

What About When Men are Objectified?

The reason women's rights groups challenge the objectification of women isn't because we are all a bunch of raving anti-nudity prudes, or moralistic censors. Believe me, we have much more important things to do with our lives! We challenge it because it is harmful.

So the key question here is, is it harmful when men are objectified?

But first, let's look at how (and how often) men are objectified.

How - & How Often - Are Men Objectified

It's Really Not The Same



Of course it's done for many of the same reasons (a bit of gratuitous publicity) but is it *really* the same when a man is 'objectified'?

Well firstly, a topless man topless is obviously not the same as a topless woman.

And of course, if you take Page 3 or any of the endless objectifying images of women she's often not just 'topless'. 'Page 3' models pose in nothing more than a G string, many other women will be wearing little more.

But quite often when we talk about men being objectified we are quite literally talking about them **merely being topless**. Take this shot of Poldark star, Aidan Turner. Debate erupted about men being objectified when images like this appeared in newspapers to publicise the show. But isn't he actually wearing more than men wear on the beach or at the local swimming pool?

And again usually when a man is topless he's not pouting, with his finger in his mouth, looking into the camera with a 'come hither' look in his eyes! He's standing strong, looking powerful, not silly, simpering, submissive and sexual. **He is not sexualised**, the way women are.

So even when men are 'objectified' it is very often not in the same way as women. The two are simply not comparable.

Men are Rarely Objectified Compared to Women

Secondly it is still very rare for men to be objectified – particularly compared to women. For men to be *sexualised* in the way women are is even more rare. In fact it is so rare that it still seems to provoke newspaper headlines when it happens, like every time Mr Poldark is pictured striding around without his top on. Whereas the totally gratuitous, sexualised images of women, that fill the 'side bars' of the same online articles that show a man with his top off are there every single day. They are so commonplace that we don't even notice them or question them.

Harm - How could Objectifying Men be Harmful?

So now let's turn to the real issue – is objectifying men harmful?

The Effect on Men and Boys' Self Esteem

If there were a huge every day volume of objectifying images of men of course it could start to effect men and boys in the same ways it effects women and girls. They too could start to feel pressured to have 'perfect' bodies, become obsessed with diet, working out or using steroids.

But how many male role models are objectified and how often? You'd need an exponential rise in this before you could ascribe any noticeable effect on boy's self esteem.

As it is, most boy's role models are still shown fully clothed while surrounded by half naked women with implants gyrating around them!

The Effect on Women's Behaviour towards Men

A large body of research alongside international treaties (not to mention basic common sense) recognises that the objectification of women promotes harmful attitudes in men towards women and how to behave towards them.

But is the reverse likely to be true? Even if women do start to see men in a more objectify manner, how could this effect women's behavior towards men?

Are women going to start routinely harassing men and boys when they walk down the street minding their own business? Are 1/3 of school boys going to be groped by their female classmates in school? Are we going to have female Harvey Weinstein's popping up everywhere demanding sexual favours from men they have physical and social power over? Are 1 in 4 women going to start assaulting their boyfriends, husbands or 'ex'es?

No.

And that's not because women 'are better then men'. We can all behave incredibly badly if we are socialised to (just as we currently socialise men to behave towards women). It is simply because women are not as physically (and often socially) strong as men. And everyone knows it. It is hard for any women to assault a man. And if a women harasses or starts groping a man, she knows that she is the one who is really going to be 'in for it'.

She's not the one with the power or in control. He is.

