

## The Social Costs of Pornography

~ Dr. John P. Splinter

**Warning:** Some of the research content on subsequent pages could easily be classified as literary PG-13 ~ not appropriate for children.

A biblical proverb translated in the old King James Version, says, "... as (a person) thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). Another way of translating that verse may be, "There is no separation between the values a person truly holds, and the collective effect upon their character." This is true in the home, in academia, the business world, and the culture.

Our culture has succumbed to a tidal wave of pornography. It has swept over us and we are now beginning to witness the wreckage. This chapter will explore some of the effects of this wreckage, specifically in terms of the social costs. To understand what these costs involve, think of things like heightened crime rates, broken marriages, weakened churches, degrading attitudes toward women, tolerance of formerly taboo things like child trafficking, sexual addiction, and increased financial costs for almost all products of any kind. Whether or not you actually use pornography, it is costing you money, threatening the safety and future lives of your children and grandchildren, and weakening positive moral influences in our culture.

Before going further, credit must be given to the Witherspoon Institute in Princeton, N.J. They have published a tremendous booklet by this title as well, "The Social Costs of Pornography."<sup>1</sup> In their booklet they articulated eight findings, all supported by credible research. So as not to plow old ground, this chapter will merely highlight their findings and encourage the reader to study their entire booklet for supportive detail. Their eight findings are:

**FINDING ONE** ~ Unlike at any other time in history, pornography is now available and consumed widely in our society, due in large part to the internet. No one remains untouched by it.

**FINDING TWO** ~ There is abundant empirical evidence that this pornography is qualitatively different from any that has gone before, in several ways: its ubiquity, the use of increasingly realistic streaming images, and the increasingly "hard-core" character of what is consumed.

**FINDING THREE** ~ Today's consumption of internet pornography can harm women in particular.

**FINDING FOUR** ~ Today's consumption of internet pornography can harm children in particular.

**FINDING FIVE** ~ Today's consumption of internet pornography can harm people not immediately connected to consumers of pornography.

**FINDING SIX** ~ The consumption of internet pornography can harm its consumers.

**FINDING SEVEN** ~ Pornography consumption is philosophically and morally problematic.

**FINDING EIGHT** ~ The fact that not everyone is harmed by pornography does not entail that pornography should not be regulated.

In the remainder of this chapter we would like to add further thought to the Witherspoon list of findings, because the advent of rampant pornography into our culture's lifeblood is a massive and debilitating issue. Our writing is in no way intended to belittle the Witherspoon work. The study of the social costs of pornography plus attending research could fill several volumes. Our writing is merely an extension of the study of these costs in our society.

**FINDING NINE** ~ Entire cultures weaken when sex is uncontrolled.

Christ once stated a principle, "Out of the overflow of (one's) heart his mouth speaks" (Lk. 6:45). This principle speaks as much to a culture and its values, as it does to an individual. In his booklet, *Where the Battle Rages*, author Michael Craven states, "Those cultures that began with a strong sexual ethic and later embraced a philosophy of sexual freedom for a period of at least three generations, *inevitably* experienced cultural demise" (author's italics).<sup>2</sup> A question Americans are asking today is, "Is our culture in decline?" The question is being discussed on radio and TV programs, university classes and international political convocations. The overriding response is, "Yes we are in decline, economically, morally, and militarily." Our culture's sexualization is certainly not the only reason for this decline ~ but it is clearly part of the conversation.

Another culture that has been studied at length, is the Roman culture. Many existing texts describe the historical rise, and fall, of that massive empire. Supporting Craven's comment (above), in any cursory exploration of sexual practices of the latter Caesars one finds many of them were sexually deviant. Here are a couple of examples:

"After retiring to Capri, where he had a private pleasure palace built, many young men and women trained in sexual practices were brought there for his pleasure, and would have sex in groups in front of him. Some rooms were furnished with pornography and sex manuals from Egypt - which let the people there know what was expected of them. Tiberius also created lechery nooks in the woods and had girls and boys dressed as nymphs and Pans prostitute themselves in the open. The place was known popularly as 'goat-pri.'" <sup>3</sup>

"Some of the things he did are hard to believe. He had little boys trained as minnows to chase him when he went swimming and to get between his legs and nibble him. He also had babies not weaned from their mother breast suck at his chest and groin. There was a painting left to him, with the provision that if he did not like it he could have 10,000 gold

pieces, and Tiberius kept the picture. It showed Atalanta sucking off Meleager. Once, in a frenzy while sacrificing, he was attracted to the acolyte and could not wait to hurry the acolyte and his brother out of the temple and assault them. When they protested, he had their legs broken.”<sup>4</sup>

“...those ancient Romans were a lusty folk. They painted pictures of erect phalluses all over their city; they freely had sex in public; they talked openly about sexual practices with their family members. In other words, sex was a need to be satisfied in whatever way necessary, generally without judgment.”<sup>5</sup>

Any student of history has heard the phrase, “The Roman Empire was never conquered. Rather, it rotted from the inside and finally caved in.” These examples make President Clinton’s and Monica Lewinski’s romps in the Oval Office tame by comparison. Yet the fact that almost everyone in America today is aware of their dalliances, and yet there were few if any legal or moral consequences, and Clinton is still considered a top leader in his political party, demonstrates our culture’s drift. As one considers Gibbon’s book, “The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire,” one wonders ~ is anyone yet writing a sequel, “The Decline and fall of the U.S.A?”

**FINDING TEN** ~ The scope of the problem is already almost beyond measurement in America.

In an article titled, “Adult Social Bonds and Use of Internet Pornography,” authors Stack (Wayne State University), Wasserman and Kern (Eastern Michigan University) provide the following research data:<sup>6</sup>

- The number of hard core video rentals ballooned from 75 million in 1986, to 665 million in 1996. (That was 14 years ago as we write in 2010. The amount of smut videos has dramatically grown since then.)
- The U.S. is the world’s largest producer of hard-core videos, with more than 150 new titles produced every week. (Simple math: 15- X 52 = 7,800/year.)

Research estimates vary widely, but however one views the data, the numbers are numbing. For example, one source states that in 1997 there were circa 900 porn sites on the Web. Today, this source estimates there are 40,634 pornographic websites.<sup>7</sup> Another source<sup>8</sup> claims that the previous estimate (above) is low by a factor of one hundred, stating there are 4.2 million pornographic websites. Again, sources vary but there appears to be some consistency in estimates that there are between 200 – 400 *million* pornographic web-pages. In 2003 the *Times of India* estimated that, “...the number of commercial pornography web pages on the Internet has increased by nearly 1,800 percent over the past five years,” and that “...over 28 million new pornographic web pages appear(ed) in the month of July alone that year.”<sup>9</sup> On July 15, 2010, this author typed the word “porn” onto the Google main page, and was informed there were 325,000,000 options from which to choose.

Another way to understand the scope of Internet porn involves looking at it as a percentage of the whole. One source published the following information:

“IT security firm Optenet [PDF] has published a report that categorizes the content on the Internet. : The number of Web sites worldwide surpassed 155 million at the end of 2007 . . . The Optenet study showed that although pornography as a total percentage of Internet content has actually decreased slightly since 2006, it still is by far the largest category of content on the Internet, representing 35 percent of all Web sites. Online shopping represents the second biggest category (10.5 percent), followed by travel (7 percent), advertising sites (6 percent) and sports (4.5 percent).”<sup>10</sup>

Another source claims that twelve percent of Internet use is for purposes of pornography.<sup>11</sup> Yet another claims it to be 25%.<sup>12</sup> However the sausage is sliced, it is apparent that the numbers are staggering. One forms a mental picture of the contents of a massive raw sewage culvert being pumped directly into the hearts and minds of men, women and children in our culture.

Again research varies regarding the dollar volume generated by porn in the U.S.A. The industry itself estimates \$2.5 billion in annual revenue from Internet porn.<sup>13</sup> Some consider that an exaggeration. However, this number is more likely significantly underestimated because between 80 – 90 percent of Internet porn consumers appear to primarily consume free Internet porn. Assuming the porn industry is not losing money even on the “free” stuff on the Net, it is reasonable (and there is research evidence to support) that the American porn industry’s annual profits are likely between a \$12 and \$14 billion. If this is so, then the porn industry in the U.S.A. alone is larger than the *combined* revenues of the NBA, NFL, and major league baseball. This means our nation is putting billions into creating what everyone used to call, “filthy movies.” Putting this into perspective in 2008, *Fortune Magazine* ranked Walmart as the largest corporation in America, at \$14.3 billion in profits.<sup>14</sup> So the porn industry is very close to the revenue volume of Walmart.

Further research finds that gender (male) is a strong predictor of cyberporn use. One study finds that males are 6.43 times more likely to use cyberporn than females. Yet the study also found that 28% of porn users are female,<sup>15</sup> and according to other researchers, that percentage may be low.

Television has become pornified. The phrase, “Primetime TV” used to mean “family values sensitive TV.” Not anymore. Today “Primetime TV” means, “likely to have edgy sexual content.” For some reason our culture has adopted the term, “adult” to represent smut. Advertisers daily practice the truth of the motto, “sex sells.” Victoria’s Secret has made sex their controlling ethos. Abercrombie and Fitch advertise clothing via use of raw teen pornography. Burger King got into the fray, advertising sandwiches using strong imagery of oral sex. Hardees recently had a campaign to sell hamburgers using a woman essentially having sex with a burger.

Yes, the scope of this problem is massive.

**FINDING ELEVEN** ~ Pornography draws people away from their moral underpinnings.

This finding may sound elementary, but until recently there was little empirical data to support the hypothesis. Now there is. One study found that cyberporn use resulted in a 26% decrease in church attendance.<sup>16</sup> The same study found that, “for the relatively unexplored belief dimension of political liberalism, a one-unit increase in liberalism was associated with a 19 percent increase in the odds of using cyberporn.”<sup>17</sup>

However, research also finds that, “Those states that consume the most porn tend to be more conservative and religious than states with lower levels of consumption.”<sup>18</sup> This research could imply one of two things: 1) conservatives use more porn, or 2) the old adage is true, that if you can’t have something, you want it more. This insight could mitigate in favor of either conservative or liberal use of porn in conservative states.

Perhaps shedding light on the previous paragraph, another study found that of people who felt that porn should be illegal to all, 59.8% reported as “often” attending church, and 38.6% reported “sometimes” going to church ~ for a total of 98.4%. By contrast, the study found that of those who felt porn should be legal, 2.5% reported as “often” attending church, and 2.3% reported as “sometimes” going to church ~ for a combined total of 4.8%.<sup>19</sup>

These findings correlate with the biblical teaching in which St. Paul warned the young pastor, Timothy, to run away from lustful thoughts. Some believe that Timothy may have been a young fellow, perhaps in his twenties, just starting to launch into adulthood, fighting the raging hormones that every man faces during that time of life. Others speculate Timothy was in his mid- to late-thirties when Paul wrote this epistle. Either way, St. Paul’s admonition was clear: “Run! Don’t hang around ~ don’t tolerate ~ run for your life ~ keep distance from “youthful lusts.” It’s a message currently lost to our culture. It’s a message about which if the Church doesn’t speak, nobody else is likely to either.

**FINDING TWELVE** ~ Pornography weakens marital bonds, drawing those who use it into illicit sexual practices.

Research has found that “persons ever having an extramarital affair were 3.18 times more apt to have used cyberporn than ones who had lacked affairs. Further, those ever having engaged in paid sex were 3.7 times more apt than those who had not to be using cyberporn.”<sup>20</sup>

In *Time Magazine*’s “Online Edition,” the magazine quotes research done within the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.

“At the 2003 meeting of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, two-thirds of the 350 divorce lawyers who attended said the Internet played a significant role in divorces in the past year, with excessive interest in online porn contributing to more than half of such cases. “This is clearly related to the Internet,” says Richard Barry, president of the association. “Pornography had an almost nonexistent role in divorce just seven or eight years ago.”<sup>21</sup>

**FINDING THIRTEEN** ~ Business productivity and relationships are dramatically affected by online pornography use.

One source estimates the number of people accessing porn while at work, as being 20% of males and 13% of females.<sup>22</sup> Assuming those numbers are somewhat accurate, that's a lot of employees and time lost when multiplied across the American work force.

When put into a dollar figure, the business cost estimate associated with pornography use is quite shocking. One U.S. study estimates Net-surfing at work costs the U.S. economy \$250 billion dollars a year. Looking for pornography is the biggest chunk of that figure.<sup>23</sup>

Other research<sup>24</sup> approaches the issue from a different angle, finding:

- 70 percent of all Internet porn traffic occurs during the 9-to-5 workday.
- Nearly one out of three companies has terminated an employee for inappropriate web use. (Note that this does not mention the percentages of companies that have no policies governing this issue, or that have not terminated employees they know are using porn on the job.)
- According to Internet Data Center research 30 to 40 percent of employee internet activity is *non business-related*, costing millions of dollars in productivity. This does not mean all the activity is porn related. For example, the cost to businesses in lost employee productivity from the internet broadcasts of the Starr report and the Clinton grand-jury video was in excess of \$450 million, according to a study reported by ZDNet.

The same source articulates a further business-related concern regarding use of pornography while on the company watch. Basically stated, Internet porn is capable of creating a hostile work environment between men and women.

“Whereas lewd jokes, questionable bulletin board items or inappropriate comments used to put companies in hot water, employees today are accessing websites that promote hate groups, pornography and illegal activities. Viewed by an offended co-worker, any of these cyber-activities can bring lawsuits upon a company.”<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, male use of pornography has been found to create balance-of-power issues between men and women. Therapists have long understood that male porn use tends to create dominating behaviors based upon degrading sexualizing attitudes and increasingly negative perceptions of females. One study reports that “...women entering a program for battered women in a large metropolitan city showed that a partner's pornography use nearly *doubled* the odds that a woman reported being sexually assaulted by her partner.”<sup>26</sup>

Such male attitudes cannot help but occur in the business world, if they exist in the heads of businessmen. In one Harvard research project, males were asked to view non-violent porn for fifteen minutes. They were then interviewed by a female Harvard researcher. The result was



that these men “treated our female experimenter who was interacting with them in a professional setting, in a manner that was both cognitively and behaviorally sexist.”<sup>27</sup>

Factor this attitude into the workplace, and it bodes nothing but problems for business productivity, sexual harassment litigation, and strained heterosexual relationships in general. In a high percentage of cases, pornography use is found to be the driving force *prior to* sexual harassment, the actual harassment being a product of a diminished and demented value of women.

Statistics such as “70% of porn use occurs during business hours” are exemplified with the following examples:

- WASHINGTON — Senior staffers at the Securities and Exchange Commission spent hours surfing pornographic websites on government-issued computers while they were being paid to police the financial system.
  - A senior attorney at the SEC's Washington headquarters spent up to eight hours a day looking at and downloading pornography. When he ran out of hard drive space, he burned the files to CDs or DVDs, which he kept in boxes around his office.
  - An accountant was blocked more than 16,000 times in a month from visiting websites classified as "Sex" or "Pornography." Yet he still managed to amass a collection of "very graphic" material on his hard drive by using Google images to bypass the SEC's internal filter.<sup>28</sup>
- Sen. Charles Grassley asked National Science Foundation for records of porn use. Conclusion of study, “\$6 billion per year from taxpayers is inadequate for NSF expenses, because so many NSF employees are “porn surfing.” But *none of the employees caught using government computers for porn, were fired* (italics ours).<sup>29</sup>
- Nine city employees in the District of Columbia have been fired for using government computers to visit an "egregious" number of pornographic Web sites in 2007.<sup>30</sup>
- Two staffers from Mendo’s Department of Planning and Building – including old timer and chief planner Frank Lynch – have been fired for swapping pornography on office computers, and swapping pornography with San Francisco’s Planning and Building porn mongers, sources say.<sup>31</sup>
- STOCKHOLM, Sweden, May 6 (UPI) -- Seven workers at Sweden's airport authority have been fired for spending a good portion of their workday surfing pornographic Web sites.<sup>32</sup>
- One Quebec company recently fired a director after an investigation found he spent about 6 hours a day, every day, downloading porn.<sup>33</sup>

Pornography also brings another problem: Downloading porn can slow down a companies' entire computer system, opening it up to viruses and hackers. The general character of the porn

industry is such that it is relatively common for people with evil intentions to infect porn sites with damaging programs to harm the computers of others tapping into the porn site.

Porn harms the overall integrity of employees. It first involves hiding, stealth and dishonesty toward one's employer. It is as much a theft of company assets, as is embezzlement, forgery or misappropriation of corporate property. Since attitude, perception and behavior are each compromised, porn users frequently demonstrate the effects of their habit through disrespect toward female staff, including but not limited to sexual harassment. Productivity cannot help but be affected as the brain becomes increasingly rewired and focused upon sex and sexual release.

To combat this problem, several Fortune 500 companies have now created internal policies ~ sometimes known as "acceptable use policies" ~ regarding Internet usage. Here are a few of these kinds of policies.

1. A disclaimer about the dangers of the Internet, a summary of appropriate and inappropriate uses of the internet (i.e., no personal commercial uses, no illegal copying, etc.).
2. A statement about avoiding frivolous use (i.e., downloading large personal files, engaging in chat rooms, etc.).
3. A "no expectation of privacy" statement that waives privacy rights over any materials sent or created using the company's computer network.
4. A statement that any search for, storage of, personal use of, or transmission of pornography (legal or illegal) on company time, equipment, or premises, will result in instant termination with no benefits.

**FINDING FOURTEEN** ~ The social costs of pornography extend to law enforcement and court systems.

"Adult video shops" are nothing more than porn vendors where a person may purchase, rent, or sometimes view pornography on premises. "Gentlemen's clubs" usually just bars with strip shows, places that may serve food and drink, delivered by nude or nearly nude women. As such, this is "live pornography." The combination of men, booze and nude women has been repeatedly demonstrated to dramatically accelerate crime rates in the general vicinity of the XXX business. Here are excerpts of two studies, taken from a report provided to the Missouri House of Representatives in 2009.<sup>34</sup>

### **Arizona, Phoenix: May 25, 1979**

The study examined crime statistics for 1978, comparing areas that have sexually oriented businesses with those that do not. The results show a marked increase in sex offenses in neighborhoods with sexually oriented businesses, and increases in property and violent crimes as well.



Three study areas (near locations of sexually oriented businesses) and three control areas (with no sexually oriented businesses) were selected. The study and control areas were paired according to the number of residents, median family income, percentage of non-white population, median age of population, percentage of dwelling units built since 1950, and percentage of acreage used for residential and non-residential purposes.

Three categories of criminal activity were included in the study: property crimes (burglary, larceny, auto theft), violent crimes (rape, murder, robbery, assault), and sex crimes (rape, indecent exposure, lewd and lascivious behavior, child molestation).

On average, the number of sex offenses was 506 percent greater in neighborhoods where sexually oriented businesses were located. In one of the neighborhoods the number was 1,000 percent above the corresponding control area. Of the sex offenses, indecent exposure was the most common offense and the largest contributor to the increase of crimes in areas where sexually oriented businesses were located. Even without considering the crime of indecent exposure the number of other sex crimes, such as rape, lewd and lascivious behavior, and child molestation, was 132 percent greater than in control areas without sexually oriented businesses.

On average, the number of property crimes was 43 percent greater in neighborhoods where sexually oriented businesses were located, and the number of violent crimes was 4 percent higher in those areas.

### **California, Los Angeles, June 1977**

More crime occurred where sexually oriented businesses were concentrated. Compared to city-wide statistics for 1969-75, areas with several such businesses experienced greater increases in pandering (340 percent), murder (42.3 percent), aggravated assault (45.2 percent), robbery (52.6 percent), and purse snatching (17 percent). Street robberies, where the criminal has face-to-face contact with his victim, increased almost 70 percent more in the study areas. A second category of crime, including other assaults, forgery, fraud, counterfeiting, embezzlement, stolen property, prostitution, narcotics, liquor laws and gambling increased 42 percent more in the study areas over the city as a whole.

These are excerpts of just two of thirty-five such research projects cited in Splinter's report to the Missouri Legislature. Each of the reports demonstrates higher crime rates and therefore a greater need for police presence (which means public dollars). More crime brings more arrests, and leads directly to higher levels of court costs and incarceration costs. While this is not the same activity as a person sitting and watching porn on a computer, it is the same issue merely taken one step farther. And high percentages of those men and women frequenting XXX businesses, began their sexual quests with pornography.

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that Internet porn tends to lead users into ever darker and more addictive behavior.<sup>35, 36, 37, 38</sup> So the man looking at porn on his home computer is next led to saving porn sites and revisiting them ~ ever more frequently. As the addiction increases, the

person considers other, more deviant activities as his/her addictive needs increase their demands upon his/her neuro-chemistry. In a surprisingly short time his brain actually begins to re-wire itself (the process is known in neurological circles as “neuro-plasticity”) around sexual themes, attitudes, perceptions, and behavior. The person’s life now becomes organized around his sex drive, and they are addicted. From that point it’s a very short step to “adult video” stores, strip clubs, paying for sex (prostitution), child porn, divorce ~ and for some, interception by law enforcement.

Such are the social costs of pornography. Psychologist Jennifer Roback Morse (Ph.D.) is quoted as saying, “There is not one positive thing that can be said with integrity about pornography.” Her statement confirms the biblical quote with which we began this paper, “For as (a person) thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7 ~ KJV). One might extend the application of that proverb to our culture ~ *as a culture “thinks in its heart,” so it is.*

Our culture has sewn the wind of pornography, we are beginning to reap the whirlwind of debauchery. To reverse this trend we must all, individually grasp hold of the issue in any way we may, and with passion and commitment say, “No! Not in my heart; not in my life; not in my family; not in my community; not on my watch.”

### What We Can Do About It

The Internet is a large enough phenomenon that it’s difficult to even imagine how to push back against the tidal wave of smut it brings. But there are things we can do ~ we are not helpless in this flood. Here’s a list of five actions we encourage the reader to undertake.

1. Clean your own house. Get rid of porn of any kind, including “premium” TV channels (which are little more than pornographic conduits), magazines, videos, DVDs, etc.
2. Call and ask law enforcement agencies in your community to forcefully apply laws governing any XXX businesses in your community. If you live in Missouri, there is a new state law as of 2010 ~ it’s Senate Bills 586 and 617, duly passed and signed by the governor. Read the law, and then demand that your local law enforcement enforce it.
3. Install porn screening software on your home computer. We recommend you look into either *Covenant Eyes*, or *Safe Eyes*. Both are excellent, and inexpensive.
4. Speak personally with your state and national senators and representatives. Ask them to search for and implement more legislative means to curtail the flood of smut.
5. Write to the Attorney General of the USA and ask that he enforce existing laws regulating and curtailing pornography and obscenity in our culture.

It goes without saying that an active faith in Christ is perhaps the strongest antidote against drifting into pornography. We encourage the reader to keep their faith strong, because above all else, faith provides wisdom and strength in this ugly arena.

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Statistical studies by sociologists Murray Straus and Larry Baron (University of New Hampshire) found that rape rates are highest in states that have high sales of sex magazines and lax enforcement of pornography laws.

Michigan state police detective Darrell Pope found that in 41 percent of the 38,000 sexual assault cases in Michigan between 1956 and 1979, pornographic material was viewed just prior to or during the crime. This finding corroborates research done by psychotherapist David Scott, who found that "half the rapists studied used pornography to arouse themselves immediately prior to seeking out a victim."

Source: <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/porno.html>

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