

OBJECT

Women Not
Sex Objects



***OBJECT* and *Turn Your Back on Page 3*
Joint Submission to the Leveson Inquiry.
December 2011**

Contents:

- Summary of recommendations

- About us

- About this submission

- Evidence of the sexual objectification of women in the UK tabloid press. 'A Week in the Life of The Sun, The Daily Star and The Sport':
 - The Sun
 - The Daily Star
 - The Sport

- Summary

- Why does this matter? Harms associated with the sexual objectification of women and girls

- Conclusion

- Tools and mechanisms for further action

- Specific recommendations

- Thank you

Summary of recommendations

This submission includes recommendations about addressing the hyper-sexualisation and objectification of women in the press. These recommendations utilise currently existing tools and mechanisms and do not require introducing new forms of regulation. Instead, these recommendations allow for greater consistency in relation to media regulation across the board.

In order to ensure a more logical and consistent approach to addressing the hyper-sexualisation and objectification of women in the press we recommend the following:

1) Regulation of printed materials should be consistent with other forms of media regulation.

- This means that, if material would not pass pre-watershed restrictions on the television, it should not be printed in unrestricted newspapers.

2) Regulation of printed materials should reflect and be guided by government legislation.

- This means that images and messages which would not be considered suitable for the workplace under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and more recently the Equality Act 2010, because of the intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment that they can create, should not be printed in newspapers which are openly displayed, freely available and unrestricted.

3) Readers should be given a greater voice in relation to the culture and ethics of the press.

- This means that there should be an inclusion of the category of 'groups' as a basis of complaint within the Press Complaints Commission Codes of Practice so as to allow readers to take action against any form of persistent stereotyping or discrimination on the basis of a group identity.

4) Gender equality and issues related to discrimination on the basis of sex should be key and distinct components of any new codes of practice for the print based media.

- This will ensure that issues related to the objectification of women and the mainstreaming of pornographic imagery are judged and regulated on the basis of equality, not obscenity.

5) Ultimately we believe that recent events have exposed the inadequacies of self-regulation in relation to a body as powerful and influential as the press. We therefore recommend the replacement of the Press Complaints Commission with a new, independent press regulator which has meaningful powers of enforcement.

About us

This is a joint submission from OBJECT and Turn Your Back on Page 3.

OBJECT

OBJECT is an award winning human rights organisation which challenges the sexual objectification of women and girls, and the mainstreaming of the sex and porn industries in the media and popular culture. We campaign and lobby against 'sex object culture' because of the harmful effects it has on the self esteem and aspirations of women and girls, and the negative impact it has on promoting the attitudes and behaviours associated with gender inequality and male violence.

www.object.org.uk

Turn Your Back on Page 3

Turn Your Back on Page 3 is a pressure group which campaigns against the Page 3 Industry through raising awareness of the harms associated with Page 3 and lobbying for an end to women being sexually objectified in the UK Press.

<https://www.facebook.com/turnyourbackonpage3>

About this submission

This submission provides a snapshot of 'A Week In The Life Of' The Sun, The Daily Star and The Sport. This evidence has been collated in order to highlight the extent to which women are degraded as sex objects in UK tabloids. It highlights the 'Page 3' phenomenon, the adverts for the porn and sex industries, and other innumerable ways in which women – and even crimes against women, such as rape and murder – are routinely trivialised and sexualised within the UK press.

It is the contention of this submission that the pervasive sexualisation, objectification and trivialisation of women within UK tabloids cannot be separated from the wider issues related to the culture and ethics of the press which are addressed by the Inquiry. This interconnection between the content of newspapers and their treatment of women is illustrated by the concerning statement given to the Inquiry by Charlotte Church:

"One particularly distasteful feature was on The Sun website which featured a countdown clock to me turning 16, carrying with it sexually charged and predatory innuendo of a young girl passing the age of consent."

As well as influencing the treatment and portrayal of female celebrities, research referred to in this submission finds that 'sex object culture', peddled by the UK press, has far wider implications for society. The sexual objectification of women is found implicitly to encourage, normalise and legitimise attitudes associated with discrimination and violence against women and girls. This is of grave concern when we live in a society in which one in three women will experience male violence in her

lifetime¹. Indeed, recent research has exposed the language of lads' mags (not markedly dissimilar to the tabloids investigated in this submission) to be indistinguishable from language used by convicted rapists when talking about women².

The links between sex object culture, 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 women³.

It is for these reasons that we believe that it is essential that any inquiry into the 'culture and ethics of the press' MUST include an examination into the way the press routinely represents women. This is crucial if the Inquiry is to be effective in achieving the highest ethical and professional media standards for which it strives.

Evidence of the sexual objectification of women in the UK tabloid press. 'A Week in the Life of The Sun, The Daily Star and The Sport':

This analysis examines the portrayal of women in The Sun, The Daily Star and The Sport. It will include various examples and analyses from each newspaper.

Although differing in level and varying in extent, a common theme found to run through all three tabloids is the portrayal of women as sex objects - a sum of body parts which exist for the sole purpose of sexual titillation. This is exemplified by the 'Page 3' feature shared by all three of these publications. These images depict young women as topless, and sometimes entirely nude, in sexualised and provocative poses. Such images stem from what would usually be considered pornographic material. These sexualised images are not restricted to the third page of publications and in the case of the Daily Star and The Sport they are more often than not included on the front covers.

Other common themes include a trivialisation and eroticisation of sexual violence and links to the sex industry through numerous adverts for sex web cams, pornographic DVDs and 'escort agencies'.

NB It is important to note that NONE of these publications are age-restricted and that they are all displayed at child's eye level next to ordinary newspapers.

This undermines Government efforts to reduce the sexualisation of young people through its current endorsement of the Bailey Review.

¹ Home Office Violence Against Women statistics <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/>

² <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/news-events/news/mags.aspx>

³ 1979 Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Article 5

The below evidence was mostly taken between the time period of November 14th - November 20th 2011.

1) Evidence from THE SUN

Circulation: 2.7m

Standard items of sexual objectification within The Sun include:

- 'Page 3 girl' (a daily image of a topless female model, sometimes fully nude)
- 'Dear Deidre' (a daily 'agony aunt' column picturing sexualised stories and images of women)
- Advertising for sex chat lines
- Routine trivialising of women as sexual objects



Monday 14th November 2011

Example 1: 'Kelly Brook won't win many top awards for acting but the wardrobe department on her latest project might clean up at the next big ceremony ... this time she's got the shot to herself – apart from the **Mitchell brothers poking through her top**'. (author's emphasis)



Analysis: In this article, Kelly is essentially reduced to a pair of breasts. The article mocks Kelly's acting skills, but believes this to be irrelevant compared to the look and size of her breasts which are referred to derogatorily as the 'Mitchell brothers'.

Tuesday 15th November 2011

Example 2: 'Jess Takes the Plunge'



Analysis: There is no context for this story other than an excuse to picture a woman's breasts in her bikini

Example 3: 'Testing of Debenhams's Invisible Shaping Bum Boosters'



Analysis: The Sun trials *Debenhams's Invisible Shaping Bum Boosters*, by testing men's reactions to a woman's bottom when she stands at the bar and bends down at work. Success is marked when men ogle. In this way, The Sun eroticises a form of sexual harassment making it appear that it is what women should, and do seek from men.

Example 4: 'Groping of Pippa Middleton's bum'



Analysis: This article alludes to a fictitious scenario between Prince Harry and Pippa Middleton where Harry is pictured doing '*what every young buck dreams of*' when he '*gropes/cops a crafty feel of Pippa's pert bum*'. Again, this article eroticises sexual harassment and portrays Pippa Middleton only in relation to her bottom.

Wednesday 16th November 2011

Example 5: "*Jessica-Jane gets 'em out*"



Analysis: This article appears to serve no purpose other than to display photographs of Jessica-Jane with her breasts out. It thereby promotes voyeurism and the idea that what is of importance in relation to women is their breasts.

Thursday 17th November 2011

Example 6: 'The Mane Attraction'



Analysis: This article reduces women jockeys to sexual objects who are photographed in their underwear. This undermining of women in sport is typical and unparalleled for male sports stars who are photographed fully clothed and in action, and who are discussed in relation to their profession - not in relation to their bodies.

Example 9: 'How to stop your man having affairs'



Analysis: This article advises women to: 'Learn to cook ... cook dinner in just your lingerie once a week'. This 'advice' is accompanied by a sexualised image of a woman cooking. The gender stereotypes promoted in this article are reminiscent of the 1950s - pre equalities legislation.

Friday 18th November 2011

Example 10: 'Death Threats to Harry girl'



Analysis: A concerning headline on the front page about death threats received by a young woman is illustrated with a sexualised photograph of the woman in her bra looking provocatively into the camera. This trivialises the threats of violence and serves to objectify the victim as a sex object.

OTHER CONCERNING EXAMPLES FROM PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF THE SUN:

Example 11: 'Free Lego Toy'



Analysis: This 'family' newspaper promotes free Lego clearly aimed at children on its front page, whilst containing adverts for Triple XXX DVDs and Page 3 imagery in the inside pages.

Example 12: 'Bodyguards For Battered Towie Sisters', 'Weapons of Marsh Destruction'.



Analysis: On the front page, The Sun reads 'Bodyguards For Battered Towie Sisters' which sits alongside a sexualised photograph of one of the sisters in 'sexy' underwear. This clearly eroticises and trivialises the violence. The same copy features a fully naked, hyper-sexualised image of Jodie Marsh with the degrading headline 'Weapons of Marsh Destruction'.

Example 13: 'Rooney Tart's Dad has a Heart Attack'



Analysis: In this article Rooney keeps his name, however, the prostituted woman from whom he paid for sex acts is labelled with the pejorative, derogatory label 'tart' in an article about her father's heart attack. This completely denies her of any humanity at this time of personal tragedy.

Example 14: The Politics of Page 3



Analysis: When asked at The Fawcett's Society's 'What About Women?' pre-election debate last year: "If we are to take women's equality seriously, shouldn't we be getting Page 3 off the breakfast table and out of the sight of children?" Lynne Featherstone MP and Harriet Harman MP responded by agreeing to 'take on the press barons' but admitted they could only do it if they worked together.

The Sun newspaper, which had swapped allegiances from Labour to the Conservatives for the 2010 general election, responded in protest using sexist and exploitative propaganda. It photographed 16 of its Page 3 'girls' in Conservative blue knickers accompanied with print suggesting there was something sinister and misplaced about Lynne Featherstone's & Harriet Harman's concerns for women's equality. In this way, it used the sexual objectification of women to influence politics and to threaten politicians who dared tackle Page 3. This is reminiscent of the bullying treatment received by Clare Short in the 1980s when she attempted to address the Page 3 phenomenon as an MP.

Example 15: 'Britain's worst sex attacker'



Analysis: The Sun calls this man 'Britain's worst sex attacker' otherwise known as 'The Night Stalker', however the use of the cartoon font trivialises the violence by almost turning the predator into a 'fun, comic strip-type' character. This is unacceptable and inexcusable when reporting on such heinous crimes against women.

2) Evidence from THE DAILY STAR

Circulation: 650,000

Standard items of sexual objectification within The Daily Star include:

- Covers – hyper-sexualised imagery of semi naked women is common place on the front covers of the newspaper
- 'Page 3' glamour models - run over several pages, not just the third page.
- Daily Star Forum – sexualised images of women are printed based on readers' requests: E.g. "Please print a pic of the gorgeous Katie Green and cheer up our dreary day at the office! says Curtis W, Wolverhampton!"
- Adverts for sex web cams and chat lines, and for pornography



Monday 14th November 2011

Example 1: 'Big Brother babe shows us exactly why she was such a great housemate / With this exclusive topless picture, we can see why Jay, 27, fell under her spell'



Analysis: Another example of a woman's worth and attributes being defined by a sexualised image of her semi-naked body

Tuesday 15th November 2011

Example 2: 'Sam's A Bit Of A Ski Bum: We assume you're not even reading this because you're still getting a massive pervy eyeful of that pert ass going up a fake ski slope'



Analysis: This reduces Sam to a sex object and reduces men to sexual predators obsessed with 'pervy' over women's backsides. The language 'pert ass' is derogatory and reflects the language used in lads' mags and pornographic magazines.

Example 3: *'Babes on your mobile: To get one of these hot Daily Star babes text ...'*



Analysis: This encourages a mentality of viewing women as commodities to be consumed sexually. It could be said to act as an opening wedge for legitimising demand for pornography and other sexual services.

Example 4: *Daily Star Babes Calendar 2012*



Analysis: Such a calendar would be prohibited from the work place under the Sex Discrimination and Equality Acts and yet is advertised in a newspaper which is universally accessible which has no age-restriction.

Wednesday 16th November 2011

Example 5: *'Freddie: they thought I'd die' ... But Jess is doing chest swell!'*



Analysis: 'Freddie's' near death experience is trivialised as the front page photograph depicts a sexually objectifying image of 'Jess' looking seductively into the camera. This can be contrasted with the above photograph of male footballers who are portrayed as subjects in their own right - fully clothed and active in their profession.

Friday 18th November 2011

Example 6: *'Walliams' ex to steam up jungle'*



Analysis: Another example of a sexually objectifying front page cover (displayed at child's eye level and sold next to ordinary newspapers)

Saturday 19th November 2011

Example 7: Advert for pornography which includes 'University Babes / 'Boobs boobs boobs'



Analysis: This is advertising pornography in a publication which is not age-restricted and can therefore be accessed by children and young people of any age. The pornography advertised is clearly aimed at sexualising teenage girls and young women.

Sunday 20th November 2011

Example 8: *Anni - A life in pictures*



Analysis: This sexualised photograph is of a murder victim 'Anni'. Again, the focus of the tragic story appears to be the sexual objectification of the female victim.

Example 9: 'England's WAGs face a tough time keeping their fellas on the leash at Euro 2012 because the team's Polish HQ is surrounded by brothels, strip clubs and street hookers'.



Analysis: This article normalises and trivialises adultery and the use of prostituted women in an industry known for high levels of violence, abuse, pimping and trafficking.

Example 10: *Bushell On The Box: Gemma Merna from Hollyoaks says she has often been caught having conversations with her dog. When asked what it was like to chat to such a dumb creature, the dog replied "Ok, as long as you keep picturing her in her underwear."*



Analysis: This example of misogyny is normalised through the use of 'humour' and is reminiscent of lads' mags.

3) Examples from THE SPORT

Circulation: Under 100,000 (unconfirmed)

Standard items of sexual objectification within The Sport include:

- Very sexualised covers of near-naked young women, interspersed with adverts for pornography
- Dozens of 'page 3 images' of young women
- Pages of adverts for the porn and sex industries which include explicit imagery
- A consistent theme of eroticising and trivialising news stories, including the reporting of rape and murder

Sunday 12th - Tuesday 15th November 2011

Example 1: *'TV Soap Babes flashed by dwarf snapper'*



Analysis: This is a front page - displayed at child's height next to ordinary newspapers. The women photographed are nameless and headless and are clearly portrayed to look vulnerable. This front page 'story' trivialises and normalises a form of voyeurism and sexual harassment which is commonplace for women and girls.

Example 2: *'This Week's Nipple Count'*



Analysis: A clear demonstration of the *raison d'être* of this so-called 'newspaper'

Example 3: Page 3 alongside a story describing Fiona Bruce's genitalia



Analysis: On the left hand side is The Sport's 'Page 3 girl', complete with age and vital statistics, and on the right hand side is a humiliating and degrading story about Fiona Bruce's 'camel toe'. The story goes on to describe Fiona Bruce's genitalia as '*trim fandango, queen of the hungry crotch, privates, finest front bottom.*' One fan says: "*Fiona is prim and proper which really adds to her allure.*"

Example 4: Sexualised and objectifying images of female students juxtaposed with a report on a '*vile builder who masturbated and ejaculated at a Tube station while ogling a horrified female commuter.*'



Analysis: Highly sexualised imagery of women photographed with their breasts out and 'up the skirt' shots are juxtaposed with a report on a '*vile builder who masturbated and ejaculated at a Tube station while ogling a horrified female commuter.*' Disturbingly, this serves to associate the description of the crime with photographs of women which are aimed to arouse men and to encourage men to sexualise women.

Example 5: 'Winkle, Winkle, Where's Ya Bra?'



Analysis: A story on Claudia Winkleman stepping out without her bra. This cannot be described as 'news' and demonstrates a form of sexual harassment and voyeurism.

Example 6: 'Jugs and Jury'



Analysis: This article reports on a new TV Drama, seemingly just so it can show naked photographs of four of the female actors. The story reads: *JUGS AND JURY: 'Don't judge the stars of ITV drama The Jury until you've cross-examined their X-rated TOPLESS (highlighted as if it's something shocking!) snaps'.* In this case, famous female actors are reduced to a pair of breasts.

Example 7: Full page advert for 'Get Off With A Granny' pornography



Analysis: This full page advert for pornography which uses age as the basis on which to objectify, sexualise, degrade and humiliate older women.

Example 8: "I'd love to give her one. But the only way I'd ever get anywhere near a girl like Rosie is if she was still tied to John Stape's bed!"



Analysis: 66 year old Chubby Brown picks a sexualised image of 21-year-old 'Soap saucepot' Rosie Webster to accompany the headline: 'Rosie's not tied down' and goes on to say "I'd love to give her one. But the only way I'd ever get anywhere near a girl like Rosie is if she was still tied to John Stape's bed!" (John Stape is the fictional character in Coronation Street who kidnapped Rosie Webster).

In this way Chubby Brown eroticises and trivialises violence against women as he alludes to the fact that the only way he could have sex with 'Rosie' would be to rape her if she was still tied up to her fictional kidnapper's bed.

Example 9: *'Party Girls thumped for having 'lesbo' sex: A drinks party for two couples ended up NAKED [in capitals to emphasise that being naked is shocking] in bed, a court heard. Natasha Sayer and Kelly Maynard stripped nude for a lesbian romp while their boyfriends chatted unaware next door. But when one of the men, Luke Smyth, 24, realised what was going on he blew a fuse – and thumped BOTH women.'*



Analysis: Within the context of this newspaper, one has to question whether this story reporting violence against women exists merely to titillate its readers. The term 'lesbo' is a derogatory and colloquial term often associated with pornography which belittles the seriousness of this act of violence.

Example 10: *'Top 50 glamour babes EVER!' Breast size included.*



Analysis: Yet another example of reducing women, referred to as 'babes', to a pair of breasts. Again, only white, large breasted, slim women are depicted as 'glamorous'.

Example 11: *'Threesome drives fella TV bonkers: A man's planned threesome with his wife and another woman ended with him behind bars – when he threw a TELLY at his missus!'*



Analysis: This is another example of trivialising violence against women as a source of amusement and titillation.

Example 12: *'Boobs on the Box: Britain's only naked TV guide.'*



Analysis: The Sport picks out programmes where 'boobs' will be on display. This TV guide gives the exact time that you will see some 'lovely-nippled squishiness'. For example: 'At one hour nine minutes, Alexandria Morrow shows her boobs and lets a fella snort coke off her arse. What a girl!' This not only encourages men to obsess over women as a pair of breasts, it is also glamorises/sexualises cocaine use which is an illegal Class A substance in the UK.

Example 13: 'Real life girls talk sex: This week; Students.'



Analysis: Tales of two 21-year-old young women telling their sexual fantasies is clearly intended to titillate the reader (presumed male).

Wednesday 16th – Saturday 19th November 2011

Example 14: Top 50 Glamour Babes Ever / 8 – Page Topless Pullout / Pippa's Amazing Bum Pic: Shock New Photo Inside.



Analysis: The only 'news' stories on this front cover are about sexually objectifying women. It is difficult to conceive how this could be classified as a newspaper and sold unrestricted as such.

Example 15: 'You need a good bum to do it from behind'



Analysis: On the left hand side is a story about 'Pippa's pert posterior!': 'Peachy Pippa Middleton showed her former boyfriend exactly what he's missing – by flashing her fab bum in a pair of skin-tight trousers. The posh totty – whose amazing arse became the focus of global headlines'. On the right hand side is a story reporting on the importance of having a 'good' bottom to 'do it from behind'. Yet again, these articles reduce women to sex objects whose purpose is to be sexually available for men.

Example 16: Topless women amongst fully clothed men



Analysis: Two topless 'glamour models' are placed between a cheering group of men on a building site in order to 'brighten up their day': "it was a really cold day, so the girls' nips were standing to attention! What a bonus'. This is deeply worrying as it is reminiscent of a gang / pack mentality sexualising two women who are overwhelmingly outnumbered by fully clothed men.

Example 17: 'Kwik-Fit man in boob grope: A Kwik-Fit employee who left a female delivery driver in tears after greeting her by grabbing her breasts must sign as a sex offender for five years.'



Analysis: Again, this story reporting an incidence of violence against women, juxtaposed with imagery encouraging men to view women as nymphomaniac sex objects, promotes conflicting and deeply concerning attitudes about women and sexual violence.

Summary

The tabloid newspapers investigated in this submission clearly promote the sexual objectification of women. Although to differing degrees, all three tabloids depict women as one-dimensional sex objects who are constantly and routinely objectified and sexualised. Furthermore, these tabloids have been shown to trivialise, normalise and even eroticise violence against women and other serious issues and crimes which

effect women and girls. They are also linked to pornography and prostitution through pages of advertising for sex chat lines, XXX DVDs and in some cases 'escort services'.

Disturbingly, this is all contained within newspapers which are universally available, displayed next to ordinary newspapers and not age-restricted.

Why does this matter? Harms associated with the sexual objectification of women and girls

Two recent UK Government commissioned reviews into 'sexualisation'; The Bailey Review (2011) and Dr Linda Papadopoulos review into the sexualisation of young people (2010), both highlight the increasing extent to which women and girls are sexualised and objectified in the media, and the harmful effects this 'sex object' culture has on society.

The links between sex object culture, 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 women⁴. 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 women⁵.

Indeed, the sexual objectification of women and girls is linked to a range of harms – ranging from body image and self esteem issues to violence, sexist attitudes and racism.

Health and well being

At the individual level, sexual objectification, as mainstreamed in the British tabloid press, 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 anxiety and is affecting women and girls at an increasingly young age⁶.
- Numerous studies have linked the increased sexualisation of women as sex objects to the rising incidence of eating disorders⁷.

⁴ 1979 Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Article 5

⁵ Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations: An Integrated Strategy to End Violence Against Women (EVAW) 2008

⁶ 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

⁷ 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.

- Plastic surgery. Increasing numbers of women and girls are turning to plastic surgery as a shortcut to fulfilling dominant beauty ideals, as promoted by the Page 3 phenomena. In fact, the UK tops the table for plastic surgery spending in Europe⁸ - most of which is spent by women and girls.

As such, the sexual objectification of women in the UK press undermines the Parliamentary Campaign for Body Confidence spearheaded by MPs including the Coalition Government's Equalities Minister.

Sexism

Research shows that frequent, regular exposure to content which sexually objectifies women and girls, such as the Page 3 phenomena, is linked to the development of sexist attitudes and gender stereotypes⁹. Emerging evidence further suggests that this 'sex object culture' is connected to attitudes of male sexual entitlement, and that it reinforces views that women are always available for sex¹⁰.

Indeed, in its review of the literature on this topic the American Psychological Association (APA) 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*"¹¹.

Racism

In general, the sexualisation and objectification of women is often constructed around ethnicity lines, with women eroticised and 'exoticised' on the basis of racist and sexist stereotypes. This is clearly evident in music videos and pornography. In the case of the tabloid press, this submission has found that women of colour are rendered invisible. Every Page 3 image contained within the tabloids investigated was found to consist of a hyper-sexualised depiction of a white woman. These 'Page 3 women' had been objectified to such an extent that they were almost interchangeable.

(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

⁸ <http://www.cosmeticsurgerybible.com/2008/news/uk-tops-table-for-european-cosmetic-surgery-spending/>

⁹ 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 behaviour. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 16*, 133-156.

¹⁰ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1116554/Could-teenage-boys-lessons-porn.html>

¹¹ American Psychological Association (2007) *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls*

The answer is not to 'diversify' Page 3, but it is important to note the ways in which the ideals of beauty promoted by the press are steeped in racist and sexist ideologies of what constitutes 'sexy' - i.e. young, thin, white and sexually available.

Violence

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

The APA found that after being exposed to images that sexually objectify women, men are significantly more accepting of sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, rape myths, and gender stereotypes¹². Studies have further linked these stereotypical attitudes about women to aggressive sexual behaviour¹³.

Indeed, recent research has found that the attitudes peddled by lads' mags directly mirror the attitudes expressed by convicted rapists in relation to women¹⁴.

Furthermore, the acceptance of male violence against women and 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 clothing¹⁵. A 2009 poll for the Home Office recently found similar results¹⁶. This suggests that such attitudes are deeply entrenched in cultural beliefs - beliefs which are influenced by the media, including the tabloid press.

Conclusion

Evidence of the pervasive hyper-sexualisation and objectification of women in the mainstream press, and research findings which link sexual objectification with attitudes and behaviours associated with the acceptance of discrimination and violence against women and girls, demonstrate the need for the Leveson Inquiry to

¹² Ibid

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/news-events/news/mags.aspx>

¹⁵ Amnesty International UK (2005) *Sexual Assault Research*: http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=16618

¹⁶ See <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/violence-against-women-poll?view=Binary>

examine the way the press routinely portrays women as sex objects through the 'Page 3' phenomenon.

Evidence included in this submission further demonstrates the routine way in which the sexual harassment, stalking and voyeurism of young women has been normalised in the tabloid press, with the submission from Charlotte Church highlighting the extent to which these attitudes and behaviours influence the treatment of young female celebrities.

This submission therefore makes clear the vital need for the portrayal of women to be included in the Inquiry into the culture and ethics of the press.

Tools and mechanisms for further action

It is important to note that tools and mechanisms already exist to address the hyper-sexualisation of women in the media.

Challenging this stereotyped portrayal of women does not therefore call for new forms of regulation or censorship. Rather it requires applying a common sense level of consistency in relation to media regulation which applies across the board.

For example, in broadcasting we already have a watershed which prevents hyper-sexualised images from being broadcasted before 9pm. Many of the images, messages and advertisements that have been found to be commonplace in UK tabloids would not pass this watershed - including the Page 3 feature. And yet, these newspapers are not age restricted, they are displayed at child's eye level next to ordinary newspapers, and they are read and left lying around in public places. This clearly demonstrates an inconsistency in relation to the regulation of hyper-sexualised and sexist images in the media which should be addressed.

Furthermore, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and more recently the Equality Act 2010 prevents sexualised images such as 'Page 3' from being displayed in the workplace due to the intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment that these images can create. Yet, in a situation unusual to the UK, these very images saturate national tabloids which are sold without age-restriction in newsagents and supermarkets and which are read and left lying around in the public domain. Again, the inconsistency is clear.

This lack of a consistent approach in relation to the hyper-sexualisation and objectification of women in the media and public space is contradictory and it undermines the Government's efforts to tackle the ever-increasing sexualisation of children and young people. This 'sexualisation' process objectifies women and girls, and grooms boys and men into thinking it is acceptable to view and treat women and girls as sex objects. This portrayal of women is incompatible with a socially responsible press.

Indeed, this institutionalised portrayal of women as sex objects in the tabloid press is at odds with Article 12 of the PCC Editor's Code of Practice which aims to safeguard against discrimination on the basis of gender, and it unequivocally contravenes general standards in relation to its depiction and treatment of women.

Specific recommendations

In order to ensure a more logical and consistent approach to addressing the hyper-sexualisation and objectification of women in the press we recommend the following:

1) Regulation of printed materials should be consistent with other forms of media regulation.

- This means that, if material would not pass pre-watershed restrictions on the television, it should not be printed in unrestricted newspapers.

2) Regulation of printed materials should reflect and be guided by government legislation.

- This means that images and messages which would not be considered suitable for the workplace under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and more recently the Equality Act 2010, because of the intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment that they can create, should not be printed in universally accessible national newspapers.

3) Readers should be given a greater voice in relation to the culture and ethics of the press.

- This means that there should be an inclusion of the category of 'groups' as a basis of complaint within the Press Complaints Commission Codes of Practice so as to allow readers to take action against any form of persistent stereotyping or discrimination on the basis of a group identity.

4) Gender equality and issues related to discrimination on the basis of sex should be key and distinct components of any new codes of practice for the print based media.

- This will ensure that issues related to the objectification of women and the mainstreaming of pornography are judged and regulated on the basis of equality, not obscenity.

5) Ultimately we believe that recent events have exposed the inadequacies of self-regulation in relation to a body as powerful and influential as the press. We therefore recommend the replacement of the Press Complaints Commission with a new, independent press regulator which has meaningful powers of enforcement.

Thank you

This Inquiry provides a unique opportunity to ensure that the hyper-sexualisation and objectification of women in our tabloid press is placed firmly on the agenda as we work together for a print-based media which is socially responsible and which adheres to common principles of equality.

Thank you for taking the time read over this submission, we hope for your support on this matter and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Please email anna@object.org.uk for more information or for more examples / evidence.