

Experiences of an LDS Spouse when her Partner used Pornography: a Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Pornography is becoming more and more accessible to society and the pornography industry brings in billions of dollars each year. Research is now starting to focus on the effects of pornography use within the marital context. The effects on the spouse of the pornography user are beginning to show that pornography use can be damaging to marriages, how one views one's partner and how one views oneself. Within the LDS Church, pornography has been considered a violation of their beliefs about chastity and moral cleanliness. With the rise of the use of pornography within the membership of the LDS Church, it is important for the ecclesiastical leadership of the Church and clinicians alike to understand the experiences of LDS spouses of pornography users. One LDS woman, married 18 years, white, participated in a 60 minute interview. Using a qualitative method and phenomenological lens, this study explores what is like for a married woman in the LDS Church to find out that her husband is viewing pornography, and being in direct violation of the Church's stance on sexual cleanliness. Themes found include emotional/psychological processes, spiritual processes and trying to make sense of these two processes in tandem. Aspects of the LDS Church that were not helpful were identified as well as aspects of the LDS Church that were helpful are outlined. Advice for Church leaders (local and general) was provided and advice for clinicians that may work with couples that find themselves in this situation is described.

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Dedication

The effects of pornography on those that are in relationships are extremely real and have the potential to be traumatic. For those that are struggling with this, either as the pornography user or as the spouse of the user, this thesis is dedicated to you. I believe that knowledge can be one of the greatest tools to fight the effects of any struggle, and I hope to be able to contribute to the knowledge of those that find themselves in a situation where pornography has entered your lives. Having this knowledge, I hope that you will be able to find the strength and wisdom to receive the necessary help you are looking for.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

That was the last thing that she expected. When she walked in, her husband was looking at other women on the Internet. In their home! It didn't make sense; he had been an active member of the Church for as long as she had known him. Or was he? Had he really been the man that she thought she had married? If God knew what he was doing, why had he still been called into leadership positions? She walked away, not even knowing whether she wanted to stay married to this man she thought she knew. Deeper, however, were her questions about how a failing marriage could affect her spiritual well-being.

The Problem and Its Setting

In an online poll conducted in 2002, over 10,000 respondents' (80% male) attitudes toward pornography were overwhelmingly accepting of pornography use. More than 50% of the respondents thought that pornography can educate people (86%), provide an outlet for harmless private fantasies (72%), lead to more open attitudes about sex and sexuality (68%), and can improve relationships (55%) (Kinsey Institute, 2002). The question remains of how much pornography use is too much. Is viewing once for a couple of hours each month too much? Would viewing pornography every day be considered too much? Perhaps viewing pornography even once would be considered too much? From a clinical standpoint, determining whether the level of pornography use is problematic or not is difficult to determine.

One study used a continuum model to describe the range of pornography use that an individual may participate in (Cooper, Putnam, Planchon, & Boies, 1999). The continuum ranges from recreational use to compulsive use to at-risk use. Cooper, Delmonico and Burg (2000) found that the majority of online sexual behaviors would be considered non-problematic.

They found that these users engaged in online sexual behavior for less than ten hours per week. Of this majority, about half engaged in online sexual behavior less than one hour per week. However, they found that around 17% of the users surveyed in the study engaged in eleven or more hours a week of online sexual behavior. This group signified a large population of users that could be defined as having problems with their sexual behaviors. From this study, the use of the Internet for sexual purposes for eleven hours or more per week would be identified as problematic.

With the ease of the Internet, pornographic material is becoming more readily available and more influential in the relationships individuals have with their significant others (Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Bridges, Bergner, & Hesson-McInnis, 2003; J. P. Schneider, 2000). Although the use of sexually explicit materials in relationships is becoming more widely accepted, there are still a number of couples and families that do not conform to this growing trend. Some families may consider use by a single member of the family damaging to the relationship.

Bridges, Bergner and Hesson-Mckinnis (2003) surveyed 100 women whose significant others use pornography regularly, and found two main themes in the perceived risk to a relationship. First, women who were *married* to a pornography user were more likely to show higher levels of distress in their relationship than women who were *not married* to the pornography user. It appears that the more committed the relationship, the more distressing pornography can be to a relationship. Second, they found that the women who reported that their partner used pornography more often were also more distressed about the pornography usage. Being in a committed marriage and having one's spouse use pornography frequently contribute more distress in a relationship than dating or being acquainted with someone who uses pornography infrequently. The study also considered religious affiliation as a contributor to

relationship distress, though they found this to be an insignificant factor in determining marital distress.

Bergner and Bridges (2002) found that many women viewed their partners differently when they discovered their partner's pornography involvement. They found that these women viewed their partners as sexually degraded, liars, unloving/selfish, and inadequate fathers and husbands. The positive view of the relationship was tainted by the use of sexually explicit material. The authors also found that these women felt themselves to be sexually undesirable to their partner, worthless as a wife and mother, and weak and stupid for allowing their partner to continue their involvement with pornography.

Upon discovery of cybersex use, Schneider (2003) found that, on average, significant others felt lonely, ignored, unimportant, neglected, and even angry toward their partner. She goes on to report that many women experience feelings such as betrayal, abandonment, devastation, shame, isolation, humiliation, and jealousy as reported by participants in her study. Participants in this study also reported having low self-esteem and feeling like they were being compared unfavorably to women on the Internet, sometimes comparing themselves to these women and feeling inadequate. Thus, it appears that for some couples, the use of pornography by one partner results in a number of concerns.

The term "pornography" can be difficult to define. A website dedicated to providing definitions from the general public and professionals alike, provided the following definition: "Pornography or porn is, in its broadest state, the explicit representation of the human body or sexual activity with the goal of sexual arousal and/or sexual relief." (Wikipedia) From this, pornography is simply the written or visual depiction of the body to provide sexual gratification. In this study, the term pornography will be used as a broad label to describe a variety of sexually

explicit materials, including Internet pornographic websites, magazines and other printed material and movies, primarily intended to incite sexual feelings.

This definition, however, cannot be applied to all populations. What one social or ethnic group considers pornographic, another may consider art. The social context in which people are experiencing external stimuli will have an impact on the way that they perceive the stimuli and the way that they will react toward it. One influential context in which people experience stimuli is through the lens of religious beliefs and values. This lens often impacts communities' views on what is considered appropriate and what is not.

Many people studying pornography use often study those that would describe themselves, or be described by significant others, as “addicted.” Patrick Carnes has written several books on the subject of pornography use and sexual addiction (Carnes, 1991, , 2001; Carnes & Adams, 2002). He has developed a working definition of sexual addiction (which includes pornography use). Sexual addiction has been defined as having the following characteristics: a pattern of out of control behavior, severe consequences due to sexual behavior, an inability to stop the behavior, despite severe consequences, an ongoing desire or effort to limit sexual behavior, sexual obsession and fantasy as a primary coping strategy, increasing amounts of sexual experience because the current level of activity is no longer sufficient, severe mood changes around sexual activity, inordinate amounts of time spent in obtaining sex, being sexual, or recovering from sexual experience, and neglect of important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of sexual behavior. (Carnes, 2001)

Effects of Religion

Religion can have a significant influence on the decisions and actions of an individual. When it comes to the use of Internet pornography, one study found that individuals with strong

religious beliefs used pornography less frequently than less religious individuals (Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004). This strong religious belief is believed to influence behaviors and attitudes more toward conservative, traditional beliefs that generally do not include the use of sexually explicit materials.

In contrast to the findings of Stack, et al, religious beliefs may also be associated with the use of online pornography as a solitary way to keep commandments related to chastity and sexual purity. The participants of one study explained that because they were not acting out with another person, they were able to avoid the sin of adultery. They found that among college males, those that had experienced higher religiosity seemed to view online pornography more than non-religious students (Abell, Steenbergh, & Boivin, 2006). The research on religious influence and the use of pornography is still limited.

One study found that religion can play a very important role in the union of marriage (Marks, 2005). This study posits that there are several factors that determine the impact that religion will have on a marriage. The author identified eight themes that connect religion and marriage. These themes fell into three dimensions of religion: faith community, religious practices and spiritual beliefs.

Religion was an important factor for this study, as I tried to conduct research that would help clarify the experiences of members of a specific religious denomination, the LDS (or Mormon, in Marks, 2005) religion. In the study by Marks (2005), the Mormon couples interviewed shared insight into the impact that their religion plays in their lives. One participant mentioned being able to overcome drug addiction after participating fully in his religion. Another participant reported the importance of participating in religious practices, such as family prayer. She reported this activity bringing “a spirit of love into [our home and marriage].” (p.

97) Another participant stated that, “My faith definitely influences the way I see myself as a human being.” (p.101) And finally, one LDS wife stated an important distinction the LDS Church believes from other Christian-based religions regarding the nature and meaning of marriage, “In our religion, if you are married in the temple, we believe that marriage is not just for this earth, it’s for eternity, and when you think of your marriage for eternity that has a very definite impact on how you speak to each other, how you treat each other, how you raise your children, on everything you do....This is a forever thing.” (p. 103)

For this study, I was concentrating on the effects that pornography/cybersex use has on members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). From my experience as a member of the LDS church, I know that the church has taken a strong and public stand against pornography use. Pornography use has been preached against openly by the leaders of the LDS church and is a topic that is addressed at nearly every semi-annual conference the church holds for its members (Clayton, 2007; Hinckley, 2006; Monson, 2006; Oaks, 2006). Any use, whether casual or addictive, is considered unacceptable.

When considering the LDS Church’s stand on pornography, one must also consider their view of what pornography is. The church defines pornography on their website as “... any material depicting or describing the human body or sexual conduct in a way that arouses sexual feelings. It is distributed through many media, including magazines, books, television, movies, music, and the Internet. It is as harmful to the spirit as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs are to the body.” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints). The teachings of the Church state that pornography use is sinful and that it should not only be avoided by its members, but that its production and distribution should be opposed. From this stance from the church leadership, any

level of pornography use would be considered too much and would be looked on as a sin that would call for repentance.

With society taking a much more accepting stance on pornography use, how do the LDS people reconcile society's acceptance of pornography and the much stricter stance of their religious leadership? Also, what is the experience of those that find themselves involved in pornography use while maintaining active participation in their religion? Finally, how do spouses of those involved in pornography make sense of their partner's use and the impact that it has on their own beliefs? These are several of the questions that led to the current study.

Theoretical Framework

The philosophical assumptions of phenomenological family therapy research are founded in trying to understand how we know something and what it is we need to know (Dahl & Boss, 2005). The purpose of asking phenomenological questions is to "...help the researcher understand the lived experience of the participant." (p. 70) Essentially, phenomenological questions are aimed at understanding the meaning that participants assign to different lived experiences. When asking these questions, one does not look for pre-conceived ideas about how the researcher thinks that participants will respond. Rather, the researcher creates a way for the participants to define their own experiences. The focus of phenomenology is to understand experiences from the participant's perspective.

This study used a phenomenological approach, to understand the experiences of wives in the LDS faith that have had spouses involved in pornography. The meaning that wives have placed on their experience of their spouse's pornography use in the context of their strict religious beliefs and values were discovered through the interview process. From the responses of the participants, themes became noticeable and shared meanings were drawn and considered.

Significance

Understanding the meaning that the participants gave to their experiences in the interviews provided much needed information in the work that therapists, husbands and religious leaders do in helping couples make sense of their situation. Spirituality is a large cultural consideration when conducting therapy with individuals and is something that may direct the therapeutic interventions (Jankowski, 2003). Therapists who are aware of the meaning clients place on certain values and experiences will allow for richer work in the therapeutic environment.

Members of the LDS Church can also gain insight into the experiences of other members of their Church and be able to receive the support that is necessary when these members turn to the Church for help. This is especially true for the local ecclesiastical leadership when the individual members of the Church approach them with their concerns and struggles. Hopefully, this study can provide insight into how the church leadership can best provide support and guidance for its members.

Rationale

Phenomenological research methods were employed as a way to understand the experiences of the women participating in the study. Qualitative interviews were used as a way to establish a foundational understanding of this experience for women in this religious faith. Research is just beginning to look at the experiences of significant others when addressing pornography use and relationships. However, there is even less research to understand LDS church members and their experiences with these issues. This study provides a basic understanding of what it is like to hold these religious beliefs and be faced with the conflict of a spouse's contradictory behavior to these beliefs.

Research Question

For this study, I explored the experiences of wives within the LDS faith whose husbands had participated in pornography use. In particular, I was interested in the influence that their faith had on the meaning they attributed to their experience.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To fully understand the experiences of the LDS women in this phenomenological study, there are several aspects to consider that have an impact on these experiences. This chapter will explore the literature that may have an impact on the experiences of the research participants. I will first address pornography in general and the impact that it has on individuals and society in general. Second, I will identify the impact that pornography use has on significant others in the pornography user's life, especially as it applies to committed relationships. Third, I will explore the effects of pornography use when combined with a religious culture. Fourth, I will address the LDS faith's position on pornography use and a brief history of this stance. Lastly, I will define pornography for its use in this study and provide a rationale for my definition. As I weave my way through these various aspects of pornography use, I am hoping to highlight the scope of this issue and the importance of viewing this from the lens of LDS women who have been thrown into this world they thought to avoid.

I realize that individual participants in this study may identify more with one aspect than another. Many themes that are found in the literature may not be expressed or experienced by everyone in this study. In addition, this study may discover themes that have not yet been identified in the current literature. Pornography use can be identified on a continuum, ranging from casual use to problematic use to addictive use. The focus of this study is not to identify which order these aspects of pornography use should be placed in, but how each woman interviewed has experienced her aspects individually. The amount of use that is considered too much by the LDS Church is the standard by which I make many of my claims. My goal in conducting this study is to *“allow the participants to define phenomena for themselves, and to*

describe the conditions, values, and attitudes they believe are relevant to that definition *for their own lives.*” (Dahl & Boss, 2005, p. 72)

Pornography: General and Social Impacts

Currently, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM IV-TR) does not list sexual addiction as a diagnosable disorder (APA, 2000). Without the official standing of the DSM for a definition, the field has been debating the definition of sex addiction, whether it really is an addiction, and how much sexual activity is considered too excessive (Gold & Heffner, 1998). Does one need to engage in sexual activity multiple times each day to be considered excessive, or is masturbating one time considered too excessive? One meta-analysis of pornography’s effects on marriage had difficulty finding consensus in defining what is even considered pornographic (Manning, 2006). A growing body of research is looking at the effects that the use of Internet pornography and cybersex are having on the family and on relationships. This investigation is of growing concern, due to the accessibility of this form of sexual material (Daneback, Cooper, & Mansson, 2005; Delmonico, 2005). Estimates range as high as 17% of Americans having difficulties with online sexual problems (Cooper, McLoughlin, & Campbell, 2000). Cooper and Marcus (2003) report pornography to be an estimated \$8 billion a year industry. They go on to report 61% of family-hour television programs containing at least some sexual content, averaging 8.5 sexual interactions per hour. The amount of sexual content that society is exposed to is increasing and influencing more and more people. It is not just adults that are exposed to the sexually explicit media, either.

In a qualitative study examining current research published addressing pornography consumption, Attwood (2005) identified three main categories of research into pornography consumption: studies focused on men, studies focused on women and studies that focused

mainly on young people. She found that young people often rely on media to gain information on sexuality and that this differs based on gender. She states, "...where girls used dictionaries, books, magazines, and romance novels, boys used pornography..." (p. 79)

Much of the research exploring the use of pornography use, views it through the lens of sexual addiction. Seegers (2003) examined sexual addiction among 240 (69 male and 171 female) students of a private university in the southeast, using the Sexual Addiction Screening Test (SAST) and the Women's Sexual Addiction Screening Test (W-SAST). Participants were divided into three categories: not at risk for sexual addiction, at risk, and in need of treatment. She found that 17.4% of male and 32.2% of female college students fell into a category of needing to seek further evaluation and treatment for their online sexual activity. In addition to this, 8.7% of the males and 13.5% of the females of this study fell into the category of being at risk of sexually addictive behaviors. This study highlights the continuum of sexual behaviors, ranging from non-problematic to behavior that would be considered needing to be evaluated for treatment.

Pornography: Effects on Significant Others

With the increased availability of sexual material, many spouses are discovering their partner's secret usage of sexually explicit material, and feel betrayed when sexually addictive behavior is revealed, including pornography use. Some studies found that sometimes partners even feel that pornography use is equivalent to "cheating" (Alonzo, 2005; Bergner & Bridges, 2002; Bridges, Bergner, & Hesson-McInnis, 2003; Paul, 2005; J. P. Schneider, 2000). In Manning's (2006) review of the current literature on pornography use and its impacts on marriage, she found that pornography use was a predictor of marital distress, separation and

divorce. Although pornography use may contribute to distress, this study does not differentiate between heavy pornography use, or addiction, and casual pornography use.

Bergner and Bridges (2002) reviewed letters written by 100 women whose romantic partners were using pornography and explored the experiences of these women when they discovered their partner's pornography use. They first discovered that for the majority of the women in the study, discovery of the pornography use was often traumatic in that it "confronts her with a new world view that she finds devastating, confusing, and incomprehensible...." (p. 195) They report that the majority of the women in their study came to view their partner as betraying them, cheating on them and even viewed heavy pornography use as an affair. They viewed their partners differently following the discovery of the pornography use as well. Some views included "pervert," "sex addict," "a sexual degenerate," and other sexually degrading terms (pp. 198-199). Other themes emerged from the letters of these women as well, including liar, unloving/selfish, and an inadequate father and husband. Schneider (2000) added to this list, including feelings of rejection, abandonment, shame, isolation and anger, to name a few (p. 31).

Not only did her view of her partner change, but her view of herself also was altered following the discovery. Feelings of sexual undesirability, worthlessness, weakness and stupidity were prevalent themes in the letters. Schneider (2000) also identified a decrease in self-esteem as a result of the partner's pornography use. Women in this study stated that they compared themselves to the women in pornography and felt that they could not compete with these women or the fantasy of these women.

Bridges, Bergner and Hesson-McInnis (2003) developed the Pornography Distress Scale (PDS), consisting of 23 negative statements and 27 positive statements derived from some of the themes found in their previous research. Messages were posted on Internet websites advertising

the study and asked for women to respond whose partners were using pornography. They compared the relationship status and the extent of a partner's pornography use to distress associated with a romantic partner's pornography use. They stopped advertising and collecting data once 100 women responded to their advertisements and completed the PDS. They found two significant contributors to the level of distress in the relationship. The first is that the level of relationship commitment contributed significantly to the level of distress in the partner. Married women reported more distress than partners that were simply dating. Second, the higher the level of pornography use, the more distress experienced by the partner. This included both frequency of pornography use, as well as, the quantity of use. Some partners reported worrying that they may lose their partner to the pornography use. One factor Bridges, et al found that was not a significant contributor to the distress caused by pornography use was the partner's religious beliefs. Comparing religious involvement, however, was not a focus of this study and was compared only after testing the two main variables. Because religion was not a central focus to the study, no measure of religious involvement was used to determine the influence religion has on the participants of this study. The significance of the contribution of religious belief on marital distress when one partner uses pornography is called into question. The influence of religious beliefs within a marriage where one partner uses pornography will be the main focus of this thesis.

Pornography: A Religious View

Literature that addresses religion and pornography use and/or sexual addiction is either focused on the individual or on religious leaders. Considering religion in the context of working with couples in a therapeutic setting has also been identified as being crucial to honoring both partners' experience of the sex addiction (Laaser, 2006). However, few studies have addressed

the influence religion has on relationships when pornography is being used. I found no literature directly connecting the religious beliefs of the couples and the experience that significant others have when their spouse uses pornography.

Abell, Steenbergh, & Boivin (2006) examined Internet-based pornography use among 125 undergraduate college males from four Midwest institutions, two of which were evangelical Christian universities. Each participant was given a packet, including the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS), Systems of Belief Inventory (SBI), Sexual Addiction Screening Test (SAST) and the Cyberporn Compulsivity Scale (CCS). They found that participants who reported greater levels of religiosity (based on the SWBS and the SBI) were less likely to be involved in behaviors associated with sexual addiction (based on the SAST). However, participants that scored higher on the SBI also scored higher on the CCS, suggesting that those that associate themselves more religiously may experience more difficulty with sexual material on the Internet.

Birchard (2004) explored the relationship between sexual misconduct (addiction) and those who have chosen religious vocations. He identified the connection between these two factors as cyclical. Those who were self-described addicts follow a pattern of sexually acting out followed by extreme religious behaviors aimed at preventing the relapse into the sexually acting out behaviors. This pattern often resembles the anorexic-bulimic cycle. However, this article does not address the distress caused by the involvement of sexual acting out behaviors. Laaser and Gregoire (2003) addressed cybersex addiction in those that have chosen a career as clergy. They examined the characteristics of those clergy who use cybersex uncontrollably and identified special considerations when trying to help them, including their role as clergy, vocational consequences, isolation concerns, narcissistic tendencies, spiritual immaturity, anger, accountability, feelings of entitlement, relationship concerns and noticing the presence of other

addictions. Like Birchard's study, Laaser and Gregoire do not focus on the relationship aspect and the distress caused by their involvement with cybersex.

A number of benefits of religious belief have been found in the literature to strengthen or improve a marital relationship. Marks (2005) reported benefits, such as better physical, mental and/or spiritual health, a "shared vision," stronger marital relationship, a sense of comfort and a structure or "rhythm" to life were identified by religious couples. She goes on to report that the 76 men and women in her study reported that their various religious communities and beliefs were central in the maintenance, support and stabilization of their marriages when faced with difficulties and challenges. If religion can be seen as an enhancer to marriage and relationships, challenging religious beliefs through actions that are contrary to those beliefs may have an impact on the couple's experience. For the LDS religion, pornography use is contrary to the teachings and beliefs of the leaders of the religion.

Pornography: The LDS Perspective

When considering the LDS stance on pornography use, it is important to understand the belief that members of the LDS Church hold toward their leaders. Campbell and Monson (2003) looked at the voting patterns of the LDS faith on issues that challenge LDS values, such as prohibition and found that if two conditions are met, members of the church will follow the direction of the leaders on issues pertaining to political ballot propositions. These two conditions are that the leaders of the church are unified in the positions being taken, and that the leaders take an official stand on the issue. Campbell and Monson also found that devout members of the LDS church are "...least likely to resist messages from religious leaders and at the same time most likely to receive the message..." (p. 608). In fact, Campbell and Monson go on to state that the lack of social and political diversity amongst the LDS church membership would make the

members of this religion even more likely to receive and follow the direction from the leaders than the larger Catholic church. Therefore, those in the LDS community who have partners that are using pornography, may potentially experience increased confusion and shame when their partner is not following the messages that their religious leaders are taking on this topic. This study hopes to better clarify this experience.

Another aspect of the LDS belief system that may contribute to the experience of being a member of the LDS faith and having a partner involved in pornography is the belief in an eternal marriage. From adolescence, members of the LDS faith are encouraged to make decisions that will ensure them an eternal companion. In a pamphlet printed by the Church and distributed to the youth, various topics are covered that allow for this eternal marriage. Youth are encouraged to: “Date only those who have high standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards.” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2001, p. 24)

So, where does pornography use fit in to this stance that the church has taken? Gordon Hinckley (15th president of the church and ordained prophet) stated in a talk directed to the young men of the church:

You must not fool around with the Internet to find pornographic material. You must not dial a long-distance telephone number to listen to filth. You must not rent videos with pornography of any kind. This salacious stuff simply is not for you. Stay away from pornography as you would avoid a serious disease. It is as destructive. It can become habitual, and those who indulge in it get so they cannot leave it alone. It is addictive. (Hinckley, 1998, p. 49)

It is clear that use of pornography of any kind (Internet, phone, video, etc.) is to be avoided, especially by the young men of the church. Any participation is unacceptable.

Hinckley's admonition to avoid this as you would serious disease further highlights the strong position the church leaders take on this issue.

Leaders of the LDS faith have been openly preaching against the use of pornographic material for decades. Spencer W. Kimball (12th president of the church and ordained prophet) advised against the use of pornography almost 30 years prior to the declaration by Hinckley. He stated:

Members of the Church everywhere are urged to not only resist the widespread plague of pornography, but as citizens to become actively and relentlessly engaged in the fight against this insidious enemy of humanity around the world.

(Kimball, 1976, p. 5)

Being involved in the use of pornography places the individual at odds with the teachings of the leaders of the church, who are believed to be the mouthpieces of God. A married man using pornography is seen as unworthy. This threatens the marriage and the view of being able to return to heaven with one's partner. In one of the Church's self-published manuals on the basic beliefs of the LDS faith, one chapter is dedicated entirely to the concept of eternal marriage (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1997). In the chapter, the difference between most views on marriage and the LDS view on marriage are considered:

Many people in the world consider marriage to be only a social custom, a legal agreement between a man and a woman to live together. But to Latter-Day Saints, marriage is much more. Our exaltation depends on marriage. We believe that marriage is the most sacred relationship that can exist between a man and a woman. This relationship affects our happiness now and in the eternities. (p. 241)

To be considered for an eternal marriage in the LDS faith, members are to be considered worthy to enter the temple, where the ordinance is performed. The chapter states, “Only members of the Church who live righteously are permitted to enter the temple (p. 244).

Sexual purity (or chastity) has been regarded as essential from the earliest days of the LDS faith. In the scripture believed to be translated from ancient records by the religion’s founder, Joseph Smith, Jr., sexual sin is considered to be the worst sin following murder and denying the Holy Ghost (Mormon, 1981, p. 306).

The church teaches that all sexual acts are to be reserved for the union of marriage. Ezra Benson (then an ordained apostle of the church) addressed the importance of maintaining our morals within the family unit. He states:

Today we are aware of great problems in our society. The most obvious are sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drug abuse, alcoholism, vandalism, pornography, and violence. These grave problems are symptoms of failure in the home—the disregarding of principles and practices established by God in the very beginning. Because parents have departed from the principles the Lord gave for happiness and success, families throughout the world are undergoing great stress and trauma. (Benson, 1982, p. 59)

The LDS Church does not have an official policy about the level of sobriety before being able to return to Church functions. This is handled, generally, on a case by case basis. Before one can return to temple worship, however, abstinence from the pornography use is required. The length of sobriety is determined by the individual’s local bishop or other leader.

Pornography: Rationale for this Definition

Since this study is examining the experiences of members of the LDS Church, using the Church's definition of pornography would be the most appropriate. The LDS religion defines pornography as: "...any material depicting or describing the human body or sexual conduct in a way that arouses sexual feelings. It is distributed through many media, including magazines, books, television, movies, music, and the Internet. It is as harmful to the spirit as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs are to the body." (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) Since I am looking specifically at the members of the LDS faith, I will use the definition that the leaders of the religion have come to use to define this type of material.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction and Study Design

Although the existing research is beginning to explore the experiences of significant others to sex addiction/pornography addiction, cultural experiences have been neglected and no study has focused on the religious experience of the significant other. Some studies have addressed religion as part of their data collection, but religion has not been a focus of research in trying to understand the experiences and meaning significant others give to use of pornography. No study has explored the experience, personal and religious, of LDS wives whose husbands have been involved with, or are currently involved with pornography use. This exploratory, phenomenological study was designed to gather information and collect data that may contribute to the existing information on the effects of sex addiction on significant others. The qualitative format was chosen because "...qualitative research of this kind reveals things about the consumption of sexually explicit media which quantitative research completely misses." (Attwod, 2005, p. 81) Also, the qualitative format will provide a clearer insight into the experiences women in the LDS Church who find themselves in this situation.

The participants in this study engaged in an interview, using open-ended questions, allowing for richer explanations of their experiences. The questions in the interview focused on their experience of being a practicing LDS woman, being married in the LDS Church later to find out that her husband has had or is currently having problems with pornography use. The questions were aimed at how the participants have been able to make sense of this experience, given the beliefs and values that she relied on entering the marriage. This qualitative approach provided a clearer picture of the participants' experience and provided several patterns and

themes. It clarified, in detail, the experiences that the participants faced when confronted with this issue.

Recruitment and Participants

For this study, I recruited participants from the LDS church who are female and married to husbands that are currently engaging in pornography use or who have had previous issues with pornography use. The recruiting began by contacting a Church operated mental health organization, which runs a group for male members struggling with sex addiction/pornography addiction and another group for the spouses of these men. I also recruited through local church leadership and word of mouth in the LDS community. The Church operated mental health organization was unable to assist in the recruitment of participants of their groups due to confidentiality policies. Several of the local Church leadership also declined to assist in recruiting, expressing concerns about pressing academic pursuits on the individuals in their congregations, possibly conflicting with the spiritual and confidential relationship they hold with them.

Being married, or having been married at the time of the discovery of the pornography use, was a requirement for this study, as the focus is the distress caused by having a spouse that uses pornography and the influence of being a member of this church has on that distress.

Participants, therefore, needed to be at least 18 years old and married.

Participants were notified of the potential hazards of participating in this interview, such as remembering difficult emotions related to the discovery of their husband's pornography use and how their religion has influenced their experience. They were also informed that they could leave the study at any time without any penalty. The researcher explained to potential participants the efforts to conceal their identities and ensure confidentiality that would be made

when reporting the data of this study. This included such changes as changing the name, age and/or family information. The researcher explained that the interviews would be audio taped and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. This included identifying certain themes within the responses of each participant to more fully understand the experiences of the participants. After all of this had been explained and participants agreed to participate in this study, each participant signed an informed consent form, acknowledging that they understood the risks associated with involvement in this study

Data Collection and Analysis

In phenomenology, Dahl and Boss state that “true knowledge is relative.” (2005, p. 63) Before beginning the interview, each participant was provided with an informed consent form to read and sign, explaining the nature of phenomenological research and the purpose of the study. Confidentiality was addressed in this form and each participant was given an opportunity to ask questions they may have about the manner in which confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained in the reporting of these findings. I began each interview from a list of sample questions and reflexive listening techniques that were used to clarify meaning. These sample questions were based on pre-existing hypotheses regarding the women’s experiences, though I remained open-minded to new ideas and understandings of their experience.

By transcribing the recording shortly after the interview myself, I was better able to familiarize myself with the responses of each participant as well as the context in which these answers were given. This will allow me to “...remain vitally connected to individual and family conversations and stories.” and provide me with an “...immersion in the data to observe and define what is there and to notice what is not there.” (Dahl & Boss, 2005, pp. 74, 75) After transcribing the interviews, I emailed the participants copies of the transcripts to review, make

any corrections to their responses and provide an opportunity to omit anything that they feel would jeopardize their anonymity.

I reviewed the interviews several times before putting responses into categories or themes based on the responses to the questions in the interviews. Due to the inability to recruit directly from larger populations of the LDS community, only two women responded. The first interview was analyzed using an open-coding process, examining the responses line by line, sorting the various responses into categories or themes. I was looking for responses that described her emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects of her life. I also looked for statements that would describe her experience as she tried to make sense of her husband's pornography use, especially as it was influenced by her religious beliefs. The resulting information was inconsistent with the goal of this research, focusing more on the experiences surrounding the termination of the relationship. Therefore, the first interview did not contribute directly to the purpose of this study and was not used. The second interview was coded, again using the open-coding process described as the data were being evaluated independently of the first interview, to establish themes more closely relevant to the topic of this study. This open-coding process allowed me to "...begin making meaning of the data." (Echevarria-Doan & Tubbs, 2005, p. 49) The result was a detailed case study of one LDS woman's experience of having a husband who was using pornographic materials.

Because I am a married, male member of the LDS religion, I understand that I entered this study with my own personal biases. I have a general understanding of the teachings of the LDS faith regarding the use of pornography as well as the sacred meaning of marriage for time and all eternity. I am also an LDS male that has struggled with this issue in my personal life and have experienced some confusion over wanting to follow the teachings of the church leaders

while enduring this struggle. I am also aware of the resources and helps that were offered to me as a member of the religion, trying to realign myself with my core beliefs and have a sense of what this may be like for others in this situation. However, my understanding ends when considering the other half of the marriage. With the strong focus on marriage within the LDS religion, this relationship is often the most important accomplishment members of the LDS Church can achieve. The pressure to remain faithful to the teachings of the Church may place members in a state of disharmony when faced with the problem of pornography use.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a clearer understanding of the influence that religion has on the experiences of women, whose husbands who are using or were using pornography. I wanted to gain insights into the resources, both in the LDS faith and outside the LDS faith, that were used to make sense of the situation women found themselves in.

For this study, I used the data from an interview with one woman whose husband is currently dealing with the issues of pornography viewing. I then coded her interview. Her name and age have been changed to preserve confidentiality. The themes I will be presenting in this chapter emerged from the coding process. I will be using the participant's words to highlight the themes that have presented themselves. This chapter aims at describing the participant's experience, as she presented it, without interpretation.

Terminology

In the results of the interview, and as I am using the participant's own words to describe her experience, there will be several terms that I will explain here in order to help the reader understand some unique aspects of the LDS church. First, the term bishop refers to the religious leader of the local congregation (called a ward in the LDS faith), and usually, the first resource used by members of the LDS faith when addressing spiritual matters. Bishops are lay clergy who do not rely on the financial support of the congregation. They all have careers and are asked to volunteer their time for the members of the congregation. Because of the strain that this can place on a family, the bishop is only asked to lead his congregation for approximately 5-8 years. Second, within the LDS faith there are several organizations that meet specific needs of the congregation: the Sunday School Presidency consists of three priesthood holding men that

oversee the religious instruction given in classes on Sundays and the Elder's Quorum is the men's group, consisting of adult males. The men's groups are often referred to as priesthood holders. The leaders of these groups are referred to as the priesthood leaders of the individual congregations. The LDS faith believes that priesthood holders are able to perform ordinances in the church, having been given authority from God to do so. This priesthood authority is dependent on overall worthiness within the church. Third, the LDS faith publishes several magazines that are distributed to members of the church throughout the world: *Ensign*, catering to adult members of the church; the *New Era*, which caters to the youth (generally 12-18 years old) of the church; *The Friend*, which caters to the children (11 years old and younger) of the church. Finally, the LDS religion is led by a man sustained by the members of the church as a modern-day prophet. He is assisted by other men (generally called General Authorities), who comprise a Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. These men are viewed as the authorities on church doctrine and the spiritual well-being of the membership of the church. Twice a year, a General Conference is held, where each of the Apostles and the Prophet address the entire membership of the church.

Throughout the interview, the participant refers to the Spirit, which is one way the LDS faith refers to the Holy Ghost, a member of the Godhead. When people are baptized members of the LDS faith, they are given a blessing that confers a gift that the Holy Ghost can be with them always. Feelings associated with the Holy Ghost are peace, comfort, understanding, love, joy and patience. Also, members of the LDS faith refer to the faith as "the Church."

Finally, it is customary for a couple within the LDS faith to get married and sealed at the same time. Getting *sealed* refers to being married in an LDS temple for time and for all eternity, not just for life on earth; being sealed means being married beyond the grave and in the afterlife.

It also means that the couple makes certain covenants, or two-way promises, with God (often referred to as Heavenly Father). These covenants are what the LDS people believe allow them to remain married after this life, but only if they keep their end of the promise. In the LDS culture, this is looked upon as the highest ordinance that the LDS people can participate in, and will result in the married couple being able to live with God in the *Celestial Kingdom*. It is not unusual for a couple not married in the temple and sealed to be required to wait approximately a year before being allowed to participate in making these covenants.

Participant Background

Cassy

The participant in this study was a Caucasian woman who lived in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. She had been married for eighteen years at the time of the interview and had four children (the oldest child was in high school and the youngest was not in school yet). Both Cassy and her husband had been members of the LDS faith when they were first married, although this was a civil marriage. Two years into their marriage, they were sealed in the temple.

Her husband's pornography use was first identified as an issue approximately one year into their marriage. His pornography use was then not discussed for approximately thirteen years, until the participant discovered her husband viewing pornography in the home.

Major Themes

While evaluating the major themes presented in the interview of this woman, I found that her experience was one that encompasses two processes. These processes revolved mainly around a spiritual process and a psychological/emotional process. Central to each of the processes described, was a struggle to make sense of the situation that she found herself in,

especially as it relates to her religious views and the impact that pornography use can have on her family. The unique LDS culture played a major role in her experience and was intertwined throughout both the spiritual and the psychological processes. Although these processes will be laid out in a sequential order, the experience was not one that could be identified as linear and it is important to note that each process was being addressed simultaneously throughout her experience.

For Cassy, the first step in each process began with the discovery that pornography was a part of her husband's life. The discovery actually came in two separate occasions: once about a year after they were married, when he admitted to pornography use, and again about fifteen years after that, when Cassy walked in on her husband viewing pornography in their home. I will explain the timeline of the experience, addressing both processes as they had influence.

The Discovery

Cassy described initially finding out about her husband's pornography use about a year into the marriage. Cassy and her husband were married civilly at first, and she began to prepare to be sealed in the temple when they had been married for a year. She described the initial discovery.

“Well, a year later, I started making plans for us to get sealed. I started calling my parents. I started calling his parents. I figured, you know, any problems we had in the past, whatever they were, they're resolved now. We've been married for a year and we can go ahead and get sealed. And, um, he had to tell me, because I was going through with plans for us to get sealed. I was calling people. I was making appointments. And finally he had to finally say, 'Look, I can't get...we can't get sealed in the temple. I'm

not worthy. I have a problem with pornography.’ And that was it. That was the last time that he ever said anything about it to me for probably fifteen years.”

It was at this point that Cassy began to try to figure out what this meant for her and her marriage. She also began trying to understand what the official position of the LDS faith really was. As implied by her husband’s comment, her husband’s pornography use made him unworthy to participate in important religious ceremonies. As she sought help from her religious leaders, the advice Cassy received was inconsistent with the way she was feeling about the situation. Over the years, Cassy reported the church taking a clearer stand on the issue of pornography use.

“The church started getting a lot better with it, maybe about four or five years ago. But before that, the church, actually, I didn’t think was very clear on it. I talked with bishops before, saying, I think my husband has a pornography problem, and their response was, ‘Oh, that’s not a very serious sin.’ You know, because I think a lot of men get it. They think, ‘I like looking at women. I don’t. But I like it. I can understand it.’ And so I think a lot of, you know, the lay clergymen, I think a lot of bishops really had a tendency to underestimate the power of the sin. And, you know, they preferred having a relationship with a real woman, so they never made the next level, you know, they didn’t ever maybe have the addiction themselves, and they only really had a real surface understanding of it. And so, I would get comments like, ‘Well, if you were a better wife, your husband wouldn’t have these problems.’ Um, or, ‘It’s not that serious of a sin.’ Or, ‘If your marriage were stronger, you wouldn’t have these problems.’”

Also, during this time, Cassy expressed continual concerns about whether or not her husband was still using pornography. Between the two major pornography discoveries, she

attempted to talk to him about whether or not he was still viewing pornography. This inquiry often revolved around when he would not tell her where he was or what he did when he was not around at home. When she did ask, his answers were often avoidant and/or defensive.

“I talked to him about it after that, you know, where is it you disappear? Where is it that you, you know, where are you going? You know. Oh, and just complete denial on his part. ‘No, I don’t have a problem. You can’t forgive me. That was a long time ago.’”

Her second discovery came approximately fifteen years later. She discovered that her husband had never been able to stop viewing pornography throughout the entire marriage.

“And it isn’t until I walked in on him viewing it on our computer, about four years ago this August that he actually really started making any kind of significant change. I was about ready to divorce him.”

Making Sense of Her Husband’s Pornography Use

After being confronted with the use of pornography by her husband, Cassy faced the challenge of making sense of what this meant for her marriage and what it meant for her family. One of the biggest decisions she faced was to consider ending the relationship.

“...he knew that I had almost divorced him. And at that point he started making changes, you know, he started treating me better... but there wasn’t an open admission of the problem... It was still my problem, not his problem.”

Although her husband continued to view pornography, his behaviors did begin to change and Cassy begins to make the decision to stay with her husband. She relies on the general beliefs about prayer within the LDS faith and turns to God to help her determine whether or not she should continue on with the divorce. Within the LDS faith, each member is taught that personal

prayers are answered by God and that definite answers can be achieved, especially when making major decisions.

“You know, [the divorce] was going to happen. But, I prayed about it, and I went to the temple and I couldn’t get a ‘yes.’ And I thought, if I can’t get a ‘yes’ than I shouldn’t do it.”

At this point, Cassy and her husband began couples counseling with an LDS therapist who specifically addressed pornography and sex addiction for members of the church. She described the efforts of her husband in the counseling as minimal.

“And one of the common questions that [the therapist] asks people as they go through therapy is, ‘When you get to the other side of the veil, and you put your hand out, do you want your wife to be on the other side?’ And, my husband wouldn’t answer the question. And I don’t think that he actually sees himself in the celestial kingdom. I don’t think that’s a real goal of his.”

Cassy identified specifically seeking out an LDS therapist. She reported wanting their therapist to have a basic spiritual understanding as she and her husband addressed the effects of pornography on their marriage and their family.

“...because when you’re seeing a therapist, you’re making yourself really vulnerable, and opening yourself, and there’s a real opportunity for mischief if your therapist doesn’t believe the way that you do. And, I wouldn’t put that part of my personal life on the line with someone that didn’t have my core beliefs.”

When asked if she would have considered seeing a non-LDS therapist, she said no.

“...you can’t sit there and talk about why you want to stay married to this man, if [your therapist] doesn’t understand the whole concept of temple marriage. Because otherwise, they’re going to look at you and go, ‘Well people divorce all the time and kids can work through it and divorce can be healthy.’ You know, or whatever it is.”

After seeking counseling, Cassy realized that her husband was not trying as hard as she thought he should to stop this behavior. In the LDS faith, eternal marriage and being with your family for eternity are sought after and taught to even the youngest members of the church. She described experiencing some feelings of loss and grief about the eternal marriage that she thought she was a part of.

“There’s a grieving process that you go through, because it’s the death of that idea. And, you know, I don’t see my husband being able to achieve that goal. And personally, I don’t think it’s even important to him... And so, it is, you go through the whole grieving-acceptance cycle that you have to go through with the death of a person, because it’s the death of a beautiful idea.”

The grieving process she described carried over to thoughts about being able to be with her children in the next life and how her children would not be able to be with their father because of his unworthy actions. In fact, she began to shift her perception of the situation to that of her children’s spiritual well-being.

“So yeah, there’s like this death of a whole idea. You know, obviously my family’s not going to be able to all be together in the celestial kingdom. But that doesn’t mean that my husband has to take my children with him. I want them to go with me. And that’s the choice that he’s going to have to make in his heart.”

Cassy was able to use her understanding of religious doctrine to find peace in her individual ability to return to live with God, even though her husband was living a life that would be considered unworthy. She trusted in the teachings of the church that place individual accountability on the actions we each take. She drew on this understanding to realize that her eternal life would only be affected by her husband's inability to be with her, but that she would be able to reach her ultimate spiritual goal: to live with God after this life.

“Well, we got sealed in the temple, and when you get married, that's a covenant that you make between you and God and you and your husband. Well, my husband broke that covenant but I didn't. And I believe that that covenant was still there between me and God and I had my responsibility to live up to my end of it.”

She believed in the individual responsibility each member of the LDS faith has to uphold the teachings of the church and realized that her husband's decisions and efforts would really only affect him. She also drew on the teaching of the LDS faith that God is unchangeable and that the teachings are clear and consequences will be given, if repentance is not satisfactory.

“Well, he has his free agency. He can make his choices. That doesn't affect my relationship. I didn't do anything wrong. You know, that doesn't affect my relationship with God. We all have our free agency and he chose to use his wrong. But that doesn't make God, not God.”

Cassy was then able to join her understanding of her religious and spiritual beliefs to those of her cognitive understanding of what a relationship should entail. She described how she had made sense of her husband's pornography use, by applying an explanation acquired from her understanding of the teachings of her faith. She described the LDS faith's belief that in opposition to God is Satan, who tries to persuade people to reject the teachings of God. It is this

understanding of opposites that helped her make sense of the decisions that her husband made. She relied on this understanding of opposites to understand that God is the more powerful of the two and that through God temptations can be overcome.

“Just that I think a lot of people feel overwhelmed and they think that Satan has all this power and they can’t possibly win. And the thing is, is that pornography is only Satan’s counterfeit of true marriage and true love, and copies are never as good as the original. And that the power, and while it looks like sex can’t possibly be good, that it looks all bad and that it looks awful, that anything that has that much power to be evil has that much power to be good. And the family can be as good as much as it can be bad. And sex and marriage can be as good as much as it has power to be bad. And I think a lot of people just take a look at the negative and they don’t realize that the opposite is true, that the positive is true, that if sex can be that bad, or marriage can be that bad, it can also, the mirror effect, the opposite and equal reaction in all things, that it can also be that good and it can also be that wonderful. And they should never despair or be worried about that. They should never take a look at it and be overwhelmed and feel like they don’t have the power to overcome.”

Cassy was able to apply the teachings of her religion and use her belief in those teachings to endure the struggles that occurred over the years following the second discovery. She described her ability to rely on her Heavenly Father to help her address this issue in her marriage and in her family. She also took a realistic look at her role in the relationship and her ability to help her husband address the pornography use and improve his spirituality and standing in the church.

“You know, a lot of the ‘primary answers’ really work, because I had spiritual confirmation that my husband was looking at pornography before my husband ever admitted it. I was able to talk to Heavenly Father about it, and to know the best way to handle it. And if you have a good relationship with your Heavenly Father, then it’s a lot of pressure always being the good one in the marriage. Maybe “the good one” is the wrong word. It’s a lot of pressure being the healthy one in the marriage, because people are going to make mistakes, there isn’t a good one or a bad one. And having the Holy Ghost with you helps you to be able to say the right things to your husband to help him grow, to help him to be better, and maybe you can’t make the situation work better, or perfect, but you sure have within your control to make it worse. And if you don’t have the spirit with you, you’re going to make the situation worse. You’re going to say the wrong things to your kids, you’re going say the wrong things to your husband, you’re not going to be able to make the friends that you need.”

I asked Cassy to clarify how she understood the “primary answers.” This term, used in the LDS faith, refers to the basic, simple actions one can take to ensure their worthiness and avoid sin. They are called the “primary answers” because the LDS faith begins to teach these basic principles to children as young as four years old through the children’s organization, called the Primary.

“Reading your scriptures, going to church, saying your prayers, doing your callings, paying your tithing, fasting on fast Sunday, going to the temple.”

Cassy was finally able to define in her words what pornography use really was. She described it as “An evil abomination.” She went on to describe the effects that it can have on the family and how Satan is using it to accomplish this goal.

“I think it’s one of Satan’s primary tools of destroying the family, because it strikes at the essence of what a family is, you know...”

How the Church Helped

Cassy seemed to be able to draw from the resources that the church had to offer. The first resource that most members of this faith turn to is their bishop. Cassy was able to do this. She reported that her current bishop had the most positive influence on her husband’s efforts to overcome the pornography use.

“To our current bishop, who says, ‘No, you have to be clean for six months before you can perform a priesthood ordinance.’ So, my husband didn’t baptize our son and he didn’t bless our baby. Because he can’t do it, he can’t make six months.”

“...some of that is just that this particular bishop I think is, you know, really good at his job.”

Cassy described how previous bishops struggled to help her and how the current leadership of the Church has been able to take a very clear position regarding pornography and its use by members of the LDS Church. She also attributed this clearly defined position as having an impact on her husband’s view of his behaviors.

“...I think it got lost in translation, where, you know, the bishops they interpreted things their own way. And it wasn’t until the church became so overwhelming on the topic that nobody could miss it.... And in fact, that’s one of the key differences in my husband’s accepting his pornography problem.”

Cassy reported that the efforts and boundaries set forth by her current bishop were what finally had a major impact on her husband’s attitude toward the identified problem. This also

validated for Cassy that this was not just her problem, but that her husband's behavior was inappropriate and inconsistent with the religious teachings that she believed in.

“...that was the really big difference with my husband, was having a priesthood leader tell him how unacceptable this was...Because before that, it was just me. It's just my wife, she doesn't like it. You know. She doesn't like me looking at other women. She doesn't understand. I'm a man. I have needs. Blah, blah, blah. She just doesn't understand me. And to have a priesthood man sitting there saying this is wrong, you can't treat your wife this way. You can't treat daughters of God this way. This is the golden rule. If you wouldn't let someone do this to your wife, then why are you doing it to other men's wives or other men's daughters? This is unacceptable. You can't even perform priesthood ordinance; you're that unworthy. And it isn't until the priesthood leader said that that he started really taking it seriously because before that, it was just something that his wife didn't understand about him. It was just a little foible. It was just a little problem that he had, that I should just really understand.”

Cassy and her husband were able to become connected to groups within the LDS faith that focused on pornography use and sex addiction by attending church and reading through the weekly bulletin. She reported thinking about these groups quickly following the discovery, due to the bulletin advertising.

“I think it was advertised in the church bulletin, actually. I heard about it somewhere in church, and so when I walked in on my husband, I knew that that was around and that I wanted him to do it... I think the men's group had been going longer, but the women's group was fairly new at that time. And they were advertising those groups, I think, in the church bulletin.”

Cassy and her husband attended these groups, one for women and one for men, which were run through LDS Family Services (a church-directed agency). The groups worked in conjunction with each other and focused on pornography use and sex addiction within the LDS faith. Cassy attended the group for spouses (in this case women) of those who were seeking help for their pornography use.

“I went to the group for six months. And the part of that that I found useful was learning the terminology and learning the addiction cycle...and having that common terminology where I could say, ‘you know, you’re going into the cycle.’ You know, and we could talk about using common terms. That I found that very helpful. You know, where we have the same terminology and we knew what the same thing meant. You know, that we both knew about the addiction cycle and where things were and I could say to him, ‘I’m not doing it. I’m not doing the bottom of the cycle. You know, you can go move in with your...if you want to go on a binge, then you can go move in with one of your friends, because you’re not going to stay here.’ And he knew what I was talking about, when I said ‘the bottom of the cycle, I’m not going to do the bottom again.’ So, I found that really helpful.”

Cassy was able to contrast the Church’s lack of consistency and resources in the past to how they were able to meet the needs of the members today, by actively addressing the issue. She also described other resources that LDS Church had implemented to address this issue in their membership.

“Honestly, I think the church is doing a great job now. And like I said, they’ve got stuff on they’re websites, and they’re doing informational meetings for the leadership, I mean really, they’ve come a long way. They really are doing much, much better at it.”

Cassy's Reflections

After describing her experience and the steps she took to make sense of her situation, Cassy answered questions that were aimed at improving the experiences of others that may find themselves in a similar situation. She was able to provide information on what the LDS faith did that was not found to be helpful. She also provided suggestions for the church leadership when counseling spouses of those pornography users, as well as tips for those that facilitated the group for the spouses. Finally, Cassy offered suggestions for other women whose husbands are viewing pornography or are attempting to stop their pornography use. This section will address each of these issues.

How the Church was Not Helpful

One of Cassy's major concerns in between the two discoveries was that she had voiced her concerns about her husband's suspected pornography use to the various bishops and yet they still placed him in leadership positions within the church structure. They also seemed to downplay the concerns that she had and minimized the effort that would be needed to help her husband stop his pornography use.

"Because before, we had bishops that had him in the elder's quorum presidency, Sunday school presidencies, and not taking it as a very serious sin and, 'oh, we just need to fellowship him a little more and it'll be fine.'"

The bishops seemed to interpret the teachings of the overall leadership of the Church in their own way.

"But until they did that, I think a lot of the local bishoprics, um, put their own spin on it. I mean, they, the church leadership in general I don't ever think approved of it. I think it only got lost in translation."

“You know, first of all, the whole co-addict problem that is inherent in the addiction anyway, and then to have someone in authority telling me that. Then you think, oh, well it must really be my problem. My bishop just said so.”

Cassy was able to find ways to make the Church affiliated group useful, as described above. However, there were several things about this group that made it difficult for her to want to continue attending. She described a feeling of disconnect with the other group members and especially with the group facilitators. She highlighted their lack of life experiences as making it difficult to feel like they could understand what it was like to have a husband in the LDS faith that views pornography.

“The thing that I found the least helpful, is the types of people that they have running it. The women that they have running the women’s group, are single women in their twenties, who’ve never been married... you know it’s like they can go through all the signs and they can make the right sounds, but they don’t really know.”

Cassy went on to describe a sense of favoritism from the group facilitators toward those wives whose husbands seemed to be making progress. She reported having feelings that the women in the group whose husbands were not trying as hard to stop their pornography use were overlooked and not given the direction and support that they needed to make sense of the situation they found themselves in.

“...actually I told the women that were running the group before I left. I said, ‘the thing is, is that in this group, it’s almost they play favorites to the wives whose husbands are trying.’ I said, ‘You take a look at the women who come, those women who enjoy coming to this group, and it’s the wives whose husbands are trying. And you spend the whole time talking about them and helping them and not addressing the issues of the

women whose husbands aren't trying, or who are in denial.' And I said, 'and you look at the women who come only sporadically, and the women who come sporadically and who aren't getting what they need out of the group. And what you're going to find is you're going to find the women whose husbands aren't trying, because you're not meeting the needs of that second group.'... I didn't find it supportive. I didn't find it helpful. I didn't feel like the other women in the group supported me. I really didn't find it useful at all. I know other women have, and I think that's great..."

She also felt as though the women facilitating the group were less educated about the problem. They also made comments that were received by Cassy as being superior to the women in the group, because they were going to make sure this problem didn't happen to them. She stated that this sense of superiority prevented her from feeling connected to the work being done in the group.

"I didn't feel connected at all. I didn't feel like the women who were running the group really truly understood the problem. I felt almost like there was a superiority, like they felt kind of sorry for us, and they were going to be smarter, they were going to marry better. You know, like we'd somehow screwed our lives up by choosing to marry these men... For instance, they'd make comments like, 'Oh, yeah. I'm going to be careful about who I marry.' And talking to them off to the side...And don't get me wrong, I mean I want my daughters to marry better than I did, too. I understand that. But that kind of superiority feeling isn't very helpful, because it doesn't help the women who are there to deal with what they've got."

Cassy reported having a difficult time feeling a connection with the other members of the group as well. Again, the feeling of not being able to address the issues she was facing in the

group setting made it difficult for her to feel that the group was a helpful resource for her to receive support.

“...some of the other women that are going through the group, they’re like, they’re earlier, a lot of them haven’t been married as long, or they’re earlier in the whole grieving process. And so the stuff that they wanted to talk about, or the stuff that they wanted to go through, I’d already been through. I mean, I’ve been married for fifteen years. I have five kids, you know. I’d known about it for fourteen. And I thought that there would be women who would...have found a healthy way to deal with it, and a lot of them hadn’t gotten there yet. And they were, some of them were kind of in the hating men mode, or one of the women she was kind of bitter about other women looking attractive, or whatever.”

Advice for Church Leaders

Cassy was able to identify several ways that the leadership of the church could be more helpful for LDS women whose husbands are viewing pornography. The first thing she mentioned when addressing the local leadership of the Church was to learn about pornography addiction before giving counsel to members of the church presenting this as a problem.

“Okay, to church leaders, I would say to do your homework before you open your mouth. Because until you realize how deep, how deep a problem it really is, don’t try to counsel someone on it... That would be specifically to the bishops and the counselors, because it’s really damaging to say, especially now, knowing about it now, it’s really damaging to say to a woman, ‘Well, if you just worked harder, you wouldn’t have this problem.’”

To take the understanding one step further, Cassy pointed out that the issue needs to be addressed with both the husband and the wife. She highlighted the importance of the couple

relationship and the importance of the bishop understanding the addiction as it affects the relationship.

“...because the priesthood leader understanding it before he goes in and deals with the husband is just as important as dealing with the wife. Because marriage takes two people. If the man isn’t on board, it doesn’t matter how great you are with the woman.”

Cassy went on to further explain one aspect of the addiction recovery that she believes bishops and other local leadership should understand: relapse. She explained that relapse is bound to happen and that to expect total abstinence immediately is unrealistic. She highlighted the need to focus on the progress made and work with the addict on extending the amount of time in between the relapses.

“And I also think that they don’t understand the whole relapse thing. Where there’s going to be relapses, and your goal is to extend out the length of time between relapses, and that very few people can really go cold turkey. Especially if they started looking at it as a teenager, they just don’t have the coping mechanisms. You know, they don’t have anything else to substitute, and it takes a while to learn those skills. And so they don’t understand what success really is. And that success really is a new timeline. You know. Well, my husband used to look at it every day, so I mean for him to, on average, be going four or five months, that’s huge. I mean your talking a percentage increase, that’s a really big deal. That’s huge. That’s amazing. But if you don’t understand the whole psychology behind it, then you’re not going to be able to say, ‘Wow, good job. Congratulations. You’ve really come a long way.’”

To Church leaders, Cassy pointed out the spiritual effects of the pornography use in the home and how the local leadership needed to understand that this has a big spiritual impact on the family.

“I don’t think a lot of them understood how damaging it really was to the spirit, until the church really started coming out on it. I don’t think they understood exactly how...I think they just thought, okay, so he looks at pictures of women. And not understanding the whole addiction process that goes behind it. And the thing with the spirit is that the Lord expects us to do our homework. And if you haven’t done your homework, he’s not going to be able to help prompt you spiritually.”

Cassy was able to address many of her concerns with a general authority, or general leader of the LDS Church. She expressed her concerns that many children are being exposed to pornography before they know what to do with it and really understand what it is. She recommended a broader range of addressing this issue, even to the younger children of the church. She used her husband’s first exposure to pornography as an example of how young children are exposed to it.

“I actually gave some of it to [one of the Apostles]... I gave him a letter. And he actually mentioned it in general conference a couple years ago. I’m sure he had advice from other people, I’m confident that he didn’t just hear it from me. But I did say that you don’t have any articles in the Ensign about this topic. You don’t have anything in the New Era, and you have to have stuff in the New Era about this, because if you don’t that’s when men become addicted. That’s when men become addicted is when they’re teenagers. And if you’re not making sure that the teenagers know how unacceptable this is, you’ve already lost them by the time they’re men. It’s too late, they’re already addicted.

They're being exposed, and they're being exposed when they're...My husband had his first exposure when he was six. His older brother showed it to him. And I'm like, you have to talk about this in the Friend. This has to be hit at all spectrums."

A Sense of Hope for Others Like Her

Cassy wanted other women in this situation to feel that there is hope. She described several of the lessons she learned and pointed out first off that the woman should not view herself as the victim. She identified this role as being the position that Satan would want the women to be in. The victim role places the wife and the family in a position where healing cannot happen. To be the victim means permitting the addiction to continue and risks exposure to children. She suggested that women not allow this addiction to pass to the next generation.

"Don't be the victim. Because if you're the victim, you don't have any control over your response...if you play the victim, you can never get better. You can never be healed. You can never help your husband. You can never break the cycle. And you can't play the victim's role and ever fix the problem. And fixing the problem really isn't fixing your husband, it's fixing the stuff that you have in your power. It's limiting...it's stopping your husband's problem with his generation. It's not passing it on to your children. It's being able to go to church and to the temple and feeling comfortable there yourself. And if you've been the victim and if everyone is always doing these things to you and you really have no control over them, then you can't ever fix these things. And all of these things are...Heavenly Father wants us to succeed. He wants us to fix these problems. And we can't ever do that for the victim. And I think that telling us that we're the victim is Satan's greatest tool for keeping women down."

Cassy finally warned other women to not allow the husband's pornography use to affect their own spirituality and that staying close to the teachings of the Church and the other members of the Church are keys to making sense of their situation.

“You want to be in control of your own destiny; you want to pick what happens to you.

And the best way to do that is to stay close to the church.”

Summary

This interview provides a clearer understanding of the influence that the LDS religion has had on the experience of this woman. Cassy described finding support from the teachings of the LDS faith and was able to eventually gain support from the local leadership as she tried to make sense of her husband's pornography use. Although this was laid out in a very linear fashion, Cassy described the course of her experience as being complex and that the spiritual, emotional and psychological effects were intertwined throughout the experience. In the end, Cassy was able to make sense of her situation and appears to have made peace with her husband's spiritual welfare.

At the time of the interview, Cassy had decided to continue to live with her husband and remain married to him. This decision, however, was not an easy one for her to make and she relied heavily on her faith and beliefs that prayers are answered. She continued to support her husband's efforts to abstain from pornography use, though she no longer tied her spirituality to that of her husband's; she was leaving his spiritual welfare up to him. Cassy was continuing to assume the role of spiritual leader of her family and leading her children in the teachings of the LDS Church.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experience of practicing LDS women, whose husbands used pornography, a direct violation of the LDS teachings. For this study I interviewed one woman whose husband was currently viewing pornography, to gain insight into her experience and to identify the influence that her religious beliefs had on this experience. Exploring this phenomenologically, I was able to better understand the perception of the pornography use, the emotional effects and the way that she was able to make sense of the situation she found herself in. I was also able to explore with her the steps she had taken in her family to protect them spiritually. I explored the aspects of the LDS Church that she found helpful, as well as those aspects that she did not find helpful. She also shared expressions of hope and advice for church leaders, as well as other women who find themselves in the same situation. In this section, I will summarize the findings of the interview, describe the clinical importance, the implications for the leadership of the LDS Church and address the shortcomings of this study and provide suggestions on future research that may address the missing information with this population.

Summary of Findings

In addressing the effects that this experience has had on her psychologically, Cassy was able to identify feelings of betrayal, a sense of grief for the loss of her eternal marriage and the effects that her husband's actions are having on her family. Upon discovery, Cassy described feelings of confusion, even having to come to terms with a life that is somewhat different than what she thought she was a part of. This corresponds with the new world view described in the study by Bergner and Bridges (2002). Unlike Schneider (2000), however, Cassy did not describe

a decrease in her self-esteem, nor did she report comparing herself to the women in pornography that her husband was looking at. She did describe feelings of anger, abandonment, isolation and rejection.

Bridges, Bergner and Hesson-McInnis (2003) described an increase in distress correlating with the level of commitment of the relationship. Cassy did express distress in her relationship due to the pornography use, as exhibited by her consideration of divorce. Bridges, et al also found that the amount of pornography use correlated with increased relationship distress. Cassy reported feelings of distress caused by the amount her husband's pornography use. However, the amount of pornography use that is considered inappropriate in the LDS culture is zero (Hinckley, 1998). Therefore, it was to be expected that Cassy would consider any pornography use by her husband distressing.

The psychological process that she encountered was inevitably influenced by the spiritual process that was occurring simultaneously. Her spiritual beliefs both contributed to her confusion and decision-making process about the marriage and whether or not she should stay in this relationship as well as helped alleviate misgivings she had about her decisions. These feelings about the possibility of divorce are congruent with Manning's (2006) review of the literature addressing pornography use and the impact on the family, where pornography use was found to be a predictor of marital distress, separation, or even divorce.

The spiritual process of making sense of her husband's pornography use was highlighted over and over again throughout the interview. Cassy seemed to rely heavily on her religious beliefs and teachings to help her make sense of the situation she was in. She also relied on the resources offered by the LDS Church to help her and her husband deal with the pornography use and its effects on the marriage and the family. Cassy even turned to her religious beliefs to help

her make sense of the marriage and her decision to stay in the marriage. This process seemed to override the psychological experiences of grief and betrayal to keep the marriage intact.

Just as shared religious beliefs can enhance a marriage (Marks, 2005), the individual's beliefs can also provide that same sense of comfort and structure/rhythm of life that religious couples have reported, when the partner is not living in accordance to those shared beliefs. Although shared religious beliefs can support the maintenance and stabilization of the marriage, Cassy found herself feeling alone when faced with this challenge.

To make sense of the psychological process, Cassy often used the spiritual process to answer questions and find acceptance and peace with the decision to stay with her husband and to work on their relationship. For example, when considering divorce Cassy used prayer and her faith that God answers her prayers to make this decision. When she did not feel as though she should leave the relationship, she began to search for help in the form of groups and couples therapy. Unlike Bridges, Bergner and Hesson-McInnis (2003), the influence of religion appears to have had an influence on the distress Cassy experienced while trying to make sense of her husband's pornography use. Her religious beliefs influenced her to view the situation in a more positive and hopeful lens. She was able to use her faith in the LDS Church's teachings to make peace with the situation she found herself in.

Cassy reported gaining an understanding of the addiction process and being able to use this knowledge in addressing her husband's behaviors. The knowledge of the inevitability of relapse in recovery helped her to make sense of her husband's inability to stop "cold turkey." She was able to identify the progress he was making and the efforts that he was putting into the recovery and not react to individual instances of relapse.

Cassy also relied on her understanding of eternal marriage and the marital covenants she made to make sense of her own spiritual welfare (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1997). She applied the LDS Church's beliefs that each person is held accountable for their own behaviors to make sense of her husband's influence on her spirituality, thus disconnecting her eternal welfare from that of her husband's. She also described relying on Church resources to make sense of her situation, such as attending the LDS temple to find peace and meditate on the situation she found herself in. She never reported questioning her faith throughout her experience.

Overall, her religious beliefs played a central role in Cassy's ability to make sense of the situation she found herself in. Her faith in the teachings of the LDS Church helped her find some level of peace when her husband's pornography use challenged her view of what their marriage really was. By using the resources and teachings of the LDS Church, Cassy has made sense of this situation.

Implications

Implications for Church Leaders

The most important piece of information obtained from Cassy for the leadership of the Church is that they need to have an understanding of the addiction process, specifically as it applies to sex/pornography, and that they need to understand the recovery process as well. These two elements are crucial for the couple to feel that they are going to be able to work through this. Church leaders need to understand that recovery may not mean instant sobriety, but that relapse is to be expected. She emphasized the need to express encouragement in increased lengths of time between relapses and to offer continued support as the husband works toward total sobriety and compliance with church doctrine.

Church leaders must be cautious to avoid relegating the burden of the pornography use onto the wife. Statements implying that the wife was not working hard enough in the marriage and that if there was just more sexual intercourse in the marriage pornography use would decrease are totally erroneous. Church leaders would benefit from a deeper understanding that this addictive process is not about intercourse, but that it may be a much deeper process than that. They should understand that "...sexual behavior is a powerful way that men communicate the storms and solaces of their internal world." And that "...sexual behavior is the fast track to unspoken, perhaps unrealized, feelings." (Cooper & Marcus, 2003, p. 311) Church leaders would do well to ensure professional mental health services are available to address any underlying emotional issues that may be present.

As the couple comes to Church leaders for spiritual guidance, it is also important that the priesthood leadership pay attention to both the husband and the wife and treat the issue as a couple. Church leaders must realize the impact the pornography use has had on the spouse and that she needs support, especially if the couple intends to stay together. Cassy's view on the importance of looking at this through the lens of the couple compliments Laaser's (2006) study of working with religious couples, stating that if they are not both working toward the same goal, recovery will not be able to occur. Research on working with couples to overcome addictions of all types is becoming more paramount (McCrady, Epstein, & Hirsch, 1999; Reid & Woolley, 2006; Trepper, McCollum, Dankoski, Davis, & LaFazia, 2000).

Finally, the impact that the pornography use has on the family is deeper than just the effects on the marriage, but that it affects the overall spirituality of the home environment. When one parent is considered unworthy, the spiritual well-being of the family rests on the other. In this case the wife is placed in a position of being the spiritual leader of the family, while the

husband addresses his spiritually inappropriate behavior. This arrangement is non-traditional in the LDS Church, where the husband is designated as the spiritual leader of the family. This role reversal places the burden of spiritual guidance, solely on the shoulders of the wife. She is now responsible for the nurturance and spiritual welfare of her children, seemingly alone.

Clinical Implications for Therapists

Cassy identified her religious beliefs as the most empowering influence in her ability to make sense of the situation she found herself in, as well as her ability to cope. Clinicians working with the LDS population would benefit from an understanding of the general and more specific Church doctrines pertaining to marriage and sexual purity before working with this population. The understanding of sexual purity, with this population, would preclude the use of pornography even one time. What may not be considered problematic in the field of addictions, could present as a major point of concern with a member of the LDS Church. If clinicians are unfamiliar with the LDS Church, they would benefit from a deeper exploration of the LDS teachings and beliefs as a way of understanding the culture that the couple or individual is coming from. For many of the LDS population, the religious culture to which they belong often has the largest cultural influence in their daily living and therefore must be addressed as a major influence in their treatment. When working with couples dealing with pornography use, the religion is a crucial context in which to address the identified problem (Laaser, 2006).

It may also be that LDS couples experiencing this situation may seek out either an LDS therapist or someone that is familiar with the LDS religion. Therefore, clinicians need to be sensitive to this desire. Cassy stated that she would only work with an LDS therapist because of the understanding that the therapist would have on the importance of eternal marriage and the spiritual impact this situation can have on the family of the pornography user.

As with the Church leaders, clinicians working with this population need to understand the addiction process and have an understanding of recovery as a process. Clients would benefit from a clinician that understood the inevitability of relapse as part of recovery. Normalizing relapse as part of recovery would benefit not only the pornography user, but also the spouse who is trying to make sense of this situation, thus potentially reducing the amount of shame and guilt surrounding relapses during the recovery process. It may be necessary to educate the spouse of the possibility of relapse and to encourage a supportive stance promoting increased lengths of sobriety between relapses. For those clients presenting with singular or infrequent use, clinicians should keep in mind the LDS Church's stance on the use of any form or amount of pornography (no use). LDS therapists would benefit from an understanding of the implications for Church leaders and clinicians.

Study Limitations and Need to Further Research

Limitations

This study was designed to gain insights into the experiences of women in the LDS Church, whose husbands either are or were viewing pornography. The goal was to better understand the influence that the LDS Church has on the experiences of women in this situation. The most notable limitation of this study is that it was an in-depth look at the experience of one woman. This woman's experience opens the door to a better understanding of the experiences of this population, although it is still one woman's experience and is not representative of the population. A larger sample of participants would have provided more points of view on this topic.

This study also focused on the experience of a woman who had been married for many years and had children before her husband's pornography use was addressed directly. Obtaining

data from wives who have been married for varying increments and/or having no children or grown children may also influence the experience of women in this situation. The impact of children in the home was not explored as a potential influence on the experience, although having children was part of her overall experience. Another potential influence that is not addressed in this study is time married before the pornography use was found and duration of the pornography use before and/or during the marriage. Newlyweds may have a different experience than those that have been married for several years before discovering the pornography use. This study also overlooks those who may have known about the pornography use before marriage, but decided to get married anyway. This study also did not explore in detail the level of pornography the spouse was viewing and how the level of use impacted the experience.

Because I am a member of the LDS Church, my perception and experiences have influenced the questions I asked and the interpretation of the data that was obtained. This may include assuming understanding and neglecting to ask some follow up questions that could provide a deeper understanding of the experience. Secondly, as a member of the LDS Church who has seen the effects of pornography use with the marital context, this topic was of personal importance for me. These experiences have also influenced the perception of the data obtained and therefore cannot be viewed as impartial. And though I tried to allow the research participant to express her views and experience freely, my own views and beliefs inevitably connected with those of the participant during the interview process.

Future Research

Future research should focus on the experiences of the husbands in the LDS Church who are viewing pornography. Interviewing both the husband and the wife individually may reveal information that would benefit those that are working with couples in the LDS Church where

pornography use is identified as a problem. The influence of religion on the secrecy of the pornography use, the shame associated with the use and the discovery and confession would provide a deeper understanding of how this situation affects the couple as a whole.

This study also focused on the experience of the female spouse of a pornography user. Research addressing the experiences of husbands whose wives are using pornography would address another insight into the influence that the LDS religion has on couples where this is presented as the main problem.

An area that was overlooked in this study is research into those that had never sought professional and ecclesiastical help with the pornography use and the outcomes of those relationships. The influence of religion in their decision to stay or leave as well as their ability to make sense out of the situation could also be addressed. This view would allow for a better understanding of those in the LDS Church who attempt to make sense of the situation alone and how this affects their personal, marital and familial lives. Research with those that do not seek professional help may also find that they have been able to make sense of their situation or that they could not and the marriage suffered. Also, research with those that only sought ecclesiastical help would provide insight into the effectiveness of the LDS Church leaders and their role as the primary source of outside help.

This study assumes that pornography use with couples in the LDS Church would be problematic. However, there may be a sub-population within the LDS Church that do not find the use of pornography conflictual with their beliefs. This population (or lack of population) would provide an alternative perspective on how members of the LDS Church view the use of pornographic materials.

This study briefly contrasts the experience of a practicing LDS woman with research that does not address religion directly. However, research on the comparison of LDS and non-LDS conservative religions could also provide an interesting view into the overall effect of religious influence in the lives of couples where pornography use is identified as an issue. Exploring the influence religion has on the experience of wives of other faiths whose husbands view pornography may have implications for clergy of other faiths as well as mental health professionals working with these couples.

A comparison of the effectiveness of ecclesiastical versus professional mental health clinicians or twelve-step programs would add to the research base as well. Members of any religious group may first seek out religious counsel before, or instead of, seeking professional services or attending a twelve-step group. An in-depth look at the effectiveness of ecclesiastical support as opposed to professional services or traditional twelve-step programs would provide us with information regarding the effectiveness of professional services or whether the simple act of seeking help from the outside is sufficient to help those facing this issue.

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Women: Is Pornography Affecting Your Marriage?

- Is your husband involved in pornography or receiving help for involvement with pornography?
- Has his involvement had an impact emotionally or spiritually on your marriage?
- Would you be willing to help Church leaders and therapists understand your experiences?

I am looking for LDS wives who are willing to share their experiences of having a husband who is or has been involved in pornography use.

I am a graduate student in Marriage and Family Therapy at Virginia Tech and member of the LDS church conducting a research thesis to better understand the experience of Latter-Day Saint wives whose husbands have been involved with pornography. The object of my research is to better understand the influence of the LDS faith on marriages that are faced with this issue.

If you would be willing to participate in a 1-1.5 hour interview, please contact me at:

Brandon Buhler
703-839-3913 or bbuhler@vt.edu

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. How do you view the use of pornography in your marriage? Sin? Mental illness? Both?
2. How has your faith influenced the way you see this problem?
3. How has the Church and its teachings influenced your understanding of the situation you find yourself in?
4. How has your faith influenced your decision to stay or leave, understanding that you may not have decided for sure?
5. What influence has your faith had on the discovery and recovery of the pornography use?
6. What has your experience been as you try to resolve the eternity of marriage with your spouse threatening this bond? Emotional experience? Spiritual experience?
7. What resources of the Church have you used? What has your experiences been using the Church resources?
8. What advice have you received from Church resources? What has been helpful? What has not been helpful?
9. You sought out an LDS therapist-why? Did you consider a non-LDS therapist?
10. How did you find out about this group?
11. What advice would you give to Church leaders? Bishops? General Authorities? Media sources?
12. What advice would you give to other wives who are in the Church struggling with this problem?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent for Spouse Participation in Virginia Tech's Qualitative Study of LDS Spouses' Experiences of Having a Husband who has been Involved with Pornography.

What is the purpose of this study? The purpose of this study is to understand the influence that religion has had on the experiences of wives in the LDS faith whose husbands have been or are currently involved with pornography.

What will I be asked to do? You will be asked to participate in an interview that will take 1-1.5 hours to complete. During this interview, you will be asked about your experience of having a husband involved with pornography and how your religious beliefs have influenced your experience. This will include, but not be limited to, factors that you felt were helpful and not helpful. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience and will take place at an agreed upon location. The face-to face interview will be audio-tape recorded to make sure we understand exactly what was said. After completing the interview, you will be contacted and given an opportunity to read through the transcript and make any corrections necessary. If a face-to-face interview cannot be arranged, the interviewer will arrange a telephone interview with you, which will also be audio-tape recorded.

Are there any risks to me? There are minimal risks associated with participation in this research study. Minimal risks include feelings of discomfort when you discuss your experiences in the LDS church and having a husband who has been involved with pornography. You have the right to refuse to answer any question at any time. The interviewer is sensitive to the potential issues surrounding this topic. The interviewer is trained and experienced and is able to refer you to any services that may be helpful to you. However, you will be responsible for any costs associated with referrals made to any counseling services. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Please be reassured that your participation is completely voluntary and confidential.

Are there benefits to me? As a result of participating in this study, you may feel satisfied that you have contributed to the knowledge and understanding of a very important research study. You may also feel satisfied your participation may benefit other women who have had similar experiences within the LDS church and that have had husbands involved in pornography. Clergy working with women in the LDS church and mental health professionals will also benefit from your contribution.

Are my responses confidential? The researcher will make every effort to conceal your identity and ensure confidentiality when reporting the findings of this study. This may include name changes, age changes and family information changes. Your responses will be only available to the researcher and his thesis advisor throughout the duration of the research study. Your name and other identifying information will not be reported in any publications or presentations of this research study, and the audio-tape recordings will be destroyed. Once the audio-taped interviews are completed and transcribed, you will be sent a copy of the transcription via email. If there are portions of the interview that you would like to change in order to protect your confidentiality, you may send these changes

to the researcher by the date designated in the email. You may also highlight any portion of the interview that you would like to not be quoted in the research when the interview findings are reported. These highlights may be sent to the researcher via email as well. If no response is received from you by the designated date, the researcher will assume you do not have any corrections.

Note: Any information reported during the interview that involves child abuse or elder abuse will be required to be reported to the appropriate authorities by the researcher.

Will I be compensated for my participation? Your participation is completely voluntary and there will be no compensation for your time other than the researcher's appreciation for your time and participation.

Do I have the right to withdraw from this study? You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. You have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions and you are allowed to leave the study at any time without penalty.

Approval of research: This research has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact:

Brandon M. Buhler, Principle Researcher
703-839-3913, bbuhler@vt.edu

Dr. Eric E. McCollum, Committee Chair
703-538-8470, emccollum@vt.edu

Dr. David M. Moore, IRB Chair
540-231-4991, moored@vt.edu

Participant's Permission

I agree to be a part of this study. I have read the consent form and have had all of my questions answered. By signing, I agree to participate in this study. I agree to follow the guidelines of the study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence.

Participant's Name (Printed)

Participant Signature

Date

Appendix D

IRB Approval Letter



DATE: April 22, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eric E. McCollum
Brandon Buhler

FROM: David M. Moore

Approval date: 4/21/2008
Continuing Review Due Date: 4/6/2009
Expiration Date: 4/20/2009

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Approval:** "Experiences of LDS Spouses When Their Partners Use Pornography: A Phenomenological Study", IRB # 08-229

This memo is regarding the above-mentioned protocol. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. As Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval to the study for a period of 12 months, effective April 21, 2008.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

Important:

If you are conducting **federally funded non-exempt research**, please send the applicable OSP/grant proposal to the IRB office, once available. OSP funds may not be released until the IRB has compared and found consistent the proposal and related IRB application.

cc: File

Department Reviewer: Angela J. Huebner