



Western Morning News and their inability to report on sexual assaults responsibly

[Western Morning News and their inability to report on Sexual Assaults responsibly](#). TW.

Those at EVB know that I have quite a beef with my local newspaper, the [Western Morning News](#). I am frequently dismayed at their inability to report on violence against women and girls without resorting to victim blaming, sympathetic tones, excuse making and language not appropriate for reporting on serious violent crimes*.

Today, Tuesday 3rd June, they have taken a story of male violence against women, but clearly didn't deem it serious enough to report on responsibly and instead chose to treat the entire story as some hilarious, Benny Hill style farce: "[Serial bottom pincher jailed for groping prison officer](#)".

To summarise this story, 31 year old Matthew Hampton from Seaton in North Devon has been jailed for 12 months for repeatedly sexually assaulting women, whilst on a suspended sentence for the same crime. He pleaded not guilty to these crimes but was found guilty by the jury after 30 minutes at this one-day trial.

Bizarrely, throughout the whole piece, the reporter mentions the words 'bottom' six times, 'buttock' four times, 'grobe' five times, 'fondle' twice and 'bum' once but only mentions 'sexual assault, the crime which he was charged with, twice. This is such dangerous reporting because it adds a comic, Benny Hill-esque tone to the whole piece and minimises the crimes against the eight victims who reported and, insultingly, reduces women to mere body parts. Touching women without consent will always be a violent crime but it seems the media is immune to this belief. They seem to have a hierarchy of importance when it comes to male violence against women and girls and mere 'groping' and 'fondling' seem to be at the bottom, without any regard for the trauma this causes individual women and the negative cultural implications of people assuming some sexual assaults are less important than others. A perfect example of this was one of ITV This Morning's contributors suggesting that she does not believe one of Lord Renard's victims claim that his repeated sexual assaults on her have ruined her life. The victim is assumed to be sensitive when they are traumatised by crimes that are seen as less important and this sucks. This is rape culture.

Even more strangely, the reporter talks about Hampton's crimes as something he cannot control: "Matthew Hampton has a compulsive urge to fondle women's bottoms which was so strong he could not control it even when he was a serving prisoner." Further on the reporter claims that this is simply a "bizarre obsession" and not a serious offence: "Hampton, 31, is a Cambridge graduate who has a masters degree and was a university researcher before his bizarre obsession led him to jail."

There are so many things wrong with this reporting I don't even know where to start.

Firstly, it is incredibly dangerous for the press to treat sex offenders with complete surprise



when they appear to be intelligent men with careers and functioning lives. Sex offenders are not old, leering men in dirty raincoats waiting in dark alleyways and we already know that 85% of rapists are known to their victims and most importantly the press knows this. Why does so much of the media choose to report on crimes in such a way? They are directly contributing to rape culture, which is why the work that EVB do in challenging this narrative is so important.

Hampton's apparent 'compulsion' and 'urges' to sexually assault women is not something "he could not control" or some sort of switch he has just turned on, as they seem to suggest. I am not sure where the reporter even got this piece of information considering that Hampton did not give evidence at this trial and pleaded not guilty. They refer to Hampton's ridiculous claim that his victims had "backed into" his hand three times whilst thinly veiling their suggestion that it was because the women had bent over in front of him (one was cleaning the bath of the hostel where he was staying and the other was getting a form for him in prison).

Men can control themselves around women and I refuse to believe that they can't, to do so is to discredit every man who does not sexually assault women and does not get pleasure from touching without consent. It is so irresponsible to Other sex offenders in this way as it creates this false illusion that women can identify those who will be violent towards them and then places the blame with women when they are assaulted because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, chose the wrong boyfriend, acting in a certain way in front of such a man. It is abundantly clear that victim blaming is something the press fall back on time and time again.

I have complained to the Western Morning news on various occasions about their reporting of male violence against women and girls but they do not seem keen to respond to me in any way.

They clearly do not take the concerns of their customers seriously and opt for lazy journalism; maybe they should attend some VAWG training. Either way, I will not stop complaining to them.

*Here is a snippet, [their first two paragraphs](#) discuss the perpetrator of sexual abuse on a child in such a sympathetic way it makes me feel sick.

[Here is another:](#) "Ask for sex" is a phrase they use instead of "threat to rape".