

OBJECT Charter on Women and the Media.

A recent review into the sexualisation of young people, conducted by Dr Linda Papadopoulos and commissioned by the Home Office, highlights the extent to which women and girls are increasingly sexualised and objectified in the media and the harmful effects this 'pornification' has on society.

Pornification is clearly damaging to the self-esteem and aspirations of women and girls, with research finding that 63% of teenage girls want to be glamour models and 25% see being a lap dancer as their ideal profession¹, that 66% of teenage girls would consider plastic surgery² and that pressures to become sexualised has led to girls across all social strata reporting mental disorders at a rate of 44% - making them the most depressed section of the population³.

Pornification further impacts on how boys and men are encouraged to view and treat women, with far-reaching implications for gender inequality and violence against women in the home – where 2 women are murdered each week by male partners⁴, in the work place – where women earn an average of 23% less than men⁵, and in Parliament – where 80% of MPs are male⁶.

The links between pornification, discrimination and violence against women are recognised at the international level by the legally binding United Nations Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which has repeatedly called on states – including the British Government - to take action against the objectification of women⁷. Similarly the UK-based End Violence Against Women coalition has called on the UK Government to tackle the sexualisation of women and girls because it provides a 'conducive context' for violence against women⁸.

These obligations require an overhaul of media regulation and a move away from inadequate self-regulatory voluntary guidelines over the portrayal of women and girls in the media.

As a signatory of the Charter, I commit to:

1. Recognising the need for a socially responsible media with respect to the sexual objectification of women and girls.
2. Supporting a mechanism (such as an All Party Parliamentary Group) to review current media portrayal of women and recommend a process for change to achieve a socially responsible media
3. Ensuring that codes for the sale and display of lads' mags and The Sport are made mandatory so that these publications are covered and placed on the top shelf and are either regulated in the same manner as Teen Girl magazines or age-restricted.
4. Seeking an end to the advertising of sexual services in newspapers and other mainstream media.
5. Calling for an end to the advertising of sex industry jobs in Government job centres

To sign up to the OBJECT Charter email anna@object.org.uk.

¹ http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/161/161338_naked_ambition_rubs_off_on_teen_girls.html

² mykindaplace.com survey of 1,800 teenage girls, 2005

³ Sweeting H, Young R, West P. GHQ increases among Scottish 15 year olds 1987-2006. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 2009; **44**:579-86.

⁴ Homicide Statistics, 1998

⁵ Banyard, K. (2010) The Equality Illusion: The Truth About Women and Men Today

⁶ www.parliament.uk

⁷ 1979 Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Article 5

⁸ Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations: An Integrated Strategy to End Violence Against Women (EVAW) 2008