

Testimony of
Jill Manning

Sociologist
Brigham Young University
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TESTIMONY OF JILL C. MANNING, M.S.
HEARING ON PORNOGRAPHY'S IMPACT ON MARRIAGE & THE FAMILY
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Thank you Senator Brownback, Senator Feingold and distinguished members of the Sub-Committee;

I appreciate this opportunity to address you.

Since the advent of the Internet, the pornography industry has profited from an unprecedented proximity to the home, work and school environments. Consequently, couples, families, and individuals of all ages are being impacted by pornography in new and often devastating ways. Although many parents work diligently to protect their family from sexually explicit material, research funded by Congress has shown Internet pornography to be "very intrusive."

Additionally, we know that a variety of fraudulent, illegal and unethical practices are used to attract new customers and eroticize attitudes that undermine public health and safety. This profit-driven assault jeopardizes the well-being of our youth and violates the privacy of those who wish not to be exposed.

Leading experts in the field of sexual addictions contend on-line sexual activity is "a hidden public health hazard exploding, in part because very few are recognizing it as such or taking it seriously."

Research reveals many systemic effects of Internet pornography that are undermining an already vulnerable culture of marriage and family. Even more disturbing is the fact that the first Internet generations have not reached full-maturity, so the upper-limits of this impact have yet to be realized. Furthermore, the numerous negative effects research point to are extremely difficult, if not impossible, for individual citizens or families to combat on their own.

This testimony is not rooted in anecdotal accounts or personal views, but rather in findings from studies published in peer-reviewed research journals. I have submitted a review of this research to the Committee, and request that it be included in the record.

The marital relationship is a logical point of impact to examine because it is the foundational family unit and a sexual union easily destabilized by sexual influences outside the marital contract. Moreover, research indicates the majority of Internet users are married and the majority seeking help for problematic sexual behaviour online are married, heterosexual males. The research indicates pornography consumption is associated with the following six trends, among others:

1. Increased marital distress, and risk of separation and divorce,

2. Decreased marital intimacy and sexual satisfaction,
 3. Infidelity
 4. Increased appetite for more graphic types of pornography and sexual activity associated with abusive, illegal or unsafe practices,
 5. Devaluation of monogamy, marriage and child rearing,
 6. An increasing number of people struggling with compulsive and addictive sexual behaviour.
- These trends reflect a cluster of symptoms that undermine the foundation upon which successful marriages and families are established.

While the marital bond may be the most vulnerable relationship to Internet pornography, children and adolescents are the most vulnerable audience.

When a child lives in a home where an adult is consuming pornography, he or she encounters the following four risks:

1. Decreased parental time and attention
2. Increased risk of encountering pornographic material
3. Increased risk of parental separation and divorce and
4. Increased risk of parental job loss and financial strain

When a child or adolescent is directly exposed the following effects have been documented:

1. Lasting negative or traumatic emotional responses,
2. Earlier onset of first sexual intercourse, thereby increasing the risk of STD's over the lifespan,
3. The belief that superior sexual satisfaction is attainable without having affection for one's partner, thereby reinforcing the commoditization of sex and the objectification of humans.
4. The belief that being married or having a family are unattractive prospects;
5. Increased risk for developing sexual compulsions and addictive behavior,
6. Increased risk of exposure to incorrect information about human sexuality long before a minor is able to contextualize this information in ways an adult brain could.
7. And, overestimating the prevalence of less common practices (e.g., group sex, bestiality, or sadomasochistic activity).

Because the United States is ranked among the top producers and consumers of pornography globally, the federal government has a unique opportunity to take a lead in addressing this issue and the related harm.

This leadership could unfold in a variety of ways. For example, through:

- ? Educating the public about the risks of pornography consumption,
- ? Supporting research that examines aspects of Internet pornography currently unknown,
- ? Allocating resources to enforce laws already in place, and lastly,
- ? Legally implement technological solutions that separate Internet content, allowing consumers to choose the type of legal content they wish to have access to.

In closing, I am convinced Internet pornography is grooming young generations of Americans in such a way that their chances of enjoying healthy and enduring relationships are handicapped. I hope this committee will carefully consider measures to reduce the harm associated with Internet pornography.

I thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify and welcome your questions at this time.