

Effects of Pornography Use on Monogamous Adult Pair-Bond

Relationships: An Adlerian Perspective

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Abstract

This integrative literature review will explore the effects of pornography use on the adult pair-bond relationship through an Adlerian perspective. The adult pair-bond attachment will be used as the keystone for basic relationship and marital functioning. Included within this review will be an examination of definitions of pornography, the emergence of pornography in society, the purposes that it seems to serve, and the ensuing effects on the adult pair-bond relationship.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Definitions	7
Pornography.....	7
Adult Pair-Bond Attachment.....	8
Importance of Monogamy to Current Research	8
The Industry	12
Evolution of the Industry.....	13
Pornography Use Accepted	17
Implicit Messages of Pornography.....	18
Previous Research.....	23
User-Gender Differences.....	26
Educational Purposes.....	28
Curiosity or Entertainment.....	30
Effects on User	31
Implications of Perceived User-Anonymity.....	32
Purpose of Using.....	35
Effects on the Brain.....	38
User Self-Esteem.....	40
User Arousal.....	42
User's Interpersonal Relationships.....	44

Effects on Non-Using Partner	46
Perception of Partner’s Use.....	47
Non-Using Partner’s Self-Esteem.....	50
Non-Using Partner-s Felt-Safety and Trust.....	52
Effects on the Adult Pair-Bond Attachment	53
Effects on Felt-Security within the Relationship.....	57
Role of Marital Sex	59
Directions for Future Research	62
Conclusion	63
References	65

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Perspective

“The sexual task requires the greatest amount of intimacy and, therefore, the most skill to fulfill on a consistent basis. It is the hardest task to meet” (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999, p. 104). It can be determined that the sexual task requires a fixed effort, mutual interest, as well as, vulnerability by both parties.

Pornography has been a growing entity for the past two decades (Salmon, 2012). Rapidly increasing in use and production, it is a subject relevant to many, but talked about by few. However, when addressed, strong opinions in either direction will often be found. Our society has experienced a steady acclimation to higher levels of promiscuity. Public dress codes have changed or disappeared completely. Nowadays, magazines, mainstream advertisements, television, and/or movies consistently push the boundaries of how little a person can wear and how sexually explicit two individuals can become before being considered pornography. Promiscuity has become a norm (Schmitt & Jonason, 2015). This transformation says something about our society and the current research looks to answer what that is through the examination of pornography use by committed couples.

The theme of pornographic material—sex, is considered taboo by most, but still, “sex” has long remained one of the most searched for words on the internet (Cooper, Morahan-Martin, & Mathy, 2002; Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013). The *Longford Report* differentiated *pornography* from *erotica* by stating that pornography depicts sexual practices divorced from any tender, emotional, or vulnerable consideration for one’s partner. In contrast, erotica facilitates the pleasure and art of sexuality, but always in terms of a positive emotional relationship (Linton, 1979). Regardless of these polarizing differences, combined, the two facets

of the pornography industry remain one of the most lucrative revenue streams in the United States generating an annual income of approximately \$13 billion in the U.S. (Ropelato, 2007). It alone, exceeds the combined revenues of Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, eBay, and Netflix (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014).

Due to its heightened prevalence, a wide and vast range of researchers have set out to investigate this growing world of pornography and discover, investigate, and analyze any possible implications of its use on its users. Consequently, the highly subjective nature of the research topic, pornography, and anything related, has caused difficulty in creating and assuming empirical arguments; that is to say, one of an unbiased view. To that end, this field of research has also been found to be subject to researchers who have set out to “prove” that which makes them feel comfortable, good, or supports their prior stance on the topic, opposed to what is possibly accurate, a widely accepted discourse of motivation and action (Alicke & Sedikides, 2010). Some have researched how its use affects solely men, the apparent main audience, (Petersen & Hyde, 2010; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014).

Due to its found prevalence among men (Stewart & Szymanski, 2012, Zitzman & Butler, 2009), substantial argument will be in the form of or derived from female (often non-using partner) perspectives. The current research will attempt to account for gender differences so as to consider possible implications of user-gender when determining effects on relationship. In order to account for confounding factors related to same-sex relational implications, the research will be limited to that of heterosexual relationships, though the need for the current investigation for all types of relationships should be addressed in future research. Specifically, committed couples, and largely, married couples will be used as the subjects as Acker and Davis (1992) found that

commonly, married participants indicated more commitment and reported being more deeply affected when dealing with relational concerns than their unmarried counterparts.

The increasing prevalence of online pornography and its frequency to be labeled a relational issue in the therapeutic office (Johnson, Makinen, & Mallikin, 2001) has lead several practitioners to ask if there are any potentially serious attachment implications for adult relationships. Furthermore, a recently heightened interest among mental health professionals regarding its effects, diagnosis, and treatment has developed (Schneider, 2004; Wolfe, 2000). To be noted, an inevitable confounding factor within the current research as a whole is the fact that it is widely dependent on self-report or client-report data. The subject of pornography use—racy in nature, invites the potential for self-reporter shame, guilt, pride, or other hindrance of truthful reporting (Poulsen et al., 2013; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Of course, certain measures can be taken by facilitators ensuring the subjects' state of anonymity; however, within the current research, a variety of data-gathering techniques will be cited.

Definitions

Pornography

In order to remain empirically consistent, the current research will operate under the context of a fixed definition of “pornography.” Pornography will be defined as "written or pictorial matter intended to arouse sexual feelings" (Boyer, Ellis, Harris, & Soukhanov, 1983, p. 534). This can include television, internet, movies, sexually graphic material, and text. Furthermore, this definition excludes face-to-face extramarital sexual contact. Also, to be inclusive of the broadest pornography consuming population, while controlling for variables, the definition of pornography will exclude pornographic fetishes or material with a fetish-focus.

Adult Pair-Bond Attachment

Attachment theory was initially formulated to define the infant-caregiver relationship and is now extended to explain the emotional attachment between adult partners. For nearly three decades, “attachment theory proves to be one of the most widely accepted theories for examining adult romantic relationships (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Selcuk, Zayas, & Hazan, 2010). In conceptualizing the adult pair-bond definition, the goal of the attachment style is achieving a felt protection which involves felt security (Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Felt security refers to a distinct psychological state characterized by feelings of safety and comfort within the relationship, as well as the belief that the partner is accessible and responsive by maintaining proximity to attachment figures (Selcuk et al., 2010).

Employing this definition, the current research will be observed according to the assertion that partners’ psychological and physical well-being is enhanced by the maintenance of the adult pair-bond, and compromised by its disruption (Selcuk et al., 2010). In order to remain consistent, the current research will be examining monogamous relationships while recognizing that this may, in the meantime, provide understanding for the cause or purpose of infidelity within our participant population as a whole.

Importance of Monogamy to Current Research

Numerous authors found their married participants to indicate more commitment, and thus more vulnerability than their unmarried counterparts (Acker & Davis, 1992; Emmers-Sommer, Warber, & Halford, 2010; Poulsen et al., 2013; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Butzer & Campbell, 2008). Additionally, through numerous sources of research, married couples have reported more and sustained sexual satisfaction compared to dating or even cohabiting couples (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Waite & Joyner, 2001). "It is revealing to

observe that children are spontaneous and whole-hearted adherents of monogamy; and this often in spite of the fact that the marriages of their parents are not always harmonious and happy" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, pg. 435). Adler considers good sex to be necessary for the well-being of an individual (Abramson, 1994). This concept of good sex is viewed as an experience of both physical and emotional pleasure enhancing the partners' feeling of self-worth, mutual and self-respect, and affection (Abramson, 1988).

Currently, this stands as the attachment style in question, as the interest of the current research is to investigate effects of pornography use on the most vulnerable and invested of adult pair-bonds. While it is acknowledged that not all of the most emotionally vulnerable, open, and invested attachments currently reside within the binds of matrimony, for example, homosexual relationships desiring to but not yet lawfully able to be married. Data will be gathered to address perceptions of those who took the step of a life-long commitment, subsequently opening themselves to the potential for intimate bond and vulnerability. More directly related to the nature of the present research, Bridges, Bergner, and Hesson-McInnis (2003), found one important variable to be that women who were married to a pornography-user opposed to dating one, disclosed significantly more emotional distress.

Finally, it has been discovered that relationship length strongly influences the correlation between perceptions of partner's pornography use and relational sexual satisfaction, with significant dissatisfaction being associated with longer relationship length (Stewart & Szymanski, 2012). The question needs to be addressed related to why sexually intimate acts are the overruling marital entity. According to Adler's life tasks and concerning interpersonal relationships, the work task is the least bearing due to its distant nature (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Mosak & Maniaci, 1999). Oppositely, the love and sex task is the most prominent task, as

it requires highest levels of interpersonal vulnerability and cooperation (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Mosak & Maniaci, 1999).

In the adult pair-bond attachment relationship, partners mutually risk intimate exposure of their inmost, core being and entrust themselves to their partner for safe-holding. Significantly, the secure base of the pair-bond relationship also catalyzes adult generativity (Butzer & Campbell, 2008). Christopher and Sprecher (2000) assert that concerning sexuality, any cognitive responses evoked by a sexual encounter are, as a rule, accompanied by a myriad of emotional responses, all unpredictable unless analyzed through the holistic context of the individual. Furthermore, should there be any degree of relational uncertainty, there will also be a decreased sexual satisfaction and negative rumination about sexual involvement with a partner (Theiss, 2005).

Consequently, safety and security in the pair-bond attachment relationship is seen as critical to adult well-being in the broadest sense (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). The fulfillment of relationship connection and bonding, the satisfying experience of authentic intimacy, and the realization of meaningful life generativity, all hinge on the quality of pair-bond attachment (Theiss & Nagy, 2010; Zitzman & Butler, 2009).

In addition to these attributes of a high-quality adult pair-bond, a fundamental willingness, capacity, and commitment to being for the other rather, than being for oneself in the relationship, is seen as a singular indicator of one's attachment trustworthiness (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Theiss & Nagy, 2010). This enables the entrusting of oneself intimately and completely to the other. Nowhere is the attachment "being for the other" symbolized more powerfully or directly than, in the face of powerful sexual drives, to limit sexual desire and

expression to the pair-bond relationship through the means of self-discipline (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Theiss & Nagy, 2010).

To conform one's sexuality to the intimate service of his or her attachment relationship and their pair-bond partner further implies one's servitude to the pair-bond (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Such other-orientation logically entails a measure of self-sacrifice, self-restraint, and self-discipline wherever personal drives and gratifications collide with partner needs and expectations (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). The willingness, capacity, and commitment to such self-discipline reflects one's safety for the pair-bond partner (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Essentially, a partner needs to feel able to safely risk being authentically vulnerable with his or her partner in order to reach optimal safety within the relationship (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Theiss & Nagy, 2010; Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Selcuk et al., 2010).

By nature and in its expression, then, the marital sexual relationship is a singular symbolic keystone of attachment dynamic and security within the relationship (Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Zitzman & Butler, 2009), as each partner presents himself or herself unclothed, exposed, and vulnerable to the other and entrusts themselves to the care, consideration, and sexual attraction of their partner (Butzer & Campbell, 2008). Marital sexuality is thus a physical symbol of emotional acceptance and the safeguarding of intimate vulnerability (Selcuk et al., 2010; Butzer & Campbell, 2008). Pair-bond sexual trustworthiness and fidelity is thus viewed as an archetypal marker and symbol of attachment safety and reliability in the relationship as a whole (Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010). Thus, any perceived sexual betrayal becomes an encompassing devastation to attachment trust (Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010; Selcuk et al., 2010; Poulsen et al., 2013). Violations and betrayals of trust in this most vulnerable context are

perceived as archetypal markers of attachment on trustworthiness in one's partner (Selcuk et al., 2010).

One could ask, as our most vulnerable and powerful attachment dynamic within the realm of security in the relationship, is it not our responsibility to guard our sexuality from outside stimuli? Masters and Johnson (1970) explained that a sexual value system is derived from sensory experiences each with a concomitant erotic meaning. These occur under the choice of circumstances and the influence of the individual's social values which make them acceptable as sexual stimuli. According to Masters and Johnson (1970), in parallel to the *lifestyle*, every person has a sexual value system. This includes one part saying what sex is, and another part talking about the self as a sexual being. A third part states that the individual must not be sexual under certain circumstances. Often, the third part depicts in a similar way to lifestyle that one must be sexual only if certain conditions are fulfilled (1970). In accordance to this line of thinking, as well as common sense of human sexuality, a person will be motivated to be sexual only if he or she is extrinsically or intrinsically moved to be so.

The Industry

The phenomenal surge in Internet use over the past decade has been accompanied by an equally portentous increase in online sexual activities, including pornography viewing (Schneider, 2004; Wolfe, 2000). Cooper (1998) created a three-factor explanation for the astronomical increase in Internet pornography use. This three-factor model has been widely accepted across investigators of this topic. Cooper (1998) describes the danger of the internet and its vulnerability to aid in the formation of internet addictions. He coins this danger the, "Triple A Engine," meaning the internet is as powerful as it is because it is *Accessible*, *Affordable*, and *Anonymous*. While some researchers have chosen to point out findings that general sexual

compulsivity rates have also increased significantly in the last decade (Wolfe, 2000; Hertlein, Emmers-Sommer, & Kennedy, 2014), others reject this as having any correlation, arguing that, for example, while the availability of pornography has increased, sex crimes have either decreased or stayed the same (Diamond, 2009). This specific argument needs no resolution for the purpose of the current work, though it is a concept that should be regarded, as it could yield long-term collateral effects throughout society.

Evolution of the Industry

Szymanski and Stewart-Richardson (2014) found pornography creation and use to be both prevalent and normative in United States' culture. For several studies, this pattern of normalization was reportedly recognized as a key component in participants' decision to use (Salmon, 2012; Short, Black, Smith, Wetterneck, & Wells, 2012; Poulsen et al., 2013; Bridges et al., 2003; Hare, Gahagan, Jackson, & Streenbeek, 2014; Fisher & Barak, 2001). While many speculate, functional reasons for why this normalization of use has yet to be empirically conclusive. Some argue it may have something to do with the "evolution" of pornography brewing the argument, pornography is no longer a 'bad' thing...everybody does it, join in (Fisher & Barak, 2001; Poulsen et al., 2013)).

Of unique importance to the current debate is the fact that previous researchers have concentrated primarily on productions released before 1986, highlighting every negative aspect. In retrospect, it is clear that 1986 marks a critical climax in the public discourse about sexually explicit materials and their potential physiological, psychological, and relational consequences (Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, 1986; Press et al., 1985; Stengel, 1986). From that year forward, it has been widely observed that there is a significant change in production and distribution of pornographic videos in order to minimize criticism.

Brosius, Weaver, and Staab (1993) highlight some of the obvious differences in production after the year 1986 and analyzed their results. Using a sample of 50 videotapes randomly collected containing 72 movies, 30 films were released during the eight-year span from 1979 to 1986 and 42 films were released in the post-1986 period. A total of 436 sexual scenes, about 6.1 scenes per film, were examined. The films produced prior to 1986 averaged a sex-scene length of 4.4 minutes while post 1986 sex-scene productions endured an average of 5.9 minutes (Brosius, Weaver, & Staab, 1993).

Interestingly, the centrality of oral-genital behaviors, in general, and fellatio (oral stimulation of the penis) in particular, as initial sexual activities suggests another approach to exploring the social roles enacted by male and female characters in pornography (Brosius et al., 1993). For example, postures enacted during oral-genital stimulation could arguably provide a subtle, yet particularly meaningful measure of the super- and sub-ordinate nature of relationships between heterosexual characters. Specifically, a woman kneeling in front of a standing or sitting partner, rather than assuming a dominant position above or even a more egalitarian posture beside a reclined partner, can be interpreted as an expression of submissiveness to a dominant male. Examination of the scenes showed that a woman knelt in front of her partner during fellatio in more than 91% of the scenes. In contrast, a male kneeling before the female, was enacted in only 9% of the scenes involving cunnilingus, or oral stimulation of the female genitals (Brosius et al., 1993).

Further evidence of the nature of the social roles enacted by male and female characters in pornography was provided by examination of the unequal rates of orgasm (Brosius et al., 1993). In fact, portrayals in which a woman reached orgasm were exceptionally rare at less than 1% (Brosius et al., 1993). Instead, as demonstrated by their vocalizations and mannerisms,

women typically experience no climax of their own, but often became enraptured in their partners graphic orgasmic displays (Brosius et al., 1993). Furthermore, in essentially all scenes, the male orgasm served as the predominant behavior that defined the purpose, the goal, and the end of each scene (Salmon, 2012; Brosius et al., 1993).

The sex-role trends depicted in these films confirms the notion that Adler warned us of many decades ago,

The sexual task requires the greatest amount of intimacy and, therefore, the most skill to fulfill on a consistent basis. It is the hardest task to meet. One of the biggest problems, though by no means the only one, is that men often view women as inferior, a fact reinforced by our culture. The sense that women are less than men is sometimes subtle and barely noticed, but it is still prevalent (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999, p. 104).

In contrast to the examination of the Brosius et al., (1993) and Salmon (2012) data, as found by Steele and Walker (1976) a feminist fantasy is as follows;

The cast of the film would consist of one attractive male and one attractive female, displaying affection, "romance", and prolonged foreplay in a bedroom setting. The film would involve a gradual process, slowly leading to coitus, or intercourse, involving a variety of positions. Furthermore, the emotional tone of the film would emphasize the "total" relationship, and not merely genital sexual behavior (Steele & Walker, 1976, p. 272).

Clearly, this view of sexuality stands in sharp contrast to the social and sexual reality of pornography. Perhaps, it is from this extreme divergence that the perceptions of pornography as degrading and demeaning to women arise. Analysis of the increase of scenes depicting female super-ordinates engaging in sex with male subordinates from the pre-1986 to post-1986

production periods helps elucidate the tremendously different interpretations that can be derived via each perspective. From the pornography-as-entertainment viewpoint, it can be argued that the shift simply represents an effort by producers to project more egalitarian themes in response to public criticism. Many feminist analysts, in particular, argue that the social and sexual reality conveyed by contemporary pornography consistently portrays women as sexually and socially subservient to and dominated by men, as well as always ready and craving sex with multiple partners (Salmon, 2012; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014, Brosius et al., 1993).

From this vantage point, the feminist analysts maintain that such materials disparage and demean women, portraying them as malleable, obsessed with sex, and willing to engage in any sexual act with any available partner (Diamond, 1985). Furthermore, the sexually explicit materials require that women be subordinate to men and serve as mere instruments for the fulfillment of male fantasies while being solely concerned with pleasing the man (Longino, 1980). Additionally, women are consistently depicted as anonymous, panting, adult toys, dehumanized as objects to be used, abused, and discarded (Brownmiller, 1975; Huer, 1987; Lawrence, 1936; Steinem, 1980). However, in effort to present a substantial argument, relegating the research to only that of the feminist viewpoint would be a disservice to those proposing to empirically provide that pornography use is a maladaptive transaction within the pair-bond attachment.

Many authors acknowledge feminist viewpoints only as a source of argument for why pornography should be banned opposed to why it is used in the first place, or what purpose it is serving for its users. These advocates would go on to say that with regard to violence against women, in all cases where it has been scientifically investigated, the correlation proves, as

pornography (or internet access in general) has increased in availability, sex crimes have either decreased or stayed at the same level, but not increased (Diamond, 2009; Salmon, 2012).

Furthermore, Neo-feminists, Paglia (1994) and McElroy (1995) have held a different view of pornography from the traditional feminists. Rather than argue that pornography needs to be banned, McElroy (1995) argued that pornography actually benefits women both personally and politically. It does so through providing sexual information, allowing for a fantasy world where women are free to explore sex without the emotional baggage of the real world, breaks down sexual stereotypes, and can provide sexual therapy. Paglia (1994) suggests that pornography empowers women, freeing them from social prudery and restrictions. She states,

Current feminism, with its anti-science and social constructionist bias, never thinks about nature. Hence it cannot deal with sex, which begins in the body and is energized by instinctual drives. Pornography, which erupts into the open in periods of personal freedom, shows the dark truth about nature, concealed by the artificers of civilization. Pornography is about lust, our animal reality that will never be fully tamed by love. Lust is elemental, aggressive, a-social. Pornography allows us to explore our deepest most forbidden selves (Paglia, 1994, p. 108).

Pornography Use Accepted

Pornography's "easy" sexuality can, understandably, become an enticing alternative to the demands of real life, pair-bond attachment, intimacy, and commitment. Pornography's easy alternative could lead some to prefer autoerotic arousal or casual, serial encounters to enduring and maintaining pair-bond intimacy. If sex is viewed strictly as a means to an end, that is, ejaculation or orgasm, essentially, the partner is not needed if this is possible through the use of pornographic material. Cyberspace offers an escape from real life relationship demands,

responsibility, and accountability that may decrease one's motivation to resolve issues with a partner. Subsequently, this can lead to the retreat to, and eventual preference for, pornography's fantastical world (Cooper et al., 2004) over real life relationships and intimacy.

Ogas and Gaddam (2011) report what they claim the porn industry has already discovered, that heterosexual men are not only attracted to visual female stimulation, but they enjoy watching the penis for its power to stimulate the sexual interest of the fantastical partner. The fear of someone else knowing the male user enjoys looking at the penis and interpreting this in their own way may be a contributing factor to the overwhelming desire for anonymity among users.

The past two decades of research has shed great light on how pornography use is related to the quality of committed relationships, Poulsen et al., (2013) examined associations among pornography use, the meaning people attach to its use, sexual quality, and relationship satisfaction. The authors also described and juxtaposed the combatting viewpoints of pornography use within our society. Concerning the effects its use has on a committed relationship, one idea proposes that pornography is a form of sexual expression and using such can help couples broaden their understanding of sexuality (Poulsen et al., 2013). At the same time, there lies a second major societal script for pornography in that its use is seen as a form of infidelity by non-using partners (Poulsen et al., 2013; Zitzman & Butler, 2009).

Implicit Messages of Pornography

At its most basic level, the titles, names, and labels give insight into what the pornography industry has found to be effective in luring consumers. Examination of 400 million searches conducted through a Dogpile search engine (Ogas & Gaddam, 2011) reveals a top-five listing of the most popular searches that includes the following categories and examples of

searches; youth ("free teen nudes"), gay ("straight guys having gay sex"), MILFs ("my friend's hot mom"), breasts ("big tits"), and cheating wives ("cuckhold porn"). "All of these categories combine cues relevant to male short-term mating" (Salmon, 2012, p. 157). Not only this, but each of the above categories represent a potential for, or in some cases, obvious source for cognitive dissonance as experienced by the user. There are laws lending to the argument of moral disposition, not to be discussed in the current research, but noteworthy, prohibiting adult sex with youth. Gay men having sex with gay men would be expected and/or natural, so instead, there is the use of possible moral or objective conflicting behavior; straight men having sex with straight men. The 'Breasts' category symbolizes unrealistic and fantastical body ideals, not likely to be seen in the vast majority of couple-sexual encounters. Finally, cheating wives serves as an obvious source of dissonance.

Each of the above categories represent a 'socially forbidden' behavior, yet millions of individuals' sexualities are primed with this, antisocial-in-nature, content. We see that not only are producers using aspects of the useless side of life to attract viewers, but simply by using these names they, too, are promoting these concepts as a worthy commitment of time.

For the current research, it is investigated why individuals use pornography. We cannot speak to its effects until we address the purposeful behavior that is its use. If it is understood why the pornography world is as big as it is, it can be deciphered which needs are being met and whether or not the mode in which those needs are met is maladaptive to a committed relationship. We can assume from the mere prevalence of pornography that there is a great need not being met and is adequately satisfied through its use. But is this satisfaction fleeting, and is it destructive?

Alarming, across all of the collected research for the current study, the range of acceptance of pornography use by a partner is from extremely negative to mildly positive (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Bridges et al., 2003; Stewart & Szymanski, 2012; Allen et al., 2007; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Fisher & Barak, 2001; Short et al., 2012; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010; Laaser & Gregoire, 2003; Schneider, 2000; Hare et al, 2014; Poulsen et al., 2013; Schneider, 2000). Nowhere within the current participant-report research, not within all-male populations or even pornography-using populations, is there a group that *highly* favors the use of pornography (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Bridges et al., 2003; Stewart & Szymanski, 2012; Allen et al., 2007; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Fisher & Barak, 2001; Short et al., 2012; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010; Laaser & Gregoire, 2003; Schneider, 2000; Hare et al, 2014; Poulsen et al., 2013). Meanwhile, as evident, there is a persistent significant concern for the negative relational and physiological implications pornography provides (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Bridges et al., 2003; Stewart & Szymanski, 2012; Allen et al., 2007; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Fisher & Barak, 2001; Short et al., 2012; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010; Laaser & Gregoire, 2003; Schneider, 2000; Hare et al, 2014; Poulsen et al., 2013; Schneider, 2000).

If users are ashamed of their use, to the extent that they are not comfortable claiming to use pornography under their own identity, is this fostering dysfunctional thoughts feelings and behaviors? This cycle of behavior places the individual in a state of *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance can be considered a dominant change theory which can change one's long term attitude simply by rationalizing a counter-attitudinal but trivial behavior (Sénémeaud & Somat, 2009). Does it not then compare to other shameful behaviors: one might withhold from their partner's knowledge? In this case in particular, the emotional weight the use

of sexually explicit material might carry could be damaging to a relationship if kept secret. Supporting this notion, many non-using partners cite the concomitant deception with pornography use to be one of the primary factors in the felt emotional betrayal (Stewart & Szymanski, 2012; Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Schneider, 2000; Bergner & Bridges, 2002).

Consistently, modern pornography rejects the adult sexual engagement as an affectionate, egalitarian sexual interaction, in which mutual satisfaction is paramount. Instead, the findings illustrate that pornography spotlights sexual desires and prowess of men, and, to this end, it persistently portrays women being *always* sexually willing and promiscuous (Brosius, et al., 1993; Palys, 1984; Snitow, 1985). Highlighting these unrealistic characteristics of pornography is a common theme among research, as Salmon (2012, 2004) concludes, “In the end, *pornotopia* is a fantasy world of low cost, impersonal sex with an endless parade of lusty, gorgeous, always orgasmic women” (Salmon, 2012, p. 154).

By priming their sexual desire with this fantasy sex world, users are inadequately preparing, and likely disrupting their potential for an increasingly satisfying sex life within the adult pair-bond, sex with security, vulnerability, and interest in their partners’ pleasure. The use of pornography results in a tendency toward autoerotic behavioral patterns; that is, sexual intent and outcome being independent of partner presence or stimulation combined with its eroticization of the sexual experience, produces a disconnect of the sexual experience from relational context, meaning, and responsibility (Zitzman & Butler, 2005; Zitzman & Butler, 2009).

Many analysts (Brown & Bryant, 1989; Palys, 1984, 1986; Prince, 1990; Slade, 1984; Winick, 1985) have noted, for instance, that pornographic materials typically feature all variants of heterosexual intercourse in countless circumstances and routinely display group sex, anal

intercourse, oral-genital contact and visible ejaculation on or into a partner (Hebditch & Anning, 1988). At the same time, however, depictions of other basic aspects of human sexuality, such as communication between sexual partners, expressions of affection or emotion (except fear and lust), depictions of foreplay, after-play, or intimate cuddling, and concern about sanitation or the consequences of sexual activities are minimized to nonexistent (Cowan, Lee, Levy, & Snyder, 1988; Prince, 1990). Furthermore, within this context, women are normatively portrayed as eagerly soliciting participation in, and responding with hysterical euphoria to any and every variety of sexual encounters (Palys, 1984; Rimmer 1986).

Although limited, distinguished empirical data show that contemporary pornographic productions typically involve a narrow range of highly stylized content conventions that strongly emphasize a chauvinistic male or macho orientation toward sexual behavior (Hertlein et al., 2014; Salmon, 2012; Short et al., 2012; Crabbe, 1988; Day, 1988). While the chosen description of the content of pornography may seem subjective and/or carry a negative connotation, empirically speaking, the statement is widely considered accurate and abundantly repeated throughout research. Most notable among these conventions is a seemingly complete preoccupation with social activity and with the exclusion of all other significant facets of human social behavior (Hebditch & Anning, 1988).

Contradictory to some claims, coercion and/or violence have been found to be rarely depicted as successful means of initiating sexual activities, however, in such circumstances, the woman, as a rule, are portrayed as experiencing sexual arousal and ultimately, an enjoyment of the physical or psychological assault (Slade, 1984; Yang & Linz, 1990). Even less frequent are productions that portrays sexual behavior within the context of a loving, affectionate relationship (Weaver, 1991). Taken together, the available research findings suggest that contemporary

pornography represents a somewhat tasteless celebration of a careless sex mentality (Weaver 1991; Palys, 1984) that rejects basic social and relational aspects of sexual activity.

Zillman and Bryant (1988) explain the nature of pornography; pornographic scripts glamorize the sexual engagement of two (sometimes more) parties who have just met, who are, and in no way, intending to be attached or committed to each other, and who will part shortly, never to meet again. Thus, Zitzman and Butler (2009) argue that pornography in no way supports or encourages intimate attachment-sustaining sexual gratification, anchored in an emotional connection, sexual responsiveness, and attachment fidelity (pg. 216). Furthermore, relationship-oriented self-discipline and restraint are also not a part of pornography's script for relationship-sexuality.

Previous Research

As previously mentioned, over the past three decades, pornography has rapidly been gaining the attention of psychological, relational, and social researchers (Poulsen et al., 2013). Previous forms of research cover a wide range of data on the subject. This range covers what exactly pornography is, what function does it serve, who consumes it, and why. The 2012, Stewart and Szymanski (2012) discovery that "sex" is one of the most searched for words on the internet, the authors bolstered the propensity of our society's attention to and curiosity about, sex. In fact, as of 2012, 78% of Americans had internet access, and this availability of access has reportedly increased pornography use (Short et al., 2012). A sizeable body of research has thus far yielded conflicting resolutions about the impact of pornography use.

As previously mentioned, previous researchers have concentrated almost exclusively on productions released before 1986. Notably, 1986 marks a critical turning point in the public discourse about sexually explicit materials and their potential consequences (Attorney General's

Commission on pornography, 1986; Press et al., 1985; Stengel, 1986). Recognizing the critical role of the United States in both the production (about 70% of all productions originate in the U.S.) and distribution, the U.S. accounts for about half of the annual revenues of modern pornography (Hebditch & Anning, 1988), it seems possible that the heightened public scrutiny of pornographic materials could have spurred producers and distributors of such materials to alter their product to minimize criticism.

Advocates of the pornography as information perspective would, on the other hand, point out that the shift appears but a new twist on an old story line. That being an acquiescent quality in which women, although they have now achieved an elevated occupational role, are thrust into traditional sexual roles and shown behaving promiscuously and to the service of the male fantasy (Garry, 1978). Taken together, the findings of this investigation substantiate the observations of Palys (1984) by illustrating that the 'sex with anyone just for the fun of it' mentality remains the predominant theme of contemporary pornography. This conclusion is qualified considerably, however, by the fact that a chauvinistic orientation toward sex is the most prevalent component within the reality presented in pornographic fare.

As a topic of high subjective nature, it is understandable that the aim of several studies was to exploit any and all negative implications of pornography use, while others diligently attempted to defend it. To date, the most accepted holistic validation of the usefulness of pornography comes in the case of both individuals in the couple using pornography together to broaden their sexual endeavors (Salmon 2012; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Under such circumstances, each member of the adult pair-bond are interested in using pornography and have yet to notice any adverse effects of its use. Furthermore, these mutually-using partners report experimenting in the bedroom, roles which were found in pornography. Commonly, issues such

as deception about use or increased sexual stimuli tolerance leading to decreased sexual reactivity hinder adult pair-bonds from viewing pornography use as a useful endeavor (Allen, Emmers, Gebhart, & Giery, 1995; Allen et al., 2007; Hare et al., 2014; Bergner & Bridges, 2002).

Additionally, not only has research yielded negative interpersonal or relational implications as a result of pornography use, but several studies report pornography use leads to impairments in occupational and financial functioning (Cooper et al., 2002); in interpersonal functioning and emotional health (Philaretou, Mahfouz, & Allen, 2005; Hare et al., 2014); as well as sexual dysfunction (Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004; Hare et al., 2014). While other studies have found pornography use reportedly aids in relieving stress, decreasing boredom, and widening sexual knowledge (Hald & Malamuth, 2008; Paul & Shim, 2008; Cooper, Galbreath, & Becker, 2004).

Short, Black, Smith, Wetterneck, and Wells (2012) reviewed a collective sample of internet-pornography-use research over the past 10 years. From their compiled data, they were able to conclude the following implications; effects of internet pornography use are widespread and have been conceptualized by the users as both negative (e.g., relationship and interpersonal distress) and positive (e.g., increases in sexual knowledge and attitudes toward sex). In efforts to be empirically validated, Short et al. (2012) viewed the methodology and content of published literature regarding internet pornography use in strictly adult populations. In order to determine reliability of the available data, the study sought to determine how the prior studies; defined Internet Pornography, utilized validated measures of pornography use, examined variables related to internet pornography, and addressed specific form and function of its use.

Collectively, it was discovered that studies were inconsistent in their definitions of internet pornography, measurement, and their assessment of the form and function of internet pornography use (Short et al., 2012). As previously stated, for the purpose of current and future research on the subject of pornography, it is critical to clearly define sexually explicit material so as to avoid comparing effects of completely different medias or consumption modalities, as well as approach the subject in a holistic manner.

User-Gender Differences

Currently, there is no direct goal in distinguishing rates of use or prevalence between males and females. It should be noted that much of the research, to date, either discusses male use, or has found that men report higher rates of pornography use than women. For example, using a final sample of 617 heterosexual couples (either married or cohabiting) Poulsen et al. (2013) found that 64% of female participants reported no use of pornography while only 30% reported using pornographic material once per month or less. This totals to 94% of the female participants reporting very little to no use while less than 2% reported using pornography more than once per month. However, their male counterparts provided higher variability in their self-report. Of the male participants, 27% reported no use, 31% reported once per month or less, 16% using two or three days per month, 16% using one or two days per week, and 10% using three or more days per week, resulting in 73% of male participants using it once per month or more (Poulsen et al., 2013).

Two cognitive neuroscientists, Ogas and Gaddam (2011) surveyed 400 million web searches by 2 million web users across one year (July 2009-July 2010). What caught their attention was a particular 13% of the searchers. This 13% comprised of 55 million searches for sexual or pornographic material, soon becoming the basis for the authors' book aimed at

informing the general audience with sensationalist insights into human sexual fantasy and desire. Among several of their conclusions, one clear extrapolation was that men are visually oriented and prefer sexual images as well as graphic sex. Women, they found, sought out erotic stories with focus or emphasis on romantic relationships. Put clearly, men like to watch sex, women like to read about sex (Ogas & Gaddam, 2011; Kring, 2013).

The Ogas and Gaddam (2011) research, for entertainment purposes, became laced with gaudily confident generalizations and assumptions, but afforded, nonetheless, the above mentioned easily measurable data, what did men search for, what did women search for? Other researchers, commonly under the restraints of American Psychological Association guidelines, aim to remain as empirically validated as possible so to gain credibility. With this sensitivity to accuracy, Poulsen et al. (2013) also addressed factors such as gender and religiosity among and within those who use pornography and those who do not. The specific participant population comprised 617 couples who were either married and/or cohabiting at the time the data were gathered (2013). As a specific citation, results from this study indicated substantial gender differences in terms of user profiles, as well as pornography's association with varying relationship factors.

Specifically, male pornography use was negatively associated with both male and female sexual quality, whereas female pornography use was positively associated with female sexual quality (Poulsen et al., 2013). These results imply that when pornography is used by males, for whatever reason, the males themselves, view their use as maladaptive to their relational experiences. Contrastingly, when women use pornography, they seem to experience less cognitive dissonance and concurrently report positive effects of use within their relationships. This delivers an intriguing concept to be later addressed—while more prevalent among men,

even the men attest to its negative consequences, however females find their use beneficial as well as experience less stress about their consumption (Poulsen et al., 2013; Schneider, 2000).

In the same year, Emmers-Sommer, Hertlein, and Kennedy (2013) examined male and female pornography users' and nonusers' attitudes regarding sexual openness, vulnerability, and inhibition, as well as relational variables both between and within gender. In comparing groups (genders) by quantity of pornography usage, both male and female pornography users were more sexually open and uninhibited while less relationally oriented than nonusers. Adlerian theory asserts, "Sexual intercourse may or may not include sexual intimacy. Intercourse may involve only physical expression or be the result of rape" (Carlson & Slavik, 1997, p. 407). It is then conceivable, due to the Emmers-Sommer et al. (2013) findings that these pornography-using men and women consider their sexual interactions to be within this context, detached and/or distant and without intimate responsibility to the other.

Educational Purposes

As mentioned, one of the two most enduring arguments for pornography is its education purpose. This view of pornographic materials asserts that they are simply entertaining, harmless, and informative sources pertaining to uninhibited sexual behavior (Salmon, 2012). Advocates of this position further contend that modern sexually explicit materials offer only positive images of sexual pleasure and healthy abandonment. Indeed, proponents of this perspective maintain that the social and sexual "reality" portrayed in pornography is so accurate and detailed that these productions provide important educational and or therapeutic aids that help eradicate the over-bearing puritanical attitudes about sex that have long dominated this society (Gagnon, 1977; Goldstein, 1984).

Hertlein et al. (2014) assert that sexual scripts, formulated, maintained, and evolving over time, guide men and women in knowing how to be in relationship with one another. In essence, girls and boys, either consciously or not, attend to the sexual scripts of their culture for the knowledge of what it means to be a man and a woman. Of course, each individual will react to these scripts in their own way, but it is noted that a vast number regard these sexual scripts, and thus, act and think accordingly. Alarming, the authors go on to cite sexually explicit materials as one of three contributors (Duncan, 1990, Duncan & Donnelly, 1991) to the formations of these sexual scripts, namely, how men and women are portrayed in the media (Herrett-Skjellum & Allen, 1996), and cultural expectations tied to each gender (Canary & Emmers-Sommer, 1997; Hertlein et al., 2014). One man states, “A lot of it is, and not on purpose, but a lot of learning. I would have never turned on a video with hopes of learning about like sweet moves or anything like that. But I guess the long-term outcome is that it kind of sculpts how you even view sex” (man, 24) (Hare et al., 2014, p. 151).

In speaking to the stance of pornography serving as educational material on the subject of sex, it is interesting to add that discussion and/or use of contraception was an extremely rare aspect of sexual behavior across the sample of pornographic movies. In only 1% of the sexual scenes, female characters mention their own contraceptive practices. Contraceptive use by male characters was never discussed. With the astounding prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (Hertlein, Emmers-Sommer, & Kennedy, 2014), pornography seems a potentially harmful resource for a young individual to “learn” sexual practices and certainly to act according to in his or her future sexual endeavors.

Brosius et al., (1993) through thorough examination of the randomly selected 50 films lend support to the notion that contemporary porn (post-1986) emphasizes a chauvinistically

male or macho orientation toward sex. Specifically, the data showed that, in projecting this image of human sexual behavior, pornography most typically portrays a reality in which men and women assume inequitable social and sexual roles. If a pornography user is to internalize this notion, that the sexual encounter should peak at the orgasm of the male, disregarding the efforts in pleasing the female, it will run in direct opposition of the Butzer and Campbell (2008) findings. Here, married participants report consciously and actively acting in a sexually attentive and other-focused manner.

Furthermore, the Brosius et al. (1993) research yielded that more than half of all sexual scenes portrayed intercourse between total strangers or casual acquaintances. Sex between committed partners was rare (Brosius, Weaver, & Staab, 1993). For several reasons, the pornographic reality of sex teaching young individuals what sex is and sexual scripts to be adhered to could be considered reason for concern on a societal level.

Curiosity or Entertainment

Advocates of pornography argue that pornographic materials are entertaining, innocuous communications that pertain to sexual behavior, as well as the sexual desires most feel unable to express to a partner (Salmon, 2012). Furthermore, they contend that modern sexually explicit materials offer only positive images of sexual pleasure and abandon. Additionally, proponents of this view maintain that the social and sexual “reality” portrayed in pornography is so accurate and detailed that these productions provide important educational and/or therapeutic aids that help eradicate puritanical attitudes towards sex that have long dominated our society (Salmon, 2012; Ogas & Gaddam, 2011). Arguing that pornography is an educational or simply entertaining enterprise may prove to be maladaptive to the user’s future interpersonal or relational functioning.

Biologist, Gary Wilson describes the process of pornography use as the equivalent of a young male training for the wrong sport, and furthermore, replacing the guys' ability to play the sport they desired to learn (Wilson, 2013). Providing a vivid view of differences and imperfections of human sexual anatomy, thus improving self-image has been cited by women as one of the few positive outcomes of viewing pornography (Hare et al., 2014). At the same time, the pornographic reality does not offer an accurate and a representative account of human sexuality (Fisher & Barak, 1989). These images of eagerness, receptiveness, casual disregard for health, and of female subservience, are providing a foundation upon which the sexual expectations of adolescents and young adults are being grounded (Brosius et al., 1993) The response from many educators is to point to the need for educational programs that could provide corrective counter-information about sexuality (Brosius et al., 1993; Fisher & Barak, 1989).

Effects on User

One factor of the research on pornography and its use, that is often neglected, is that sexually explicit material is a (in most cases) sought out, self-regulated behavior. The manner in which individuals choose to engage with pornography can be a critical component of how the pornographic material influences his or her sexual health. Its effects and mediation should not be viewed as a strict one-way process during which explicit material is consumed and underlying messages are thus adopted by passive recipients (Poulsen et al., 2013; Bridges et al., 2003). Rather, the ways in which pornography consumption may influence sexual health can and should be more accurately understood as a complex process in which the participants actively engage with, evaluate, and reproduce messages in a personally-modified form, in a manner that is directed by their social context and identity, or *lifestyle* (Poulsen et al., 2013; Bridges et al., 2003; Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Cooper et al., 2002).

While the bulk of the current research regards only that research which has been explored in significant frequency, it is noted that there tend to be extreme conclusions reached by authors. Included is the finding that pornography use has been associated with extramarital affairs and the engagement of paid sex (Stack et al., 2004; Poulsen et al., 2013). Others have resolved strong associations to the use of pornography, for example, close familial relations and family cohesion has been found to be related to later-age loss of virginity, as well as fewer sexual partners (Danziger, 1995; Miller, Sabo, Farrell, Barnes, & Melnick, 1998). Because these patterns have historically been found to be negatively correlated with pornography use (Miller et al., 1998), many have anticipated a direct relation between pornography use and family of origin perceived quality: the better quality of family of origin, the absence of use of pornography (Carroll et al., 2008). Added to this discourse is further validation that the effects of sexually explicit materials are almost certainly a joint function of personality characteristics of the using-individual (Fisher & Barak, 1991; Malamuth et al., 2001).

Research arguing for both positive and negative implications of pornography use, commonly echo the potential and possibility for cognitive dissonance as experienced by the user. Allen, Emmers-Sommer, D'Alessio, Timmerman, Hanzal, and Korus (2007) explain the issue of the difference between the physiological and psychological reaction to the pornography use, itself, by the user. Though there might be a perceived-positive physiological reaction to pornography, the individual always applies a psychological interpretation of his or her use which may prove to be negative or maladaptive to the desired sexual connection to a partner (Allen et al., 2007). To date, one factor has been found to alleviate, for some, this pressure is perceived anonymity.

Implications of Perceived User-Anonymity

Perceived anonymity refers to a state where an individual sheds his or her identity and normative standards, which leads to a state of reduced self-awareness (Plowman & Goode, 2009). Decreased self-awareness as the result of *deindividuation*, a loss of one's self of individuality and personal responsibility, has been found to result in a lowering of self-observation, self-evaluation, and concern for social evaluation (Zimbardo, 1969; Shim & Paul, 2014). Altogether, being in this state of deindividuation weakens an individual's self-control over normative beliefs based on guilt, shame, fear, and commitment, which inevitably leads to lowered thresholds for the expression of inhibited behavior (Postmes & Spears, 1998). One consistently reported collateral effect of lowered self-observation and/or self-evaluation is the susceptibility to engage in increased frequency of dishonest behavior: that which is directly cited as a source of disgust by non-using partners toward their using-partners (Allen et al., 2007; Schneider, 2000).

Other recent studies have found anonymity to be a cause and the rise of obscene behavior online and across the Internet. For example, Plowman and Goode (2009) identified the feeling of anonymity as a factor determining the intent to download music illicitly. Some have argued that the practice of flaming on the Internet, that is, the intentional expression of hostile and aggressive messages online (Luzon, 2013), might have developed from deindividuation driven by an anonymity (Leah & Spears, 1991). For example, racists have used the Internet to advocate racial violence, believing that their anonymity allows them to avoid potential harmful physical, economic, and cultural retaliation a response to such activities (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002). Simply put, evidence suggests that computer deindividuation weakens the effects of subjective norms.

To fully understand the meaning perceived anonymity can have for an individual, one might ask which other behaviors solicit preference for anonymity? White (1977) demonstrated that people who feel anonymous are more likely to tolerate obscene language than are those who do not feel anonymous. Utilizing secondary data from criminal reports in the Northern Ireland, Silke (2003) revealed that more offenders committed violent crimes wearing disguises to mask their identities than committed violent crimes without wearing disguises. Specific to the current debate, the Shim & Paul (2014) research yielded results suggesting that when internet-pornography users feel anonymous, they are statistically more likely to be motivated to search for extreme types of pornography regardless of the user gender.

While not all of these resolutions appear to directly relate to the adult pair-bond, according to Adlerian understanding of the individual through a holistic lens (as implied by his label, *Individual Psychology*) and if anonymity has these common effects on a substantial frequency of individuals, these same effects on a moderate level could arguably be present on the vast majority of pornography users. If there is any truth at all in this evaluation, these effects would oppose the tendencies toward the attributes of the adult pair-bond attachment, namely, attentiveness, responsiveness, and commitment to the partner.

Zillmann and Bryant (1984) demonstrated that repeated, extensive exposure, (480 minutes over a six-week period) to pornography depicting women as hyper-promiscuous and socially non-discriminating sexual objects resulted in the trivialization of sexual aggressiveness among a group of college students. Both males and females who experienced this extensive exposure conditions subsequently indicated the willingness to assign a shorter prison sentence to a convicted rapist than did those who were assigned to shorter and milder exposure conditions. Milburn, Mather, and Conrad (2000) found that viewing R-rated movie scenes containing

sexually objectifying images resulted in an increase likelihood of accepting rape myths and of attributing responsibility of rape incidents to the female victim.

Purpose of Using

When investigating how pornography use affects a relationship, it is important to ask what purpose does it serve? Or perhaps, which need is not being met, that pornography use meets? Through an Adlerian lens, does it aid in the fulfillment of a useful or useless purpose in life? Laaser and Gregoire (2003) proposed that pornography is used by individuals who have difficulty connecting with people and choose fantasy connections online over healthy relationships. If we can assume masturbation, or even any measure of pleasure is the end result of the use of pornography, the Laaser and Gregoire (2003) line of thought is highly relatable to Adler's explanation of safeguarding through distance (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956) where masturbation is listed (multiple times) as an arrangement used by the client for creating distance. Engaging in a solitary behavior, one that isolates and facilitates escape from inferior feelings (or thoughts of inadequacy), therefore, opposes acting in a socially interested manner.

Although there can be a tendency to position pornography as a social problem that needs to be solved, pornography can and should be conceptualized in research using more expansive, holistic terms to help more effectively capture the ways individuals' experiences shape how pornography could influence his or her own sexual health (Halavais, 2006; Mastronadi, 2003; Hare et al., 2014). As within the Adlerian scope, we will address what purpose the use of pornography serves for the individual. As with any other marital issue or concern, there is always a purpose behind it.

Recalling the Paglia (1994) description of pornography,

Pornography, which erupts into the open in periods of personal freedom, shows the dark truth about nature, concealed by the artificers of civilization. Pornography is about lust, our animal reality that will never be fully tamed by love. Lust is elemental, aggressive, a-social. Pornography allows us to explore our deepest most forbidden selves (Paglia, 1994, p. 108).

If one is to assert this argument is valid, then it stands in opposition of what Adler (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Mosak & Maniaci, 1999) might consider to be the useful side of life. Instead of it being necessary to turn to pornography for a woman to fully actualize her animal sexual drive or lust, would it not be more beneficial and perhaps, advantageous, for a woman to feel inclined to do so within her relationship? To argue that lust is a-social, it must then be accepted as apart from socially interested. If a male enjoys watching it depicted on screen, a husband would likely prefer to be lusted after by his wife in her animalistic, aggressive desires, should they be present. Furthermore, a couple that experiences a mutual felt-safety, thus freeing them each to explore their deepest most forbidden selves with each other will likely be inclined to love and respect one another through relationship.

Paglia (1994) indeed, reports a perception of what pornography is, however, there is one concept that is neglected. This is the concept that generally, within the heterosexual relationship, if the woman would be brought to orgasm as often as the man, Paglia's (1994) aforementioned description of pornography could be, instead, the result of the marital sexual encounter. Furthermore, feeling able to be authentically erotic and subsequently satisfied, the woman would likely seek after this orgasm from her partner more often.

One empirically supported validation for using pornography is that of what Blazina (2001) found, that historically, traditional gender roles of socialization leaves many men with

relational and sexual deficits due to the prescription of overly restrictive gender roles, emotional disconnection, and use of pornography to experience some level of emotional and/or sexual gratification without having to risk intimacy or interpersonal rejection. Assuming that the user reacts positively to pornography, it liberates the individual from a perception of his or her use as contrary to his or her value system (Allen et al., 2007). The user may, in fact, experience a form of gratification even if on an antisocial spectrum.

Could it be that pornography use deprives, perhaps purposefully, the individual from person to person vulnerability when exploring their sexuality with one another? “It was more of a tool for understanding. I started watching...more for information cause, I would not ask, what things are so you look it up online and you can find it that way” (woman, 26) (Hare et al., 2014, p. 151). While using pornography with informative purposes seemed to benefit this woman’s understanding of sexuality, there is concern with her statement, “cause...I would not ask.” The use of pornography is then used as an escape from a potentially vulnerable conversation with a sexual partner. As Schneider (2000) states, the pornography user escapes the vulnerability and hassle of a real relationship through the use of his or her fantastical relationships. The Hare et al. (2014) example is expressed in a mild degree, but it lends to the beginning stages of avoidance in an individual’s thought process.

Butzer & Campbell (2008) validated this concern when they found an avoidant attachment style, meaning an individual feeling uncomfortable with closeness and emotional intimacy with a partner, to be found as a predictive indicator of pornography use. Subsequently, these individuals tended to be less emotionally invested in their relationships and strived to remain emotionally independent of their partners (Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Adler (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956) would argue it is this very vulnerability and

willingness to be imperfect (even in the bedroom) from which a secure intimate attachment can thrive.

Interestingly, the use of pornography by one partner may, in some cases, also be a purposeful entity for the non-using partner as well. While significant data speaks to the self-esteem and reactionary effects on a partner who came into the knowledge of their partner's pornography use, it is a curiosity of current research whether or not there are certain common characteristics in women who seek out partners knowing full-well of his pornography use. While little research to date has been conducted to answer this question, notably, Stewart and Szymanski (2012) arrived at the idea that women with poor self-esteem seek out partners who will continue to reinforce those negative images and the partners will tend toward the use of pornographic materials. Furthermore, due to the fact that some pornography use is considered normative in the American culture, the findings suggest that only when use becomes problematic and begins to interfere with day-to-day functioning and/or secure attachment dynamics, that it may have damaging effects.

Effects on the Brain

Watching porn lays down new neural pathways in your brain. The more you use, the stronger the neural connections, and the more difficult it is to stop. This results in an increased appetite for the stimulant, pornography (Doidge, 2007). Viewing pornography or looking at sexually explicit and graphic material is the effective means by which one decreases his or her sensitivity to partner-sexual-advances or initiations. This outside sexual stimuli increases one's need for such, and subsequently increase of such, in order to become aroused.

Excessive, habitual, or addictive levels of pornography use, creates in increased neural-chemical tolerance. This describes the brain's ability to adapt to any substance absorbed by

entering, and its demand for more. Neurochemical tolerance has been shown to be due primarily to desensitization of neurochemical receptor sites to neuro-chemical transmitters. Thinking about or performing sex creates a heightened neuro-chemical response in various parts of the brain. Over time, the brain will gain tolerance of the response (Milkman & Sunderwirth, 1987). Tolerance then leads to escalation. If more of the same neuro-chemical stimulant is needed to achieve the same levels of pleasure, indulgence in sexual thought will increase over time. Similarly, we could assume that if or when one becomes tuned-in to the sexual cues or attractiveness of his or her partner, due to the neural pathways becoming stronger as they do with pornography use, and result in an increased appetite for sexual encounters with your partner?

Furthering this line of research, it is important to note the difference between pornography addictions and casual use. Some authors, such as Zitzman & Butler (2009) have indicated that there is a higher prevalence of addiction than appreciated, even by some users, themselves (Gold & Heffner, 1998; Laaser & Gregoire, 2003). Gold and Heffner (1998) also assert that for many individuals, their pornography use meets the criteria for an addiction. The authors find that those struggling to overcome compulsive pornography use report many if not all of the same features diagnostically characteristic of an addiction (Gold & Heffner, 1998; Wolfe, 2000). So it should be asked, when should the pornography use be considered addictive?

When a behavior meets the criteria of an addiction, whatever it may be, Gold and Heffner (1998) present the phenomena an addict experiences. The reactive chain of effects addiction results in or yields is as follows;

a neurophysiological and psychological phenomena; producing an intense, highly preoccupying altered state of conscious awareness and experience; capacitating escape from reality and/or escape into fantasy; which serves as a maladaptive coping strategy

due to pairing proximal, visceral reinforcers with distal, more abstract punishments, thereby setting up a double approach—avoidance dynamic, with a definable cycle of relapse; associated with failure or inability to avoid high-risk behavior in the pursuit of the experience (e.g. viewing pornography in public); and producing personal, relationship, and work impairment leading to repeated failed attempts to quit; development of physical and/or psychological tolerance or desensitization leading to diminishing returns; and physical and/or psychological dependency or "entrapment," with an associated existential experience of powerlessness (Gold & Heffner, 1998; Zitzman & Butler, 2009, p. 212).

Wolfe (2000) found that for many individuals, their pornography use met all of these criteria, thus strongly relating the term and forcing ensuing research on the subject to address pornography use as an addiction on a large scale. If addiction to pornography use is found to be even near the majority rule for pornography users, then, it also increases the applicability of these potential threats to relationship quality on a broad scale.

User Self-esteem

Recently, scholars have begun to recognize and, thus, study the links between various sources of appearance-related pressure (e.g., media and interpersonal pressures to be mesomorphic) and men's body image and well-being. With the high prevalence of pornography use among men (Brosius et al., 1993), it has become imperative to examine the medium of self-reported appearance-related pressures deriving from the presentation of the male pornographic subjects or "characters." Tylka (2014) incorporated pornography use into two models of men's body image and one model of men's interpersonal and emotional well-being. A sample size of 359 college men rated how often they viewed pornography and also completed measures of

general media and interpersonal pressures to be mesomorphic, internalization of the mesomorphic ideal, body monitoring, body image (i.e., muscularity and body fat dissatisfaction, body appreciation), anxiety and avoidance within romantic relationships, and emotional well-being (i.e., positive and negative affect).

Data analysis revealed that men's frequency of pornography use was positively linked to muscularity and body fat dissatisfaction indirectly through internalization of the mesomorphic ideal (Tylka, 2014). As well, the data found frequency of pornography use was negatively linked to body appreciation directly and indirectly through body monitoring (Tylka, 2014). The aforesaid frequency was positively linked to negative affect indirectly through romantic attachment anxiety and avoidance and negatively linked to positive affect indirectly through relationship attachment anxiety and avoidance (Tylka, 2014). These findings validate the need to more comprehensively examine men's pornography use and the implications of this use for their psychological health. Given their findings, future researchers may want to examine how pornography use may be linked to their male clients' body-related, relational, and emotional well-being.

If the idea of pornography is to portray a fantastical sexual scenario, one with two (or more) "aesthetically perfect" participants, what then does a regular pornography user make of their own sexual encounters? Salmon (2012) asserts the destructive pattern of men in pornographic films becoming easily, repeatedly aroused for excessive durations of time by visual stimuli. Not only is this not "easy" for every male, but users report feeling uncertain of their own 'abilities' within the context of sexual encounters (Salmon, 2012; Schneider, 2000; Zitzman & Butler, 2005). As one male respondent (age 25) explained, "Cause you like, watch these movies, and you see guys basically going at it forever. . .definitely had like the erectile anxiety. . .with a

lot of sexual encounters just on that internal pressure, almost doubting myself” (Hare et al., 2014, p. 155). Furthermore, with regular exposure to fantastical human bodies, users run the risk of becoming acclimated to seeing these flawless models outside of their own relationship in order to become aroused. This may be presumptuous in nature, but it does beg the question whether pornography use results in tuning in outside sexual triggers and tuning out the sexual triggers as provided by the partner? Some literature (Zitzman & Butler, 2009) would attest.

As mentioned, one factor of pornography that can have damaging effects on a young man, especially, is the misleading information as to the duration and effects of a sexual encounter. Meaning, it is found that as a rule, a 45-minute pornographic movie takes three days of filming to produce (Carroll et al., 2008). Furthermore, pornography is often found to portray male characters in a do-no-wrong role; whatever the male does or says, the female reacts with unbridled orgasmic enthusiasm (Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, Chyng, & Liberman, 2010). Consequently, when a male uses pornography, he is exposed to sexual encounters which are consistently; long-lasting, always orgasmic, and done by a seemingly genius sexual driver, the male (Bridges et al., 2010). If the pornography is viewed with any repetitiveness, there lies the potential for the user normalizing this type of sex, and being self-critical when not living up to it (Brosius et al., 1993; Hertlein et al, 2014; Salmon, 2012).

User Arousal

Surprisingly, and most ironically, across nearly all resources analyzed for the current investigation, there was report of the pornography-using partner losing interest in sex with his or her partner (Allen et al., 2007; Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Zitzman & Butler, 2005; Salmon, 2012; Schneider, 2000; Fisher & Barak, 2001; Laaser & Gregoire, 2003; Wilson, 2013). The reason for this according to Doidge (2007) and Pitchers et al. (2013) is that as a porn user’s brain acclimates

to the new levels of dopamine flooding through it, regular activities that would normally release a surge of dopamine and make the person feel aroused are no longer strong enough to register, leaving the user in a flat mood whenever they are not using porn. According to the Sexual Behavior Sequence, individuals respond to unconditioned sexual stimuli with physiological sexual arousal (through the release of dopamine into the brain). Unconditioned erotic stimuli can include tactile stimulation of the genitalia, exposure to pheromones, as well as, visual sexual cues such as exposure to the genitalia or breasts or observation of sexual behavior (Byrne, 1977).

Since the brain becomes accustomed to the increasing rates of dopamine, tolerance increase, inevitably forcing your sexual partner to ‘compete’ with the higher levels of dopamine release in initiating your arousal. Using the neurological explanation, it is logical to assume that an individual who does not use porn, fully experiences every moment of dopamine release into his or her brain. The stimulus can be smaller; the partner undressing, certain looks or glances, and will, nonetheless, result in arousal (or the initiation of). Compare this to an individual who uses pornography, he or she may lose the ability to become aroused by sexual looks or glances, his partner undressing, etc., and the loss of these sexual mechanisms is the loss of a formerly sufficient aphrodisiac between partners.

In fact, Hare et al. (2014) found conflicting results in their study on the impact of pornography use on young men’s holistic sexual health, but one resounding sentiment suggested that for men throughout their lives, in their masturbatory practices, or preferences in the pornography they use, made it more difficult to respond to sexual stimuli with real life partners. “I think I am that I am tainted due to the pornography I look at sometimes. And almost my normal sexual encounters with females, I don’t know if I get my full potential arousal because of the porno that I look at” (man, 24) (Hare et al., 2014, p. 155). Furthermore, some men claimed

the physical and mental exertion required while using pornography took time out of their lives that they would have used attaining a balanced life and relationships with others.

Schneider (2000) presented a concern that pornography use is the consequence of heightened tolerance to sexual stimuli for the user. In terms of sex, the author adds, this can mean more time devoted to watching, increased number of sexual partners, riskier sexual activities, or extending from internet videos, chat rooms, or partners to real-life sexual encounters, all of which are potential dangers creating sexual arousal from partner to be completely lost.

User's Interpersonal Relationships

The way in which a pornography user interprets the pornography, as well as his or her use of such, may have positive or negative effects. When considering use of pornography by younger single individuals, we can assume any resolutions (i.e. sexual scripts, gender role conceptualizations, attachment styles) of the pornography or their use will be played out within their interpersonal relationships, then eventually their marriages. Not only can we assume this, but it has been found to be empirically validated (Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Hare et al., 2014; Schneider, 2000; Zitzman & Butler, 2005).

Pornography staunchly promotes an emotional, psychological, and existential disconnect of sexuality from relational context, meaning, and constraints. Consequently, the pornographic material induces sexual arousal, climax, and resolution without, the presence of or addressing, relationship attentiveness, responsiveness, or commitment: the key dimensions of attachment. The irony of pornography is its relationship disconnection in the context of what can be the most intimate human connection possible. (Zitzman & Butler, 2009) All three; attentiveness, responsiveness, and commitment could arguably be considered facets of interest in the partner.

Following this notion, Adler asserts (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956) interest in the other is a prerequisite and chief drive in sexual attractiveness. Debatably, then, pornography use directly contradicts the developing, fostering, and maintaining interest in a romantic partner.

The wives in the Zitzman & Butler (2009) study commonly received and conceptualized partner's pornography use as breaches of attachment and reacted to their partners' use as an attachment-attacking behavior. Furthermore, the wives reported a felt scripting of sexuality. Wives' perceptions of the alleged ego-centric nature of husbands' pornography use and concomitant deception directly signified them both as attachment-corrosive behaviors: a perceived being for one's self rather than for the relationship. Nevertheless, it is important to know that pornography use was reported to negatively impact the pair-bond relationship and secure attachment even after husbands chose to disclose their involvement with pornography. Thus, aside from the impact of deception, husbands' pornography use appeared to exert its own unique damage to attachment trust. Wives viewed pair-bond sexuality as the archetypal symbol of attachment promise between a husband and a wife and its "unfaithful" misuse as a hurtful betrayal (Zitzman & Butler, 2009).

Recognizing that little is known about the psychological and relational effects it can have on men in romantic relationships, Szymanski and Stewart-Richardson (2014) set out to examine theorized antecedents (i.e., gender role conflict and attachment styles) and consequences (i.e., poorer relationship quality and sexual satisfaction) of men's pornography use among 373 college-age adult heterosexual men. While the target population used by Szymanski and Stewart-Richardson (2014) does not parallel that of the current research, it offers an understanding into where these men find themselves normalizing their use of pornography and thereby, bringing the issue to their future relationships.

Results provided that both frequency of pornography use and perceived problematic pornography use were related to greater gender role conflict, more avoidant and anxious attachment styles, poorer relationship quality, and less sexual satisfaction. In addition, the findings supported a theorized mediated model in which gender role conflict could be linked to relational outcomes both via attachment styles and pornography use (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014).

Two years prior, Stewart and Szymanski (2012) examined the psychological and relational effects on young adult women involved in heterosexual romantic relationships in which their male partners regularly used pornography. The aim was to examine the relationships between men's pornography use, both frequency and problematic use, on their heterosexual female partner's psychological and relational well-being among 308 young adult college women. Participants from a large Southern public university in the United States completed an online inventory.

Results showed women's reports of their male partner's frequency of pornography use were negatively associated with their relationship quality, as well as, recurrent perceptions of pornography use as problematic was negatively correlated with self-esteem, relationship quality, and sexual satisfaction. In addition, self-esteem moderately mediated the relationship between perceptions of partner's problematic pornography use and relationship quality. It should be noted that this is not a study on married couples. Taking this into account, we can maintain the validity of the data on a predictive basis for these participants in future relationships and possibly marriages. Furthermore, the data serves as a look at perceptions of partner-use and self-perceived effects on their relationship.

Effects on Non-Using Partner

Conceivably, when one partner uses pornography, for the purpose of curiosity, arousal, masturbation, education, or as a necessary prerequisite of sexual encounters, the non-using partners will inevitably perceive their partner's use in a certain way. Respective to the holistic and individual nature of every person, we cannot predict or assume to know exactly how each person perceives their partner's use, but we can extrapolate common themes or resounding reactions.

Perception of Partner's Use

The Bridges, Bergner and Hesson-McInnis (2003) research is highly regarded in the current research due to the nature of their unique methodology. The premise of their study is the analysis of online opinions from a random sample of women. These responses are unaltered, unguided, and reactive in nature to the discovery of their partners' use of pornography. No one inquired for feelings or emotions on the matter and the women did not set out to answer any questions on the subject of pornography. Rather, the statements and letters Bridges et al. (2003) used are raw emotion of unsuspecting partners. These women are expressing their emotions and/or seeking support from women of a similar position. Most important to the validity of the current research, the women are clearly expressing their experience or perception of their partners' pornography use.

The vast majority of women in the Bridges et al. (2003) study, upon discovery of their partner's pornography use, consequently engaged in a reassessment of their relationship. Numerous participants used words such as; betrayal, cheating, and affair, to describe the view she held of her partner following the discovery of his pornography use (Bridges, Bergner, & Hesson-McInnis, 2003). Many noted a decline in their partner's sexual desire for them and

believed that their partners had come to prefer the pornographic models to them; others no longer felt like a beloved partner to whom their mate made love, but more like a “warm body” that he was using to achieve sexual gratification (Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Bridges et al., 2003). They reported drop-offs in the intimacy of their relationships, a diminished sense that their partners were truly invested in them, strong feelings that their partners failed utterly to understand them or their distress regarding the pornography, and, finally, a sense that they were living a shameful lie in presenting themselves to others as a trusting and loving couple (Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Bridges et al., 2003).

The typical woman in the Bridges et al. (2003) research engaged in a personal struggle regarding the implications of the pornography use for her own worth and value (Bridges et al., 2003). A part of her struggled to believe that ‘this is not about me, this is not a valid indicator of my worth, value, and desirability as a woman and a person.’ Another part of her said: ‘indeed, it is about me.’ More often than not, the second notion pulled the most weight (Bridges et al., 2003). In conclusion, the loss of her partner to his pornographic interests was a valid indicator of her self-worth and desirability (Bridges et al., 2003). In her mind, his pornography use implied that she must be physically unattractive, sexually undesirable, worthless, inadequate as a wife and a woman, and weak and/or stupid for not taking a strong stand against her partner’s use (Bridges et al., 2003).

Pornography could and should be considered a threat to the adult pair-bond relationship if or when it is perceived by the non-using partner as a threat to his or her sense of certainty in the relationship (Tylka, 2013). This relational uncertainty results in people’s confidence in their perceptions of a relationship, and includes three sources of doubt: self-uncertainty, referring to doubts about one’s own relational involvement, partner uncertainty, referring to doubts about a

partner's relational involvement and relationship uncertainty, which involves doubts of the relationship status (Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Bridges et al., 2003).

When felt-security is being threatened, an individual may become less willing to be vulnerable with his or her partner, especially in the area of sex. As one non-using partner states, "it's demoralizing to have one's partner constantly focused outside the relationship for sexual stimulation and gratification" (Schneider, 2000, p. 44). Security within the relationship will be felt in many different ways (Butzer & Campbell, 2008). If the goal of the adult pair-bond is to achieve a felt-security within their relationship, it should then be protected from potential threats.

Schneider (2000) reported resounding perceptions from women whose partners used pornography. One woman (55 years old) explains,

This behavior has left me feeling alone, isolated, rejected, and less than. Masturbation hangs a sign on the door that says, you are not needed, I can take care of myself, thank you very much. I have threatened, manipulated, tried to control, cried, gave him the cold shoulder, yelled, tried to be understanding, and even tried to ignore it (Schneider, 2000, p. 38).

Within this quote alone, it is evident this particular woman and her partner's relationship suffered relationally, sexually, and communicatively due to the presence of pornography within the relationship. A 34-year old woman explains a similar experience, "I feel humiliated, used, and betrayed, as well as lied to and misled. It's almost impossible for me to let him touch me without feeling really yucky and/or crying....We have now been consensually abstinent for 3 weeks" (Schneider, 2000, p. 39). The pornography users subject in the Schneider (2000) research were, predominantly, using pornography at an addictive level. However, as seen by the extreme types of reactions and statements made by the non-using partner, it is evident that the level of

developed disgust for their partners' use were likely cultivated over long periods of time (Schneider, 2000).

Commonly, non-using-partners tended to equate pornography use with attachment infidelity as well as stretching it to perceived risk for real-life infidelity. As well, speaking to gender differences, we find one similarity in that both male and female non-using partners interpret their partner's using as an act of betrayal and is significantly correlated with emotional infidelity (Poulsen et al., 2013). Autoerotic sexuality (shared...with countless fantasy women) in pornographic depictions was viewed by wives as a symbolic infidelity which eroded their confidence in their real-life fidelity with their husbands (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Schneider, 2000; Stewart & Szymanski, 2012). A non-using partner's perception of partner's pornography use as a form of infidelity is a perilous gateway as infidelity is the most commonly cited reason for relational break-up, as well as divorce, in heterosexual relationships (Metts, 1994; Amato & Previti, 2003)

Non-using Partners' Self-Esteem

One influential factor in any relationship is the self-esteem of each partner. If a person's self-esteem is at all dependent on the behaviors of his or her partner, which is to be expected at times, then the use of pornography could understandably prove to have implications, positive or negative.

When I know that my husband has masturbated to cyberporn, I don't want him to touch me. I feel I am leftovers, not first-run as I should be. My self-esteem is damaged beyond belief. To be honest, our sex life is pretty incredible—we are not prudes by any means. I just don't understand. How can it be soooo good for both of us but still not enough for him (31-year-old woman)? (Schneider, 2000, p. 33)

As evidenced by the above statement, and many others of the like, the idea of another woman having the ability to arouse one's husband more than herself is able, or the husband needing the online character to reach arousal prior to interaction with his wife, has potential to be a devastating resolve when paired with the discovery Ellis and Symons (1990) found. They found that more than half of female fantasies revolve around the desire to be sexually irresistible by a partner and thus the center of their sexual attraction.

Furthermore, heavily regarded research in sexuality and aging yielded resounding emotions similar to this woman's (age 65) evaluation, "I think for women particularly they like shows of affection. I think women like to feel that somebody is attracted to them and admires them and men the same. I think you need that buzz from somebody else" (Hinchliff & Gott, 2008, p.76). If this represents a common female sexual desire, fantasy, or requisite, it is conceivable that the requirement of pornography by the partner, in order to reach arousal, could be perceived as a threat to the female's sexual confidence and self-esteem.

Schneider (2000) yielded research data riddled with emotionally traumatized non-using partners. While most of the respondents commented on a damaged self-esteem due to their partners' need for pornography as means of arousal, some stepped outside the bounds of marriage to alleviate their hurt. In fact, three respondents reported having sought out and engaged in extramarital affairs or encounters, either to repair their own self-esteem or to get revenge on their pornography-using spouses (2000, p. 39).

"I thought I was not good enough because I did not look like the girls in the pictures. I thought that if I dressed and looked good it would keep him interested" (38 year-old woman) (Schneider, 2000, p. 33). The concept of offering more sex, more sexual activities, variety of sexual interactions, and aesthetically improving one's own appearance proved to be a common

reaction to partner's use of pornography. In all reported cases, these attempts were short lived and followed by a complete transition to preferring no sex at all and even being repulsed by the pornography-using partner. A 44 year-old man explains his experience, "At first we had sex more than ever as I desperately tried to prove myself, then sex with her made me sick. I get strong pictures of what she lusted after and get repelled and feel bad...I used to see sex as a very intimate loving thing.....now...I can't be intimate or vulnerable" (Schneider, 2000, p. 42).

Across numerous studies, there was a resounding concept of a perceived 'third-person' in bed with the using and non-using partner. It had become an encounter with countless beautiful bodies and the non-using partner soon resolved they could not possibly compete with fantasy. Many individuals expressed doubts in their ability to sexually arouse or capture the sexual attention of their pornography-using partner. These individuals expressed losing confidence not only in themselves as worthwhile sexual partners (Tylka, 2013; Schneider, 2000), but confidence in their prior perceived intimacy—as if to say, it is no longer enough for my partner (Schneider, 2000; Poulsen et al., 2013).

Non-Using Partner's Felt-Safety and Trust

Pornography, though widely consumed, proves to have negative or maladaptive concomitant societal perceptions regarding users and the industry in general. As mentioned, pornography use by one partner is often viewed by the other as an act of betrayal, infidelity, or deception of some sort. Not only that, but it has been found that use is less prevalent in reported "happy" marriages. More specifically, concerning committed relationships; Bridges et al. (2003) reported that both men and women see online sexual activity as an act of betrayal. Whitty (2003) found that Internet pornography is significantly correlated with emotional infidelity. Additionally, Stack, Wasserman, and Kern (2004) found that happily married individuals are

61% less likely to report using Internet pornography compared to those who report being unhappy in their marriage, suggesting there may be a link between pornography use and happiness in marriage (Stack et al., 2004; Butzer & Campbell, 2008).

Speaking to the threatening implications of pornography use on a pair-bond's felt trust, Schneider (2000) reported that couples attending counseling for online sexual activity addictions cited rebuilding trust in his or her partner as their paramount need. We are reminded that the current research is strictly analyzing literature on pornography use while excluding any extramarital sexual acts. That being said, it is interesting to note this resounding theme of felt infidelity on the part of the non-using partner. In fact, some participants even reported partner's pornography use or cybersex involvement is either equally or more hurtful than a live affair as one woman (38) writes, "My husband has actually cheated on me and it feels no different. The online "safe" cheating has just as dirty, filthy a feel to it as does the "real-life" cheating" (Schneider, 2000, p. 46).

Effects on the Adult Pair-Bond Attachment

To simplify, one of the keystone pillars of the Adlerian orientation, social interest, can be used to argue that if people indulge themselves in behaviors that promote or facilitate comfort in an asocial entity, is this healthy for us? In reality, Adler may be arguing the same desire through different means, with a more socially interested force. Meaning, nowhere does Adler contend that sexuality is meant to be polite, tamed, or suppressed; rather it should be released within and under the earned trust of a committed adult pair-bond. Theoretically, employing genuine interest in one's partner, can fuel lustful and animalistic sexual self fully actualized (Abramson, 1994).

Adler's stance, to be in relationship means to be for the other rather than for one's self, would essentially, result in each partner consistently desiring to discover and understand the

sexual wants and desires of his or her partner. If this style of interaction is maintained, it serves as a source of encouragement for the adult pair-bond, “In no area as in the area of sex is it so clear that criticism suppresses functioning and encouragement improves it” (Abramson, 1994, p. 115). Of course, this interest is a commitment to the partner, one that comes with vulnerability and risk (Ferguson, 1989). This evaluation, then, validates the Laaser and Gregoire (2003) conclusion that pornography is used by individuals who have difficulty connecting with people and choose cyber fantasy connections over healthy relationships (Short, et al., 2012).

Schneider (2000), as previously discussed, distributed a brief survey to an anonymous field of participants and received completed surveys from 91 women and three men, all of whom had experienced significant adverse consequences due to their partner’s involvement with cybersex. The open-ended questions included on the survey yielded 7 conclusions, 5 of which will be identified due to their relevance to the question at hand: (1) In learning of their partner’s online sexual activities, respondents reported feeling hurt, betrayal, rejection, abandonment, loneliness, isolation, humiliation, devastation, shame, jealousy, and anger. (2) As many respondents reported seriously contemplating separations and 22.3% of respondents were already separated or divorced, their partner’s cybersex activity was identified as a major factor in the separation and divorce. (3) 68% respondents reported either one or both partner’s had lost interest in relational sex, this including 52.1% of cybersex-users having lost interest in sex with his or her partner and 34% of partners having lost interest in sex with his or her cybersex-using partner. (4) Partners unfavorably compared themselves with the online sexual participants and felt unable to compete with them for their partners’ sexual attraction/desire. (5) Partners reported a resounding admittance that activities such as cyber-affairs were as emotionally painful as an offline affair (this included reports from partners whose cybersex-involved partners had

committed both). Each of the categorized themes clearly represents, either a threat to, or an established perceived violation of the adult pair-bond attachment.

If adult romantic relationships revolve around the integration of attachment, care-giving, and sexual mating (Butzer & Campbell, 2008) and, accordingly, pair-bond attachment requires the maintenance of attentiveness, responsiveness, and commitment (Zitzman & Butler, 2009), the attractiveness of pornography and the user's sexuality liberated from relationship responsibility, and responsiveness, should sensibly be regarded as a risk to the pair-bond attachment. In efforts of nurturing one's interest in his or her partner, it is concerning to consider what Bridges et al. (2010) analyzed, from experimental research, that after using pornography, or simply being exposed to it, men tended to rate themselves as less in love with their partner as ones who did not view pornography. Furthermore, it has been found that after being experimentally exposed to pornographic images, participants became more critical of their partners' appearance, sexual attraction, sexual performance, and displays of affection (Zillmann & Bryant, 1988).

"The sexual task requires the greatest amount of intimacy and, therefore, the most skilled to fulfill on a consistent basis. It is the hardest task to meet. One of the biggest problems, though by no means the only one, is that men often view women as inferior, a fact reinforced by our culture. The sense that women are less than men is sometimes subtle and barely notice, but it is still prevalent" (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999, p. 104). "I definitely hold feminist views. So one side of me says you got to treat women respectfully, and then there is porn that...frequently, shows, I don't want to say the degrading of women but kind of that men dominating women" (man, 25) (Hare et al., 2014). This quote, and others, displays the internal struggle of a 25 year old man trying to decide how is that "right" way to be sexually present with a woman. Hare et al. (2014)

found this to be a common theme among male users—as described, the process within which they actively work to negotiate or resolve the messages they are receiving from pornographic material. “I feel that a lot of heteronormative pornography is very condescending towards women...basically just like molds women into a certain role that they are playing, and it is normally weak, and they are usually dominated” (woman, 25) (Hare et al., 2014, p. 155).

"This is what I have called the masculine protest, which is very much provoked by the overvaluation of men in our present culture. Both men and women will over-stress the importance of being manly, and will try to avoid being put to the test" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, pg. 433). Repetitive indulgence in pornographic objectification is found to promote a fragmented and self-preoccupied template for the pair-bond relationship which diminishes the partner's weight in the relationship (Zitzman & Butler, 2009).

As a pair-bond partner's preoccupation with pornography increases, couples report deterioration of marital and family relationships, as well as an impairment of performance at work and at home (Livingston, Burley, & Springer, 1996). Adler would argue this chain-reaction throughout the relationship is due to the susceptibility of permeation between the, previously three, now five *tasks of life*, namely; love/sex, work, social, self-management, and spirituality (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Accordingly, if an individual is failing to or finding challenge in meeting any one of the life tasks, either one, two, three, or even all four of the others will suffer. Appropriately, as Adler finds the love/sex task the hardest to meet, it is conceivable that difficulties in such would cause great challenge among the remaining four.

The Resch and Alderson (2014) research pertains to male pornography use and female partners' relationship satisfaction and distress. Using the Pornography Distress Scale and Couples Satisfaction Index online, the authors investigated disclosure tendencies (honesty when

reporting their amounts or frequency of use) of men using pornography and partners mutually consuming. In addition, they found honesty and mutual use to be predictors of relationship satisfaction. Participants responding to a questionnaire, of course, elicits only self-report data. The collective data revealed that women who reported more honestly about frequency of use positively correlated with lower levels of distress. In addition, honesty regarding pornography use showed a positive correlation to relationship satisfaction. (Resch & Alderson, 2014). This would allow us to conclude that those who use pornography and feel open to report use levels, likely experience lower levels of cognitive dissonance, thus possibly proving to be a useful mechanism within the marital relationship.

Zitzman and Butler (2009), highly regarded researchers in the current debate, opened the window to wives' experience of their husbands' pornography use and concomitant deception through interviews with 14 women. Through analyses, three attachment-related impacts from husband's pornography use and deception emerged: 1) the development of an attachment fault line in the relationship, stemming from perceived attachment infidelity; 2) followed by a widening attachment rift arising from wives sense of distance and disconnection from their husbands; 3) culminating in attachment estrangement from a sense of being emotionally and psychologically unsafe in the relationship. From these findings the authors were able to determine, according to their sample of respondents, that trustworthiness and trust are foundational components of secure attachment. The authors go on to stress that pornography consistently scripts sexual and relational behaviors in strict opposition with the requisite dynamics for security and authentic intimacy within the pair-bond relationship (Zitzman & Butler, 2009).

Effects on Felt-Security within the Relationship

As a component of secure attachment, trust refers to the practice and system of connoting a belief, confidence, and expectation that the spouse will be consistently, reliably, and faithfully available, attentive, and responsive, physically, emotionally, and psychologically, to his or her partner's needs (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). Attachment security is anchored in the confidence that one's partner will faithfully demonstrate a trustworthy state of being for the other in the relationship. These emotional and psychological dynamics and behavioral patterns, which is widely connoted with the word trust, e.g., "I trust him," is the basis for secure attachment in the adult pair-bond relationship.

Attachment injury or attachment trauma occurs when emotional and existential safety are uncertain or unreliable and when core attachment expectations are unfulfilled, violated, or abandoned (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). Selcuk, Zayas, and Hazan (2010) state that regulating one's partner's felt-security is a basic function of marriage, as marriage is an attachment relationship. Thus, this regulation of felt security can be mediated through two processes; stress buffering and synchrony. Stress buffering refers to the mutual process in which spouses soften each other's reactivity to life's stressors, thereby fostering a constant and stable sense of felt security. Synchrony then, refers to the synchronization of the pair's physiological and psychological states over time—a powerful entity.

Selcuk et al. (2010) state that each of the aforementioned two processes are made possible simply through *existence* of an attachment bond, however the impact of each process on each partner may be affected by relationship quality. Accordingly, attachment injuries or trauma typically occur in a situation or context where “the person is most vulnerable and comfort is essential” (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001, p.150). Sexuality is just such an experience of

acute emotional vulnerability. Considering this assessment, if the use of pornography carries the meaning of betrayal (or anything of the like) within the non-using partner, it seems the basic functions (stress buffering and synchrony) of the attachment form—marriage, are at risk.

A securely attached adult is assured a relationship safe-haven to which he or she can reliably and predictably return in times of distress (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988). Thus, attachment security is correlated with personal well-being and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, secure attachment “trust” in adult pair-bond relationships is the psychological catalyst for generativity, the primary developmental activity of adulthood and a primary source of physiological well-being (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Trust in one’s secure base empowers exploring and fulfilling adult generative activities such as the depth of one’s sexuality or sexual needs and desires.

Taken objectively, pornographic scripts value promiscuity and focus on self-gratification. The detached exploitive sexuality depicted within pornographic media is found to directly impact attachment trust between the user and partner while diminishing any safe and secure expectation of one’s partner being fully for the other, rather than for one’s self. The authors found that partners of users were less willing to be experimental and risk failure or rejection with partner under such circumstances. Authentic intimacy, or the ability to safely risk being intimately and authentically open and vulnerable in relationships, is one additional bonding opportunity sacrificed through the use of pornography (Olson, 2000; Zitzman & Butler, 2009).

Role of Marital Sex

“When our sex life suffers, everything else is bad” (male age 31, married, Elliott & Umberson, 2008, p. 398). Ironically, a common correlate of pornography use has been found to be a damaged marital sex life. Thus, in the current debate, it should be understood what role sex

plays in a marriage and how it is viewed by married individuals. If we are to evaluate the impact of watching others engaging in sex or foreign sexual stimulants, it is important to have a healthy understanding of the marital couple's usefulness and perception of sex. Elliott and Umberson (2008) investigated this very subject, the nature of sex in marriage, and found that 94% of their participants established that sex is a keystone and integral part of marital success; and furthermore, describe sex as a barometer of the health of their marriage. Consequently, marital sexuality also creates a context for potential harm where that vulnerability is not held by one spouse with complete fidelity and trustworthiness (Zitzman & Butler, 2009; Butler & Seedall, 2006).

Taken at the most fundamental level, why do partners have sex? Meston and Buss (2007) formulated nine categories representing the nine most common themes their participants cited as reasons for having sex. As follows; (1) pure attraction to a person, (2) physical pleasure, (3) expression of love, (4) having sex to please the other, (5) in order to escalate the depth of the relationship, (6) curiosity, (7) seeking new experiences, (8) mere opportunity, (9) sex just happening due to uncontrollable circumstances (Meston & Buss, 2007; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010, pg. 422).

Many authors (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004; Regan, 2000; Sprecher, 2002; Leavitt & Willoughby, 2015) have found that sexual desire plays an integral role in the marital satisfaction. Consistently, respondents who perceive their marriage to be "happy," report creating positive experiences within their relationships, tend to label sexual interactions as one way to facilitate and nurture closeness and intimacy with their partners (Impett, Strachman, Finkel, & Gable, 2008). When inquiring as to how acting out sexual motives or desires to a partner is perceived in the relationship, Leavitt and Willoughby (2015) found that, as perceived by partners, physical

attempts at being physically intimate with a partner yielded significant association with relationship satisfaction and positive and effective communicative tendencies. As well, these physical attempts were significantly negatively associated with conflict (2015).

Put simply, sex matters. More directly, for many, sex reportedly represents a fundamental way married individuals are able to show that they love and care for their partner (Elliott & Umberson, 2008). A decisive resonance from happily married individuals was that sexual desire and maintenance of an active sex life is a consistent positive influence on relationship outcomes (Leavitt & Willoughby, 2015; Theiss & Nagy, 2010; Emmers-Sommer, Warber, & Halford, 2010; Hertlein, Emmers-Sommer, & Kennedy, 2014; Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Elliott & Umberson, 2008). Accordingly, when sex suffers, everything else suffers. Studies continue to find that Americans consider sex as integral element of the relational intimacy with a partner, as well as, key to personal fulfillment, and crucial for relationship longevity (Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, & Kolata, 1994; Knoblock & Soloman, 1999; Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2013).

Conclusively, married individuals value their sex. Thus, any marital entity reportedly carrying this much weight within the marriage, should, logically speaking, be nurtured and protected. Respectively, a substantial population of respondents offered, often under no inquiry, how they consciously work to alter their own sexual feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, namely, their sexual self, (shocking recognition of Adlerian fundamentals) in order to respond to and acknowledge the sexual interest of their partners (Elliott & Umberson, 2008). To this end, this commitment to working on their sexual self for the betterment of their relationship and in efforts of meeting their partners' needs and desires, and actively appreciating each other's sexual vulnerability is reported to result in a better sexual relationship over time (Leavitt & Willoughby,

2015; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010; Elliott & Umberson, 2008). Marital sexuality, then, creates a context for potential harm where that vulnerability is not held by one's spouse with complete fidelity and trustworthiness (Butler & Seedall, 2006).

Directions for Future Research

The current research speaks to only a fraction of the population—heterosexual married couples. Throughout the research, it became apparent there is a need for investigating the effects pornography use has on youth and young adults. How does it affect their sexual health and development? How does it affect their views of 'relationship'? How does it affect their views on gender roles? How does it affect sexual expectations of themselves? While some of the data provided for the present debate shed light on some of these issues, one can see that the answers to all of these questions would give great insight to how the young individual will grow to be in relationship with a partner.

As necessary the research on pornography-using youth is, same-sex couples should be equally regarded, especially during the current societal movements allowing more same-sex couples to be officially wed. In fact, same-sex couples provide unique gender-specific implications for the adult pair-bond attachment.

One of the most prominent arguments supporting pornography use, or perhaps attempting to relieve it from the scrutinized grasp of society, is that of educational purposes. If indeed those who use pornography are going to claim an educational motive, and considering the maladaptive effects pornography use seems to provide, sex therapy may provide a healthy substitute to using. There are trained professionals willing to help partners gain a deeper understanding of; their sexuality, how to communicate their sexual desires, abilities to satisfy a partner, and ways to

strengthen emotional and sexual intimacy, all while avoiding any and all of the negative effects of pornography use.

Conclusion

There are numerous challenges to the collection, validation, and interpretation of research on pornography or otherwise sexually motivated material. There are political and moral limitations for federal funding. Subjects, due to its sensitive nature, hesitate to provide unfiltered views of their sexual behaviors and activities. Furthermore, most researchers in the field rely on self-report questionnaires or interviews (Kring, 2013). This is noted to simply highlight the need for more and broader sources and modes of research as some of the present data is subject to the above mentioned obstacles.

Sexual responses are, in essence, an indivisible part of general behavior chosen by people and according to private logic in coordination with personal goals (Abramson, 1994). If pornography is used at an addictive level, no empirical data to date encourages the continuation of the behavior. While recognizing it is, in fact, addictive and will be respectfully difficult to extinguish, the literature would advise to do so through whatever means necessary if the addicted user hopes to salvage his or her current or future romantic relationships.

In the case of a non-addicted pornography-user, several other concerns surface. Most urgent, the tendency for use to become addictive, in which case, the aforementioned maladaptive implications begin to interfere with the adult pair-bond attachment. Others, as explained in the current research, range from negative effects on the user, to negative effects on both partners and their relationship as a structure.

However, there proved to be one set of circumstances in which the use of pornography appeared to benefit the adult pair-bond. Accordingly, each of the two partners must claim to be

willingly engaging in the use of pornography, together, in order to broaden their experimental sexual behavior. Even this, though, proved to be a nearly unmeasurable deduction as respondents will always report what they want to report leaving authors no certainty of truth.

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