SEXISM INVADES IPHONE APPS

by Jenny Chang with Samantha Fingerhut

Here's a true story. One day while at my office, I was conducting research about an iPhone app called *iGrope*, and I came across a Web site which allowed me to see how this app works on my computer. The application supposedly simulates "touching" breasts. I clicked to the page and sure enough breasts showed up on my screen that allowed me to jiggle, play with, and resize them. Unclear as to why this would be fun, I called in my colleague to ask her what she thought. As she entered my office, she suddenly stopped with a peculiar look on her face and asked, "Why are the rooftop workers staring into your office?" Horrified, I turned around to find two men with giant grins on their faces, giving me the thumbs up. That's when I realized that some iPhone apps should really just not be on the market.

While this makes for some entertaining anecdotes, the reality is that this new digital and interactive frontier is also becoming a new playground in which to exploit women. *iGrope* is only one of the many new misogynistic apps being created and rushed to a receptive market. And now with the introduction of the iPad already reaching over 600,000 in sales since its release just this April, reports show that Apple application downloads are dramatically climbing, indicating the market for Apple's apps is just getting bigger.

Of course, there are many apps that are fun or useful, but there are also those developers out there willing to bring sexism and negative stereotypes onto our phones and mobile devices. The more shocking revelation is

Apple's role in supporting this trend through an inconsistent and opaque approval process that has given a green light to a variety of sexist apps. Apple is the final arbiter and actually does have to approve ALL iPhone and iPad applications that are available through its iStore, including some of the ones that are listed below. Apple did not respond to repeated requests for comment from NOW-NYC.

Booty Caller (also known as ***Black Book Caller***): This application allows users to build a list of "special" ladies to call (in the words of the developers) for "booty calls, drunk dials, hook-ups or other random late night activities." Apple originally rejected this app because it had "Booty" in the name, but by changing the name to *Black Book Caller*, the app was then approved. *Developed by Bearded Pony, www.beardedpony.com*

iAmAMan: For $1.99, guys can get this app, which helps them keep track of their girlfriend's (or girlfriends') menstrual cycles, helping them maintain a chauvinist playboy lifestyle. The app also allows men to set different passwords for different girls, so if one hacks the phone, she won't see another girl's menstrual cycle on the calendar. *Developed by IPS Pirates, http://ipspirates.com*

iWobble: With the touch of a button, the *iWobble* app allows users to shake the breasts in a picture of any woman. The app allows users to play with pictures taken or downloaded of a woman they fancy, and then digitally create

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movement of the breasts or other body parts when you shake the iPhone. *Developed by xda developers, www.xda-developers.com*

PinPointsX: This application provides what it calls a "passion map" to its customers. It pretty much functions as a cross between Match.com, Booty Caller, and GPS, where consenting subscribers can provide information on types of persons they are looking for, and the application brings up all the potential partners that are within range of the location the subscribers are standing at the moment. Note: the potential partners could be consenting strangers. "Adult" entertainment apps like this one raise some red flags, particularly in light of NOW-NYC's efforts to get sex advertising—which has been linked to pimping and sex trafficking—out of the back pages of local publications. This has the potential to bring the trafficking market beyond print and even beyond infamous Craigslist ads to a whole new interactive level. NOW-NYC will be on watch. *Developed by PinPointsX, www.pinpointsx.com*

Shake That Booty: This app presents a cartoon image of a woman's behind in tight jeans, and users can press a button, touch the butt on the screen, or shake the phone to get the female's behind to wiggle and jiggle. Surprisingly, this app also has "Booty" in the name, but was approved by Apple immediately. *Developed by Visionaire Design, www.visionairedesign.com*

The Vanity App: This app allows users to rate someone's attractiveness with a photo on a scale from 1-10 based on the Golden Ratio. In a promotional video of *The Vanity App*, a user takes a digital photo of model Adriana Lima, does the measurements, and shows a rating of 9.4. Many criticized the creator of this app for making such an application, to which he defended its use as an artist tool. Yeah, right! *Developed by Tav Shande, www.tavshande. com*

Take Action! Remember, the only way to fight stereotypes is to take action against them.

We need all NOW-NYC members to get involved. If we're loud enough, we can get some real results. Here's how you can help:

1) *Submit your own complaints to Apple about how these apps offend you, by writing letters to or calling the corporate office expressing your outrage against any sexist applications you know are available for the iPhone or iPad. You can write to: Steve Jobs, CEO; Apple; 1 Infinite Loop; Cupertino, CA 95014 or call Apple at 408.996.1010. If you submit your letter to NOW-NYC by email, we'll send it to Apple on your behalf. Write to: contact@ nownyc.org with Apple in the subject line.*

2) *Track sexist and offensive iPhone or iPad apps that are on the market and report them to us at contact@nownyc.org or 212.627.9895.*

3) *Create your own apps to counter the offensive ones, creating a market for more women-positive applications. Two sites that can help you do that are swebapps.com and medlmobile.com.*