

## THE EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY ON INDIVIDUALS, MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

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Pornography is a major threat to marriages, the family, and the society at large. It is not a private choice without public consequence. Pornography alters both sexual attitudes and behavior, undermining marriage, which in turn, undermines the stability of the entire community.

### THE FAMILY AND PORNOGRAPHY

- Married men who are involved in pornography feel less satisfied with their conjugal relations and less emotionally attached to their wives.
- Pornography use is a pathway to infidelity and divorce, and is frequently a major factor in these family disasters.
- Couples affected by one spouse's addiction usually experience a loss of interest in sexual intercourse and good family relations.
- Both spouses perceive pornography viewing as tantamount to infidelity.
- Pornography viewing leads to a loss of interest in good family relations.

Pornography affects all members of the family. Not only does it eliminate an affectionate family life, children can experience traumas related to encounters with their parents' pornographic material. A study of adolescents revealed that viewing sexually explicit internet materials significantly increased their uncertainties about sexuality, and it can lower their self-esteem and bring about feelings of loneliness<sup>1</sup> and depression.<sup>2</sup> Pornography devastates marriages, as husbands report to loving their spouses less due to the addiction, and the wives of these users have deep psychological wounds, with feelings of betrayal, mistrust, and anger towards their partner, sometimes requiring clinical treatment for trauma.<sup>3</sup>

Pornography use and "cybersex" can often be just as damaging to family relationships as real-life infidelity, and this estrangement has tangible consequences: when viewing pornography becomes an addiction, 40 percent of "sex addicts" lose their spouses, 58 percent suffer considerable financial losses, and about a third lose their jobs.<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Peter and Valkenburg, "Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Internet Material," 595-6.

<sup>2</sup> Todd G. Morrison, Shannon R. Ellis, Melanie A. Morrison, Anomi Bearden, and Rebecca L. Harriman, "Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material and Variations in Body Esteem, Genital Attitudes, and Sexual Esteem Among a Sample of Canadian Men," *The Journal of Men's Studies* 14 (2006): 209-22 (216-7)

<sup>3</sup> Barbara A. Steffens and Robyn L. Rennie, "The Traumatic Nature of Disclosure for Wives of Sexual Addicts," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 247-67.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Anne Layden, Ph.D. (Center for Cognitive Therapy, Department of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania), Testimony for U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, November 18, 2004, 2.

## THE INDIVIDUAL AND PORNOGRAPHY

- Pornography is addictive, and neuroscientists are beginning to map the biological substrate of this addiction.
- Users tend to become desensitized to and bored with the type of pornography they use, seeking more perverse forms of sexual imagery.
- Men who view pornography regularly have a higher tolerance for abnormal sexuality, including rape, sexual aggression, and sexual promiscuity.
- Prolonged consumption of pornography by men produces notions of women as commodities or as “sex objects.”
- Pornography engenders greater sexual permissiveness, leading to a greater risk of out-of-wedlock births and STDs.
- Child-sex offenders are more likely to view pornography regularly or to be involved in its distribution.

Pornography changes the habits of the mind, and its use can easily become habitual, leading to desensitization, boredom, distorted views of reality, and an objectification of women. A greater amount of sexual stimuli becomes necessary to arouse habitual users, leading them to pursue more deviant forms of pornography to fulfill their sexual desires, e.g., watching “depictions of group sex, sadomasochistic practices, and sexual contact with animals.”<sup>5</sup>

## THE COMMUNITY AND PORNOGRAPHY

- The presence of sexually-oriented businesses significantly harms the surrounding community, leading to increases in crime and decreases in property values.
- Pornography viewing and sexual offense are inextricably linked.
- There is a connection between the consumption of violent pornography with behavioral aggression and the incidence of rape.

Today’s media-saturated society has made it much harder for parents to protect their children from pornography. The growth of digital media and the internet have allowed pornographers to harness technology for their own profits. Studies have shown that individuals who were convicted of the collection and distribution of internet child pornography had also committed an average of over thirteen different child sex abuses.<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The main defenses against pornography are close family life, a good marriage and good relations between parents and children, coupled with deliberate parental monitoring of internet use. Traditionally, government has kept a tight lid on sexual traffic and businesses, but in matters of pornography, that has waned almost completely, except where child pornography is concerned. Given the massive, deleterious individual, marital, family, and social effects of pornography, it is time for citizens, communities, and government to reconsider their laissez-faire approach.

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<sup>5</sup> Weaver, “The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities,” 3.

<sup>6</sup> Michael L. Bourke and Andres E. Hernandez, “The ‘Butner Study’ Redux: A Report of Incidence of Hands-on Child Victimization by Child Pornography Offenders,” *Journal of Family Violence* 24 (2009): 183-91 (187).