

OBJECT Charter on Women and the Media.

British culture represents an ever-increasing sexualisation and objectification of women and girls in the media, linked to a growing mainstreaming of the pornography and sex industries in popular culture.

This 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 positive obligations require an overhaul of media regulation to move away from inadequate self-regulatory voluntary guidelines and towards introducing statutory gender-based codes and an independent body responsible for regulating the portrayal of women and girls in the media.

As a signatory of the Charter, we commit to:

1. Support OBJECT's aims of challenging the objectification of women and girls in the media.
2. Address the need to move beyond voluntary codes and self-regulation of the media which are clearly ineffective in promoting gender equality.
3. Work towards establishing independent regulation for the media with statutory codes based on principles of gender equality as defined by CEDAW (1979).
4. Support 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 and an independent body responsible for regulating the portrayal of women and girls in the media and popular culture.
5. Ensure that the voluntary code for the sale and display of lads' mags and The Sport is made mandatory so that lads' mags and The Sport are covered and placed on the top shelf and that they are either regulated in the same manner as Teen Girl magazines, or, if not age-restricted.
6. Ban the advertising of sexual services in newspapers, leaflets, cards (such as those in telephone boxes), or on radio, television, computer, telephone, fax or photography.

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