

**OBJECT's response to the Bailey Review on the Commercialisation
and Sexualisation of Childhood
(Industry and Wider Stakeholder Version)**

OBJECT's response is endorsed by the following NGOs and human rights organisations:

Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis www.rapecrisiscentre-argyll-bute.org.uk

Eva, Women's Aid www.eva.org.uk

Feminist Webs www.feministwebs.com

London Feminist Network www.feministwebs.com

Million Women Rise www.millionwomenrise.com

Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Project www.ndvf.org.uk

NUS Women's Campaign www.nus.org.uk/Campaigns/Womens

Rape Crisis England and Wales www.rapecrisis.org.uk

RESPECT www.respect.uk.net

Rights of Women www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

Safe Exit www.toynbeehall.org.uk

South Essex Rape and Incest crisis Centre (SERICC) www.sericc.org.uk

South Leeds Community Radio www.southleedscommunityradio.org.uk

Welsh Women's Aid www.welshwomensaid.org

White Ribbon Campaign www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk

Women in Prison www.womeninprison.org.uk

Department for
Education

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Reason for confidentiality:

Name

Organisation (if applicable) OBJECT

Address:

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the call for evidence you can telephone: 0370 000 2288 or e-mail: bailey.review@education.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk

Please select ONE box that best describes you as a respondent:

PLEASE NOTE, IF YOU ARE RESPONDING AS A PARENT, THERE IS A SEPARATE CALL FOR EVIDENCE. YOU CAN ACCESS THIS FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S e-CONSULTATION WEBSITE:

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<input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturer	<input type="checkbox"/> Retailer	<input type="checkbox"/> Broadcaster
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet/Telecoms Provider	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertising/Marketing Company	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Regulator/Body
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional/Trade Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Children and Young People's Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/> Education Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Government Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) x

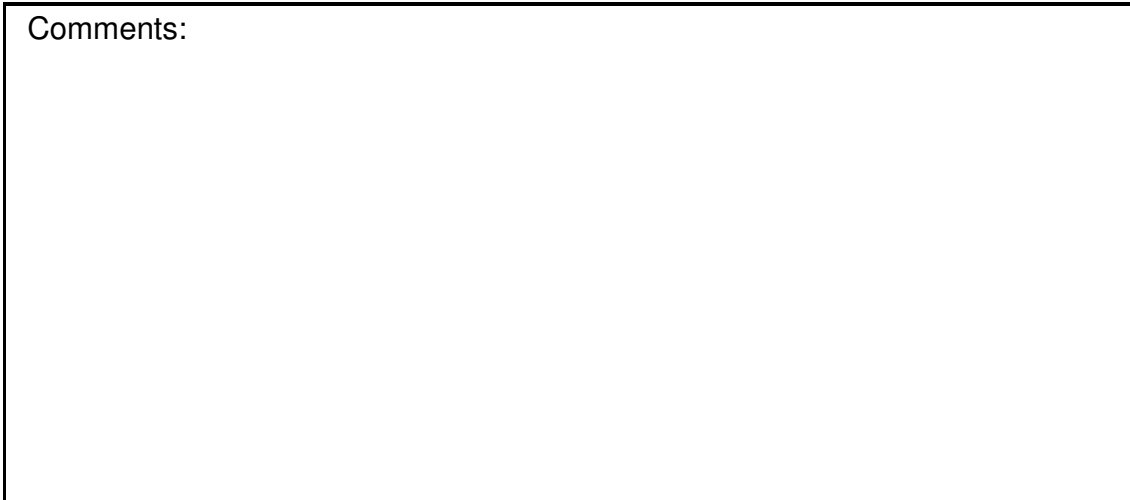
OBJECT is an award winning human rights organisation which challenges the sexual objectification of women and girls because of the harmful effects sexualisation has on the self esteem and aspirations of women and girls and the negative impact it has on promoting the attitudes and behaviours which underpin and legitimise male violence. www.object.org.uk

SECTION 1: FOR INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS ONLY

Questions about your business or industry

1 To what extent do you think parents are concerned about how your business, and your industry more widely, impacts on children and young people?

Comments:



2 If you think that parents are concerned, what do you think their key concerns are in respect of your business and industry?

Comments:



3 How does your business and/or industry seek to understand further parents' concerns? Please give specific examples of work you have done, or are doing, in this area.

Comments:

4 Currently, how does your business and/or industry respond to the concerns of parents, children and young people? Please provide specific examples where possible.

Comments:

5 Is there more that either your business or your industry more widely could do to respond to the concerns of parents, children and young people in relation to your industry?

Comments:

6 Is there more that anyone else (Government, other industry groups, regulators, educators, parents etc) could do to respond to parental concerns in relation to your industry?

Comments:

7 Do you have any examples of good practice in terms of how your business and/or industry is responding to the concerns of parents and children? Please give details.

Comments:

SECTION 2: FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

General

8 a) The following factors are sometimes said to put pressure on children to grow up too quickly. Which factors do you think have the most influence on children, if any? (tick all that apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sexual images (e.g. TV, films and advertising)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Advertising and marketing aimed at children	<input type="checkbox"/>	Peer pressure
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Seeing inappropriate things on the internet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The things that celebrities like pop stars and actors do	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	None of these				

The sexualisation of women and girls in the media and popular culture is increasingly prevalent across many forms of media, from television, video games, the internet, film, advertising and clothing to products, animated cartoons, magazines and news and it is affecting girls at younger and younger ages. The growing pressure on girls and young women to be sexualised is linked to the continued mainstreaming of the sex industry and the 'pornification of culture'.

A growing body of research has firmly linked the sexual objectification of women and girls to a negative effect on individual health and well-being, with increased sexualisation leading to severe dissatisfaction over body image and self-esteem; high rates of eating disorders among women and girls; rising levels of women turning to plastic surgery; increased incidences of sexual bullying and damaging sexual relations between young people.

A recent review into the sexualisation of young people, conducted by Dr Linda Papadopoulos and commissioned by the previous government, 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.

The sexual objectification of women is also linked to the promotion and reinforcement of sexist attitudes – via exposure to media which overwhelmingly contains gender stereotyping and affects perceptions of all women. This has significant overlap with racism via the objectification of women according to their ethnicity.

Finally, a large body of evidence demonstrates the connection between the sexualisation of women in the media and popular culture with violence against women.

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 women and girls¹. 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 women and girls².

Gender

8 b) Do you think these pressures...

Affect boys and girls equally?

x None of these

x Affect girls more?

Affect boys more?

Comments:

'Sex object culture' is frequently described as a generic 'sexualisation of society', in which sexualised imagery is increasingly prevalent³. However closer analysis reveals that it is in fact heavily gendered – with women and girls disproportionately portrayed as sexual objects. Images stemming from pornography and the sex industry dominate the representation of women and this has been termed 'the pornification of culture' by leading academics⁴.

The sexualisation and commercialisation of young people involves the sexual objectification of women and girls and the conditioning of boys and men to act out a version of masculinity in which sexual dominance over women and girls is normal and acceptable. This is the kind of masculinity we see peddled in lads' mags for example, in which teenage boys are told that 'all women fantasize about being raped' and are instructed on how to pressure their girlfriends into porn, or advised to set fire to their girlfriend's pubic hair when she asleep. (See OBJECT's content analysis of lads' mags for more examples of the contempt that runs through them, the direct links to prostitution and hardcore

¹ 1979 Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Article 5

² Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations: An Integrated Strategy to End Violence Against Women (EVAW) 2008

³ For example Attwood, F., Brunt, R & Cere, R (Eds) *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualization of Western Culture*. London and New York: I.B. Taurus

⁴ Eg. Gill, R (2007) Gill, Rosalind (2007) *Supersexualize Me! Advertising and 'the midriffs'*. Chapter prepared for Attwood, F., Bunter & Carer (Eds) *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualisation of Western Culture*. London and New York: I.B. Taurus

pornography, and the ways in which issues like rape, trafficking, incest and child abuse are trivialized).

Therefore, both girls and boys are affected by this 'sex object culture' but in very different ways. Girls are on the receiving end of the sexism, discrimination and violence that this culture promotes and condones, whilst ordinary boys and men are groomed to act out.

Below are some further examples of the harms associated with 'sex object culture':

At the individual level gendered sexualisation has extensive negative effects and undermines body self-esteem and confidence in both women and girls.

This manifests itself via:

- Constant monitoring of appearance – studies show that women and girls face intense pressure to maintain extracting 'beauty' standards. This often results in Body Dysmorphic Disorder and appearance anxiety⁵ and is affecting women and girls at an increasingly young age. In 2007 the Girl Guiding Association (in collaboration with BEAT Eating Disorder Charity) interviewed girls aged between 7- 10 years and found that many reported serious dissatisfaction with their appearance and weight⁶.
- Eating disorders – BEAT reports that eating disorders disproportionately affect women with between 4% and 20% of young women practising unhealthy eating patterns of dieting, bingeing and purge eating⁷. According to BEAT eating disorders are as common amongst young women as autism⁸. Numerous studies have linked the increased sexualisation of women as sexual objects to the rising incidence of eating disorders⁹.
- Plastic surgery – increasing numbers of women and girls are turning to plastic surgery as a shortcut to fulfilling dominant beauty ideals, which

⁵ Fredrickson, B. L., Roberts, T., Noll, S. M., Quinn, D. M., & Twenge, J.M. (1998). That swimsuit becomes you: Sex differences in self-objectification, restrained eating, and math performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 269-284; McKinley, N. M. (1999). Women and objectified body consciousness: Mothers' and daughters' body experiences in cultural, developmental, and familial context. *Developmental Psychology*, 35, 760-769; Tiggemann, M., & Slater, A. (2001). A test of objectification theory in former dancers and non-dancers. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25, 57-64

⁶ See Girl Guiding Association (2007) *Girls Shout Out: Self Esteem – Under Ten and Under Pressure?*

⁷ See <http://www.b-eat.co.uk/PressMediaInformation/FAQsoneatingdisorders>

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Abramson, E., & Valene, P. (1991). Media use, dietary restraint, bulimia, and attitudes toward obesity: A preliminary study. *British Review of Bulimia and Anorexia Nervosa*, 5, 73-76.; Harrison, K. (2000). The body electric: Thin-ideal media and eating disorders in adolescents. *Journal of Communication*, 50, 119-143;

Stice, E., & Shaw, H. (2003). Prospective relations of body image, eating, and affective disturbances to smoking onset in adolescent girls: How Virginia slims. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71, 129-135; Thomsen, S. R., Weber, M. M., & Brown, L. B. (2002). The relationship between reading beauty and fashion magazines and the use of pathogenic dieting methods among adolescent females. *Adolescence*, 37, 1-18

frequently stem from pornography. The UK tops the table for plastic surgery spending in Europe¹⁰ - most of which is spent by women and girls. At the peak of the lads' mags magazine boom in 2005/6 the number of breast augmentations carried out in the UK increased by 150%¹¹.

Sexuality

Emerging evidence suggests the sexualisation of women and girls has negative effects on the ability to develop healthy sexuality¹². Studies have shown that self-objectification on the part of young women often leads to weakened sexual assertiveness¹³. At the same time young people increasingly learn about sexual relationships through the media and from pornography, as shown in a 2003 study carried out by Institute of Education which found that 66% of young people reported the media as their primary source of information on sex and relationships¹⁴. Researchers argue this is "reinforcing the views of many young men that women are always available for sex"¹⁵.

A 2005 study of 2,081 young people in Rochdale also found that pornography influences young men's expectations of sexual relationships, "lead[ing] to pressure on young women to comply" and grooming young men and boys to expect sexual acts normalised in pornography¹⁶.

This is linked to evidence that sexual bullying / harassment is increasingly a problem in UK educational institutions, as demonstrated by the WOMANKIND project *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives* - which reported "an alarming prevalence of attitudes which reinforce violent behaviours" as well as gender stereotyping¹⁷.

The links must be made between these occurrences and the sexualisation of women and girls in our media and popular culture – as demonstrated by a 2007 report from the Independent Advisory Group on Sexual Health and HIV

¹⁰ <http://www.cosmeticsurgerybible.com/2008/news/uk-tops-table-for-european-cosmetic-surgery-spending/>

¹¹ <http://www.marketresearchworld.net/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=777&Itemid=>

¹² American Psychological Association (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls*

¹³ Impett, E. A., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. L. (2006). To be seen and not heard: Femininity ideology and adolescent girls' sexual health. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 21, 628-646.

¹⁴ Buckingham and Bragg (2003) *Young people, media and personal relationships*, Institute of Education

¹⁵ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1116554/Could-teenage-boys-lessons-porn.html>

¹⁶ Redgrave, K. & Limmer, M., (2005) *'It makes you more up for it': School aged young people's perspectives on alcohol and sexual health* Rochdale Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

¹⁷ <http://www.womankind.org.uk/uk-schools.html>

(IAGSHH), which identified the sexualisation of toys and product advertising as direct influences on young people's sexual behaviour and values¹⁸.

Sexism

Research shows that frequent, regular exposure to content which sexually objectifies women and girls is linked to the development of sexist attitudes and the acceptance of traditional masculine ideologies, including the objectification of women¹⁹. This research has also shown that sexually objectifying content is connected to acceptance of gender role stereotyping and attitudes of entitlement in sexual relationships.

Academic research has found that exposure to sexually objectifying material of women affects people's perceptions or judgements of other women – in ways which again reinforce sexist attitudes²⁰.

In its review of the literature on this topic, the American Psychological Association states that "*overall it is argued that exposure to sexualised depictions of women may lead to global thoughts that women are seductive and frivolous sex objects... and foster an overall climate that does not value girls' and women's voices or contributions to society*"²¹.

A society in which a dominant message is that female worth comes primarily from physical appearance is one in which female aspirations are likely to reflect this. For example surveys in the UK have found that a high proportion of young women aspire to work as 'glamour models' or lap dancers²². The American Psychological Association links the sexualisation of women in media and popular culture to such aspirations²³.

¹⁸ Independent Advisory Group on Sexual Health and HIV (2007) *Sex, Drugs, Alcohol and Young People: A review of the impact drugs and alcohol have on young people's sexual behaviour* London, Department of Health.

¹⁹ Strouse, J. S., Goodwin, M. P., & Roscoe, B. (1994). Correlates of attitudes toward sexual harassment among early adolescents. *Sex Roles, 31*, 559-577; Ward, L.M., & Averitt, L. (2005, November). *Associations between media use and young adults' perceptions of first intercourse*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, Boston; Ward, L.M., & Friedman, K. (2006). Using TV as a guide: Associations between television viewing and adolescents' sexual attitudes and behavior. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 16*, 133-156.

²⁰ Hansen, C. H., & Hansen, R. D. (1988). How rock music videos can change what is seen when boy meets girl: Priming stereotypic appraisal of social interactions. *Sex Roles, 19*, 287-316; Gan, S., Zillmann, D., & Mitrook, M. (1997). Stereotyping effect of Black women's sexual rap on White audiences. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 19*, 381-399.

²¹ American Psychological Association (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls* p.32

²² mykindaplace.com survey of 1,800 teenage girls, 2005

²³ American Psychological Association (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls* p.33

Racism

The sexualisation and objectification of women is often constructed around ethnicity lines– with much imagery promoting a white hyper-sexualised ideal that fails to represent the diversity of UK women.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic group women have historically suffered stereotypes that focus on their sexuality and bodies – resulting in dominant stereotypes surrounding their sexual attitudes, beliefs and behaviour²⁴.

This has been amplified by the mainstreaming of pornography into mainstream culture, increasing the prevalence of porn stereotypes such as black women portrayed in ways which signal animalistic sexuality and women of Asian origin being portrayed as sexually submissive²⁵.

Violence

A significant body of research exists which demonstrates the links between the increased sexualisation of women and girls, mainstreaming of pornography and violence towards women.

Studies have linked stereotypical attitudes about women's sexuality (for example acceptance of rape myths / sexist beliefs about women/ adversarial sexual beliefs) to aggressive sexual behaviour²⁶. A growing body of evidence has also joined the dots between media exposure to sexist beliefs and acceptance of violence against women²⁷. Analysis has shown that adults exposed to sexually objectifying images of women from mainstream media are significantly more accepting of rape myths, sexual harassment, gender role

²⁴ Hill Collins, P. (2004). *Black sexual politics: African-Americans, gender and the new racism*. New York: Routledge; Greene, B. (2000). African American lesbian and bisexual women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 239-250; Hurtado, A. (2003). Negotiating the color line. In A. Hurtado (Ed.), *Voicing Chicana feminisms: Young women speak out on sexuality and identity* (pp. 176-197). New York: New York University Press.

²⁵ Gill, R (2007) *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press p.79

²⁶ Dean, K. E., & Malamuth, N. M. (1997). Characteristics women who aggress sexually and of men who imagine aggressing: Risk and moderating variables. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 449-455; Murnen, S. K., Wright, C., & Kaluzny, G. (2002). If "boys will be boys," then girls will be victims? A meta-analytic review of the research that relates masculine ideology to sexual aggression. *Sex Roles*, 46, 359-375; Osland, J. A., Fitch, M., & Willis, E. E. (1996). Likelihood to rape in college males. *Sex Roles*, 35, 171-183; Spence, J.T., Losoff, M., & Robbins, A. S. (1991). Sexually aggressive tactics in dating relationships: Personality and attitudinal correlates. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 10, 289-304; Truman, D. M., Tokar, D.M., & Fischer, A. R. (1996). Dimensions of masculinity: Relations to date rape, supportive attitudes, and sexual aggression in dating situations. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74, 555-562; Vogel, B. L. (2000). Correlates of pre-college males' sexual aggression: Attitudes, beliefs and behavior. *Women and Criminal Justice*, 11, 25-47.

²⁷ American Psychological Association (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls*

stereotypes, inter-personal violence than those who were in controlled conditions²⁸.

The acceptance of male violence against women and indeed the placing of blame on the female victim, rather than the male perpetrator, is reflected in general public opinion. For example a 2005 Amnesty International Poll found that 1 in 3 people believed a woman was partly to blame for sexual violence committed against her if she had been drinking or wearing revealing clothing²⁹. A 2009 poll for the Home Office recently found similar results³⁰ – suggesting that such attitudes are deeply entrenched in cultural beliefs.

In the U.S., the 1986 Attorney General Commission (known as the Meese Commission) found a causal relationship between exposure to violent pornography and acts of sexualised violence against women³¹.

The transcripts of the public hearings on Ordinances to add Pornography as Discrimination Against Women in Minneapolis (1983) contain evidence from a range of expert witnesses and survivors of abuse about the links with sexual violence and the socialisation processes for men created by pornography³². Malamuth et al's research (1984) demonstrated that men who watched pornography indicated a subsequent willingness to force women into sexual acts if they thought that such actions would not be punished³³.

Boeringer (1994) found a strong likelihood of coercing women into sexual acts with use of pornography featuring rape and sexual violence³⁴. Zillman and Bryant's research (1988) and experimental work demonstrated that exposure to 'non-violent' pornography led to men developing 'callousness' towards women and a trivialisation of rape³⁵. Allen et al (1995)'s analysis of research on the

²⁸ Kalof, L. (1999). The effects of gender and music video imagery on sexual attitudes. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 139, 378-385; Lanis, K., & Covell, K. (1995). Images of women in advertisements: Effects on attitudes related to sexual aggression. *Sex Roles*, 32, 639-649; MacKay, N. L., & Covell, K. (1997). The impact of women in advertisements on attitudes toward women. *Sex Roles*, 36, 573-583; Milburn, M., Mather, R., & Conrad, S. (2000). The effects of viewing R-rated movie scenes that objectify women on perceptions of date rape. *Sex Roles*, 43, 645-664; Ward, L.M. (2002). Does television exposure affect emerging adults' attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationships? Correlational and experimental confirmation. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 31, 1-15.

²⁹ Amnesty International UK (2005) *Sexual Assault Research*: http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=16618

³⁰ See <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/violence-against-women-poll?view=Binary>

³¹ Akdeniz, Y (1997) "Governance of Pornography and Child Pornography on the Global Internet: A Multi-Layered Approach," in Edwards, L and Waelde, C eds, *Law and the Internet: Regulating Cyberspace*, Hart Publishing

³² Everywoman (1988) *Pornography and Sexual Violence: Evidence of the Links* London: Everywoman

³³ Hunter, C (2000) The Dangers of Porn? A Review of the Effects Literature @ www.asc.upenn.edu/usr/chunter/porn_effects.html

³⁴ Malamuth, N.M (2000) Pornography and Sexual Aggression: Are there reliable effects and can we understand them?

In *Annual Review of Sex Research* 2000 p.11

³⁵ Hunter, C (2000) The Dangers of Porn? A Review of the Effects Literature @ www.asc.upenn.edu/usr/chunter/porn_effects.html 24/10/05

effects of pornography found a significant correlation between exposure to pornography and actual sexual aggression, as well as attitudes supporting sexual aggression³⁶.

In a summary of research in 2000, Neil Malamuth concluded that “*Meta-analyses of the experimental literature show that exposure to both non-violent and violent pornography affects both aggressive attitudes and behaviours, and that violent pornography does so to a greater degree*”³⁷.

The American Psychological Association has also raised concerns about the effect of both the sexualisation of girls and the sexualisation of women as girls (for example in advertising and pornography) on the incidence of child sexual abuse – which is known to disproportionately affect women³⁸.

The sexualisation of women and ‘pornification’ of culture also harms boys and men who are pressurised to act out a version of ‘being a man’ in which power over women is normal. The effect is demonstrated by the fact that only 8% of rapes are stranger rapes³⁹. The vast majority of rape is carried out by women’s current or former partners. This means that it is ‘ordinary’ boys and men who are committing sexually violent crimes. Men and boys face intense pressure to ‘need sex all the time’ and this has a damaging impact on the development of attitudes to sex and relationships⁴⁰.

Corporate Social Responsibility

9 In general, do you think that businesses (e.g. retailers, manufacturers, broadcasters, advertisers, internet providers etc.) are responsive to and responsible with regard to the concerns of parents and children? Please give examples.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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³⁶ Malamuth, N.M (2000) Pornography and Sexual Aggression: Are there reliable effects and can we understand them?

In Annual Review of Sex Research 2000 p.11

³⁷ Malamuth, N.M (2000) Pornography and Sexual Aggression: Are there reliable effects and can we understand them?

In Annual Review of Sex Research 2000 p.11

³⁸ American Psychological Association (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls*

³⁹ *Just representation? Press reporting and the reality of rape* (2008) Eaves Housing for Women

⁴⁰ Paul, P (2005) *Pornified: How Pornography is Damaging Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families*. US: Owl Books

Comments:

There have been some positive examples of corporate responsibility in this area. For example, recently a number of leading supermarket chains and BP petrol station shops agreed to cover up lads' mags and put them on the top shelf. This is a result of years of campaigning in which groups and individuals called on retailers to adhere to their voluntary codes of practice in relation to the sale and display of sexually explicit materials. However, not all retailers have followed suit – most notably of absence is WH Smith, the largest distributor of so-called 'soft porn'.

Another positive example is the pledge made by some leading retailers who signed up to the Mumsnet 'Let Girls be Girls campaign' to stop selling products which directly sexualise young girls. However, again, this has not been comprehensive and there are no guarantees that policies will be adhered to in the future.

In relation to advertisers, broadcasters, internet service providers, the situation has been far less promising with parents and women's groups constantly complaining that their concerns are not being taken seriously or acted upon by regulatory bodies.

Public Space - Physical Environment

10 Thinking about the public space (streets, public transport, shopping and leisure areas), do you think that children are exposed inappropriately to things of a too commercial or sexual nature? If you answered yes, please explain why giving specific examples where possible.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

The sale and display of lads' mags and newspapers like the Daily Sport or the Star at child height in WH Smith, newsagents, and until recently leading supermarkets, is an example of children being exposed to images directly stemming from pornography on a daily basis. This exposure of pornification further takes place through advertising, television, film, and music videos.

One particularly concerning example has been the proliferation of lap dancing clubs on our high streets, the resulting behaviour which takes place outside strip clubs, and the advertisements which accompany this mainstreaming of the sex industry.

In response to a consultation into the licensing of strip clubs in the London Borough of Hackney, hundreds of women responded regarding the negative impact that currently existing clubs have on their sense of safety, referring to increased levels of sexual harassment and assault that takes place outside the clubs. This is reflected in advice issued by the Royal Institute of Town Planning, which has called for women's views to be sought in all lap dancing applications, in view of evidence showing "*that in certain locations, lap dancing and exotic dancing clubs make women feel threatened or uncomfortable*"⁴¹. Many parents also referred to the negative impact these clubs have on their children. Some examples included:

'I am the mother of 3 young boys – a 3 (nearly 4) year old, and one year old twins. We pass advertising hoardings for lap dancing clubs like Spearmint Rhino when we are going about our daily business...My 3 year old notices everything around him.

What sense is he meant to make of the explicit posters which are designed to be sexually provocative and which so comprehensively degrade and dehumanise women? Does he begin to see women differently? Or does he compartmentalise that there is another group of women, not really like the ones he knows? Either way, regardless of all other input his experience of what women are is tainted. What happens to the slightly older children who can read the degrading messages? And the teenagers who are beginning to explore their own sexuality?

And what should I do as a mother? Start talking to him about the sexual oppression of women at the age of 3? Ignore the images and hope he doesn't mention them, although I know he sees them? I want my boys to grow up respecting women and girls. These establishments and their advertising undermine this.'

⁴¹ Royal Town Planning Institute Good Practice Note 7: Gender and Spatial Planning, December 2007 www.rtpi.org.uk

And:

'When I take my daughter swimming on the weekends, she asks me to make sure that we leave before nightfall. Our route from the swimming pool to the train takes us past several lap dancing clubs, and although my daughter has no idea of what is going, she finds the atmosphere frightening.'

The mainstreaming of the sex industry fits directly into the pornification of popular culture – a culture in which women are increasingly portrayed as sexual objects and judged primarily on the basis of how attractive they are⁴². This has a negative impact on the levels of respect that women and girls can expect to receive and grooms men and boys to treat women and girls as sexual objects.

The mainstreaming process has also served to normalise prostitution, lap dancing and other related activities⁴³ - making the harm of commercial sexual exploitation invisible and glamorising the sex industries which leads to teenage girls aspiring to be glamour models or lap dancers (see above) despite the inherent harms of these industries on the women involved (see OBJECT fact sheets and testimonies on prostitution and lap dancing for further information)

Public Space - Virtual Environment

11 Thinking about broadcasting and the internet, do you think that current measures to protect children from exposure to inappropriately commercialised or sexualised content and advertising are effective and sufficient? If no, please give specific examples of where you think there are weaknesses.

Yes

No

Not Sure

⁴² Gill, Rosalind(2008), Open University, Speech at launch of Stripping the Illusion campaign launch, House of Commons 22.04.08

⁴³ Coy, Maddy; Hovarth, Miranda; Kelly, Liz (2007) *'It's just like going to the Supermarket: Men buying sex in East London'*, London Metropolitan University, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, report produced for Safe Exit at Toynbee Hall.

Comments:

Most forms of media in the UK, including advertising, are **self-regulated** and not subject to any specific statutory controls on their content or activities. OFCOM, the electronic communications regulator, does regulate radio and broadcasting content and has powers to impose penalties. However, despite being bound to the Gender Equality Duty 2007, OFCOM has not currently undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment of its work and its extensive Broadcasting Code contains only one single reference to gender⁴⁴.

In relation to print media there is a **voluntary 1 page** code relating to sexist materials such as lads' mags⁴⁵. However this was drawn up by the retail industry (with no public consultation), contains no monitoring or evaluation or powers to impose penalties and is framed in terms of 'sexually explicit' material, therefore containing **no gender analysis**. The press ostensibly regulates itself through the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) – however the PCC contains no powers with which to impose penalties for breaches of its own equal opportunity codes. And regulation of the internet is minimal. Moreover, concerns relating to the sexualisation of women tend to be judged by media regulators solely on the grounds of obscenity, indecency or privacy⁴⁶.

In short, we have no effective policy to address the sexualisation of women and girls in the media and popular culture – despite a range of international and domestic obligations (see below). This is concerning considering the gravity of the situation.

The unbalanced and stereotyped portrayal of women in the media and popular culture hinges on two connected issues. Firstly, women are often under-represented in much of the media. Moreover, where they *are* portrayed, women are disproportionately sexualised, stereotyped and objectified. This has markedly increased over the last ten to fifteen years and spans many different types of media and business forms⁴⁷.

The following evidence demonstrates how women and girls are increasingly sexualised in the media and popular culture. It also makes explicit the links between this and mainstreaming of the sex industry:

⁴⁴ Rule 2.3 of the OFCOM Broadcasting code states: "In applying generally accepted standards broadcasters must ensure that material which may cause offence is justified by the context. Such material may include...discriminatory treatment or language (for example on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion, beliefs and sexual orientation).

⁴⁵ "How to minimise consumer complaints about child exposure to "Grown up's" titles (2006) National Federation of Retail Newsagents <http://www.nfrnonline.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=88>

⁴⁶ Amy-Chinn, D. (2006) This is just for Me(n): lingerie advertising for the post-feminist woman, *Journal of Consumer Culture* 6 (2)

⁴⁷ Gill, R (2007) *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Television

The world depicted on our television screens is disproportionately male⁴⁸. The UK actors' union Equity launched a campaign earlier this year calling for equal representation in television, stating that for every two male roles in a drama there is just one female role⁴⁹.

Television programmes also disproportionately sexualise women and girls⁵⁰. Academic research shows that a significant proportion of screen time involves the trivialisation of sexism and comments which characterise women as sex objects. For example analysis of popular US comedies (most of which are exported to the UK) found that 23% of sexual comments involved catcalling / leering/ staring at women⁵¹. Other studies have found a high frequency of sexual harassment incidents in prime time television⁵².

Music Videos

44%–81% of music videos contain sexual imagery⁵³. Women are far more likely than men to be presented in provocative or revealing clothing⁵⁴ and sexually objectified – often through imagery linked to the sex industry, such as pole/ lap dancing⁵⁵.

Women are frequently portrayed as decorative objects that dance and pose and do not play any instruments⁵⁶. Contrary to popular belief this is not restricted to

⁴⁸ Eaton, C. (1997). Prime-time stereotyping on the new television networks. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74, 859–872.

⁴⁹ <http://www.equity.org.uk/article.aspx?id=151>

⁵⁰ Eaton, C. (1997). Prime-time stereotyping on the new television networks. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74, 859–872.

⁵¹ Lampman, C., Rolfe-Maloney, B., David, E. J., Yan, M., McCermott, N., Winters, S., et al. (2002, Fall). Messages about sex in the workplace: A content analysis of primetime television. *Sexuality & Culture*, 6, 3–21.

⁵² Grauerholz, E., & King, A. (1997). Primetime sexual harassment. *Violence Against Women*, 3, 129–148; Montemurro, B. (2003). Not a laughing matter: Sexual harassment as “material” on workplace-based situation comedies. *Sex Roles*, 48, 433–445.

⁵³ Gow, J. (1996). Reconsidering gender roles on MTV: Depictions in the most popular music videos of the early 1990s. *Communication Reports*, 9, 151–161; Greeson, L. E., & Williams, R.A. (1986). Social implications of music videos for youth: An analysis of the contents and effects of MTV. *Youth and Society*, 18, 177–189; Pardun, C. J., & McKee, K. B. (1995). Strange bedfellows: Symbols of religion and sexuality on MTV. *Youth & Society*, 26, 438–449; Sherman, B. L., & Dominick, J. R. (1986). Violence and sex in music videos: TV and rock 'n roll. *Journal of Communication*, 36, 79–93.

⁵⁴ Andsager, J., & Roe, K. (2003). “What’s your definition of dirty, baby?”: Sex in music videos. *Sexuality & Culture: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 7(3), 79–97; Seidman, S. A. (1992). An investigation of sex-role stereotyping in music videos. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 36, 209–216; Sommers-Flanagan, R.

⁵⁵ Sommers-Flanagan, R., Sommers-Flanagan, J., & Davis, B. (1993). What’s happening on music television? A gender role content analysis. *Sex Roles*, 28, 745–753.

⁵⁶ Arnett, J. J. (2002). The sounds of sex: Sex in teens’ music and music videos. In J. Brown, K. Walsh-Childers, & J. Steele (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media* (pp. 253–264).

hip hop or pop. In one analysis of country music videos, 42% of female artists were coded as wearing “alluring clothing”⁵⁷. Analysis of MTV music videos has found objectification in 44.4% of the 30-second clips analysed⁵⁸.

Film

There is a near absence of female characters in the top income generating films⁵⁹. A recent study analysed the 101 top-box office income U-rated films from 1990 to 2004. Of the over 4,000 characters in these films, 75% overall were male, 83% of characters in crowds were male, 83% of narrators were male, and 72% of speaking characters were male⁶⁰.

Animated films and cartoons

Recent films and TV programmes directed towards children have shown increased sexualisation of women, such as sexualised costumes in *Ella Enchanted* and the parody of a female stripper in *Shrek 2*⁶¹. Contemporary Disney characters e.g. *The Little Mermaid* or *Pocahontas*, are represented with more cleavage, fewer clothes, and more heavily sexualised than previously⁶².

Magazines

Academic analysis of young women’s magazines has shown that girls are repeatedly encouraged to look and dress in specific ways to look sexy for men, a phenomenon labelled “costuming for seduction” by researchers⁶³. Such studies reveal that attracting the attention of boys by looking “hot” and “sexy” is the main purpose of many of the articles, text, cover lines, ads, and

Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum; Gow, J. (1996). Reconsidering gender roles on MTV: Depictions in the most popular music videos of the early 1990s. *Communication Reports*, 9, 151-161.

⁵⁷ Andsager, J., & Roe, K. (2003). “What’s your definition of dirty, baby?”: Sex in music videos. *Sexuality & Culture: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 7(3), 79-97.

⁵⁸ Sommers-Flanagan, R., Sommers-Flanagan, J., & Davis, B. (1993). What’s happening on music television? A gender role content analysis. *Sex Roles*, 28, 745-753.

⁵⁹ Bazzini, D. G., McIntosh, W. D., Smith, S. M., Cook, S., & Harris, C. (1997). The aging women in popular film: Underrepresented, unattractive, unfriendly, and unintelligent. *Sex Roles*, 36, 531-553.

⁶⁰ Kelly, J., & Smith, S. L. (2006). *Where the girls aren't: Gender disparity saturates G-rated films* [Research brief]. Retrieved August 31, 2006, from www.thriveoncreative.com/clients/seejane/pdfs/where.the.girls.arent.pdf

⁶¹ Lamb, S., & Brown, L. M. (2006). *Packaging girlhood: Rescuing our daughters from marketers' schemes*. New York: St. Martin's Press; Levin, D. E. (2005). So sexy, so soon: The sexualization of childhood. In S. Olfman (Ed.), *Childhood lost: How American culture is failing our kids* (pp. 137-153). Westport, CT: Praeger Press.

⁶² Lacroix, C. (2004). Images of animated others: The Orientalization of Disney’s cartoon heroines from the Little Mermaid to the Hunchback of Notre Dame. *Popular Communication*, 2, 213-229.

⁶³ Duffy, M., & Gotcher, J. M. (1996). Crucial advice on how to get the guy: The rhetorical vision of power and seduction in the teen magazine *YM*. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 20, 32-48.

photographs in women's magazines.

Men's magazines and 'lads' mags' consistently promote sexist attitudes through their objectification of women, pornographic imagery and overt promotion of contempt and disrespect (often under the guise of 'irony' or 'retrosexism'⁶⁴) and are directly linked to pornography and prostitution through their imagery, and promotional features on the sex industry and the extensive advertising in their back pages. Links between magazines targeting men and those targeting women are also evident – for example *More* magazine (targeted to the 16 - 24 age bracket) promotes FHM 'High Street Honey' contests – competitions in which women are encouraged to send in 'glamorous' pictures of themselves and are advised to 'dress sexily'⁶⁵. This is unsurprising given both are owned by the same media corporation⁶⁶.

Comparison of both men's (Playboy) and women's (Cosmopolitan) magazines concluded that both types of magazines portray female sexuality in similar ways despite appealing to different audiences. Men's and women's magazines both depict women as sexualised objects whose desire is best fulfilled by making themselves into commodities that are sexually available to men. The primary difference was that women's magazines are not as crude, aggressive as men's magazines⁶⁷.

Video games

The vast majority of young people regularly play video games - 87% of younger children and 70% of adolescents⁶⁸. Games contain highly sexualized content and few strong female characters⁶⁹. Where strong female characters *are* portrayed they are still sexualised, for example the character of Lara Croft.

In a recent study, Haninger and Thompson (2004) sampled 80 "teen"-rated video games from a sample of 396 games released in 2001. 27% of games carried strong sexual themes. Games were significantly more likely to depict female characters partially nude or engaged in sexual activity than male characters. When the authors expanded their definition of "sexual theme" to include "pronounced cleavage, large breasts, or provocative clothing," the percentage of female characters depicted in this way rose to 46%⁷⁰.

⁶⁴ Gill, R (2007) *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press

⁶⁵ More Magazine, July 23 2008, *Want to be FHM's next High Street Honey*

⁶⁶ FHM and More Magazine are both owned by Bauer Media

⁶⁷ N.R. Krassas: 'Boxing Helena & Corsetting Eunice: Sexual Rhetoric in Cosmopolitan & Playboy Magazines, *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, June 2001

⁶⁸ Paik, H. (2001). The history of children's use of electronic media. In D. G. Singer & J. L. Singer (Eds.), *Handbook of children and the media* (pp. 7-27). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁶⁹ Dietz, T. L. (1998). An examination of violence and gender role portrayals in video games: Implications for gender socialization and aggressive behavior. *Sex Roles*, 38, 425-442.

⁷⁰ Haninger, K., & Thompson, K. M. (2004). Content and ratings of teen-rated video games. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 291, 856-865.

Moreover, violence against women and exploitation in the sex industry is frequently trivialised in video games. For example, RapeLay, a Japanese 'game' simulating gang rape had to be removed from the retail website Amazon in April 2009⁷¹ and the popular game 'Grand Theft Auto' has previously featured violence towards women in prostitution and the use of strip clubs. *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* enables players to beat a prostituted woman with a baseball bat, complete with screams for help. The incredible realism now possible with such games means players can feel that they are really committing this act.

Internet

Pornography is readily available on the Internet⁷² with newspaper sources estimating that 12% of all web sites are pornography sites, and 25% of all search engine requests are for pornography⁷³. This has a huge impact on the availability of sexualised imagery of women – given that the gendered nature of pornography is well-established in terms of gender stereotyping and sexist portrayal of women and girls⁷⁴.

Lambiase (2003) examined the sexualisation of girls and women on official fan websites of male and female celebrities, which target and attract young women readers. She found that female celebrities were far more likely than male celebrities to be represented by sexualized images, regardless of whether the site was official or produced by fans⁷⁵.

Advertising

Advertising is a medium in which women are overwhelmingly sexualised. In a recent study of 72 beer and non-beer ads randomly selected from prime-time sports and entertainment programming, 75% of the beer ads and 50% of the non-beer ads were labelled as "sexist," and featured women in very limited and objectifying roles⁷⁶. Magazine advertisements also sexualise women and portray them as sexual objects, as frequently shown in studies⁷⁷. Analyses of

⁷¹ http://www.equalitynow.org/english/actions/action_3301_en.html

⁷² Griffiths, M. (2000). Excessive internet use: Implications for sexual behavior. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 3, 537-552.

⁷³ English, B. (2005, May 12). The secret life of boys: Pornography is a mouse click away, and kids are being exposed to it in ever-increasing numbers. *The Boston Globe*.

⁷⁴ Itzin, C (1993) Pornography, Women and Civil Liberties, OUP:Oxford

⁷⁵ Lambiase, J. (2003). Sex—Online and in Internet advertising. In T. Reichert & J. Lambiase (Eds), *Sex in advertising: Perspectives on the erotic appeal* (pp. 247-269). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

⁷⁶ Rouner, D., Slater, M., & Domenech-Rodriguez, M. (2003). Adolescent evaluation of gender role and sexual imagery in television advertisements. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 47, 435-454.

⁷⁷ Baker, C. N. (2005). Images of women's sexuality in advertisements: A content analysis of Black- and White-oriented women's and men's magazines. *Sex Roles*, 52, 13-27; Lindner, K. (2004). Images of women in general interest and fashion advertisements from 1955 to

photographs from *Maxim* and *Stuff* (two popular men's magazines) revealed that 80.5% of the women were depicted as sexual objects⁷⁸.

Evidence indicates that such sexual objectification occurs more frequently for women in magazine ads than for men⁷⁹. For example, Reichert, Lambiase, Morgan, Carstarphen, and Zavoina (1999) found that women were three times more likely than men to be dressed in a sexually provocative way in advertising. In approximately 80% of the ads in their sample, female models were posed in sexually explicit postures. In half of the ads studied, female models were "dismembered" (i.e., body parts were excluded or obscured) by the camera angle or logo placement. This was the case for only 17% of men in ads⁸⁰. Women are therefore disproportionately portrayed as a mere sum of body parts.

Advertising also frequently blurs the division between young and older women – young girls are "adultified" and adult women "youthified."⁸¹ This is compounded by the pornification of advertising which has seen images from pornography become a normal, mainstream element of popular culture. Images of thin, high sexualised young women now saturate our daily lives⁸².

Clothing and Products

12 Thinking about the retail sector, do you think clothing and products for children are sufficiently age-appropriate and gender-appropriate (including non-gendered)? If not, please provide specific examples.

Yes

No

Not Sure

2002. *Sex Roles*, 51, 409-421; Rudman, W. J., & Verdi, P. (1993). Exploitation: Comparing sexual and violent imagery of females and males in advertising. *Women & Health*, 20, 1-14.

⁷⁸ Krassas, N. R., Blauwkamp, J.M., & Wesselink, P. (2003). "Master your Johnson": Sexual rhetoric in *Maxim* and *Stuff* magazines. *Sexuality & Culture*, 7, 98-119.

⁷⁹ Plous, S., & Neptune, D. (1997). Racial and gender biases in magazine advertising: A content analytic study. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, 627-644; Reichert, T.

(2003). The prevalence of sexual imagery in ads targeted to young adults. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 37, 403-412; Soley, L. C., & Kurzbard, G. (1986). Sex in advertising: A comparison of 1964 and 1984 magazine advertisements. *Journal of Advertising*, 15, 46-64.

⁸⁰ Reichert, T., Lambiase, J., Morgan, S., Carstarphen, M., & Zavoina, S. (1999).

Cheesecake and beefcake: No matter how you slice it, sexual explicitness in advertising continues to increase. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76, 7-20.

⁸¹ Merskin, D. (2004). Reviving Lolita? A media literacy examination of sexual portrayals of girls in fashion advertising. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48, 119-129.

⁸² McNair, B. (2002) *Striptease Culture: sex, media and the democratisation of desire*. London, Routledge.

Comments:

Some examples of the direct targeting of younger and young girls by this 'sex object culture' are as follows:

'Bratz girlz' dolls (marketed to 4-8 year olds) are dressed in sexualised clothing such as miniskirts, fishnet stockings, and feather boas. They are marketed wearing bikinis, sitting in a jacuzzi, mixing drinks, and 'relaxing', while "Bratz boyz" play guitar and stand with their surf boards, poised for action⁸³.

Playboy took the sexualisation of girls and women a step further through the direct marketing of a pornographic brand to young people. 'Back to school' Playboy merchandise includes pencil cases, stationary, alarm clocks and make up kits - all carrying the logo of a global pornography brand and marketed to pre-teens and teens⁸⁴. Tesco was forced to withdraw pole dancing kits, complete with fake money and a toy garter, after complaints that they were being marketed as 'toys and games'⁸⁵. The same kits continue to be sold in the toys section of retail giant Amazon.

The cosmetics industry increasingly targets younger and younger girls through dedicated product ranges and the giving away of free samples with magazines⁸⁶. From the youngest age, girls are being groomed in the belief that 'being pretty' is a defining attribute for girls and women.

Marketing studies show that retailers increasingly sell specific identities to young people via clothing. In this context it is disturbing that girls of younger and younger ages are encouraged to wear clothes that highlight their sexuality⁸⁷. Examples range from push up bras retailed by Tesco's to girls aged from 7 and 8⁸⁸ to 'stripper inspired' thongs marketed to teenage girls and available in children's wear departments⁸⁹.

⁸³ Lamb, S., & Brown, L. M. (2006). *Packaging girlhood: Rescuing our daughters from marketers' schemes*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

⁸⁴ Mayo, E & Nairns, A (2009) *Consumer Kids: How Big Business Is Grooming Our Children for Profit*. London: Constable.

⁸⁵ Retail Week (2006) Tesco removes pole-dancing kit from toys and games site <http://www.retail-week.com/tesco-removes-pole-dancing-kit-from-toys-and-games-site/105151.article>

⁸⁶ American Psychological Association (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls*

⁸⁷ American Psychological Association (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls*

⁸⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1895575/Tesco-accused-over-padded-bra-for-7-year-olds.html>

⁸⁹ Pollett, A., & Hurwitz, P. (2004, January 12/19). Strip till you drop. *The Nation*, 20-21, pp. 24-25.

Children as Consumers

13 Parents and children sometimes report that they feel under pressure to buy things they would prefer not to. Who do you think should be responsible for helping parents and children deal with such pressures? (tick as many as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manufacturers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retailers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regulators	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advertisers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Marketing Companies
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Broadcasters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Providers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educators
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consumer Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

Comments:

Parents and young people need to be empowered to reject the sexist images they are bombarded with in the media and popular culture. Media literacy in schools which has a gender dimension can play a vital role here. However, ultimately the responsibility to protect children from the effects of this increasingly pornified culture cannot be laid solely at the feet of parents.

Parents are not with their children 24 hours a day, they do not have control over what magazines children are exposed to in supermarkets or newsagents, or to the sexist billboards or lap dancing clubs on their high streets. Parents do not have control over the content of their child's favourite music video which is broadcasted before the watershed, or to the pornography that is so easily accessed via the internet or mobile phones by children who are often far more computer and literate than their parents.

The Government is under obligation to tackle the sexualisation of women and girls because of the harmful effect it has on self-esteem issues and violence discrimination against women and girls. Therefore, ultimately the responsibility lies with policy makers to ensure that profit-driven industries are required to respect the human rights of women and girls by taking a stand against 'sex object culture'.

Some of the international and domestic human rights obligations to tackle the sexualisation of women and gender stereotyping in the media and popular culture include:

- The **United Nations Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW) is an internationally legally binding document to which all signatories are bound to act. Since 1979 CEDAW has called on States to take decisive action to tackle objectification, requiring that measures are put in place "*to modify the social and cultural patterns of*

men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women” (Article 5)⁹⁰.

- CEDAW has since repeatedly identified the links between the portrayal of women as sexual objects by the media and commercial sex industry with attitudes that underpin violence and discrimination against women⁹¹. Article 6 calls for States to take “*all appropriate legislative and other measures*” to deal with trafficking and the exploitation of the prostitution of women”.
- **Strategic Objective J2 of the UN Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) 1995⁹²** called for all States to tackle unbalanced reporting and portrayal of women in the media, stating that “*the continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications - electronic, print, visual and audio - must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. In addition, violent and degrading or pornographic media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society*”. The BPfA recommended that Governments and international organisations undertake to do the following:
 - Promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communication aimed at promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls and their multiple roles;
 - Encourage the media and advertising agencies to develop specific programmes to raise awareness of the Platform for Action;
 - Encourage gender-sensitive training for media professionals, including media owners and managers, to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women in the media;
 - Encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development;
 - Promote the concept that the sexist stereotypes displayed in the media are gender discriminatory, degrading in nature and offensive;
 - Take effective measures or institute such measures, including appropriate legislation against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.
- **Strategic Objective D2** of the BPfA calls for States to take action to tackle “*factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in*

⁹⁰ 1979 Convention on Ending All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Article 5.

⁹¹ Eg. 1993 Convention on Ending All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

⁹² <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/media.htm#object2>

women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, forced marriages and forced labour in order to eliminate trafficking in women, including by strengthening existing legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and to punishing the perpetrators, through both criminal and civil measures”.

- In 2005, a review of the BPfA stated that there had been “*few advances in the representations [of women] in publicity or the news*”. It reiterated the need to “*increase efforts to sensitize mass media journalists and those who work in ICTs to gender and women’s issues, placing special emphasis on how the media contributes to reproducing stereotypes of men and women that reinforce inequalities between the sexes*”⁹³.
- **Article 9 of the Palermo Protocol** (the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocol) requires States to “*discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking*”.
- The **Gender Equality Duty 2007**⁹⁴ requires public authorities to promote gender equality and to eliminate sex discrimination. It requires positive action to be taken to ensure that the different needs of women and men are considered in terms of public authority decisions and take appropriate steps to promote gender equality. This includes countering gender stereotyping.
- In 2008 the **UN CEDAW Committee** cross-examined UK government officials to assess UK progress in fulfilling CEDAW obligations. On gender stereotyping and the portrayal of women in the media and popular culture, it was found that the Government has still not **enacted any** relevant policies. The committee **strongly called for action** to be taken.⁹⁵
- The **End Violence Against Women** coalition has repeatedly called on the Government to take action on this issue and has highlighted the sexualisation of women and girls as a ‘conducive context’ for violence against women⁹⁶. Since 2005 EVAW has produced a yearly report monitoring the progress of government departments on tackling violence against women.

⁹³ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/49sess.htm>

⁹⁴ The Gender Equality Duty is contained in the Equality Act 2006 and applies to all bodies carrying out ‘public functions’.

⁹⁵ 2008 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Concluding Observations on the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Forty First Session)

⁹⁶ EVAW (2008) *Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations: A Template for an Integrated Strategy on Violence Against Women for the UK*

- The **Women's National Commission** (WNC)⁹⁷ has also consistently raised the sexualisation of women and girls via the media and mainstreaming of the sex industry, as an issue which the Government must address and recommends the following action:
 - that women's portrayal in the press be regulated by an independent body with clearly defined harm-based codes
 - that the Government fund long-term awareness campaigns, in schools and in public, on the causes of violence and discrimination and that enables critical perspectives on media images, including pornography
 - that the Government runs/supports and funds a national campaign, across all communities, that raises women's aspirations, tackles cultural barriers and promotes role models and opportunities for women
 - that legislation limits the sale of pornography to licensed outlets
 - that Government ensures the provision of adequate resources for investigations into the possession of extreme pornography
 - that lap-dancing and similar clubs be licensed under the same conditions as sex shops
 - that the Government invests in its prostitution strategy
 - that the Government invests in addressing and reducing the demand side of prostitution
 - that the Government develops effective mechanisms to monitor the off-street sex industry and ensure the women working there are protected from violence, exploitation and coercion
 - that the Government acknowledges the importance of exit strategies through providing adequate investment for such strategies

14 Companies use a range of marketing and advertising techniques when promoting products towards children. Are there any you think are inappropriate for children? If yes, please provide details.

Yes

No

Not Sure

⁹⁷ Submission to CEDAW (April 2008) Women's National Commission

Comments:

See answer regarding clothing and products.

Consumer Voice

15 Do you think that complaints processes for parents to raise concerns about inappropriately commercialised or sexualised products/images/material are sufficiently accessible? If no, please give details of what could be improved and by whom.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Parents and women's groups constantly complain that their concerns are not being taken seriously or acted upon by regulatory bodies.

General Comments

16 Is there anything else you want to say about the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood?

Comments:

Legal Background

Tackling the sexualisation of women and girls in the media and popular culture will involve improved regulation of the media. This is an area of policy-making that is frequently opposed by freedom of expression arguments⁹⁸. However, no human right is absolute and any tension between two rights must be considered in the context of the relevant rights conventions in which they sit - in order to establish where the balance of rights should lie.

In this light OBJECT argues that the right of women and girls to live their lives free of gender-based discrimination and violence should be given equal – if not greater - priority as the right to freedom of speech. Both rights must be assessed and a framework established which places adequate emphasis on ending gender-based violence and discrimination. The framework currently in place gives higher priority to the right to freedom of speech – despite the fact that this ‘right’ is currently being used in ways which reinforce attitudes underpinning gender-based violence or discrimination. Moreover it must be recognised that regulation of the media is not solely, or frequently primarily, about ‘freedom of expression’ but also about economics. Just like other industries the media is regulated by market forces – and it is increasingly clear that market forces alone cannot guarantee socially just outcomes.

Legal instruments

- **Freedom of Expression:** Article 19 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) enshrines the human right to freedom of expression – subject to restrictions that account for:
 - a) ‘**the respect for the rights and reputation of others**’;
 - b) ‘*the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals*’⁹⁹.

This means that a policy promoting other areas of human rights (such as tackling the sexualisation of women to end gender-based violence) should not be blocked on the grounds of freedom of expression, if blocking the policy will interfere with the rights and reputation of others (such as a woman’s right to live free from gender-based discrimination and violence).

- **The Human rights based definition of Violence Against Women:** General Recommendation 19 (1992) of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sets

⁹⁸ For example in response to OBJECT’s 2005/6 campaigning for independent, social regulation of the media the DCMS stated; “This government firmly believes in freedom of expression and not intervening in regulation of the press” (DCMS, 2006).

⁹⁹ Supra no.5 Art.19, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

out the following international legal definition of VAW; *'violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering'*.

In order to end such violence, CEDAW requires States to take action to change the culture in which violence against women occurs¹⁰⁰.

- **Article 3 of CEDAW also requires that States** *"take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men"*.

This places the priority of such action very high as the state is not required to simply consider taking action or to ensure respect for the right in question. Rather it is required to **pro-actively** take action and its obligations include respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right of women to live their lives free from gender-based discrimination and violence.

When **comparing different human rights** it is therefore important to identify the following:

- a) Whether either right is 'absolute';
- b) Identify where each right falls in a 'hierarchy' of rights, according to existing UN conventions and therefore compare whether the rights concerned are obligations of immediate (short-term) or progressive realisation (long-term);
- c) Whether one of the rights acts a 'gate keeper' to other rights – ie. the right to live free from discrimination is essential for the fulfilment of other human rights;
- d) The centrality of either right to human capability or dignity.

On all 4 counts the right to a life free from gender-based discrimination and violence against women is higher than the right to freedom of expression. This is not to say that freedom of expression is not an important right. Rather it is to say that in our society freedom of expression is given a higher priority than respecting the human right of women to be free of gender-based discrimination and violence. This has been made clear by the evidence outlined above and by the simple fact that gender equality influenced regulation of the media is currently non-existent in the UK.

¹⁰⁰ CEDAW General Recommendation 19 (1992).

Recommendations:

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

- Gender equality to be mainstreamed into media regulation – at present concerns relating to the sexualisation of women are judged solely on the grounds of obscenity and indecency. This must be extended to **gender equality** by bodies such as OFCOM and ASA.
- This regulation should be enacted via **legislation**. Voluntary 'codes' have proven meaningless in relation to a long-term impact¹⁰¹.
- Positive incentives for improved media representation to be enacted. A Gender Equality media watchdog should be created and given sufficient powers to actually deliver change.

Department for Education (DfE)

- National Curriculum to include media literacy from a gendered perspective to equip young women and men with the tools to identify gender stereotyping and distorted coverage of gender roles.
- Sex Education, PSHE and Citizenship curriculum to include information on the harms of pornography to counter its impact and influence on sexual relations and sexist attitudes.

Home Office

- Prostitution is a form of violence against women and the commodification of women through prostitution contributes to the sexualisation of women in wider society. Crucially many women, children and men experience abuse and exploitation in prostitution and face poor access to exit services. The Home Office should ensure that prostitution is included in any cross-governmental violence against women strategy – to ensure that sustainable funding is given to exit services and to ensure that firm measures are taken to decriminalise those exploited in prostitution and to use Section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act fully to tackle the demand for prostitution by making potential buyers aware that it is now a crime to pay for sex from a person who has been exploited.

¹⁰¹ See http://www.object.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17&Itemid=33

- This is a first and vital step towards implementing the ‘Nordic’ policy on prostitution which decriminalises all persons selling sexual acts and provides support services and exit strategies to those currently in prostitution, whilst criminalising the buyers of sexual acts to curb the demand which fuels prostitution and trafficking. The Home Office should work towards introducing legislation which *fully* matches this approach.

17 Finally, please let us have your views on responding to this call for evidence (e.g. the number and type of questions, was it easy to find, understand, complete etc.)

Comments:

This is an important review and we hope that it will further use and build upon the comprehensive review on the Sexualisation of Young People commissioned by the previous government and carried out by Dr Linda Papadopoulos in 2010.

This response is endorsed by the following NGOs and human rights organisations:

Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis www.rapecrisiscentre-argyll-bute.org.uk

Eva, Women’s Aid www.eva.org.uk

Feminist Webs www.feministwebs.com

London Feminist Network www.feministwebs.com

Million Women Rise www.millionwomenrise.com

Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Project www.ndvf.org.uk

NUS Women’s Campaign www.nus.org.uk/Campaigns/Womens

Rape Crisis England and Wales www.rapecrisis.org.uk

RESPECT www.respect.uk.net

Rights of Women www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

Safe Exit www.toynbeehall.org.uk

South Essex Rape and Incest crisis Centre (SERICC) www.sericc.org.uk

South Leeds Community Radio www.southleedscommunityradio.org.uk

Welsh Women’s Aid www.welshwomensaid.org

White Ribbon Campaign www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk

Women in Prison www.womeninprison.org.uk

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply x

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

xYes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Donna Harrison, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 738212 / email: donna.harrison@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 18 March 2011

Send by post to: Reg Bailey, Review of Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood, Department for Education, Ground Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to: bailey.review@education.gsi.gov.uk