them. Kelly argues there are four stages on the continuum which are: consensual sex, equally desired by both the man and the woman; altruistic sex occurring when the woman feels sorry for the man or guilty for saying no; compliant sex where the consequences for not doing it are worse than saying no; and finally, legally defined rape. This can also be applied to women in relationships, as they feel as though they have a duty or obligation and owe sex to their partner; what Cahill (2013) calls 'the cultural scaffolding of rape'. By this logic, all women will experience sexual assault at some point in their lives, however not all forms of this will necessarily be labelled as criminal. It is therefore difficult to clearly distinguish who is a 'victim' and who is not in the continuum scale. As a result, everyday incidents which women may define as sexual assault become perceived and hence treated as normal as it is not rape as legally defined. Furthermore, women will often face stigma if they do not fit the role of the 'ideal victim' (Christie, 1986) in that they did not contribute to their victimhood and some element of blame will be placed upon them for example their skirt was too short or they had too much to drink.

[4] The prevalence of this being heterosexual sex is that it is relevant to heteronormativity being deemed the norm in relation to hegemonic masculinity and therefore linked to the powerful masculine ideal (Connell, 2005).

Consent

Consent can be defined as a person agreeing by choice and having the freedom and capacity to make the choice[5]. If going by this definition, then arguably it could be stated that anyone engaging within the NTE and intoxicated to some degree does not necessarily have the capacity to make the decision to give their full consent. Furthermore, linking in with the examples above in terms of levels of fear of women engaging in the NTE, if they feel threatened or intimidated by a man, they could therefore end up involved in sexual activities under a state of duress. Much of the concept of consent links in with the concept of freedom; without one you cannot have the other. It is easy to suggest that women do not have that individual choice, freedom or agency in order to give consent, therefore painting them as a victim and adopting victim feminism (Vera-Gray, 2018). However, alongside this is the argument that being scared equates to weakness which is not the case, particularly if the fear is rational.

Plaxton (2015) talks of implied consent and how it is more likely to be an accepted notion in cases of sexual assault as opposed to what he calls 'normal' assault. He also argues that if a woman is unaware she is about to be touched (sexually) there is no possibility she is able to consent to the touching before it happens (Plaxton, 2015). Therefore, implied consent would seem to affirm some of the rape myths discussed earlier including that a woman is in a constant state of sexual desire and as a result consent does not need to be gained as it is expected. Moreover, if these rape myths, however untrue, are to be taken as genuinely believed by the perpetrator then it must be questioned as to whether there is truly an intention to commit a sexual assault if they believe consent is always present.

Consent in terms of the legal definition is flawed. As discussed in the continuum of sexual violence (Kelly, 1989) there are instances where sex occurs which by definition is legal however is somewhat coerced (Beres, 2018), therefore causing sexual harm on some level. Furthermore, Thomas, Stelzl and Lafrance (2017) argue how the not so uncommon phenomenon of women faking orgasms is primarily to bring to an end unwanted sex. This illustrates yet another example of how male pleasure and ego[6] are socially accepted as priority over female consent and enjoyment. Education around consent is needed and is one way of attempting to prevent sexual assault (Fileborn, 2017) however, by simply teaching young people about consent in terms of the legal definition is not doing enough as it is only working towards abolishing sexual harm of a legal kind, not of any kind. In order to achieve this idealistic state where no sexual harm occurs then the heteronormative constructions of masculinity and femininity must be challenged, including the humour which masks these attitudes (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017).

[5] Section 74 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
[6] As female orgasms are seen as dependant on male performance.

Night Time Economy

Women often have an anxiety on some level of engaging within the NTE for fear of harm being caused to them (Sheard, 2011). The worry of drinks being 'spiked' is part of this fear and so it is common for women to cover their drinks with their hands while out to prevent anything being put in them (Burgess, Donovan & Moore, 2009). This is particularly prevalent among young women at university in the UK and the US partly due to the widespread media attention to drug facilitated sexual assault, which could be labelled as a moral panic (Cohen, 1972; Sheard, 2011) to the extent that drink spiking testing kits can now be purchased (Not in my Drink, 2018). A moral panic can be described as a person, group or concept that is perceived as a threat to societies interests and values (Cohen, 1972). Although this fear is widespread across young women out in bars and clubs, research suggests that alcohol is a much more prevalent factor in these types of crimes than drugs (Burgess, Donovan & Moore, 2009).

Women aged between 16-19 and 20-24 are the most at-risk groups for becoming victims of sexual assault as 8.8% and 7.2% respectively report some form of sexual assault (ONS, 2018). One reason for this could be that these age groups also list going out and/or drinking as one of their most important spending priorities (Hollands, 2010) and therefore, are the most likely group to engage within the NTE; meaning that the NTE can be argued to be a risk factor and even a facilitator of sexual assault. Around 83% of these assaults were not reported to the police (ONS, 2018) which could be a result of the influence of intoxication and therefore uncertainty as to whether consent was given, feelings of shame and embarrassment, or fear of secondary victimisation during the criminal justice process (Herman, 1988). On the other hand, it can be argued that this type of sexually abusive behaviour is somewhat expected and hence accepted in the NTE environment.

If this theory is true then it raises the question: why is this behaviour acceptable at night where it is seemingly not during the day? One of the themes of concurrent use of alcohol and drugs[7] in men is the construction of a hyper-masculine identity (Anderson, Daly & Rapp, 2009; Ayres & Treadwell, 2011) which could heighten the prevalence of rape culture supportive attitudes within these individuals. Hegemonic masculinity and toxic masculinity can also increase the likelihood of this (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity can be understood as the pattern of practice allowing the continuation of male dominance over females (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Another reason for these attitudes has been suggested to be a way for men to bond with other men through the use of aggressive and harassing behaviour towards women to assert their masculinity (Quinn, 2002) and is particularly prevalent among young men including virgins (Pascoe, 2005). This in turn could be said to increase the likelihood of sexual assaults occurring in this environment, explaining how daily risks

[7] Particularly cocaine.

could be elevated within the context of the NTE. One researched method which is thought, if correctly implemented, could reduce sexual assaults is bystander intervention; which is when an individual's behaviours intervene on an event creating a positive outcome (Fileborn, 2017). Some reasons for lack of bystander intervention include ignorance; ambiguity towards consent and danger; relationship to victim or perpetrator; the diffusion of any responsibility; or social norms running counter to intervention (Burn, 2008).

#MeToo movement

The #MeToo movement was founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke with the aim of supporting and raising awareness of sexual violence among black women and girls (About – Me Too Movement, 2018). #MeToo began trending on Twitter in October 2017 after Alyssa Milano used it in response to sexual assault allegations against Harvey Weinstein (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2018) and since then it has captured the attention of Hollywood stars sparking international debate on and offline, encouraging people to speak out about their own experiences from sexual harassment to rape. As a result, allegations have been made against numerous influential men and household names including Harvey Weinstein, Brett Kavanaugh and Morgan Freeman (Cooney, 2018). Starting as relatively small grassroots work, it has now become an international movement after #MeToo went viral on Twitter, giving countless women a voice, a platform and the courage to speak out about their own experiences which they may have previously felt alone in. It has allowed people to tell their stories without the fear of them becoming distorted through the media (Cuklanz, 2015). Furthermore, the immediateness of the responses of social media comments allows for true opinions, thoughts and experiences to be publicised without filter (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017). #MeToo has also formed the basis for further online activism such as #AskMoreOfHim (Powell & Sugiura, 2018) encouraging men to call out everyday sexism when they come across it.

#MeToo's prominence within the public eye has not only forced out the long-needed conversations surrounding sexual assault and the normalised culture of patriarchy, but it has also encouraged other debates. For example, it puts into question the effectiveness of justice systems around the world (Salter, 2013) and has created a culture of 'trial by social media' (Elliot, 2016; Cossman, 2018), effectively making social media users the judge and jury in the context of these allegations, with the power to remove people from their jobs and societal positions. Women publicly naming and shaming alleged perpetrators can be seen as an invasion of privacy and a subversion of the rights to a fair trial and presumption of innocence (Salter, 2013). Arguably however, speaking out online gives women the level playing field they may not have had reporting their experiences offline to the police for example due to privileged statuses some of the accused hold (Salter, 2013) making their fight for justice somewhat more difficult. Another criticism of the movement is that is has 'gone too far' (Cossman,

2018) for example the increased discussions around what may be viewed as more trivial forms of sexual assault such as harassment or catcalling has to some extent removed the seriousness of sexual assault and sexual violence from the 'real' victims. Additionally, the movement has been condemned for creating a victimology paradigm for all women (Cossman, 2018); however, the label of 'survivor' is often self-applied to victims of sexual abuse (Papendick & Bohner, 2017) suggesting an attempt to separate themselves from negative connotations attached to the label of 'victim' such helplessness. Moreover, false accusations are flagged as creating more victims in those falsely accused (Cossman, 2018) and can induce secondary victimisation due to the public nature of the explicit experiences detailed.

Bringing with it a revolution of positive changes to 21st century, the #MeToo movement has reinvigorated feminism (Powell & Sugiura, 2018) and as a result has not had a wholly positive response. It has in some senses expanded the platform of abuse, particularly of feminists and those advocating for women's rights, to online as well as face-to-face (Vera-Gray, 2017). Threats of rape and the label 'feminazi' have become increasingly prominent in recent years, possibly through fear of men for being 'outed' for their own behaviour or simply to try and silence women who publicly identify with feminism (Cole, 2015). Jane (2014) labels these vulgar misogynistic online comments 'e-bile' and argues that the only way to deal with this is to openly talk and raise awareness of the issue uncensored. She identifies common themes throughout her analysis of these comments which are regularly aimed at women within the public sphere[8]. The authors of the comments were anonymous or difficult to identify and largely involved some form of sexually explicit, homophobic or misogynistic language alongside appearance or sexuality related comments (Jane, 2014; Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2018). Similarly, a common theme is passing coerced sex acts, including rape, as an all-purpose 'remedy' for feminism. Jane (2014) also explains how speaking out about this type of online abuse often leads to even more extreme hostility. From these examples it is clear to see that although the #MeToo movement has done a considerable amount for women and for feminism, there is still a large amount of work to be done.

Summary

There is a wealth of literature surrounding the main themes for this piece of research, particularly sexual assault, and it is an incredibly topical subject that is currently receiving a great deal of attention in the media, government and policy review; however, there are gaps needing to be filled. Although there is growing research surrounding #MeToo particularly in terms of the online abuse of women (Powell & Sugiura, 2018) or those supporting the cause, there is a lack of research on the implications

[8] The number of which has largely increased with the #MeToo movement.

of #MeToo for those involved and for those watching it unfold and additionally whether this impact will be meaningful with long-term consequences. There is also a need for more research into the area of what constitutes normal behaviour for women to accept from men, particularly within the NTE. Behaviours within the NTE have also been extensively researched but often with the variable of drugs and/or alcohol attached. There is a need for research into whether the cover of the NTE in itself increases the likelihood of sexual assault. The concept of masculinity and the reasons for the occurrence of sexual assault is well researched but there is a need for more information surrounding how to rectify these attitudes. Fileborn (2017) suggests some solutions including the need for venue owners and staff in the NTE to take some responsibility and be more vigilant and bystander intervention is essential. However, it raises the question: why are these relatively simple but necessary changes not yet being widely implicated? These areas will be explored further in the primary research conducted as part of this dissertation study. The next chapter will discuss the methodology that was conducted for this research design.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodology

This chapter will discuss the mixed methodology approach used to carry out the research, involving the use of a survey and non-participant observation, and how the findings of both were compared to further inform this research. Using mixed methods provides a qualitative understanding, helping to meet the first objective of the research. It also provides quantitative statistics allowing for easier and more direct comparison and analysis, making it the most suitable approach for this research. Additionally, it can be stated that this approach helps to clarify the intentions of the research and gives a sense of thoroughness (Bryman, 2006). Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) state that no major area is now studied with only one method. Therefore, creating and carrying out mixed methodology research provides more reliable results compared with using one approach.

Methods

A survey method was utilised through the creation and distribution of an online questionnaire. These are favourable due to their ability to reach a wider sample of people and therefore increase response rate; they are inexpensive and they have been shown to produce a higher quality of data than traditional questionnaires (Tuten, Urban & Bosnjak, 2000). The survey consisted of 15 questions to ensure it would take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete so as not to deter potential participants from partaking due to time constraints. There was a mixture of demographic questions allowing for comparisons to be made during data analysis dependant on factors such as age and gender; scenario questions in order to gain participants opinions, specifically whether they would define a depicted situation as sexual assault; as well as open-ended and dichotomous questions. The questions were informed from literature to ensure relevance to the topic and also messages and material disseminated from the media into the public and therefore my target sample. The survey[9] was distributed through the researchers own social media accounts as this is the most efficient way of reaching the sample of young people (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014).

Those aged between 16-24 list going out and/or drinking as their third most important spending priority (Hollands, 2010), therefore meaning that this group are most likely to engage with the NTE. As the legal drinking age in the UK is 18 years old, younger ages were not invited to complete the survey however those over the age of 24 will be as their opinions are still relevant to the research to compare. Therefore, the target sample for the survey will be anyone above the age of 18 who has ever

[9] A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 2.

engaged with the NTE. For the non-participant observation, the sample will be any tweets including #MeToo or the key words mentioned below.

Non-participant observation (Cadwell & Atwal, 2005) took the form of the collection and analysis of tweets from the #MeToo movement on Twitter to explore whether the movement has had an impact on opinions of sexual assault within the NTE, adhering to objective 2. 100 tweets were collected in order to form a reliable and representative analysis in which enough key themes could be drawn from. Too many tweets may have oversaturated the data and resulted in the replication of themes. The survey was conducted first and while it was running the Twitter analysis took place, however they are not sequential. The collected data was compared during the analysis section of the research.

Data Collection

Once the online survey had been created using onlinesurveys.ac.uk it was posted onto the researcher's personal social media accounts where people were asked to complete and share it in order to gain as many participants as possible. The survey was kept open until December 2018 with the initial intention of gaining 100 respondents. Using Twitters advanced search tool, #MeToo alongside key words and phrases such as 'night time economy', 'club', 'bar', 'sexual assault' and 'rape' were used in order to find tweets relevant to the research. Hashtags make tracking exchanges and comments of this nature relatively easy (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013). Tweets were manually copied and pasted into a word document, omitting any names or Twitter handles.

Analysis

Two methods were used in the analysis of the survey. Firstly, the data was inputted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) allowing for direct comparison and the identification of trends within the data. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, graphs and tables were utilised in order to present the findings in the clearest way possible. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes and trends within the open-ended questions of the survey and the collected opinions of Twitter users. To complete the thematic analysis, the relevant data was printed and highlighters used to allow for theme development, giving a visual indication making it easier to 'code' the data in line with Braun, Clarke and Terrys (2015) guidelines for carrying out thematic analysis[10].

Ethics

The four main ethical issues raised by this study were informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the sensitive nature of the topic. All survey respondents were provided with a participant information sheet and a consent form before starting, explaining to them there is no obligation to

[10] Tables of the thematic analysis and themes can be found in Appendices 3-11.

take part and that they could withdraw at any time before the point of final submission. After this, they were not be able to withdraw as it would have been impossible to identify individual responses from the data set as Internet Protocol (IP) Addresses were not recorded, therefore all information was anonymous.

All the information provided in the survey remained confidential and was only accessed by authorised personnel such as the researcher and supervisor. The Twitter comments were already in the public domain so there were no confidentiality issues surrounding this aspect of the research (Marwick, 2012) and informed consent was not sought. However, all identifying information including Twitter handles were removed from the data to ensure anonymity.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research, links to appropriate charity websites were attached at the end of the survey if participants had been affected by any of the issues raised and wanted talk to someone. By disclosing the full extent of the research topic to participants in the participant information sheet, potential harm was prevented (Gilliam & Guillemin, 2004). Risks to myself as the researcher were also noted and these were mitigated by talking to my supervisor if any problems of this nature arose.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to review and discuss the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data retrieved from the survey as well as the collected Twitter data. The quantitative data from the survey will be presented in graphs and tables first explaining the demographics and highlighting some of the inconsistencies preventing generalisation of the data then going on to discuss some of the trends discovered. The qualitative data from both the survey and the Twitter data will be explored through thematic analysis.

Demographics

The survey sample was any person aged over 18 and of any gender living in the UK. Although the topic is related to the NTE, engagement within it was not necessary in filling out this survey as the aim was only to uncover perceptions of it in relation to sexual assault. There was a total number of 167 respondents.

Figure 1: What gender do you identify with?

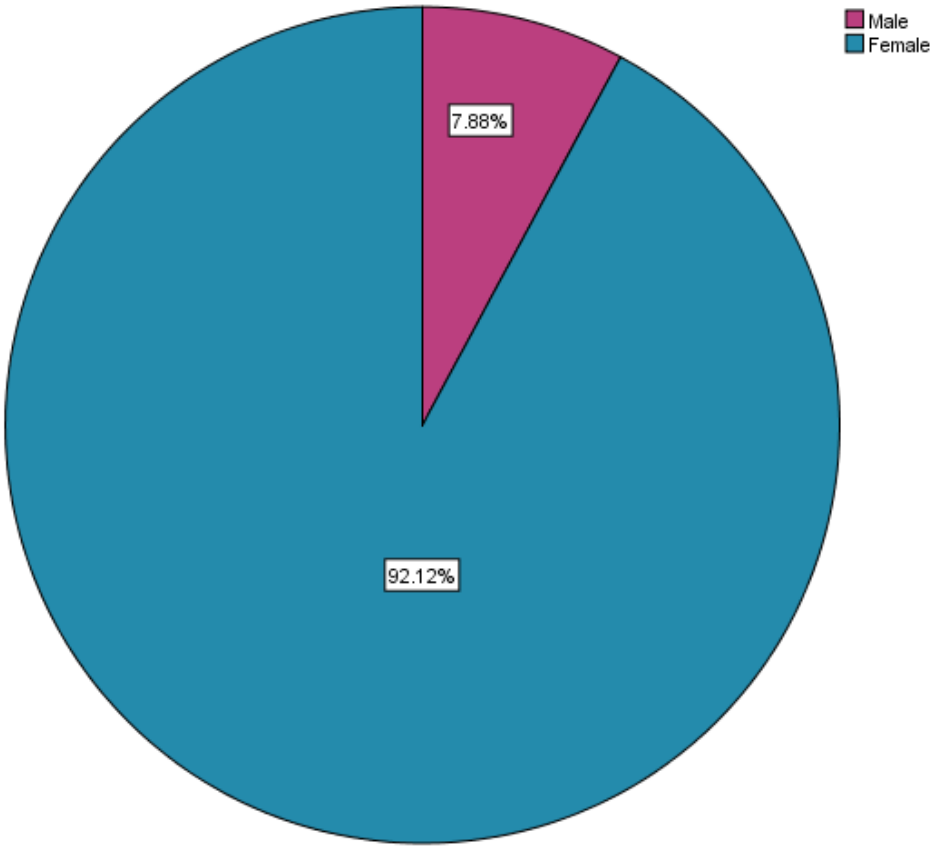
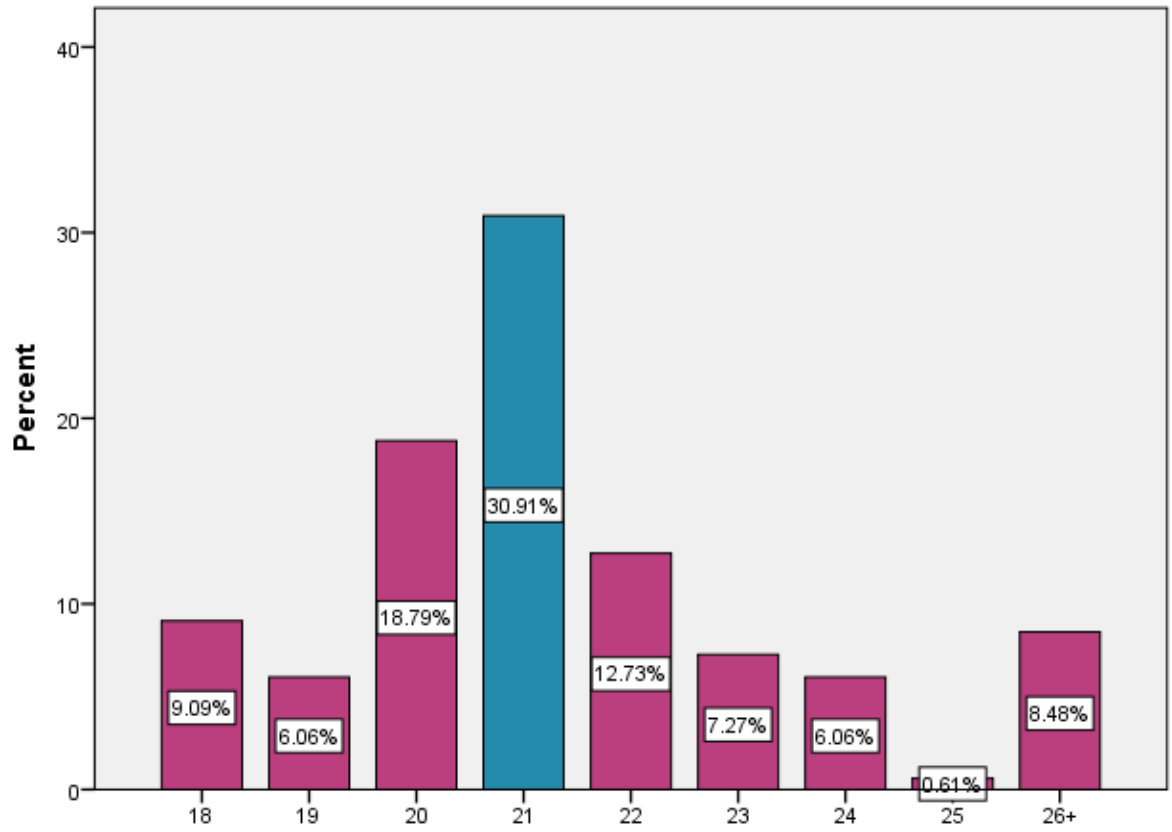


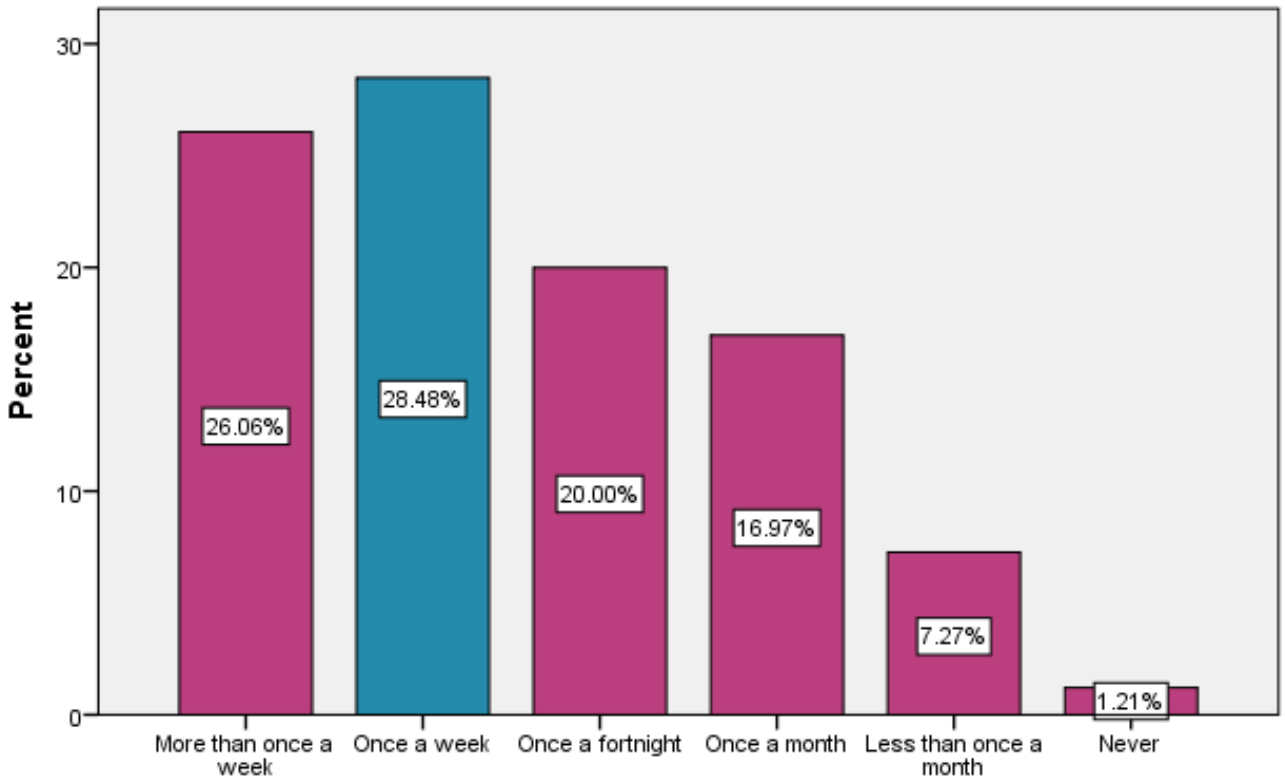
Figure 1 shows the vast majority of respondents to this survey were female meaning the findings cannot be generalised due to its lack of gender representativeness, evidenced by the most recent UK census finding the population is comprised of 51% women (ONS, 2019). Furthermore, there were no responses of 'other' to this question again evidencing its bias towards female perceptions. One reason for this could be due to the appeal of this topic to women and therefore why so many more compared to men chose to participate. The link to the survey was also shared on Twitter by a blogger with a largely female following identifying another explanation for this large female majority.

Figure 2: How old are you?



Out of the total number of respondents, those aged 21 made up the majority. The reason for this is most likely the access members of the public had to the survey. As it was shared on the researcher's social media, it is expected that the main viewers will be of similar age. Those aged 16-24 are the most likely age group to prioritise alcohol and going out (Hollands, 2010) and therefore the most likely to engage in the NTE however for this survey the age was brought up to 18 due to the legal drinking age in the UK and ethical reasons. Those most likely to engage in the NTE are hence most likely to find this topic appealing and of interest, leading them to complete the survey.

Figure 3: How often do you engage with the night time economy?



As can be seen in figure 3, 'once a week' was the most common answer for respondents when stating how often they engage in the NTE, followed closely by 'more than once a week'. The reason for these findings could be as a result of the age range, it is likely a large number of students answered the survey. It has been found on average 91% of students engaged with the NTE in some form (Gant & Terry, 2017), although this survey is comprised of those engaging in the NTE more often.

Scenario questions[11]:

The scenario with the most participants stating it was indicative of sexual assault was scenario 3 with 161 responses indicating this. Scenario 3 involved a stranger putting their hand inside Bella's shorts while she was dancing in a night club.

Table 1:

Scenario 3: Bella

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	161	96.4	98.8	98.8
	No	2	1.2	1.2	100.0
	Total	163	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	4	2.4		
Total		167	100.0		

The scenario with the least participants stating it was indicative of sexual assault was scenario 1 involving Sarah and Jake with only 46 believing it was. In this scenario, Jake offers to buy Sarah a drink in a night club and when she declines, he begins calling her names such as 'whore'. This indicates participants were more likely to consider the incident in the scenario as sexual assault when physical contact with a stranger had occurred.

Table 2:

Scenario 1: Sarah and Jake

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	46	27.5	27.9	27.9
	No	119	71.3	72.1	100.0
	Total	165	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.2		
Total		167	100.0		

The element of the perpetrator being a stranger is seemingly important to participants with the comparison below of scenario 4 where although there was clear sexual physical contact, Eddie and

[11] The full survey including scenario questions can be found in Appendix 2.

Lucy were in a relationship and so a lesser amount of 135 compared to scenario 3's 161 indicated they perceived the incident as sexual assault.

Table 3:

Scenario 4: Eddie and Lucy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	135	80.8	83.3	83.3
	No	27	16.2	16.7	100.0
	Total	162	97.0	100.0	
Missing	System	5	3.0		
Total		167	100.0		

The role gender played in the scenario did not seem to affect the opinions of the participants regarding their belief a sexual assault had taken place. Scenario 2 involved a female being implicated as having committed the sexual assault on a male reversing the stereotype. 159 respondents stated she had.

Table 4:

Scenario 2: Jonathan and Lizzie

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	159	95.2	97.0	97.0
	No	5	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	164	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.8		
Total		167	100.0		

T-tests:

T-Test 1:

Group Statistics

	2. What gender do you identify with?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
10. Do you think it is reasonable to expect some form of unwanted attention when engaging in the night time economy?	Male	13	1.54	.519	.144
	Female	152	1.64	.480	.039

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
10. Do you think it is reasonable to expect some form of unwanted attention when engaging in the night time economy?	Equal variances assumed	1.008	.317	-.761	163	.448	-.106	.140	-.382	.169
	Equal variances not assumed			-.713	13.816	.488	-.106	.149	-.426	.214

There is not a statistically significant effect relating to gender and the belief that it is reasonable to expect some form of unwanted attention when engaging in the NTE, t(13.816) = -0.713, p=.488 with men giving a higher score (M 1.54, SD .519) than women (M 1.64, SD .480). Therefore, gender does not make a difference to the belief it is reasonable to expect some form of unwanted attention when engaging in the NTE however it can be said males in this study were more inclined to agree with the

statement than females. From this, a variety of questions can be asked as to why this is, including whether they are referring to attention given to females or basing it on their own experiences.

T-test 2:

Group Statistics

	2. What gender do you identify with?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
9. Do you think people are less likely to report to the police if they believe they have been a victim of sexual assault if it occurred in the night time economy as opposed to during the day?	Male	13	1.15	.376	.104
	Female	152	1.18	.389	.032

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
9. Do you think people are less likely to report to the police if they believe they have been a victim of sexual assault if it occurred in the night time economy as opposed to during the day?	Equal variances assumed	.318	.574	-.271	163	.787	-.030	.112	-.252	.191
	Equal variances not assumed			-.279	14.293	.784	-.030	.109	-.263	.203

There is not a statistically significant effect between gender and the belief that someone is less likely to report to the police after being victimised in a sexual assault due to its occurrence within the NTE, t(14.293) = -0.279, p=.784 with males (M 1.15, SD .376) giving lower scores than females (M 1.18, SD .389). Therefore, there is no relation between gender and the belief that people are less likely to report a sexual assault if it occurred within the NTE. However as above, males in this study were more inclined to agree with the statement than females. Although this cannot be generalised, the implications of this must be considered including if this belief is held amongst males whether it would increase the likelihood of them committing a sexual assault within this environment.

T-test 3:

Group Statistics

	10. Do you think it is reasonable to expect some form of unwanted attention when engaging in the night time economy?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
11. Do you think yourself or others around you change your behaviour when engaging in the night time economy, particularly within the context of what you believe to be acceptable behaviour conducted by yourself or acceptable behaviour to receive from other	Yes	58	1.22	.421	.055
	No	100	1.26	.441	.044

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper

11. Do you think yourself or others around you change your behaviour when engaging in the night time economy, particularly within the context of what you believe to be acceptable behaviour conducted by yourself or acceptable behaviour to receive from other	Equal variances assumed	1.045	.308	-.501	156	.617	-.036	.072	-.177	.105
	Equal variances not assumed			-.507	123.820	.613	-.036	.071	-.176	.104

There is not a statistically significant effect between those believing it is reasonable to expect some form of unwanted behaviour within the NTE and those who believe themselves or others around them change their behaviour within the NTE t(123.820) = -0.507, p=0.613 with those answering yes to the question relating to unwanted attention (M 1.22, SD .421) scoring higher than those answering no (M 1.26, SD .441). Therefore, there is no correlation between those believing it is reasonable to expect some form of unwanted behaviour within the NTE and those who believe themselves or others around them change their behaviour in this environment.

Survey Thematic Analysis

The identified themes in relation to the qualitative answers given will be examined in order to get a better understanding of the mindset and perceptions of the participants. A range of themes were found for each question with some overlap particularly in terms of lack of consent and physical sexual contact seemingly acting as the main indicators of sexual assault for participants. Another theme overlapping into a range of different answers was whether verbal abuse constitutes sexual assault. Alcohol played a large part in participants opinions with regards to the NTE changing behaviour but the answers to a range of questions also indicated participants believed just the environment of the NTE can lead to more predatory and otherwise socially unacceptable behaviour. Only the most prominent themes for each question will be discussed[12].

The most prominent theme identified in the question asking participants for their reasoning for feeling unsafe was the anticipation of unwanted attention with indications of this behaviour being highlighted as staring, unwanted conversations and "being creepy" as well as unwanted sexual behaviours such as touching. Another common theme found was the fear of being alone in the dark, particularly when walking home. Participants expanding on this stated they feared people talking to them while in unlit and quiet areas, being physically and/or sexually attacked. Participants provided examples of self-protective behaviours they engaged in including "I don't use headphones after dark as I wouldn't be able to hear anyone approaching" or walking with keys between fingers. These 'safety measures' can also be identified in other research (Vera-Gray 2018).

A considerable number of participants stated they believed there is a difference in the perceived severity of sexual assault due to its occurrence during the NTE. Reasons for this were explained as being due to the culture of acceptance of this type of behaviour as it is "just what happens" and "part and parcel of a night out". A lesser amount stated daytime is perceived as generally safer and therefore "if it happens in 'broad daylight' people are always so shocked" and hence "unconsented sexual touching in the day…is dealt with more seriously". Responses also indicated repercussions of alcohol such as memory loss would inhibit the level of severity perceived by themselves and others.

There was debate to be found within the answers of whether it is reasonable to expect unwanted behaviour within the NTE. A prominent theme found in the explanations indicated it is so ingrained into the culture of the NTE that it is normal and reasonable to expect and "it has been allowed and protected by the predators" however many made the point of saying that despite this, it is not right. The NTE was described as an environment largely based around sex and "pulling culture" and "is

[12] A full list of themes for each question can be found in Appendices 3-11.

synonymous with the dating ritual"; therefore, by entering into it means it should be expected. It was also indicated that it is reasonable and expected but only to the point where it does not cross a boundary once reciprocation is not given. Participants stated "there is nothing wrong with someone making an advance…as long as it's clearly consensual" and "people will try to talk to you…this is not a problem it's the persistence".

Alcohol was deemed be the most common factor in reasons why people change their behaviour when in the NTE. This ranged from becoming louder and rowdier to loosing inhibitions and sense of morals with participants stating "actions will be taken which would be 'funny' or 'banter', but in the daytime and sober would be considered inappropriate" and the addition of alcohol can mean "you are more mouthy or can be ruder to people than you would normally be". The environment of the NTE in itself can be identified as a theme with explanations including its informality and different culture encouraging otherwise unacceptable behaviour. Moreover, heightened vigilance of women was highlighted as being the most noticeable change in behaviour with examples provided such as "I close up and put up a front so that people won't come near me" and "we have to act lairy so that we don't come across as easy victims".

In the scenario questions, respondents were found to be more likely to label the depicted incident as sexual assault if there was a lack of consent and clear physical sexualised contact as was illustrated in scenario 2 and 3. The involvement of a stranger as opposed to a partner also made it easier for respondents to label the incident as sexual assault. The perpetrator was a stranger in scenario 3 and participants provided almost definitive conclusions that the incident was sexual assault as it was "unwanted sexual attention and invading privacy and personal space". Whereas in scenario 4 where the couple were in a relationship, it was suggested "it isn't sexual assault due to the nature of their long relationship" and assumptions were made that "as they were engaged she probably would have said yes", indicating they would be more likely to class it as sexual assault or rape if they were strangers. Furthermore, male pronouns were used to describe the perpetrator in scenario 3 when their gender had not been disclosed, illustrating the subconscious presumption of a male offender. However, the female perpetrator depicted in scenario 2 raised opinions such as "gender does not change whether something is sexual assault or not", making an interesting comparison. For further discussion on these themes, see Appendices 7-10.

Twitter Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis of the Twitter data resulted in the identification of eleven themes, however this section will focus on the four most prominent and relevant themes[13]. These are: the opinion that women are over exaggerating their experiences and making false accusations; lack of reporting of incidents due to the acceptance of sexual assault through its normalisation within our culture; the negative impact of the #MeToo movement; and finally, victim blaming.

Accusations of over exaggeration of experiences was the most common theme found within the data. It involved some element of the author sharing their opinion that women over exaggerate and make false accusations for example "let's be honest, some biotches (sic) lie". Emphasis was put on the consequences of the falsely accused in that "your life could be ruined" and motivations for reporting sexual assaults include "she wanted to ruin his life". There was also a prominence of excuses being made for men including "he's a good guy" or "it was a long time ago". A reoccurring opinion within this theme was how it is currently "a scary time for young men" alluding to an epidemic of false accusations. This opinion has been publicly promoted by prominent and supposedly influential figures such as Donald Trump (Bump, 2018), in an attempt to equalise the level of victimisation between the victims and perpetrators. There was also debate surrounding whether historic accusations can be fairly prosecuted today due to the difference in culture including "don't apply your #MeToo lens to what you think should have been done 35 years ago. This was normal". This insinuates it is unfair to stigmatise historic actions against todays moral code.

Throughout the analysis of this theme, it was found sexual assault and harassment is perceived as a common occurrence in everyday lives but particularly for women with relevance to the NTE, ranging from verbal abuse to rape. Furthermore, experiences shared by women on Twitter revealed how the lack of action taken indicated societies message to them and others that this should be normal and accepted behaviour; "women told their stories – no one cared – it sent a clear message to others: shut up and stay silent". According to Twitter users and Bates (2014), the media play an important part in normalising rape culture both for victims and perpetrators. In contrast, the #MeToo movement was hailed by some Twitter users as forcing into the open much needed conversations surrounding this topic area, reducing the acceptance of its occurrence within society and uncovering the imperativeness of feminist digital activism.

The #MeToo movement was criticised in a number of analysed tweets for reasons such as inciting secondary victimisation through the public nature of explicit disclosures, and the more minor

[13] A full list of themes for the Twitter analysis can be found in Appendix 11.

disclosures such as frottaging or catcalling are “taking away from the real victims”; normalising the degradation of the seriousness of sexual assault. Those who complained that women over exaggerate experiences often called upon the negative effects of #MeToo in an attempt to illustrate their point, for example stating “it has gone too far”. There were also opinions stating the movement gives a platform for false accusations and the idea that the sense of empowerment from such movements makes women feel safer which in fact is dangerous as a hashtag does not reduce the level of threat.

The theme of victim blaming was uncovered in a small but notable percentage of the analysed tweets. Literature however, would suggest it is much more prominent (Powell, 2010; Higson, 2018; Simonson, 2018) than can be evidenced in this part of the research. These tweets referred to experiences involving women being asked what they had been wearing or how much they had to drink after disclosing a sexual assault, or the demeaning of those who have waited years before disclosing. Name-calling of a sexual nature can be highlighted from the data such as “We Mock Rape Victims. Don’t Like It? That’s Tough. We Hate Women Who Speak Up. They’re Sluts. (sic)”. Moreover, there were perceptions of the media reporting of such cases allusively implying the fault of the women for example through stating “a woman was raped” as opposed to “a man raped a woman”, deflecting the influence of the male in this situation.

Summary

When comparing the quantitative and qualitative data similar themes can be identified such as the internalisation of rape culture through views such as an incident is less likely to amount to sexual assault if those involved are in a relationship and inappropriate behaviour should be somewhat expected when engaging in the NTE. A slight, however not significant disparity in terms of male and female perceptions can be identified with males more inclined to be supportive of views which can be labelled as facilitating rape culture. Furthermore, this research has also highlighted the importance of digital feminist activism in creating a safer and more equalised society for women as this means of information dissemination gives access to a large population. The following chapter will consist of a discussion relating the findings of this research to the literature discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents the discussion of the main findings drawing on the literature outlined in chapter 2. The discussion is broken down into the following sections: rape culture, victim blaming and the NTE. Although victim blaming is a tool used to uphold rape culture, the extent to which it is identified and discussed within this research and other literature means it is necessary to examine it singularly. All three elements will be explored in terms of their relation to sexual assault in the NTE.

Rape Culture

Analysing the results from both the survey and the Twitter data it was apparent that respondents were attempting to show their open-mindedness when faced with a stereotype which may be reflective of rape culture, however there were suggestions that some individuals have internalised beliefs indicative of rape culture. For example, the consensus that stranger rape is seen as more valid than domestic rape or sexual assault, which is consistent with previous research (Fowler, Blackburn, Marquart & Mullings, 2010). This is one example of the indoctrination of rape culture within society through the internalisation of rape myths such as the idea that rape can only be committed by strangers rather than people close to the victim (Stubbs-Richardson, Rader & Cosby, 2018). This is also indicative of heteronormative perspectives held within society. Herman (1988, p.45) illustrates the close link of this form of sexuality with violence in that the heteronormativity depicted in popular culture "is frequently that of a sadomasochistic relationship thinly veiled by a romantic façade".

The uncertainty surrounding all scenarios in the survey was notable due to none of them receiving a consensus that the incident was or was not sexual assault. Generally speaking, the reasoning for each of these was found to mirror the concept of the continuum of sexual violence (Kelly, 1989) through participants not wanting to label it as sexual assault nor as acceptable and harmless behaviour; instead wanting to put it somewhere in between. Alternatively, it can be argued that this ambiguity is reflective of the scenarios not fitting the restrictive social definition of rape and therefore challenging rape myths which participants unknowingly were ascribing to through their uncertainty. This can also be said for male victims of sexual assault in that this status does not align with male gender roles (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Victim Blaming

Victim blaming was an element found in the qualitative analysis from both the survey and the Twitter data. Although it was not as prominent a theme as initially anticipated, it can be said to interlink with experiences of not being believed and the allegations of false accusations. When this is pulled together, victim blaming can be identified as extremely prominent in this research. There were also

examples found in the survey where participants cited actions conducted within the NTE with the purpose of keeping them safe including going to the toilet in pairs and dressing more conservatively; denoting the research of Vera-Gray (2018) on women's safety work. The answers given were consistent with women's safety work but there was a lack of similar examples from a male perspective and therefore it raises the question as to whether men have to adhere to the same or similar safety measures or whether this is a gender specific task as insinuated in 'The Right Amount of Panic' (Vera-Gray, 2018).

There was some reflection of judgement from Twitter users in terms of only believing the 'ideal victim' (Christie, 1986) over those not quite fitting the label in the form of 'trial by social media'. Victims were questioned online in terms of why they had taken so long to come forward, whether they had ulterior motives particularly of a political nature and on any other variable which may remove their status as an ideal victim. By putting some or all of the blame on the victim it deflects the blame from the toxic rape culture existing in society; in other words, the problem is seen to be with the victim, not societal values. Furthermore, negative comments about victims as well as the movement were found to be more common in this research than those of a supportive or empowering nature, although these were still notable. This is reflective of the work of Stubbs-Richardson, Rader and Cosby (2018) who found Twitter users participating in victim blaming and rape culture were more likely to gain more retweets and have more followers than those voicing polar opinions. Therefore, it can be said attitudes more aligned with victim blaming and rape culture are seemingly perceived as more desirable within society meaning the findings of the research supports previous academic studies.

Night Time Economy

Part of the aim of this research was to discover whether the NTE in itself has some form of influence over the prevalence of sexual assaults occurring within this environment due to a gap in research in this area. As can be seen in the previous chapter, this research has found that it has. However, there are a string of elements woven into this simplified statement which must be discussed in relation to the literature that is currently available. Much of the literature discussed in chapter 2 involved the influence of alcohol and drugs (Ayres & Treadwell, 2011) and this was reflected in the findings of this research in that participants to the survey largely identified intoxication as a factor in the changing behaviours in the NTE. There was mention of behaviour becoming more aggressive which although was not gender specific is in line with research conducted surrounding the creation of the hyper-masculine identity (Anderson, Daly & Rapp, 2009; Ayres & Treadwell, 2011) created through intoxication in the NTE. As discussed in the previous chapter, although not a statistically significant finding, males were more likely to agree that the occurrence of a sexual assault within the NTE would have a detrimental effect on the likelihood of reporting to the police. This combined with the concept

of the hyper-masculine identity could be argued to increase the likelihood of a male committing a sexual assault within the NTE. On the other hand, this can also be seen to be reflective of the work of Herman (1988) in stating the influence of alcohol can induce uncertainty in the victim's mind, hence impairing their confidence in reporting the incident.

Although serious incidences of sexual assault occur in the NTE, including rape, the focus of this research has been on what can be described as the more trivial forms of sexual assault. There were accusations found throughout the survey and the Twitter data of this focus deflecting attention away from the more serious incidents. It must be questioned as to whether the key to reducing the volume of the most serious sexual offences lies in focusing on trivial incidents indicative of rape culture and changing these attitudes. With movements such as #MeToo bringing the everyday examples of sexual assault into mainstream culture it has opened up conversations for people to share their experiences. Found in both sets of data were examples of participants stating in essence their struggle to find examples of engagement in the NTE where they have not received some form of unwanted sexual attention, often involving contact. Although more commonly described as a female experience, it was also referenced as a male experience. This hints at the potentially huge scale that these unreported incidents are going unquestioned weekly and hence there is a clear necessity to change the accepting attitudes with reference to this type of behaviour before the larger issues can be successfully tackled.

Summary

The data found is supportive of previously conducted research but at the same time provides new valuable information. Rape culture is an extensively analysed topic with much of the research concluding rape culture and rape myths are a ubiquitous phenomenon, heavily influencing individuals' behaviour. This research has identified numerous examples of this through both the survey and the Twitter analysis. Moreover, victim blaming is another prevalent topic, particularly within feminist research, such that it is more common than was initially found in this project. However, when other elements are examined, behaviours that are reflective of a victim blaming culture can be identified such as safety work or the questioning of those not quite fitting the role of the ideal victim (Christie, 1986). In terms of sexual assaults within the NTE, previous research is strongly influenced by intoxication rather than simply the change of environment. However, this research has shown the NTE itself does have an effect on negative behaviour, which can increase the likelihood of individuals committing or becoming victims of sexual assaults. The next chapter will conclude this dissertation.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter will seek to conclude the main arguments featured throughout this piece of work, demonstrating how the aim and objectives have been met. Limitations will also be highlighted in terms of what can be done to improve this research if it were to be repeated; and finally, recommendations will be made as a result of these findings.

Perceptions of sexual assault in the NTE

Much focus in previous research has been in regards to the impact of intoxication in the NTE on sexual assault (Burgess, Donovan & Moore, 2009; Sheard, 2011) and the potentially disproportionate fear women have of this. The findings of this research uncovered that alcohol was perceived to be an outstanding factor among participants in regards to unsafe feelings and sexual assault within the NTE however a case was made for the environment of the NTE in itself changing the behaviour of individuals to enact in ways they most likely would not in their day to day lives. Therefore, it can be said that sexual assault is considered to be a normalised part of engaging in the NTE, with acceptance and ignorance playing a part in its continuation. Moreover, the lack of reporting of sexual assaults can be evidenced in statistics. In the year ending March 2017, 31% of those who had experienced rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) had not told anyone and only 30% had told someone in an official position (ONS, 2018). This mirrors the findings of this research, cementing this point further.

The prominence of rape culture and victim blaming is heavily referenced in feminist literature (Powell, 2010; Higson, 2018; Simonson, 2018) and again the findings of this research are reflective of this. The findings have shown that there is still a culture of victim blaming within society including judgement of women not necessarily meeting the notion of the 'ideal victim' (Christie, 1986) and being penalised for it. More subtly however, there tends to be a heightened focus on the victim in media reports of sexual assaults compared to other crimes. This not only pushes the perpetrator out of the limelight but it also inevitably increases questions surrounding the victim's own liability due to their prominence in the reporting.

Influence of #MeToo in challenging rape culture

There is a disparity in terms of the literature in relation to the #MeToo movement when compared with that of sexual assault however it is clearly an area of growing interest for academics particularly in terms of digital abuse of feminist activists (Jane 2014; Cole 2015; Powell & Sugiura, 2018). The movement has been seen by some as revolutionary in that it is the first and most high profile of its kind (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2018) however clearly there is still much work to be done. One of the biggest positives to come out of it is simply putting these previously taboo topics into the

mainstream media to allow discussions to develop. Although in its embryonic stages, it has allowed and encouraged women to speak out, giving them a platform and a voice, which was previously non-existent (Cuklanz, 2015). Movements such as #MeToo have brought these topics into everyday conversations, which is the first stage in changing these attitudes and behaviours that are detrimental to the treatment and development of women in society.

Limitations

Although overall the research conducted as part of this dissertation can be said to have been successful in meeting the aim and objectives, there are some limitations. As specified in the introduction, this research has mainly focused on women as the victims of sexual assaults and has not taken into account those of other genders experiencing similar situations. Furthermore, due to limitations such as time and word count, research on a larger scale could not be conducted to make the survey more representative, particularly in terms of gender. Additionally, a wider sample of Twitter data could have been analysed to provide a more accurate picture if the above constraints were not in place. Moreover, it is somewhat difficult to fully address the aim of the research due to there not being a question directly asking the survey participants whether the #MeToo movement had changed their opinions of sexual assault in the NTE. Instead, answers have been analysed intuitively to decipher whether a conclusion can be made in this area while at the same time, acknowledging the context of today's society.

Recommendations

As a result of the research conducted as part of this dissertation, three recommendations can be made. Firstly, there is a need to tackle rape culture and rape myths which unfortunately are highly prominent within society. Secondly, raising awareness surrounding the scale and magnitude of these issues; and finally, to stop the culture of acceptance this type of behaviour has attracted within the NTE and in wider society. The best way to start the journey of achieving these goals is through the continuation of conversations already taking place and educating individuals on these issues who otherwise would be unaware. It is hopeful that if these changes begin to take shape, women will have the ability to be less fearful when engaging in the NTE and long-term in an ideal world, there will be an eradication of sexual harm. Everybody must take responsibility in making the world a safer place for women.

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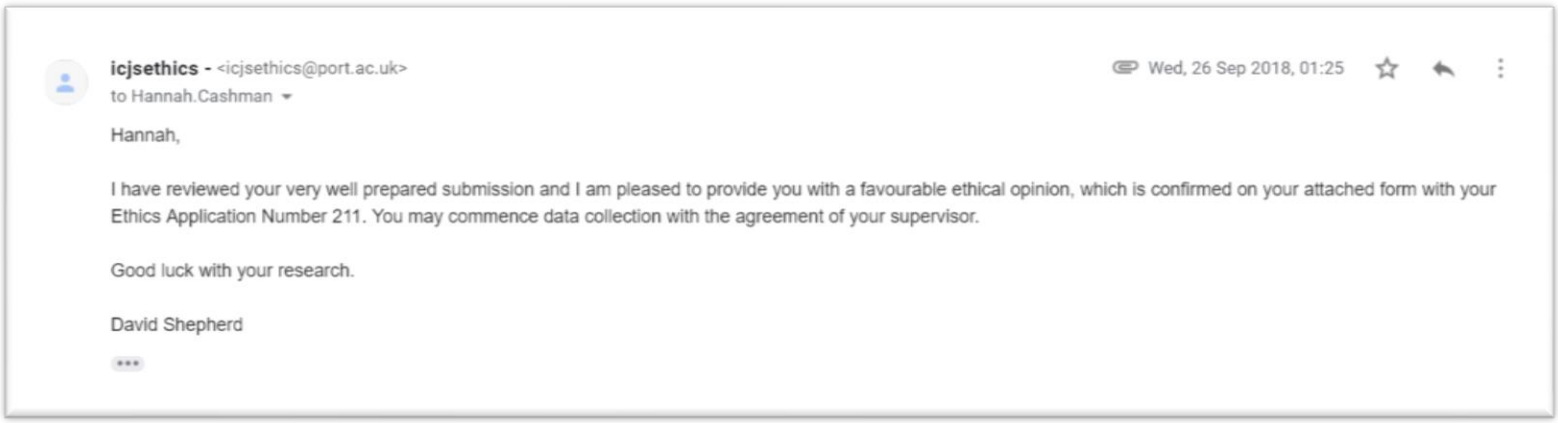
Appendices:

Appendix 1: Ethical approval



icjsethics - <icjsethics@port.ac.uk> Wed, 26 Sep 2018, 01:25

to Hannah.Cashman

Hannah,

I have reviewed your very well prepared submission and I am pleased to provide you with a favourable ethical opinion, which is confirmed on your attached form with your Ethics Application Number 211. You may commence data collection with the agreement of your supervisor.

Good luck with your research.

David Shepherd

Appendix 2: Survey questions

1. How old are you?
    - 18
    - 19
    - 20
    - 21
    - 22
    - 23
    - 24
    - 25
    - 26+

2. What gender do you identify with?
    - Male
    - Female
    - Other

    2a. If other please state

3. How often do you engage with the night time economy? (The night time economy can be defined as economic activity occurring between 6pm and 6am (Wickham, 2012) ie. in bars, pubs and clubs).
    - More than once a week
    - Once a week
    - Once a fortnight
    - Once a month
    - Less than once a month
    - Never

If answered 'never' please skip to question 6.

4. How often do you feel unsafe while engaging with the night time economy?
    - All the time
    - Regularly
    - Sometimes
    - Rarely
    - Never

If answered 'never' please skip to question 6.

5. What is the cause of you feeling unsafe?

6. Which of these actions, if any, would you regard as sexual assault?
    - Unwanted touching anywhere on the body
    - Unwanted touching of breasts, genitalia or buttocks
    - Prolonged staring
    - Catcalling
    - Exhibitionism (flashing genitalia to non-consenting people or strangers)
    - Verbal aggression including use of words such as 'slut', 'slag', 'frigid'
    - Non-consensual sexual intercourse (excluding sexual intercourse)
    - Sexual activity or intercourse with an intoxicated individual
    - Rape
7. Please write a statement which you believe defines sexual assault.

8. Do you think there is a difference in the perceived severity of sexual assault simply due to its occurrence during the day as opposed to within the night time economy?
    - Yes
    - No

    8a. Why/why not?

9. Do you think people are less likely to report to the police if they believe they have been a victim of sexual assault if it occurred within the night time economy as opposed to during the day?
    - Yes
    - No

    9a. Why/why not?

10. Do you think it is reasonable to expect some level of unwanted attention when engaging in the night time economy?
    - Yes
    - No

    10a. Why/why not?

11. Do you think yourself or others around you change behaviour when engaging in the night time economy, particularly within the context of what you believe to be acceptable behaviour conducted by yourself or acceptable behaviour to receive from others?
    - Yes
    - No

    11a. Please explain your answer further

The following questions will consist of a scenario. After reading the scenario please answer whether you would consider the actions in the scenario to be sexual assault and why.

12. Sarah visits a popular night club on a busy Saturday night to celebrate her birthday with some friends. While queuing to buy a drink at the bar, Jake approaches her and offers to buy her a drink which she declines. Jake, who was already very drunk at this point then starts behaving aggressively towards her calling her a 'whore' and an 'ungrateful bitch'.

    Would you consider Jakes behaviour towards Sarah as sexual assault?

    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

    Please explain your reasoning:

13. Jonathan and Lizzie met on a night out in a pub. They spent the whole night talking and had also kissed. Jonathan asked Lizzie to go back to his flat with him and she agreed. While on their way to the taxi rank they began kissing. Jonathan changed his mind about Lizzie going back to his flat and told her this however she would not stop kissing him and had him pinned up against a wall until he was able to push her off and run away.

    Would you consider Lizzies behaviour towards Jonathan as sexual assault?

    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

    Please explain your reasoning:

14. Bella was on a girls holiday with her friends in Zante. On their first night they were all dancing in a busy nightclub and Bella felt someone dancing close behind her but chose to ignore it as it was most likely because the nightclub was very crowded. Suddenly Bella felt the person close behind her put their hand inside her shorts. She pushed the hand away and moved on to a different nightclub after telling her friends what had happened.

    Would you consider what happened to Bella as sexual assault?

    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

    Please explain your reasoning:

15. Eddie and Lucy had been engaged for 6 months and a couple in total for over 5 years when they went out to a pub with some of their mutual friends. After drinking in the bar for four hours they moved onto another bar. By this point, Lucy was extremely drunk, could barely walk and complained she felt sick. Eddie took her to the toilet and while in there had sex with her. The next day she could not remember what had happened and could not remember whether or not she had consented to the sex, when Eddie explained what they had done.

    Would you consider Eddies actions towards Lucy as sexual assault?

    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

    Please explain your reasoning:

Coding:

Theme discussed in dissertation.	Theme not discussed in dissertation.

Appendix 3: Reasons for feeling unsafe

Identified theme	Explanation
Violence, aggression or criminal behaviour	Fear regarding the threat of violence or aggression from others. Was associated in some instances with being alone in the dark.
Intoxication	Becoming more vulnerable, loosing inhibitions and people are able to take advantage of this. Both in terms of voluntary and involuntary intoxication from alcohol and drugs.

Men and unwanted attention	Fear of being put in an uncomfortable position by a stranger and feeling trapped in a situation. Particularly female fear of men.
Unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature	Similar to above but in a sexual context for example strangers touching or making inappropriate sexualised comments.
Being alone in the dark	The connotations alongside this including uncertainty of stranger's intentions when alone in quiet or unlit areas. Some overlap with fear of violence and of unwanted/sexual behaviour.
Negative past experiences	Negative past experiences which have caused the participant to be fearful of the same event occurring. This was more specifically from women with regards to sexual assaults.

Appendix 4: The effect of the NTE on the perceived severity of sexual assault

Identified theme	Explanation
Intoxication	The effect of alcohol on things such as memory means people are more unsure of things that have happened while they were intoxicated. The effect also causes people to do things they usually would not sober.
The accepting culture of the NTE	The NTE has more of an 'anything goes' attitude so there is a level of expectance and acceptance when a sexual assault occurs in this environment.
Legally still the same	Participants stated the same criminal act had occurred so the context of its occurrence is irrelevant.
Victim blaming	Fear of being blamed for the sexual assault by others including the authorities as well as blaming oneself.
The daytime is a safer environment	The perceived safety of the daytime makes it more shocking when a sexual assault occurs in this context hence why it is perceived as less important and less severe than when it occurs in the NTE. Some overlap with the culture of the NTE.

Appendix 5: Reasonableness of expecting unwanted attention in the NTE

Identified Theme	Explanation
It should not be expected and it is not reasonable	There is no way unwanted attention should be expected and it is not reasonable under any circumstances.
It is so common it becomes the norm	There was a level of expectation of unwanted behaviour due to its common occurrence and so it is 'the norm' however there were indications participants did not think it was reasonable.

It is reasonable to the point one of the involved no longer shows interest	It is to some extent unreasonable to expect people to effectively ignore you so as long as the attention is unharmful and stops when one person indicated they are no longer interested in engaging then it is reasonable and expected.
Sex culture is embedded in the NTE	The NTE revolves around sex and 'pulling' culture – people go out seeking some form of sexual gratification and therefore by involving oneself in this environment it means agreement to this expectation. Overlap with reasonable to a point.

Appendix 6: Changing behaviour in the NTE

Identified theme	Explanation
Alcohol	Indicated alcohol was the biggest influencer in change of behaviour through people becoming rowdier and louder, not necessarily indicative of negative behaviour however.
Change of environment	Simply the change of environment causes changes in behaviour due to its informality and the different and more accepting of all behaviours culture.
Behaviour does not change	Some participants stated they did not ever change their behaviour and neither did any of their friends.
Morals stay the same	Although behaviour changes for example with the influence of alcohol or being in a more relaxed environment, morals will still stay the same so potentially inappropriate behaviour will not occur.
Girls become more vigilant	The most noticeable behaviour when engaging in the NTE is the heightened vigilance of women with examples of being warier of men and staying in groups.

Appendix 7: Scenario 1 – Sarah and Jake

Identified theme	Explanation
Verbal assault is sexual assault	Participants were clear in their view verbal assault is sexual assault when there is some form of sexual connotation attached to it, in this example 'whore'. It was also identified that Jake became aggressive as a result of Sarah's rejection of his sexual advance.
Verbal assault is not sexual assault	Stated there had to be some element of physical sexualised touch for it to constitute sexual assault which was not present in this incident.
Labelling verbal assault as sexual assault takes away the severity from 'real' sexual assaults	By focusing on more trivial examples of aggression towards women such as catcalling and as provided in this example, it takes the seriousness away from things such as rape where the focus of this type of awareness should be.

Aggression towards Jake	Aggressive language such as 'dick' and stating he has a 'pathetic ego' to describe Jake.
There is no sexual element	Some participants alluded to the fact that the word 'whore' is so commonly used now that there is no sexual connotation or element of assault attached to it.

Appendix 8: Scenario 2 – Jonathon and Lizzie

Identified theme	Explanation
Sexualised physical contact	It can be identified as a sexual assault as there was sexual physical contact between them in the form of a kiss.
Verbally saying 'no'	As Jonathon verbally tells Lizzie he does not want to kiss her anymore and she continues, it constitutes as sexual assault.
Element of force	As Lizzie forced him by pushing him against a wall, this element of force and aggression mean the participants were more inclined to label this as sexual assault.
He did not give her a reason	It was picked up that Jonathon should have made his position clearer by explaining why he no longer wanted to kiss and just saying 'no' was alluded to not being quite enough. An element of sympathy was shown to Lizzie as if it was not made quite clear enough.
Gender influence	A range of responses indicated the any gender can commit a sexual assault and so Lizzie being female did not deter them from labelling this as a sexual assault.

Appendix 9: Scenario 3: Bella

Identified theme	Explanation
Lack of consent	As Bella did not know who touched her there was no way she could give consent or that the perpetrator thought she was giving consent.
Physical and intimate touching	As the touching was in an intimate area (inside Bella's shorts), the perpetrator committed sexual assault.
Male assumption	Although the gender of the perpetrator was not disclosed in the scenario, a number of participants used male pronouns when describing them showing the assumption it would be a male perpetrator.
Effect on the victim	As Bella felt distressed enough by the incident to leave the club, it shows it had a negative effect on her and hence can be classed as a sexual assault.

Perpetrators intentions	The perpetrator putting their hand inside Bella's shorts was a clear attempt of gaining some sexual gratification and therefore it can be classed as sexual assault.
It did not escalate	As it was just one touch and after Bella pushed them away and they did not try again, it is not severe enough to justly be identified as sexual assault.

Appendix 10: Scenario 4 – Eddie and Lucy

Identified theme	Explanation
She was too drunk	Due to the fact Lucy was not able to walk and was being sick, she was too drunk and even if she had consented Eddie was still taking advantage of her intoxicated state.
Unsure as to whether it is sexual assault or not	Due to the limited details provided in the scenario, particularly around whether she consented the respondents found it difficult to class it as sexual assault. Most stated that if she had consented then it was not sexual assault despite her intoxicated state.
It is rape	Eddie had sex with Lucy while she either was not in the state to consent or she had not consented and therefore he raped her.
Their relationship is irrelevant	The fact that they are in a relationship is irrelevant to the fact that he took advantage of her intoxicated state.
Responsibility of Lucy	Lucy should still be responsible for her actions while drunk in terms of consenting or saying no or she should not get herself so drunk in the first place.
Lucy should trust her partner	Lucy should trust that Eddie would not harm her due to their relationship despite the fact she cannot remember consenting. Some participants stated that if Eddie was a stranger however and not her fiancée then it should be classed as sexual assault.

Appendix 11: #MeToo tweets

Identified theme	Explanation
Victim blaming	Elements of accusations implicating women's responsibility in their own sexual assaults in the form of women speaking about their experiences of being blamed or others taking about how they would blame women.
Women overexaggerating/ making false accusations	Slight overlap with victim blaming in the sense of not believing the full extent of the sexual assault, that they overexaggerate their experiences and also overstating the prominence of false accusations.

Normalisation through culture	Tweets in this section identified modern culture as detrimental to women in that sexual assault is normalised so at times, they are unable to identify it but when they do, they are unable to report it due to it not being taken seriously. It is the 'norm'.
'Trial by social media'	This theme involved a sense of superiority in knowledge over the legal system in the author of the tweet believing their views about a certain case, the victim and the perpetrator are correct before there has been a verdict from a trial.
NTE	Mentions of sexual assaults occurring in the NTE particularly being touched in night clubs without permission. Experiences of this were shared by both men and women.
Male experiences	This theme involved men sharing their experiences of when they have been sexually assaulted, often with empathetic undertones to the #MeToo movement.
Women's fear	Women explaining the precautions they have to take in everyday situations so they are not attacked and their fear around the possibility of this. The purpose of these tweets seemed to be trying to educate men on the gender differences they seem to be blind to.
The negative effect of #MeToo	This theme included people being opposed to #MeToo due to it deflecting from the seriousness of sexual assaults and focusing on the more trivial everyday incidents. There were also arguments in that it gives a platform for those wanting to make false accusations and receive support without evidence. Overlap with 'trial by social media'.
Abuse of supporters and survivors	Some tweets in this theme were abusive directly to survivors for example calling them 'sluts' while some tweets accused #MeToo as being a 'political weapon' with people making false accusations for political gain particularly in the Ford and Kavanaugh case.
Empowerment	Much of the tweets in this theme involved individuals expressing gratitude to survivors for speaking out about their story, for being brave and encouraging others to do the same.
Creation of more victims	The tweets in this theme spoke of how the #MeToo movement just encouraged the creation of more victims through 'twisting' for example, regretted sex into rape/sexual assault and the fact that the movement is not about helping victims but about creating more.