

# The Quiet Family Killer: Pornography and Marriage

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When receiving a gift, sometimes the best moment is right before it's opened. That's the moment when all advertising hype melds with the hope that the gift will truly be what is desired. But as all holiday gift givers and receivers know, many things don't deliver what they promise.



And in a sexually-charged society such as ours, where sex sells everything from tires to Christmas trees, Family Research Council has released a ground-breaking comprehensive study review of what it costs families trying to create a life together when pornography has taken hold. Men, women and children are saturated by sexual content, and more significantly, are told that it has no real effect. It's just a little amusement.

But pornography is no benign gift to men and women. As this academic review reveals, pornography is creating a debt and a cost in the lives of family that rivals any deficit the federal government is producing.

The fact that marriage rates are dropping steadily is well known. But the impact of pornography use and its correlation to fractured families has been little discussed. The data show that as pornography sales increase, the marriage rate drops. (see graph) From there, the science is clear; children from families without married parents have much higher poverty rates as well as poorer health and other socio-economic difficulties. Nations with low marriage rates suffer the same fates. And underlying the social trends is the impact of pornography on family formation. It's a quiet family killer.

It's time for a sex-oriented culture like Americas to consider the cost of this kind of pornographic saturation. Here is some of what the studies showed:

Much is made of the effects of pornography on men, rightly so, but its more tragic effects can be seen in the marriages and families of men who are habitual users, for pornography and infidelity are almost interchangeable – at least in the heart; and in family life the heart counts most. Pornography becomes a powerful acid that weakens the capacity to marry or sustain a marriage.

Most men, including doctors, had not the foggiest notion that the wives of habitual pornography users developed deep psychological wounds, commonly reporting feelings of betrayal, loss, mistrust, devastation, and anger in responses to the discovery of their husbands' use of pornography, especially on-line internet use. Both men and women considered on-line activity and relationships acts of adultery.

Many pornography-viewing husbands lose their emotional capacity, and this, in turn, causes both husbands and wives to be less interested in the marriage bed. It's ironic that the thing which is supposed to increase desire actually increases dissatisfaction with a beloved spouse as real people fail to live up to airbrushed fantasies.

When the viewing of pornography rises to the level of addiction, as many as 40 percent of these addicts lose their spouses, and close to 60 percent suffer considerable financial losses. About a third lose their jobs, according to Congressional testimony.

One study of “cybersex”—a form of sexually explicit interaction between two people on the Internet—unearthed an ironic result: more than half had lost interest in marital intercourse, leading to a fourfold increase in procurement of prostitution.

Pornography users increasingly see the institution of marriage as sexually confining, believe less in the importance of marital faithfulness, have increasing doubts about the value of marriage as an essential social institution, and doubt its future viability. How much of our changed debate on marriage results from the increased use of pornography?

Given all this, it is not surprising that addiction to pornography seems to be a major contributor to separation and divorce: In the only study to date of the relationship, 68 percent of the divorces reviewed 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). This particular study is far from satisfactory, but it flags a potent threat to social stability.

Conservatives were alarmed when David W. Ogden was appointed Deputy Attorney General given his career as an advocate on behalf of the pornography industry. What better way for him to clear his reputation as a legal advocate for pornography than to advance greater protections for children from this terrible scourge, though it’s unlikely. Ogden was among those who fought Attorney General Ed Meese when he attempted to craft protections for children against pornography and its social poisons. He even opposed filters on public library computers where children are vulnerable.

But given the high costs to women and children when families fall apart, perhaps the American Bar Association and its cadres of divorce lawyers may find that class action suits are advised against pornographers on behalf of those who have been abandoned. There is serious cash on the table. It is estimated that \$97 billion was made in 2006 alone by the porn industry, with the United States serving as home to the biggest producers. A lawsuit for damages to the family could rival anything big tobacco ever generated.

It is also time for the National Institute of Mental Health to study further the problems of pornography and its social fallout. Sexual addictions, violent crimes, self-destructive behaviors, family break down and financial ruin are only a few of the problems associated with excessive pornographic consumption.

The Holidays may seem a strange time to some to release such a study. But for those of us who hope that strong families are gathering together at this time of year, it’s time to confront a quiet family killer.

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