

The rise of the Ladette

With recent studies concluding that 85% of girls drink, another 50% smoke and 1/5 take drugs, making them more likely than boys to participate in anti social behaviour, comes the confirmation that Britain's 'Ladette' culture is spreading.

For those who have yet to encounter a 'Ladette' then read this.... The urbandictionary defines a 'Ladette' as "a young woman who behaves in a confident and noisy way, who drinks alcohol and may enjoy activities; traditionally enjoyed by men". By these activities they surely mean sport and promiscuous sex which are openly discussed between men and seen as an acceptable activity for a *man* to traditionally engage in.

However, when you consider the definition of 'Ladette' you will probably conjure up a different image, perhaps more extreme pictures than the ones the definition focuses on. You may think of binge drinking, girls falling over in the street with their bodies on display or teenage girls in town poured into tracksuits labelled 'Trans gender'. Whichever way you imagine a 'Ladette' it is safe to say that the feeling towards them is never positive. What positive point could we make about them, apart from perhaps the fact that they are practising equality by assuming 'male' traits and enjoying themselves in a detrimental way? Therefore with such a negative perception, we should feel that this is a worrying development and that women should not be acting this way. One main reason being, drinking to excess and flaunting themselves is dangerous. So where did this culture come from and why are girls behaving this way?

Some believe that this culture has been around for about ten years now, however in the 1990's there was only 'Lad' culture and women were yet to have joined in! This 'Lad' culture began as a way of young men being able to redefine what being a man really means, by following simple rules.

The rules of course were to drink pints of lager, watch football and eat kebabs, to name a few. It seemed as if the 'Lad' culture was about being part of a male group and feeling like a 'real man', however it could also be linked with the lack of pressure to settle down and earning enough to think of themselves only. This in some strange way seems so much more acceptable, for a man to do these things. It is like we expect men to behave this way and its part of being a lad, for example they are encouraged to 'sow their wild oats' and not to become 'tied down'. Today, with the use of these expressions we are practising a negative view on marriage and family life. However not always have young men been encouraged to act this way. In the past, they too were expected to have a good job, a family and settle down. Perhaps it is because many men did this and still had a good time but now without as much family pressure they can enjoy themselves more and don't need to suffer the pain caused by responsibility!

This 90's culture could have possibly developed into 'Ladette' culture due to women feeling as if they should enjoy themselves as they also have less responsibility. The culture has evolved to the next level which some say has been born as a backlash of feminism. This means that women have realised that they have more power today, they are continuing to gain equal rights and so want to act the way they can and the way men do. The women in the 90's who pioneered 'Ladette' culture were surely aware of the 'Lad' culture around them and must have decided it was a good idea. It seems they wanted a slice of the action.

Decades ago it was unacceptable for a woman to go out and socialise, instead most women were married at twenty so didn't have the opportunity to drink and flirt like the women today. Also this was looked down upon, a woman's role was clearly defined as the housewife and child bearer. They were not taught equally to boys and in contrast had to learn to cook and clean from a young age and were also discouraged from achieving.

In today's society women have to compete with men for jobs, something, which undoubtedly, puts pressure on them. Therefore behaving as the boys do makes them feel more empowered and in a position to succeed.

The fact that women are rightly acknowledged as equals to men has perhaps made them feel as if they should take part in the same activities. In society people tend not to complain about a woman enjoying a drink and watching football but these women can't be labelled 'Ladettes' in truth. Those women who are now behaving worse than males in the streets by drinking and flirting dangerously are causing the problem for themselves and those who have to watch it. Another worrying factor is that the culture is not only seen in pubs or in night-clubs in over 18's but the example that is being set has spread to teenage girls who drink on street corners and put themselves into compromising positions weekly. This is alarming!

However the increased independence and equal rights is not at all a negative aspect of society. In fact, quite the opposite, times have changed and women are being appreciated the way they should in terms of personal rights. It is fair to say that almost no woman would want the lifestyle of a 1950's housewife, no job, no social life and little independence. However this doesn't mean that women should feel compelled to behave like a man and a defined line between male and female behaviour is needed.

Today it seems as if it's uncool to stand against women behaving how they want, but its time we looked at the problems clearly. There is nothing wrong with a girl/women going out with their friends for a good time but it's frightening to see someone so drunk they cannot walk or who is shouting and screaming. Their vulnerability can only lead them into trouble.

One large problem that could be linked to 'Ladette' culture is the danger to the girls' health. In a survey conducted at various schools under Professor Colin Pritchard, it was found that nearly a third of girls in their early teenage years admitted to binge drinking. The survey also proved that both boys and girls are drinking more alcohol on a regular basis, 68% of boys and an astonishing 85% of girls. This compares to around 50% for each in 1985. The excessive intake of alcohol is extremely scary and questions where they are actually drinking and if they are with people they can trust. As for the health matter, it is thought that liver damage is now commonly seen in 20year olds that in the past wasn't apparent until around 60 or 70.

Smoking has also increased in teenagers, figures show that the number of girls who smoke has risen to 50% whilst boys who smoke has decreased to 25%. This poses another health threat and also demonstrates how girls are becoming worse than boys are and proves the backlash to traditional feminism is there.

This sort of behaviour is often associated with problems such as unwanted pregnancy and means that girls are under high risk when drunk and trying to impress others. Britain actually has the worst rates of teenage pregnancy with around 38,690 conceptions of under 18's. With the rise of 'Ladette' culture in the 90's these figures have increased. This must have something to do with the fact that girls are befriending themselves with groups of boys, joining in with drinking and are under pressure to 'perform'. Also the idea that a 'Ladette' is promiscuous and not really choosy with men suggests that they are jumping into bed with them, regarding sex as something

very casual rather than something which used to be seen as expression for a person you love. The girls are then realising the consequences when they never see the father again and are carrying his child.

It is important to discuss that it is not just the boys who are pressurising them but their female friends too. They are adding pressure on them to follow the same direction of other girls as the culture includes all the cool things to be doing. Therefore they are pressured into acting like other and dressing like others in order to fit into the times.

The question is now, how long will it last? Maybe in years to come it will have phased out, or maybe it will have progressed. Either way the culture can't be changed, it's the result of many factors and won't go away as long as it is cool. It isn't entirely possible to label someone a 'Ladette' or a 'girlie girl' in terms of personality but the two lifestyles are different and there is one I personally prefer. I can't say imitating a man is right but using equality in whatever way women can is important. That is only if the boundary isn't over stepped.