

The Effects of Pornography on Individuals, Marriage, Family, and Community

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.¹

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Pornography, as a visual (mis)representation of sexuality, distorts an individual's concept of sexual relations by objectifying them, which, in turn, alters both sexual attitudes and behavior. It is a major threat to marriage, to family, to children, and to individual happiness.

Social scientists, clinical psychologists, and biologists have begun to clarify some of the social and psychological effects of pornography, and neurologists are beginning to delineate the biological mechanisms through which pornography produces its powerful effects on people.

Pornography's power to undermine individual and social functioning is powerful and deep.

- **Effect on the Mind:** Pornography significantly distorts attitudes and perceptions about the nature of sexual intercourse. Men who habitually

¹ Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Marriage and Religion Research, Family Research Council, Washington, D.C.

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look at pornography have a higher tolerance for abnormal sexual behaviors, sexual aggression, promiscuity, and even rape. In addition, men begin to view women and even children as “sex objects,” commodities or instruments for their pleasure, not as persons with their own inherent dignity.

- **Effect on the Body:** Pornography is very addictive. The addictive aspect of pornography has a biological substrate, with dopamine hormone release acting as one of the mechanisms for forming the transmission pathway to pleasure centers of the brain. Also, the increased sexual permissiveness engendered by pornography increases the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease or of being an unwitting parent in an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.
- **Effect on the Heart:** Pornography affects people’s emotional lives. Married men who are involved in pornography feel less satisfied with their marital sexual relations and less emotionally attached to their wives. Women married to men with a pornography addiction report feelings of betrayal, mistrust, and anger. Pornographic use may lead to infidelity and even divorce. Adolescents who view pornography feel shame, diminished self-confidence, and sexual uncertainty.

I. Introduction

The conjugal act—the act of sexual intercourse—brings humanity into existence and sets in motion the next generations of society. Sexual intercourse, like atomic energy, is a powerful agent for good if channeled well, but for ill if not. Healthy societies maintain their stability by channeling the sexual energies of young adults into marriage, an institution that legitimizes sexual intercourse, protects the children that are the fruit of intercourse, and channels the giving and receiving of sexual pleasure in a way that builds up rather than tears down society. Sexual taboos are one set of the normal mechanisms of social control of the sexual appetite. They are analogous to the control rods of a nuclear reactor plant: they block the sexual from straying off course and into destructive pathways.

One of the biggest tasks of adolescent members of all society is to come to grips with their burgeoning sexuality. Some have always tested the limits of sexual expression even when strong social controls were in place. In well-ordered societies, such testing triggers immediate social sanctions from parents, mentors, and community.

In today’s media-saturated society, these sanctions operate in fewer and fewer quarters. A substantial factor in this shift has been the growth of digital media and the Internet. This “digital revolution” has led to great strides in productivity, communication, and other desirable ends, but pornographers also have harnessed its power for their profit. The cost has been a further weakening of the nation’s

citizens and families, a development that should be of grave concern to all. The social sciences demonstrate the appropriateness of this concern.

Two recent reports, one by the American Psychological Association on hypersexualized girls, and the other by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy on the pornographic content of phone texting among teenagers, make clear that the digital revolution is being used by younger and younger children to dismantle the barriers that channel sexuality into family life.²

Pornography hurts adults, children, couples, families, and society. Among adolescents, pornography hinders the development of a healthy sexuality, and among adults, it distorts sexual attitudes and social realities. In families, pornography use leads to marital dissatisfaction, infidelity, separation, and divorce. Society at large is not immune to the effect of pornography. Child sex-offenders, for example, are often involved not only in the viewing, but also in the distribution, of pornography.

Pornography is powerful enough even to overwhelm individuals, couples, and families despite earlier affectionate relationships—whether between the mother and father or between the parents and the child. But loving family relationships can help mute many of the factors that encourage the use of pornography long before its addictive power takes root in a user's life.

The effect of regular viewing of pornography on marriage and family is dealt with first, for there its greatest damage to the innocent can be seen. Then the source of this damage is reviewed: the effects on the individual user, his psyche, and his behavior. Adolescent usage, patterns, and effects are then delineated, for during this period the habit of viewing pornography is often developed in stages. Finally the effects of sexually-oriented-businesses on their local environs are reviewed.

II. Family Consequences of Viewing Pornography

Pornography has significant effects during all stages of family life. For a child exposed to pornography within a family setting, pornography causes stress and increases the risk for developing negative attitudes about the nature and purpose of human sexuality. For adolescents who view pornography, their attitudes toward their own and others' sexuality change, and their sexual expectations and behavior are shaped accordingly. For adults, pornography has harmful and even destructive effects on marriage.

² Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, American Psychological Association, Washington D.C., 2008 at <http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualizationrep.pdf>; and: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy: "SEX And TECH, Results from a survey of teens and young adults," Washington D.C., 2008 at http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/SEXTECH/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf.

A. Impact on Children

The impact of a parent's use of pornography on young children is varied and disturbing. Pornography eliminates the warmth of affectionate family life, which is the natural social nutrient for a growing child. Other losses and traumas related to the use of pornography when a child is young include:

- encountering pornographic material a parent has acquired;
- encountering a parent masturbating;
- overhearing a parent engaged in "phone sex";
- witnessing and experiencing stress in the home caused by online sexual activities;
- increased risk of the children becoming consumers of pornography themselves;
- witnessing and being involved in parental conflict;
- exposure to the commodification of human beings, especially women, as "sex objects";
- increased risk of parental job loss and financial strain;
- increased risk of parental separation and divorce;
- decreased parental time and attention—both from the pornography-addicted parent and from the parent preoccupied with the addicted spouse.³

Also, parents may disclose their struggle with the addiction to pornography to their children, intentionally or unintentionally, thereby distorting their children's sexual development.⁴

B. Impact on Adolescents

Pornography viewing among teenagers disorients them during that developmental phase when they have to learn how to handle their sexuality and when they are most vulnerable to uncertainty about their sexual beliefs and moral values.⁵ A study of 2,343 adolescents found that sexually explicit Internet material significantly increased their uncertainties about sexuality.⁶ The study also showed that increased exposure to sexually explicit Internet material increased favorable attitudes toward sexual exploration with others outside of marriage and decreased marital commitment to the other spouse.⁷ Another study by Todd G. Morrison, professor of psychology at the University of Saskatchewan, and

³ Jennifer P. Schneider, "Effects of Cybersex Addiction on the Family: Results of a Survey," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 7 (2000): 31-58.

⁴ M. Deborah Corley and Jennifer P. Schneider, "Sex Addiction Disclosure to Children: The Parents' Perspective," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 10 (2003): 291-324.

⁵ Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg, "Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Internet Material, Sexual Uncertainty, and Attitudes Toward Uncommitted Sexual Exploration: Is There a Link?" *Communication Research* 35 (2008): 579-601 (581).

⁶ Peter and Valkenburg, "Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Internet Material," 596.

⁷ Peter and Valkenburg, "Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Internet Material," 595.

colleagues found that adolescents exposed to high levels of pornography had lower levels of sexual self-esteem.⁸

A significant relationship also exists between frequent pornography use and feelings of loneliness, including major depression.⁹

Finally, viewing pornography can engender feelings of shame: In a study of high school students, the majority of those who had viewed pornography felt some degree of shame for viewing it. However, 36 percent of males and 26 percent of females said they were never ashamed of viewing pornography,¹⁰ giving some idea of the level of desensitization already reached in society.

High adolescent consumption of pornography also affects behavior. Male pornography use is linked to significantly increased sexual intercourse with non-romantic friends,¹¹ and is likely a correlate of the so-called “hook-up” culture.

Exposure to pornographic sexual content can be a significant factor in teenage pregnancy. A three year longitudinal study of teenagers found that frequent exposure to televised sexual content was related to a substantially greater likelihood of teenage pregnancy within the succeeding three years. This same study also found that the likelihood of teenage pregnancy was two times greater when the quantity of that sexual content exposure, within the viewing episodes, was high rather than low.¹²

⁸ 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).

⁹ Michele L. Ybarra and Kimberly J. Mitchell, “Exposure to Internet Pornography among Children and Adolescents: A National Survey,” *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 8 (2005): 473-86 (479).

Vincent Cyrus Yoder, Thomas B. Virden III, and Kiran Amin “Internet pornography and Loneliness: An Association?” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 12 (2005): 19-44 (30). This was a study of 400 individual Internet pornography users.

¹⁰ Thomas Johansson and Nils Hammarén, “Hegemonic Masculinity and Pornography: Young People’s Attitudes Toward and Relations to Pornography,” *The Journal of Men’s Studies* 15 (2007): 57-70 (64).

¹¹ E. Häggström-Nordin, U. Hanson, and T. Tydén, “Associations between Pornography Consumption and Sexual Practices among Adolescents in Sweden,” *International Journal of STD & AIDS* 16 (2005): 102-7 (104-5).

¹² Anita Chandra, Steven C. Martino, Rebecca L. Collins, Marc N. Elliott, Sandra H. Berry, David E. Kanouse, and Angela Miu, “Does Watching Sex on Television Predict Teen Pregnancy? Findings from a Longitudinal Survey of Youth,” *Pediatrics* 122 (2008): 1047-1054 (1052).

C. Impact on Marriage

Marital Dissatisfaction. Pornography use undermines marital relations and distresses wives.¹³ Husbands report loving their spouses less after long periods of looking at (and desiring) women depicted in pornography.¹⁴

In many cases, the wives of pornography users also develop deep psychological wounds, commonly reporting feelings of betrayal, loss, mistrust, devastation, and anger in responses to the discovery or disclosure of a partner's pornographic online sexual activity.¹⁵

Wives can begin to feel unattractive or sexually inadequate and may become severely depressed when they realize their husbands view pornography.¹⁶ The distress level in wives may be so high as to require clinical treatment for trauma, not mere discomfort.¹⁷

Viewers of pornography assign increased importance to sexual relations without emotional involvement,¹⁸ and consequently, wives experience decreased intimacy from their husbands.¹⁹

The emotional distance fostered by pornography and "cybersex" (interactive computer contact with another regarding pornographic sexual issues) can often be just as damaging to the relationship as real-life infidelity,²⁰ and both men and women tend to put online sexual activity in the same category as having an affair.²¹ The estrangement between spouses wrought by pornography can have tangible consequences as well: when the viewing of pornography rises to the level

¹³ Ana J. Bridges, Raymond M. Bergner, and Matthew Hesson-McInnis, "Romantic Partners' Use of Pornography: Its Significance for Women," *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 29 (2003): 1-14.

¹⁴ Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, "Pornography's Impact on Sexual Satisfaction," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 18 (1988): 438-53 (439-440), quoting S.E. Gutierrez, D.T. Kenrick, and L. Goldberg (1983, August), Adverse effect of popular erotica on judgments of one's mate, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Anaheim, CA

¹⁵ Schneider, "Effects of Cybersex Addiction on the Family," 31-58.

¹⁶ Schneider, "Effects of Cybersex Addiction on the Family," 38.

¹⁷ Barbara A. Steffens and Robyn L. Rennie, "The Traumatic Nature of Disclosure for Wives of Sexual Addicts," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 247-67.

¹⁸ Zillmann and Bryant, "Pornography's Impact on Sexual Satisfaction," 448.

¹⁹ Raymond M. Bergner and Ana J. Bridges, "The Significance of Heavy Pornography Involvement for Romantic Partners: Research and Clinical Implications," *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 28 (2002): 193-206 (197).

²⁰ J.P. Schneider, "Effects of Cybersex Problems on the Spouse and Family," *Sex and the Internet: A Guidebook for Clinicians*, ed. A. Cooper (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002): 169-86 (180).

²¹ Monica Therese Whitty, "Pushing the Wrong Buttons: Men's and Women's Attitudes toward Online and Offline Infidelity," *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 6 (2003): 569-79.

of addiction, 40 percent of “sex addicts” lose their spouses, 58 percent suffer considerable financial losses, and about a third lose their jobs.²²

In a study on the effects of “cybersex”—a form of sexually explicit interaction between two people on the Internet—researchers found that more than half of those engaged in “cybersex” had lost interest in sexual intercourse, while one-third of their partners had lost interest as well, while in one-fifth of the couples both husband and wife or both partners had a significantly decreased interest in sexual intercourse. Stated differently, this study showed that only one-third of couples maintained an interest in sexual relations with one another when one partner was engaged in “cybersex.”²³

Prolonged exposure to pornography also fosters dissatisfaction with, and even distaste for, a spouse’s affection.²⁴ Cynical attitudes regarding love begin to emerge, and “superior sexual pleasures are thought attainable without affection toward partners.”²⁵ These consequences hold for both men and women who have had prolonged exposure to pornography, with the decline in sexual happiness being primarily due to the growing dissatisfaction with the spouse’s normal sexual behavior.²⁶

Finally, pornography users increasingly see the institution of marriage as sexually confining,²⁷ have diminished belief in the importance of marital faithfulness,²⁸ and have increasing doubts about the value of marriage as an essential social institution and further doubts about its future viability.²⁹ All this naturally diminishes the importance for them of having good family relations in their own families.³⁰

Increased Infidelity. Dolf Zillman of the University of Alabama, in one study of adolescents, shows that the steady use of pornography frequently leads to abandonment of fidelity to their girlfriends.³¹ Steven Stack of Wayne State University and colleagues later showed that pornography use increased the

²² 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.

²³ Schneider, “Effects of Cybersex Addiction on the Family,” 39-40.

²⁴ James B. Weaver III, “The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities” (Testimony presented before the Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Washington, D.C., November 18, 2004), 4.

²⁵ Dolf Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica on Adolescents’ and Young Adults’ Dispositions toward Sexuality,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 27S (2000): 41-44 (42).

²⁶ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 448.

²⁷ Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 42.

²⁸ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 448.

²⁹ Weaver, “The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities,” 4.

³⁰ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 448.

³¹ Dolf Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 42.

marital infidelity rate by more than 300 percent.³² Another study found a strong correlation between viewing Internet pornography and sexually permissive behavior.³³ Stack's study found that Internet pornography use is 3.7 times greater among those who procure sexual relations with a prostitute than among those who do not.³⁴

“Cybersex” pornography also leads to much higher levels of infidelity among women. Women who engaged in “cybersex” had about 40 percent more offline sexual partners than women who did not engage in cybersex.³⁵

Separation and Divorce. Given the research already cited, it is not surprising that addiction to pornography is a contributor to separation and divorce. In the best study to date (a very rudimentary opportunity study of reports by divorce lawyers on the most salient factors present in the divorce cases they handled), 68 percent of divorce cases involved one party meeting a new paramour over the Internet, 56 percent involved “one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites,” 47 percent involved “spending excessive time on the computer,” and 33 percent involved spending excessive time in chat rooms (a commonly sexualized forum).³⁶ Cybersex, which often takes place in these chat rooms, was a major factor in separation and divorce: In over 22 percent of the couples observed the spouse was no longer living with the “cybersex” addict, and in many of the other cases spouses were seriously considering leaving the marriage or relationship.³⁷

III. Differences between Men and Women

Pornography affects both men and women. However there are significant differences between men and women on the likelihood of using pornography, the types of pornography used, and their feelings about pornography.

³² Steven Stack, Ira Wasserman, and Roger Kern, “Adult Social Bonds and Use of Internet Pornography,” *Social Science Quarterly* 85 (2004): 75-88.

³³ Ven-hwei Lo and Ran Wei, “Exposure to Internet Pornography and Taiwanese Adolescents’ Sexual Attitudes and Behavior,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 49 (2005): 221-37 (229).

³⁴ Steven Stack, Ira Wasserman, and Roger Kern, “Adult Social Bonds and Use of Internet Pornography,” *Social Science Quarterly* 85 (2004): 75-88 (83).

³⁵ Kristian Daneback, Al Cooper, and Sven-Axel Månsson, “An Internet Study of Cybersex Participants,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 34 (2005): 321-28 (324-25).

³⁶ Jill Manning, Senate Testimony, November 10, 2005, referencing: J. Dedmon, “Is the Internet bad for your marriage? Online affairs, pornographic sites playing greater role in divorces,” 2002, press release from American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, 14.

³⁷ Schneider, “Effects of Cybersex Addiction on the Family,” 56.

A. Different Rates of Use and Different Types of Use

Men and women use pornography differently. Men are more than six times as likely to view pornography as females,³⁸ and more likely to spend more time viewing it.

In a study of self-identified female “cybersex” addicts, women reported that they preferred engaging in “cybersex” within the context of a relationship (via email or chat room) rather than accessing pornographic images. This preference may contribute to the significant difference one study found in the proportion of women who have real-life sexual encounters with their online companions compared to men. It found that 80 percent of women who engaged in these online sexual activities also had real-life sexual encounters with their online partners, compared to the much lower proportion of 33 percent for men.³⁹ Also, as stated above, such women are much more likely to have had very high numbers of such sexual encounters and partners.⁴⁰ However in another study, this time of men who flirted in Internet chat rooms, 78 percent reported they had at least one face-to-face sexual experience with someone they had met through a chat room in the past year.⁴¹ Thus, it seems that a very high proportion of both men and women who engage in “cybersex” may go on to have physical sexual encounters with their online partners.

A study of sex-addicted men also found that 43 percent used online sexual activity to engage in sexual activities they would never otherwise perform.⁴² Similarly, self reports also reveal that the tendency to explore new behaviors in “offline” relationships increases with increased online sexual activity.⁴³

B. Different Reactions to Different Infidelities

The way men and women view infidelity is very different. One study, using undergraduates from a large university in Northern Ireland, investigated how men and women perceive online and offline sexual and emotional infidelity. When forced to decide, men were more upset by sexual infidelity and women by emotional infidelity. Only 23 percent of women claimed they would be more

³⁸ Steven Stack, Ira Wasserman, and Roger Kern, “Adult Social Bonds and Use of Internet Pornography,” *Social Science Quarterly* 85 (2004): 75-88 (85).

³⁹ Jennifer P. Schneider, “A Qualitative Study of Cybersex Participants: Gender Differences, Recovery Issues, and Implications for Therapists,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 7 (2000): 249-78 (277).

⁴⁰ Kristian Daneback, Al Cooper, and Sven-Axel Månsson, “An Internet Study of Cybersex Participants,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 34 (2005): 321-28 (324-25).

⁴¹ Brian Dew, Michael Brubaker, and Danica Hays, “From the Altar to the Internet: Married Men and Their Online Sexual Behavior,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 195-207 (199).

⁴² Al Cooper, Nathan Galbreath, and Michael A. Becker, “Sex on the Internet: Furthering our Understanding of Men with Online Sexual Problems,” *Psychology of Addictive Behavior* 18 (2004): 223-30 (225).

⁴³ Al Cooper, Nathan Galbreath, and Michael A. Becker, “Sex on the Internet: Furthering our Understanding of Men with Online Sexual Problems,” 226.

bothered by sexual infidelity, compared to the 77 percent of women who would be more bothered by emotional infidelity. Males felt the opposite way. Eighty-four percent of the men reported they would be more bothered by sexual infidelity, whereas only 16 percent say they would be more bothered by emotional infidelity.⁴⁴

In a study which examined different types of degrading pornography, featuring themes such as “objectification” and “dominance,” both men and women rated the same three major themes as the most degrading of all, but with different intensities: women rated them as even more degrading than men did.⁴⁵

IV. Individual Consequences of Viewing Pornography

Pornography changes the habits of the mind, the inner private self. Its use can easily become habitual, which in turn leads 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.

A. Desensitization, Habituation, and Boredom

Prolonged use of pornography produces habituation,⁴⁶ boredom, and sexual dissatisfaction among female and male viewers,⁴⁷ and is associated with more lenient views of extramarital sexual relations and recreational attitudes toward sex.⁴⁸ A 2000 study of college freshmen found that the habitual use of pornography led to greater tolerance of sexually explicit material, thus requiring more novel and bizarre material to achieve the same level of arousal or interest.⁴⁹ For example, habituation may lead to watching “depictions of group sex, sadomasochistic practices, and sexual contact with animals,”⁵⁰ engaging in anal intercourse,⁵¹ and trivializing “nonviolent forms of the sexual abuse of children.”⁵²

⁴⁴ Monica T. Whitty and Laura-Lee Quigley, “Emotional and Sexual Infidelity Offline and in Cyberspace,” *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 34 (2008): 461-468 (465).

⁴⁵ Gloria Cowan and Kerri F. Dunn, “What Themes in Pornography Lead to Perceptions of the Degradation of Women?” *The Journal of Sex Research* 31 (1994): 11-21 (16-17).

⁴⁶ Dolf Zillman, Indiana University, Paper prepared for the Surgeon General’s Workshop on Pornography and Public Health, Arlington VA, 1986. Available at http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/NN/B/C/K/V/_/_/nmbckv.pdf (accessed April 23, 2012).

⁴⁷ Weaver, “The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities,” 2, 4.

⁴⁸ Ven-hwei Lo and Ran Wei, “Exposure to Internet Pornography and Taiwanese Adolescents’ Sexual Attitudes and Behavior,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 49 (2005): 221-37 (230); Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg, “Adolescents’ Exposure to Sexually Explicit Online Material and Recreational Attitudes toward Sex,” *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006): 639-660 (654).

⁴⁹ Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 41.

⁵⁰ Weaver, “The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities,” 3.

⁵¹ Häggström-Nordin, Hanson, and Tydén, “Associations between Pornography Consumption and Sexual Practices among Adolescents in Sweden,” 104-5.

The pornography industry adapted to this desire for more bizarre and uncommon images. An analysis of the content of Playboy, Penthouse, and Hustler from the years 1953 to 1984 revealed 6,004 child images and an additional 14,854 images depicting crime or violence. Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of the child images were sexual and violent, with most of the images displaying girls between the ages of three and eleven years of age. Each of these magazines portrayed the scenes involving children as though the child had been unharmed by the sexual scene or even benefited from it.⁵³

Heavy exposure to pornography leads men to judge their mates as sexually less attractive,⁵⁴ resulting in less satisfaction with their affection, physical appearance, and sexual behavior.⁵⁵ The need for more intense sexual stimulation brought on by pornography can lead to boredom in normal relationships and a greater likelihood of seeking sexual pleasure outside of marriage. Repeated exposure to pornography leads the viewer to consider “recreational sexual engagements” as increasingly important,⁵⁶ and changes the viewer to being very accepting of sexual permissiveness.⁵⁷

B. Distorted Perception of Reality

Pornography presents sexual access as relentless, “a sporting event that amounts to innocent fun” with inconsequential effects on emotions, perceptions, and health.⁵⁸ This is not the case, however. Pornography leads to distorted perceptions of social reality: an exaggerated perception of the level of sexual activity in the general population,⁵⁹ an inflated estimate “of the incidence of premarital and extramarital sexual activity, as well as increased assessment of male and female promiscuity,” “an overestimation of almost all sexual activities performed by sexually active adults,”⁶⁰ and an overestimation of the general prevalence of perversions such as group sex, bestiality, and sadomasochistic activity.⁶¹ Thus the beliefs being formed in the mind of the viewer of pornography are far removed from reality. A case could be made that repeated viewing of pornography induces a mental illness in matters sexual.

⁵² Weaver, “The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities,” 3.

⁵³ Judith A. Reisman, “The Psychopharmacology of Pictorial Pornography Restructuring Brain, Mind & Memory & Subverting Freedom of Speech” (2007), 26. Communication with the author.

⁵⁴ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 439.

⁵⁵ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 448.

⁵⁶ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 450.

⁵⁷ Ven-hwei Lo and Ran Wei, “Exposure to Internet Pornography and Taiwanese Adolescents’ Sexual Attitudes and Behavior,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 49 (2005): 221-37 (233).

⁵⁸ Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 43.

⁵⁹ Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 41.

⁶⁰ James B. Weaver III, “The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities,” 3.

⁶¹ Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 41-2.

These distortions result in an acceptance of three beliefs: (1) sexual relationships are recreational in nature, (2) men are generally sexually driven, and (3) women are sex objects or commodities.⁶² These are called “permission-giving beliefs” because they result in assumptions that one’s behavior is normal, acceptable, and commonplace, and thus not hurtful to anyone else.⁶³ These beliefs are deepened and reinforced by masturbation while viewing pornography,⁶⁴ a frequent practice among those who use pornography to deal with stress.⁶⁵

When male and female viewers do not believe that exposure to pornography has any effect upon their personal views or lives,⁶⁶ they more readily internalize abnormal sexual attitudes and increase the likelihood that they will engage in perverse sexual behaviors.⁶⁷

All of these distortions amount to a serious misunderstanding about sexuality and relationships and are a dangerous distortion of the nature of social life.⁶⁸ Those who perceive pornographic sexual scenes as depicting reality tend to be more accepting of sexual permissiveness than others.⁶⁹ Prolonged exposure to pornography fosters the belief that sexual inactivity constitutes a health risk.⁷⁰

C. Objectification and Degradation of Women

Pornography fosters the idea that the degradation of women is acceptable. Since males use pornography much more frequently than females,⁷¹ exposure to sexual and even semi-sexual material from the Internet, magazines, and television is associated with stronger notions that women are sex objects or sexual

⁶² L. Monique Ward, “Does Television Exposure Affect Emerging Adults’ Attitudes and Assumptions about Sexual Relationships? Correlational and Experimental Confirmation,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 31 (2002): 1-15 (12).

⁶³ Mary Anne Layden, Center for Cognitive Therapy, Department of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania (Testimony for U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, November 18, 2004).

⁶⁴ Sylvain C. Boies, “University Students’ Uses of and Reactions to Online Sexual Information and Entertainment: Links to Online and Offline Sexual Behavior,” *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 11 (2002): 77-89 (86).

⁶⁵ Cooper, Galbreath, and Becker, “Sex on the Internet: Furthering Our Understanding of Men with Online Sexual Problems,” 226.

⁶⁶ Nicole Daluga, “A Content Analysis of Sexual Risk and Protective Behaviors and Messages in Sexually Explicit Web Pages Viewed by a National Probability Sample of U.S. Adolescents” (Atlanta, Georgia: Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University, 2002), 255-279, 19; K.A. Cameron, L.F. Salazar, J.M. Bernhardt, N. Burgess-Whitman, G.M. Wingood, and R.J. DiClemente, “Adolescents’ Experience with Sex on the Web: Results from Online Focus Groups,” *Journal of Adolescence* 28 (2005): 535-40 (537).

⁶⁷ Layden, Testimony for U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

⁶⁸ Layden, Testimony for U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

⁶⁹ Laramie D. Taylor, “Effects of Visual and Verbal Sexual Television Content and Perceived Realism on Attitudes and Beliefs,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 42 (2005): 130-37 (135).

⁷⁰ Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 42.

⁷¹ Häggström-Nordin, Hanson, and Tydén, “Associations between Pornography Consumption and Sexual Practices among Adolescents in Sweden” (103).

commodities.⁷² Men thus exposed are more likely to describe women in overtly sexual terms, rather than by other personal attributes.⁷³

A study of widely distributed x-rated films by Gloria Cowan and colleagues, professors of psychology at California State University, San Bernardino, determined the range and extent of domination and sexual inequality depicted of women in a random selection of movies in family video rental stores in California. Physical aggression was present in 73 percent of the films, and rape scenes were present in 51 percent, with the woman as the victim every time. The films depicted gender-role inequalities as well, typically portraying the men as professionals and the women as school girls, secretaries, or housewives.⁷⁴ During the sexual scenes, the man usually remained at least partially clothed, whereas the woman was usually naked.⁷⁵

Pornographic films also degrade women through “rape myth acceptance” scenes, which depict women being raped and ultimately enjoying the experience. These scenes foster the belief that women really “want” to be raped. Jeannette Norris of the University of Washington conducted a study in which a group of students read two versions of the same story depicting a woman being raped. The story, however, had two different endings: one version ended with the woman deeply distressed, the other ended with the woman seeming to enjoy herself. Even though the two stories were identical in every way except for the woman’s reaction at the end, the students viewed the scenario more positively when the story depicted the woman as enjoying the rape. They perceived the raped woman as having a greater “desire” to have sex and were thus more accepting of what the man had done.⁷⁶

Similar results emerge in assessments of college men. Sarah Murnen of Kenyon College, Ohio found that fraternity members, who displayed many more pornographic pictures of women in their rooms than those from the non-fraternity group, had more positive attitudes toward rape.⁷⁷

Women tend to view pornography as more degrading of women than men do. When a sample of students was asked about their feelings toward pornography,

⁷² Peter Jochen and Patti M. Valkenburg, “Adolescents’ Exposure to a Sexualized Media Environment and Their Notions of Women as Sex Objects,” *Sex Roles* 56 (2007): 381-395 (390).

⁷³ Deborah E.S. Frable, Anne E Johnson, and Hildy Kellman, “Seeing Masculine Men, Sexy Women, and Gender Differences: Exposure to Pornography and Cognitive Constructions of Gender,” *Journal of Personality* 65 (1997): 311-355 (333).

⁷⁴ Gloria Cowan, Carole Lee, Daniella Levy, and Debra Snyder, “Dominance and Inequality in X-Rated Videocassettes,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 12 (1988): 299-311 (306-307).

⁷⁵ Cowan, Lee, Levy, and Snyder, “Dominance and Inequality in X-Rated Videocassettes,” 308.

⁷⁶ Jeanette Norris, “Social Influence Effects on Responses to Sexually Explicit Material Containing Violence,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 28 (1991): 67-76 (70-73).

⁷⁷ Timothy E. Bleecker and Sarah K. Murnen, “Fraternity Membership, the Display of Degrading Sexual Images of Women, and Rape Myth Acceptance,” *Sex Roles* 53 (2005): 487-493 (490).

72 percent of the young women but only 23 percent of the young men stated their feelings were negative. Moreover, when asked if pornography is degrading, almost 90 percent of young women but only 65 percent of young men agreed that pornography is degrading.⁷⁸

After prolonged exposure to pornography, men especially, but also some women, trivialize rape as a criminal offense.⁷⁹

Whether they think pornography is degrading or not, women who view pornography regularly unwittingly engage in a form of self degradation: they develop a negative body image about themselves because they do not measure up to the depictions in the pornographic materials.⁸⁰

V. Clinical Consequences of Viewing Pornography

Pornography consumption has more than just psychological and familial ramifications. There are numerous clinical consequences to pornography use, including increased risk for significant physical and mental health problems and a greater likelihood of committing a sex-based crime.

A. Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancies

Since pornography encourages sexually permissive attitudes and behavior, users of pornography have a higher likelihood of contracting a sexually transmitted disease or fathering an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Pornography's frequent depiction of intercourse without condoms (87 percent of the time) is an invitation for the promiscuous to contract a sexually transmitted disease,⁸¹ to have a child out of wedlock and to have multiple sex partners.⁸² Pornography also promotes

⁷⁸ Thomas Johansson and Nils Hammaren, "Hegemonic Masculinity and Pornography: Young People's Attitudes Toward and Relations to Pornography," *The Journal of Men's Studies* 15 (2007): 57-70 (62).

⁷⁹ Weaver, "The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities," 3.

⁸⁰ Sheilah Siegel, "Applying Social Comparison Theory to Women's Body Image and Self-esteem: The Effects of Pornography" (Doctoral dissertation, Pacific Graduate School of Psychology, Palo Alto, CA, 1997).

⁸¹ Nicole Daluga, "A Content Analysis of Sexual Risk and Protective Behaviors and Messages in Sexually Explicit Web Pages Viewed by a National Probability Sample of U.S. Adolescents" (Atlanta, Georgia: Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University, 2002), 255-279.

⁸² Gina M. Wingood, Ralph J. DiClemente, Kathy Harrington, Suzy Davies, Edward W. Hook, and M. Kim Oh, "Exposure to X-rated Movies and Adolescents' Sexual and Contraceptive-related Attitudes and Behaviors," *Pediatrics* 107 (2001): 1116-19.

sexual compulsiveness, which doubles the likelihood of being infected with a sexually transmitted disease.⁸³

B. Sexual Addiction

Pornography and “cybersex” are highly addictive and can lead to sexually compulsive behaviors (that decrease a person’s capacity to perform other major tasks in life). Over 90 percent of therapists surveyed in one study believed that a person could become addicted to “cybersex.”⁸⁴ In an American survey, 57 percent of frequent viewers used online sexual activity to deal with stress.⁸⁵ A 2006 Swedish study of regular Internet pornography users found that about six percent were compulsive users and that these compulsives also used much more non-Internet pornography as well.⁸⁶

Addictive pornography use leads to lower self-esteem and a weakened ability to carry out a meaningful social and work life. A survey of pornography addicts found that they disliked the “out of control” feeling and the time consumption that their pornography use engendered. All of the sexual compulsives reported they had felt distressed and experienced impairment in an important aspect of their lives as a result of their addiction. Almost half of the sexual compulsives said their behavior had significant negative results in their social lives, and a quarter reported negative effects on their job.⁸⁷ In another survey, sexual compulsives and sexual addicts were 23 times more likely than those without a problem to state that discovering online sexual material was the worst thing that had ever happened in their life.⁸⁸ No wonder then that severe clinical depression was reported twice as frequently among Internet pornography users compared to non-users.⁸⁹

⁸³ Kristian Daneback, Michael W. Ross, and Sven-Axel Månsson, “Characteristics and Behaviors of Sexual Compulsives Who Use the Internet for Sexual Purposes,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 53-67 (59-60).

⁸⁴ Peter D. Goldberg, Brennan D. Peterson, Karen H. Rosen, and Mary Linda Sara, “Cybersex: The Impact of a Contemporary Problem on the Practices of Marriage and Family Therapists,” *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 34 (2008): 469-80 (475).

⁸⁵ A. Cooper, N. Galbreath, and M.A. Becker, “Sex on the Internet: Furthering Our Understanding of Men with Online Sexual Problems,” *Psychology of Addictive Behavior* 18 (2004): 223-30 (225).

⁸⁶ Kristian Daneback, Michael W. Ross, and Sven-Axel Månsson, “Characteristics and Behaviors of Sexual Compulsives Who Use the Internet for Sexual Purposes,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 53-67 (59, 61).

⁸⁷ Donald W. Black, Laura L.D. Kehrberg, Denise L. Flumerfelt, and Steven S. Schlosser, “Characteristics of 36 Subjects Reporting Compulsive Sexual Behavior,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 154 (1997): 243-49 (247).

⁸⁸ Al Cooper, Eric Griffin-Shelley, David L. Delmonico, and Robin M. Mathy, “Online Sexual Problems: Assessment and Predictive Variables,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 8 (2001): 267-85 (281).

⁸⁹ Michele L. Ybarra and Kimberly J. Mitchell, “Exposure to Internet Pornography among Children and Adolescents: A National Survey,” *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 8 (2005): 473-86 (479).

C. Aggression and Abuse

Intense use of pornography is strongly related to sexual aggression,⁹⁰ and among frequent viewers of pornography, there is a marked increase in sexual callousness, including the “rape myth acceptance” noted above.⁹¹

A significant portion of pornography is violent in content. A study of different pornographic media found violence in almost a quarter of magazine scenes, in more than a quarter of video scenes, and in almost half (over 42 percent) of online pornography. A second study found that almost half the violent Internet scenes included nonconsensual sex.⁹²

The data suggest “a modest connection between exposure to pornography and subsequent behavioral aggression,”⁹³ though when men consume violent pornography (i.e. depicting rape or torture), they are more likely to commit acts of sexual aggression.⁹⁴ Dangerously, pornography strongly affects psychotic men, who are more likely to act out their impulses.⁹⁵

Consumption of nonviolent pornography also increases men’s self-acknowledged willingness to force compliance with their particular sexual desires on reluctant partners.⁹⁶ And though there are conflicting data on the relative effects of violent versus non-violent pornography,⁹⁷ there is little doubt that the consumption of pornography leads to a significant increase in “rape myth acceptance,”⁹⁸ which involves a reduction of sympathy with rape victims and a trivialization of rape as a criminal offense,⁹⁹ a diminished concern about child sexual abuse, short of the rape of children,¹⁰⁰ and an increased preparedness to resort to rape.¹⁰¹

⁹⁰ Vanessa Vega and Neil M. Malamuth, “Predicting Sexual Aggression: The Role of Pornography in the Context of General and Specific Risk Factors,” *Aggressive Behavior* 33 (2007): 104-17 (109).

⁹¹ Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 42.

⁹² Martin Barron and Michael Kimmel, “Sexual Violence in Three Pornographic Media: Toward a Sociological Explanation,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 37 (2000): 161-68 (163-65).

⁹³ Jill C. Manning, “The Impact of Internet Pornography on Marriage and the Family: A Review of the Research,” *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13 (2006): 131-65 (136).

⁹⁴ N.M. Malamuth, T. Addison, and M. Koss, “Pornography and Sexual Aggression: Are There Reliable Effects and Can We Understand Them?” *Annual Review of Sex Research* 11 (2000): 26-94.

⁹⁵ Weaver, “The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities,” 4.

⁹⁶ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 439.

⁹⁷ M. Allen, R. Emmers, L. Gebhardt, and M.A. Giery, “Exposure to Pornography and Acceptance of Rape Myths,” *Journal of Communication* 45 (1995): 5–26 (19-20).

⁹⁸ “A Meta-analysis of the Published Research on the Effects of Pornography,” in *The Changing Family and Child Development*, ed. E. Oddone-Paolucci, M. Genium, and C. Violato (Surrey, United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), 48-59 (51).

⁹⁹ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 439.

¹⁰⁰ Dolf Zillmann, “Influence of Unrestrained Access to Erotica,” 42.

¹⁰¹ Zillmann and Bryant, “Pornography’s Impact on Sexual Satisfaction,” 439.

One study at a rape crisis center interviewed 100 sexually abused women to determine if pornography played a role in any past incidences of sexual abuse. While 58 percent could not say, 28 percent stated that their abuser had in fact used pornography. Of this 28 percent (women who were aware that their abuser used pornography), 40 percent (or 11 percent of the total group) reported that pornography actually played a role in the abusive incident they experienced. In some cases the abuser had watched pornography before abusing the woman, in one case he used pornography while committing the abuse, and in yet some other cases he forced his victim to participate in the making of a pornographic film.¹⁰²

D. Sex Offenders and Pornography

Pornography viewing and sexual offense are inextricably linked.

One study of convicted Internet sexual offenders reported that they spent more than eleven hours per week viewing pornographic images of children on the Internet.¹⁰³ Another study compared two groups of offenders: those convicted of Internet collection and distribution of child pornography images, and those who commit real life child sex abuse. The results showed that a majority of those who were convicted of only Internet-based offenses also had committed real life sexual abuse of children. Moreover the study also found that real life offenders had committed an average of over thirteen different child sex abuse offenses, irrespective of whether they had formally been convicted of any real life incident.¹⁰⁴

A study of sex offenders and non-offenders revealed significant differences in adolescent pornography use as well as current use. Significant proportions of different types of rapists and molesters had used hard-core pornography (depictions of non-consensual acts) during their adolescence: 33 percent of heterosexual child molesters, 39 percent of homosexual child molesters, and 33 percent of rapists. The current use of hard core pornography was even greater for these groups: 67 percent of heterosexual child molesters, 67 percent of homosexual child molesters, and 83 percent of rapists, contrasted with 29 percent of non-offending pornography viewers. About a third of the sex offenders reported using pornography as a deliberate stimulus to commit their sexual offenses.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Raquel Kennedy Bergen and Kathleen A. Bogle, "Exploring the Connection between Pornography and Sexual Violence," *Violence and Victims* 15 (2000): 227-34 (230-1).

¹⁰³ Sarah Laulik, Jane Allam, and Lorraine Sheridan, "An Investigation into Maladaptive Personality Functioning in Internet Sex Offenders," *Psychology, Crime & Law* 13 (2007): 523-35 (527).

¹⁰⁴ 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).

¹⁰⁵ W.L. Marshall, "The Use of Sexually Explicit Stimuli by Rapists, Child Molesters, and Nonoffenders," *The Journal of Sex Research* 25 (1988): 267-288 (279).

Another study examined the beliefs of three groups: real life, “contact-only” child sex offenders, Internet-only child sex offenders, and mixed offenders (contact and Internet). While all groups were more likely to minimize the gravity of their offense, the Internet-only group was more likely than the contact-only group to think that children could make their own decisions on sexual involvement and to believe that some children wanted, even eagerly wanted, sexual activity with an adult.¹⁰⁶

VI. Pornography and New Findings in Neurology

The neurological study of pornography is still in its infancy, but neurophysiology provides insight into pornography’s power to form the cognitive and emotional habits of the user. As is becoming clear from many different areas of neurological study, repetition of an act establishes new neural pathways, thus facilitating the retention of these behaviors.¹⁰⁷

Other research is uncovering the link between dopamine, a hormone that produces feelings of pleasure, and the effect that a pornographic image has. PET scans (a nuclear medicine three-dimensional imaging technique) of both pornography-addicted adults and non-addicted adults viewing pornography show brain reactions for both groups similar to cocaine addicts looking at images of people taking cocaine.¹⁰⁸ Findings such as these have led scholars to posit that “emotionally arousing images imprint and alter the brain, triggering an instant, involuntary, but lasting, biochemical memory trail.”¹⁰⁹ A small experimental indication of this type of imprinting occurred in one study where participants saw a board of words that were either sexual or neutral. All participants retained more sexual words than neutral words, but pornography consumers retained even higher amounts of sexual words.¹¹⁰

Treatment programs for sex offenders and pornography addicts, designed to break patterns of deriving pleasure from viewing pornography, use a technique

¹⁰⁶ Dennis Howitt and Kerry Sheldon, “The Role of Cognitive Distortions in Paedophilic Offending: Internet and Contact Offenders Compared,” *Psychology, Crime & Law* 13 (2007): 469-86 (478).

¹⁰⁷ For instance, see John J. Ratey and Eric Hagerman, *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2008).

¹⁰⁸ Mary Anne Layden, Center for Cognitive Therapy, Department of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania (Testimony for U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, November 18, 2004).

¹⁰⁹ Judith A. Reisman, President, The Institute for Media Education, Testimony before the United States Senate, Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on “The Brain Science Behind Pornography Addiction and the Effects of Addiction on Families and Communities,” November 18, 2004, 1.

¹¹⁰ Marie-Elaine M. Corbeil and Stuart J. McKelvie, “Pornography Use and Recall of Sexual and Neutral Words,” *North American Journal of Psychology* 10 (2008): 363-84 (380).

called “safeguarding.” “Safeguards” are negative thoughts used to interrupt sexual fantasies. Whenever patients have sexual fantasies, they are taught to think of a safeguard; for example, they may produce a mental image of bugs crawling on them, a public address system broadcasting their thoughts, or an image of a police officer watching their sexual behavior. Through this method, participants learn to interrupt their fantasies¹¹¹ and, it is thought, gradually displace the old neurological pathway with a different and safer one.

VII. Adolescent Exposure to Pornography in the Media

The phenomenal growth of mass media during the late 20th century, and particularly the establishment of the Internet, has vastly increased accessibility to pornography and other sexually-related information. This creates a major obstacle to the healthy development of sexuality, especially among youth.

Though most U.S. parents (78 percent) are worried about their adolescents accessing Internet pornography, not all teenagers readily take to this sexualized culture. Most start out being ill at ease with any display of pornography: they tend to be upset or embarrassed,¹¹² with reactions ranging from fear to shame to anger to fascination.¹¹³ In one survey, about a quarter were “very” upset by this exposure,¹¹⁴ but they tend not to report it.¹¹⁵

Adolescents often come across pornography accidentally on the Internet. One study found that 70 percent of youth aged 15 to 17 accidentally came across pornography online.¹¹⁶ A study of 1,501 youth aged ten to seventeen examined unwanted exposure incidents more thoroughly: in 26 percent of the cases, respondents reported that when they tried to exit an unwanted site, they were

¹¹¹ Scott Aylwin, John R. Reddon, and Andrew R. Burke, “Sexual Fantasies of Adolescent Male Sex Offenders in Residential Treatment: A Descriptive Study,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 34 (2005): 231-39 (233-35).

¹¹² C. Von Feilitzen and U. Carlsson, *Children in the New Media Landscape: Games, Pornography, Perceptions* (Goteburg: UNESCO/Nordicom, 2000).

¹¹³ J. Cantor, M.L. Mares, and J.S. Hyde, “Autobiographical memories of exposure to sexual media content,” *Media Psychology* 5 (2003): 1-31. The most common emotional responses to sexually explicit material (not necessarily online) were disgust (24.5 percent), shock or surprise (23.6 percent), embarrassment (21.4 percent), interest or curiosity (20.9 percent), anger (18.4 percent), amusement (15.3 percent), fear (11.2 percent), and sadness (9.2 percent).

¹¹⁴ Kimberly J. Mitchell, David Finkelhor, and Janis Wolak, “Victimization of Youths on the Internet,” *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, & Trauma* 8 (2003): 1-39 (9).

¹¹⁵ K. Wigley and B. Clarke, National Opinion Poll’s Kids.net (2000), <http://www.nop.co.uk> (accessed January 2003), in S. Livingstone, “Children’s Use of the Internet: Reflections on the Emerging Research Agenda,” *New Media & Society* 5 (2003): 147-66 (156).

¹¹⁶ Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation Report, 2002, <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=14095> (accessed October 19, 2009).

actually brought to an additional sex site.¹¹⁷ The same study showed that out of the total number of unwanted exposure incidents, 44 percent of the time the youth did not disclose the episode to anyone else.¹¹⁸

These initial reactions of disgust, however, rapidly dissipate so that older adolescents tend to use sexually explicit Internet material more often than younger adolescents¹¹⁹ and are twice as likely to report intentional pornography use as are younger adolescents.¹²⁰ Repeated exposure to pornography eventually wipes out any feelings of shame and disgust and gives way, instead, to unadulterated enjoyment.¹²¹

A 2005 survey showed that respondents who reported unintentional exposure to pornography were over 2.5 times as likely to then report intentional exposure as those who did not report any unintentional exposure.¹²² It seems the unintentional exposure has its effect of bringing them back for more, which of course is one of the fears of parents.

Several factors predict an adolescent's use of pornography. Teenagers who watch pornography more frequently tend to be high sensation seekers, less satisfied with their lives, have a fast Internet connection, and have friends who are younger.¹²³ Adolescents are at greater risk for intentionally seeking out sexual material when they have high levels of computer use. The more time spent on the computer, the more likely these adolescents will search for sexually explicit content.¹²⁴ Not surprisingly, given all that has already been reported, viewers who masturbate while viewing sexually explicit material assess the material more favorably than those who do not masturbate.¹²⁵

There is a difference between boys' and girls' reasons for seeking pornographic sites, differences that parallel the different patterns of adult male and female use of pornography. Boys tend to seek pornography initially because they are curious or want sexual arousal, while girls tend first to go to non-pornographic but

¹¹⁷ Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak, "Victimization of Youths on the Internet," 18.

¹¹⁸ Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak, "Victimization of Youths on the Internet," 19.

¹¹⁹ Peter and Valkenburg, "Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Internet Material," 591.

¹²⁰ Ybarra and Mitchell, "Exposure to Internet Pornography among Children and Adolescents," 483.

¹²¹ Weaver, "The Effects of Pornography Addiction on Families and Communities," 2.

¹²² Michele L. Ybarra and Kimberly J. Mitchell, "Exposure to Internet Pornography among Children and Adolescents: A National Survey," *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 8 (2005): 473-86 (479).

¹²³ Jochen Peter and Patt M. Valkenburg, "Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material on the Internet," *Communication Research* 33 (2006): 178-204 (196, 200).

¹²⁴ Amanda Nosko, Eileen Wood, and Serge Desmarais, "Unsolicited Online Sexual Material: What Affects Our Attitudes and Likelihood to Search for More?" *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 16 (2007): 1-10 (6-7).

¹²⁵ Boies, "University Students' Uses of and Reactions to Online Sexual Information and Entertainment," 86.

sexually oriented sites for sexual health or relationship-related information.¹²⁶ Also, the impacts are different for boys and girls: males report more positive memories of sexually explicit material than females,¹²⁷ and report “more positive attitudes toward uncommitted sexual exploration” as their use of pornography increases.¹²⁸ In one study, adolescents who watched the highest level of sexual content on television doubled the likelihood they would initiate intercourse.¹²⁹

VIII. The Protective Role of Parental Involvement

Although U.S. adolescents indicate their preferred source of sexual information is their parents, more than half of them report they have learned about intercourse, pregnancy, and birth control from television, and half of teenage women report they first learned about intercourse from magazines.¹³⁰

A study of 1,300 eight- to thirteen-year-old girls found that, among those who engaged in “cybersex,” 95 percent of the parents were completely unaware of their children’s involvement.¹³¹ Compared to adolescents who do not search for pornography online, adolescents who search for pornography online are about three times as likely to have parents who do not monitor their behavior at all (or very little). Compared to those who do not seek out pornography, those who seek Internet pornography are three times as likely to give a poor rating of their attachment to their parent.¹³²

¹²⁶ Kenzie A. Cameron, Laura F. Salazar, Jay M. Bernhardt, Nan Burgess-Whitman, Gina M. Wingood, and Ralph J. DiClemente, “Adolescents’ Experience with Sex on the Web: Results from Online Focus Groups,” *Journal of Adolescence* 28 (2005): 535-40.

¹²⁷ Patricia M. Greenfield, “Inadvertent Exposure to Pornography on the Internet: Implications for Peer-to-Peer File Sharing Networks for Child Development and Families,” *Applied Developmental Psychology* 25 (2004): 741-50 (744-5).

¹²⁸ Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg, “Adolescents’ Exposure to Sexually Explicit Internet Material, Sexual Uncertainty, and Attitudes toward Uncommitted Sexual Exploration: Is There a Link?” *Communication Research* 35 (2008): 579-601 (595).

¹²⁹ Rebecca L. Collins, Marc N. Elliott, Sandra H. Berry, David E. Kanouse, Dale Kunkel, Sarah B. Hunter, and Angela Miu, “Watching Sex on Television Predicts Adolescent Initiation of Sexual Behavior,” electronic version, *Pediatrics* 114 (2004): e280-9 (e284-5).

¹³⁰ Nicole Daluga, “A Content Analysis of Sexual Risk and Protective Behaviors and Messages in Sexually Explicit Web Pages Viewed by a National Probability Sample of U.S. Adolescents” (Atlanta, Georgia: Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University, 2002), 255-279; Tina Hoff, Liberty Green, and Julia Davis: National survey of adolescents and young adults: Sexual health knowledge, attitudes and experiences, (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2003), <http://www.kff.org/youth/hivstds/3218-index.cfm> (accessed October 22, 2009) (37).

¹³¹ Joan D. Atwood, “Mommy’s Little Angel, Daddy’s Little Girl: Do You Know What Your Pre-Teens Are Doing?” *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 34 (2006): 447-67 (461).

¹³² Michele L. Ybarra and Kimberly J. Mitchell, “Exposure to Internet Pornography among Children and Adolescents: A National Survey,” *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 8 (2005): 473-86 (478).

Clearly there is a lot that parents can do, but it takes a good family life, lots of communication with the adolescent, and a relationship that permits such communication about such an anxiety-provoking topic.

We move now to matters far outside the family.

IX. The Effect of Sexually-Oriented Businesses on their Surroundings

Sexually-oriented businesses (SOBs)—pornography stores and strip clubs—deleteriously affect their surrounding communities. For instance, SOBs along Garden Grove Boulevard in California contributed to 36 percent of all crime in that area.¹³³ A similar study in Centralia, Washington found that, after an SOB opened, the serious crime rate rose significantly in the vicinity of the SOB's address.¹³⁴ Findings such as these generally come from studies commissioned by cities to measure the incidence of the eight serious crimes of the Uniform Crime Reports: homicide, rape, assault, robbery, burglary, theft, auto theft, and arson.¹³⁵

SOBs have been found to cause more crime than non-sexually oriented nightclubs and bars. A report from Daytona Beach, Florida found that SOB neighborhoods have 270 percent more total crime than non-SOB control neighborhoods and 180 percent more than non-SOB neighborhoods with “taverns.”¹³⁶ A study in Adams County, Colorado found that 83 percent of crimes in a neighborhood featuring two adult businesses were connected to those adult businesses.¹³⁷

SOBs can also act as centers for crime. In Houston, Texas, more than 517 arrests took place within 12 months at SOBs, 50 at one SOB alone.¹³⁸

¹³³ “Protecting Communities from Sexually Oriented Businesses,” 2nd ed. (Scottsdale, AZ: Alliance Defense Fund, November 2002), <http://www.communitydefense.org/cdcdocs/pcsob/pcsob2ed.pdf> (accessed October 21, 2009), 151.

¹³⁴ Richard McCleary, “Crime Risk in the Vicinity of a Sexually Oriented Business: A Report to the Centralia City Attorney’s Office” (Revised Report, February 28, 2004), http://communitydefense.org/cdcdocs/landuse/pdf/washington_centralia_2004.pdf (accessed October 21, 2009), 2.

¹³⁵ McCleary, “Crime Risk in the Vicinity of a Sexually Oriented Business: A Report to the Centralia City Attorney’s Office,” 2-3.

¹³⁶ Valerie Jenness, Richard McCleary, and James W. Meeker, “Crime-Related Secondary Effects of Sexually-Oriented Businesses Report to the County Attorney Palm Beach County, Florida” (Executive Summary, August 15, 2007), http://communitydefense.org/cdcdocs/landuse/pdf/florida_palmbeach_2007.pdf (accessed October 21, 2009), 3.

¹³⁷ “Protecting Communities from Sexually Oriented Businesses,” 153.

¹³⁸ Jew Don Boney Jr., Helen Huey, John Castillo, Ray Driscoll, Joe Roach, Judson Robinson Jr., Gracie Guzman Saenz, and Orlando Sanchez, “Sexually Oriented Businesses Ordinance Revision Committee Legislative Report” (Houston, TX, January 7, 1997),

A study of SOBs in Phoenix, Arizona found that the number of sex offenses was 506 percent greater in a neighborhood containing a SOB.¹³⁹ Sexual deviants are attracted to these areas, intending to pay for sexual pleasures. The forbidden partners they desire include children, the invalid, and the elderly.¹⁴⁰

The transmission of STDs is also commonplace at many SOBs. Pennsylvania's attorney general closed several Philadelphia SOBs because patrons created a serious public health risk by regularly engaging in unprotected sexual activity inside the video booths, promoting the spread of HIV, hepatitis B, and other STDs.¹⁴¹ The numbers of incidences may be higher than reported to police (and thus used in these studies) because many victims are reluctant to report crimes committed against them while at SOBs. This reluctance makes many patrons easy prey for criminals.

SOBs affect property values as well. The closer a property is to an SOB, the more its value depreciates. A study of owners of commercial property or their owners from Dallas, Texas found that all concluded that SOBs drastically decrease property value. Property sales were significantly lower at \$1.50 to \$7 per square foot in areas in close proximity to SOBs, compared to \$10 to \$12 per square foot a mile away from SOBs.¹⁴²

The close proximity of SOBs to neighborhoods leads to a greater exposure of children to pornographic material.¹⁴³ In Denver, Colorado, an investigation into the adverse secondary effects of SOBs on surrounding neighborhoods found large amounts of litter in these neighborhoods that included pornographic images, sex paraphernalia, used condoms, and used syringes.¹⁴⁴

The devaluation of people and property by SOBs has not gone unnoticed by the courts, which have consistently afforded substantial deference to government entities seeking to regulate adverse secondary effects associated with SOBs. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that a jurisdiction need not conduct its own study,

<http://www.communitydefense.org/cdcdocs/landuse/pdf/txhouston.pdf> (accessed October 21, 2009), 8-9.

¹³⁹ "Protecting Communities from Sexually Oriented Businesses," 149.

¹⁴⁰ Boney Jr., Huey, Castillo, Driscoll, Roach, Robinson Jr., Saenz, and Sanchez, "Sexually Oriented Businesses Ordinance Revision Committee Legislative Report," 10.

¹⁴¹ "Protecting Communities from Sexually Oriented Businesses," 8-9.

¹⁴² Peter Malin, "An Analysis of the effects of SOBs on the Surrounding Neighborhoods in Dallas, Texas" The Malin Group, April 29, 1997, Dallas, TX:

<http://www.communitydefense.org/cdcdocs/landuse/pdf/txdallas.pdf> (accessed June 1, 2009), 8-9.

¹⁴³ "Protecting Communities from Sexually Oriented Businesses," 11.

¹⁴⁴ "Protecting Communities from Sexually Oriented Businesses," 154.

but may rely on relevant studies and evidence produced by other jurisdictions.¹⁴⁵ The Court has also recognized that common experience and case law can be relevant factors in support of SOB regulation.¹⁴⁶

X. Conclusion: Pornography in the Context of Modernity's Social and Sexual Problems

Contemporary society is alarmingly sexualized, and the traditional sexual taboos of a well-functioning society have broken down. Nearly two-thirds of United States high-school students have had sexual intercourse by grade twelve.¹⁴⁷ Of these sexually active high-schoolers, 70 percent of females and 55 percent of males report that they wish they had waited instead.¹⁴⁸ These numbers have massive implications for the future of the American family, for of women who have had three sexual partners other than their eventual husband, only 39 percent will be in a stable marriage by their mid-thirties.¹⁴⁹ In 2007, 20 percent of U.S. girls in grade 12 already have had sexual intercourse with four or more partners.¹⁵⁰ The vast majority of their children will grow up without their fathers present.

As the empirical data make clear, pornography further misshapes this already dysfunctional sexuality, and the consumption of pornography can become a destructive addiction as well. This sexual malformation not only affects the consumer of pornography, but also weakens those close to him or her. Habitual consumption of pornography can break down the relational substrates of human life and interaction—family, friends and society.

As such, reinforcing these relationships is the surest guard against such destructive sexual tendencies.

The closer adult men were to their fathers growing up, the fewer non-marital sexual behaviors they engage in and the greater their levels of marital happiness

¹⁴⁵ *City of Renton v. Playtime Theatres, Inc.*, 475 U.S. 41, 51-52 (1986) (“The First Amendment does not require a city, before enacting such an ordinance, to conduct new studies or produce evidence independent of that already generated by other cities, so long as whatever evidence the city relies upon is reasonably believed to be relevant to the problem that the city addresses.”).

¹⁴⁶ See, e.g., *City of Erie v. Pap’s A.M.*, 529 U.S. 277 (2000); *City of Los Angeles v. Alameda Books, Inc.*, 535 U.S. 425 (2002).

¹⁴⁷ Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance --- United States, 2007 June 6, 2008 / 57(SS04); 1-131 Table 61 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5704a1.htm#tab63> (accessed Nov. 2, 2009).

¹⁴⁸ Joe S. McIlhaney Jr., M.D. and Freda McKissic Bush, M.D., *Hooked: New Science on How Casual Sex is Affecting Our Children* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2008), 106.

¹⁴⁹ National Survey of Family Growth, Analysis by Kirk Johnson of the Heritage Foundation (1995).

¹⁵⁰ Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance --- United States, 2007 June 6, 2008 / 57(SS04);1-131 Table 63 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5704a1.htm#tab63> (accessed Nov. 2, 2009).

and family satisfaction.¹⁵¹ The proportion of adolescents who rate their fathers as very close to them is highest among those from intact married families (40 percent) and lowest among those from single-parent families (three percent).¹⁵²

Society benefits when it fosters a healthy sexuality. Human beings are healthiest and happiest when they are monogamous (only one sexual partner in a lifetime), and that happiness is directly related to monogamy's long-term stability and exclusivity.¹⁵³

Healthy relationships yield additional positive sexual outcomes. Some research indicates that married couples have the most frequent, and Conservative Protestant women have the most enjoyable, sexual relations.¹⁵⁴ The supreme and tragic irony is that, while the desire for the highest levels of sexual fulfillment are likely the motive for many adolescents' first peek into pornography, the attainment of that universal longing is most likely to be had through monogamy and regular participation in religious worship.

These insights, until recently, were common social assumptions and institutionalized patterns. Until the dawn of the sexual revolution and, later, the digital age, they were reflected in a public opprobrium of pornography. One 1994 study found that 71 percent favored a total ban on sexually violent movies and 77 percent a total ban on sexually violent magazines. Only eight percent thought that there should be no restrictions on the former, and only three percent thought there should be no restrictions on the latter. Concerning merely sexually explicit magazines, less than 10 percent thought there should be no restrictions on the material.¹⁵⁵

The cultural censure of disordered sexuality that enables stable family life has faded with the proliferation of Internet pornography. As a result, the effects of hyper-sexualization permeate society.¹⁵⁶ Today's youth are reaching puberty earlier, engaging in sexual intercourse sooner, while "Emerging Adults" are

¹⁵¹ R. Hosley, K. Canfield, S.L. O'Donnell, and G. Roid, "Father Closeness: Its Effect on Married Men's Sexual Behaviors, Marital, and Family Satisfaction," *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 15 (2008): 59-76 (69-70).

¹⁵² Patrick Fagan (author): original unpublished research. Available on request.

¹⁵³ McIlhaney Jr. and Bush, *Hooked: New Science on How Casual Sex is Affecting Our Children*, 136-37; L.J. Waite and M. Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 47-123. Chapters 4-8 detail the various emotional, physical, financial, and health benefits of marriage.

¹⁵⁴ Robert T. Michael, John H. Gagnon, Edward O. Laumann, and Gina Kolata, *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1994), 118, 127, 129.

¹⁵⁵ Randy D. Fisher, Ida J. Cook, and Edwin C. Shirkey, "Correlates of Support for Censorship of Sexual, Sexually Violent, and Violent Media," *The Journal of Sex Research* 31 (1994): 229-40 (234).

¹⁵⁶ R.E. Longo, S.M. Brown, and D. Price Orcutt, "Effects of Internet Sexuality on Children and Adolescents," in *Sex and the Internet: A Guidebook for Clinicians*, ed. A. Cooper (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), 87-105 (91).

cohabiting more, having children out of wedlock, and getting married significantly later or not at all.

The key to militating against these damaging patterns and to protecting against the effects of pornography is to foster relationships of affection and attachment in family. The first and most important relationship is between the father and the mother. The second is engaged parents who love their children. In today's technological society, this means limiting, monitoring, and directing their children's Internet use. This, in turn, provides an invaluable shield against Internet pornography, and allows room for a healthy sexuality to unfold in a natural and socially supported way. In our over-sexualized culture, with a longer pre-marriage period, children need the capacity for abstinence if their sexuality is to be channeled into stable marriage, procreation, and healthy family life for their children. Strong families remain the best defense against the negative effects of pornography, especially when aided by regular religious worship with all the benefits it brings.¹⁵⁷

Finally, the fundamental role of government (including the courts) is to protect innocent citizens, most especially children and adolescents, and to protect the sound functioning of the basic institutions of family, church, school, marketplace, and government. They are all interdependent. Pornography, clearly, undermines both marriage and the family, and has a host of ill effects. It is time for government to reassess its laissez-faire attitude towards the proliferation of pornography, especially on the Internet.

Our present and future families need protection from this insidious enemy of love, affection, and of family and social stability.

For future editions of this paper, please forward any peer-reviewed published research not covered in this paper to newresearch@frc.org.

¹⁵⁷ Nicholas Zill, "Quality of Parent-Child Relationship, Religious Attendance, and Family Structure," *Mapping America* 48 (2009). See also *Mapping America* charts of U.S. patterns of viewing x-rated movies (Maps # 37 to 39) and adultery (Maps # 73 to 75), <http://www.mappingamericaproject.org/publications>.