

How Pornography Harms Children and Families— and What We Can Do

Thomas Lickona, Ph.D.

www.thomaslickona.com

Center for the 4th & 5th Rs

lickona@cortland.edu

State University of New York at Cortland

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INTENTIONAL PARENTING

- Increasingly, we are raising our children in a cultural context that cannot be counted on to support good character. Therefore parents have to be *more vigilant and more intentional* than in past generations.
- This means taking deliberate steps to build close relationships, foster the virtues, and create a positive family culture that helps protect our children against the negative influences of the wider culture.





The Global Sexual Revolution

The sexual revolution is the dominant cultural revolution of the past half century.


“We are experiencing a cultural revolution that overthrows sexual morality—with severe consequences. As sex goes, so goes the family. As the family goes, so goes society.”

—Gabriele Kuby (Catholic sociologist), *The Global Sexual Revolution* (2016)

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- The sexual revolution normalized pornography.
 - The Internet made it ubiquitous.



11 years of age is now estimated as the average age at which boys in the US and UK begin using Internet pornography.

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- By 2000, U.S. youth under 17 were spending 65% more time on adult pornography Internet sites than they did on game sites.
 - Four of the 10 youth who visited a pornographic site were girls.

“The Impact of Pornography on Children”

October 2015, www.acped.org/

- A comprehensive research review.

- It defined pornography as:

“the depiction of erotic behavior (sexual display in pictures or writing) that is intended to cause sexual excitement in the viewer.”



Findings:

- Pornography use by youth is linked to increased depression, anxiety, violent behavior, early sex, sexual promiscuity, and teen pregnancy.
- Children under 12 who view pornography are more likely to sexually assault peers.


Zillman/Bryant series of studies (*Journal of Family Issues*, 1988; before the Internet)


- Subjects were college students and non-college students, randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups.
- The study had the experimental group view pornographic material for 6 weeks (*note: this is ethically problematic*); the control group viewed non-sexual TV and movies.
- Subjects completed a pre-post survey to assess attitudes on relationship issues.



Compared to the control group, subjects exposed to pornography over 6 weeks:

1. Demonstrated increased callousness toward women.
2. Considered the crime of rape less serious.
3. Were more accepting of non-marital sex.
4. Became more interested in more extreme and deviant forms of pornography.

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5. Were more accepting of sexual infidelity in a relationship.
 6. Valued marriage less.
 7. Among males, expressed a decreased desire for children.
 8. Among female subjects, expressed a decreased desire to have a daughter.



After viewing pornography, men typically rate themselves as less in love with their partner and are more critical of their partner's appearance and sexual performance.

Pornography use is increasingly linked to divorce.

—David Perry, “The Impact of Pornography on Children,”
American College of Pediatricians (2015)



Internet Porn's Effects on Teens

“The Impact of Internet Pornography on Adolescents: A Review of the Research,” *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 19, 2012.

- Examined studies in diverse cultures, including China, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States.



The more teens view pornography, the more they:

- think about sex and become distracted by their thoughts about sex.
- approve of casual sex and have early sex
- engage in higher-risk sexual behaviors (e.g., multiple partners, anal sex, sex on drugs)
- become more aggressive in their sexual behavior
- agree that it is acceptable to hold a girl down and force her to have sex
- become depressed.



Conclusion:

“The negative impact of Internet pornography on adolescent behavior appears to be a global trend.”

What Does Internet Porn Show?

- In a study of 50 of the most popular Internet videos, the female performers were abused physically or verbally an average of 12 times per scene. Gang rape and repeated anal sex by multiple men were frequently featured. Always, the female performers were depicted as enjoying the abuse.

R. J. Wosnitzer & A. J. Bridges, "Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography: A Content Analysis" (International Communication Association, San Francisco, 2007).



How can families protect
themselves against
pornography?

Good Pictures Bad Pictures

by Kristen A. Jenson and Gail Poyner

In gentle language, teaches children a **CAN DO** plan if they encounter pornography:

1. **C**lose my eyes.
2. **A**lways tell a trusted adult.
3. **N**ame it when I see it.
4. **D**istract myself.
5. **O**rder my thinking brain to be the boss!

For ages 12+:


Fight the New Drug

(www.fightthenewdrug.org)

Porn Kills Love

(www.pornkillslove.com)

- Started by college students in 2008
- Now a growing global movement



For anyone (youth or adults) trying to break free of a pornography habit, *Fight the New Drug* offers the “Fortify App” with a “battle tracker” to monitor progress.



Time magazine cover story, April 11, 2016:

PORN

**Why Young Men Who Grew Up on It Are
Becoming Advocates for Turning It Off**

Share Stories of People Who Broke Free of Pornography

“Since I was a teenager, it had been a rollercoaster ride of shame and justification. I am now 2 ½ years porn free, and it feels AMAZING.


“Not until I realized the implications this had on my marriage and my ability to father could I finally break free.”

—Nick Willis, New Zealand champion long-distance runner and winner of Olympic silver medal



Explaining Why Porn is Wrong

1. It has the negative effects shown by research.
2. It violates the dignity of the human person by treating people as sex objects.
3. It's addictive—it brings short-term pleasure but then starts to run your life.
4. For males, it's usually accompanied by masturbation, another habit that's hard to break. Both habits will reduce your self-control and self-respect.
5. Both can cause problems in marriage.



6. From a faith perspective, pornography goes against God's plan for his beautiful gift of sex—to express love in marriage and create new life. Pornography violates the sexual purity God expects of us.

For these reasons, the Catholic *Catechism* names pornography as one of the serious sins against chastity.

Helps for parents:

- Internet filters like **Covenant Eyes**
- provider services like **Integrity Online**
- the app **Screen Time** . . .

to block access to pornography and monitor screen use.

A FAMILY MEDIA PLAN

Have a family meeting to discuss, “What screens policies are best for our family?”

“The use of media in our family is a privilege, not a right. That privilege has to be exercised with parents’ permission—in a way that is consistent with our family values.


So, for any TV show, movie, magazine, music CD, video game, Internet site, or social media platform, here’s the question: *Is it consistent with what we value and believe as a family?* Let’s come up with a Family Media Plan that will work for our family.”



Explain Why You Set Limits

“We want you to be able to use good media. But bad media can stay in your mind for a very long time and affect you in ways you may not even be aware of.

“Parents who care about their kids set limits on these things. It’s because we love you.”




For anyone—adults or youth—struggling with a pornography problem, Kevin Majeres, M.D., a Catholic Harvard Medical School psychiatrist, offers free virtue-based modules that have proved helpful:

www.overcomingcravings.com



Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography

—Peter C. Kleponis (Catholic psychotherapist)



Dr. Kleponis, in his self-help manual *Integrity Starts Here!*, explains how emotional factors—loneliness, stress, anger, a lack of fulfillment, and wounds from divorce—can contribute to using pornography.

His *7-point recovery program* includes purifying one's life; support and accountability; daily prayer; stress management; and doing “virtue exercises” to keep from slipping back.

Society's Responsibility?

One step:

- Britain's Parliament recently passed a law to protect minors by requiring pornographic websites to verify the user's age (must be 18+).



Media Literacy/Digital Safety: What Schools Can Do


Help students learn to . . .

1. think critically about various forms of media and their messages.
2. think critically about their own media habits and develop healthy habits.



Thinking Critically about Pornography

1. How does pornography affect our respect for the dignity of other people?
2. How does it affect our self-respect?
3. Who are pornography's victims?
4. Why is it such big business?
5. What are gender differences in use of and attitudes toward pornography?
6. What rules should parents have about pornography?



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Thomas Lickona:*

lickona@cortland.edu