

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at:  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292984434>

# From Bad to Worse? Pornography Consumption, Spousal Religiosity, Gender, and Marital Quality

**Article** *in* Sociological Forum · March 2016

DOI: 10.1111/socf.12252

---

CITATIONS

6

---

READS

338

**1 author:**



[Samuel Perry](#)

University of Oklahoma

**44** PUBLICATIONS **177**

CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



## From Bad to Worse? Pornography Consumption, Spousal Religiosity, Gender, and Marital Quality<sup>1</sup>

Samuel L. Perry<sup>2</sup>

---

*Pornography consumption is consistently associated with lower marital quality. Scholars have theorized that embeddedness within a religious community may exacerbate the negative association between pornography use and marital quality because of greater social or psychic costs to porn viewing. As a test and extension of this theory, I examine how being married to a religiously devout spouse potentially moderates the link between respondents' reported pornography consumption and their marital satisfaction. Data are taken from the 2006 Portraits of American Life Study. In the main effects, porn consumption is negatively related to marital satisfaction, while spousal religiosity is positively related to marital satisfaction. Interaction effects reveal, however, that spousal religiosity intensifies the negative effect of porn viewing on marital satisfaction. These effects are robust whether marital satisfaction is operationalized as a scale or with individual measures and whether spousal religiosity is measured with respondents' evaluations their spouses' religiosity or spouses' self-reported religiosity measures. The effects are also similar for both husbands and wives. I argue that for married Americans, having a religiously committed spouse increases the social and psychic costs of porn consumption such that marital satisfaction decreases more drastically as a result.*

---

**KEY WORDS:** gender; marital quality; marriage; pornography; religion; religiosity.

### INTRODUCTION

Owing in large part to the increased privacy and access provided by the Internet, pornography<sup>3</sup> consumption has become fairly widespread in the United States. Some sources indicate that up to one-third of Americans access sexually explicit materials at least once a month or more (Carroll et al. 2008; Edelman 2009; Short et al. 2012).<sup>4</sup> Although there remains some ambivalence about the society-wide

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank the editor and anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback. The author also wishes to thank Jill Perry for her support and sacrifice.

<sup>2</sup> All data and coding information for the purposes of replication are available upon request. Department of Sociology, University of Oklahoma, 780 Van Vleet Oval Kaufman Hall, Norman, Oklahoma 73019; e-mail: samperry@ou.edu.

<sup>3</sup> The term *pornography* is difficult to define (Lindgren 1993). Because of the cultural and moral stigma associated with the term itself, researchers often use more euphemistic or technical terms like *sexually explicit media or materials*, *erotica*, or *online sexual activity* (Carroll et al. 2008; Lindgren 1993; Manning 2006; Short et al. 2012). Yet many studies and nationally representative surveys ask questions explicitly about “pornography” attitudes and consumption, and thus I use the term *pornography* here. In this study, I use *pornography* in a general sense of visual material (magazines, movies, Internet images) intended to sexually arouse the viewer. I use the terms *pornography* and *porn* interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> Research on frequency of porn use varies somewhat by sample characteristics and definitions. Edelman (2009) reports that somewhere over 35% of Internet users visit an “adult” website at least once a month, and those who visit adult websites once a month average nearly eight visits per month. Additionally, since 1985 the General Social Surveys find that almost a quarter of American adults has “seen an X-rated movie in the last year.” Similarly, the 2006 Portraits of American Life Study finds that 34% of American adults has “viewed pornographic materials” in the past 12 months.

consequences of such pervasive pornography use, research consistently finds that pornography consumption can pose serious problems for heterosexual married Americans. Frequent pornography use is predictive of lower marital quality by a variety of different measures, higher chance of infidelity and overall marital instability, lower sexual satisfaction (often among men), and self-image or intimacy problems (among women) (Bridges, Bergner, and Hesson-McInnis 2003; Daneback, Traeen, and Mansson 2009; Doran and Price 2014; Manning 2006; Perry 2016a; Poulsen, Busby, and Galovan 2013; Stack, Wasserman, and Kern 2004; Yucel and Gassanov 2010). To be sure, in many cases marital problems themselves may temporally precede and promote pornography consumption. However, qualitative and experimental research suggests that it is porn use that more often negatively affects couples' outcomes than vice versa (Bergner and Bridges 2002; Lambert et al. 2012; Zillmann and Bryant 1988).

While a large body of research has linked pornography consumption to marital quality, few studies have given explicit attention to the ways religious factors might moderate this association. Rather, measures of religious life are most often included in models to be controlled away. As an exception to this trend, recent research has argued that frequent religious service attendance (as an indicator of social embeddedness within a group of coreligionists) actually intensifies the negative relationship between pornography consumption and various measures of marital quality (Doran and Price 2014). Researchers theorize that being closely connected to other devoutly religious individuals increases the social or psychic costs to viewing pornography for married persons, such that marital quality is diminished more significantly than it would have been among frequent porn users who attend religious services less often or never.

As a test and extension of this theory, the current study examines how being married to a religiously committed spouse (arguably a greater measure of religious embeddedness than service attendance) moderates the link between pornography consumption and marital quality. I also examine whether this potential moderating effect may differ by gender. Drawing on 2006 Portraits of American Life Study data and focusing on overall marital satisfaction as a measure of marital quality, I demonstrate that spousal religiosity intensifies or worsens the negative effect of respondents' pornography use on their reported marital satisfaction and that these effects are robust to a variety of different operationalizations of key measures. Moreover, I show that this moderating effect generally holds for both husbands and wives. The findings of this study extend the growing literature on religion and married life by explicating how religious commitment—in this case, the commitment of one's spouse—may exacerbate the negative consequences on marital quality owing to Americans' increasing pornography consumption.

To better frame the current study, I first survey what we know about the influences of pornography consumption and spousal religiosity on marriage outcomes. I draw on this research to develop hypotheses about the ways spousal religiosity potentially moderates the link between pornography consumption and marital quality.

## BACKGROUND

### *Pornography Consumption and Relationship Outcomes*

With some important qualifications,<sup>5</sup> most studies find that pornography use is negatively associated with various measures of relationship quality and stability, both for those in unmarried romantic relationships as well as married couples (for reviews, see Doring 2009; Manning 2006; Short et al. 2012). In experimental, quantitative, and qualitative studies of heterosexual romantic couples, researchers have shown that frequent porn use is associated with lower commitment to the relationship, sexual satisfaction, sexual attraction, feelings of intimacy, and overall satisfaction with one's romantic partner (Bergner and Bridges 2002; Lambert et al. 2012; Maddox, Rhoades, and Markman 2011; Zillmann and Bryant 1988). Studies also show that porn viewing, alone or as a couple, is associated with a greater likelihood of infidelity (Maddox et al. 2011).

Some of the negative consequences of porn use tend to be gendered. For example, studies have also shown that, for heterosexual women, their romantic partner's pornography use negatively impacted their self-esteem and perceptions of relationship quality (Bergner and Bridges 2002; Daneback et al. 2009; Stewart and Szymanski 2012). And other studies find that men's viewing of sexual media was negatively correlated to their sexual satisfaction, while women's sexual media viewing was either unassociated or positively related to sexual satisfaction (Bridges and Morokoff 2011; Poulsen et al. 2013). The gendered differences here might be due to the negative effects of pornography on men's sexual expectations and evaluations of their own sex lives, whereas pornography consumption for women might help them better understand their own bodies and sexual tastes and is more likely done as a part of sex with their partner rather than alone for the purposes of masturbation (Bridges and Morokoff 2011; Maddox et al. 2011; Manning 2006).

Marriage relationships might be more negatively affected by porn use than monogamous dating relationships because there could be greater social and cultural pressure to define "fidelity" more strictly and avoid viewing sexually explicit media. Accordingly, Bridges et al. (2003) report that married women were significantly more disturbed by their partner's online porn use than women in dating relationships, and were more likely to view pornography as harmful to the relationship. Focusing exclusively on married couples, Yucel and Gassanov (2010) find that husbands' pornography use (as reported by their wives) was negatively related to their sexual satisfaction. Wives' porn use, however, was unrelated to their own sexual satisfaction. Drawing on the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS), Stack et al. (2004) report that Internet porn consumption is strongly correlated with being in an unhappy marriage. Also using GSS data, Doran and Price (2014) report negative associations between viewing either online pornography or X-rated movies and marital quality and stability. Specifically, ever-married adults who viewed an

<sup>5</sup> Some family care practitioners argue that watching sexually explicit materials *together*, for the purposes of fantasy stimulation, education, and mutual gratification, may actually benefit marriages (Manning 2006). Supporting this argument, some studies have found that women who viewed pornography with their partners reported greater sexual satisfaction (Bridges and Morokoff 2011; Maddox et al. 2011; Manning 2006; Poulsen et al. 2013).

X-rated movie in the past year or Internet pornography in the last 30 days were more likely to be divorced, and more likely to have an extramarital affair. And those who had viewed an X-rated movie were less happy with their marriage and less happy overall (see also Patterson and Price 2012; Perry 2016a). Doran and Price also find that, for married men, porn consumption reduced the positive relationship between sex frequency and happiness. Based on these findings, I generally expect that

Hypothesis 1: More frequent pornography consumption will be negatively associated with marital quality, net of other factors.

An important caveat here is that the majority of the above studies are based on cross-sectional data, and thus, it is difficult to determine the direction of the effect. It could be that marital unhappiness or sexual dissatisfaction lead to the greater use of pornography, just as pornography could lead to a host of relational problems (Doran and Price 2014). Yet qualitative and experimental data would seem to suggest that more often it is frequent porn consumption that influences relationship outcomes rather than the reverse (Bergner and Bridges 2002; Lambert et al. 2012; Zillmann and Bryant 1988).

### *Spousal Religiosity and Marital Quality*

Within the extensive and growing literature on religion and married life (see Mahoney 2010 for a review), two findings are among the most consistent. The first is that religiously homogamous marriages tend to exhibit higher levels of quality and stability. More specifically, marriages that are homogamous in terms of religious tradition or denomination, beliefs, and/or practices are more satisfying for both partners and less prone to divorce (Call and Heaton 1997; Curtis and Ellison 2002; Ellison, Burdette, and Wilcox 2010; Heaton 1984, 2002; Heaton and Pratt 1990; Lichter and Carmalt 2009; Myers 2006; Ortega, Whitt and William 1984; Shehan, Bock, and Lee 1990; Vaaler, Ellison, and Powers 2009; Wilson and Musick 1996). The flipside of this finding is that marriages with greater heterogamy in the areas of religious commitment, identity, belief, or practice report lower marital quality and stability (Call and Heaton 1997; Curtis and Ellison 2002; Lichter and Carmalt 2009; Perry 2014; Waite and Lehrer 2003).

The second consistent finding in the research on religion and marriage is that the religiosity of marriage partners, as individuals, is positively associated with marital stability and quality. Thus, it is not merely cultural compatibility that benefits marriage, but rather religious commitment itself may promote positive relationship outcomes (Allgood et al. 2009; Brown, Orbuch, and Bauermeister 2008; Burdette et al. 2007; Call and Heaton 1997; Ellison et al. 2010; Ellison et al. 2011; Lichter and Carmalt 2009; Perry 2014; Sullivan 2001; Wilcox and Dew 2013). Supporting this idea, recent research affirms that married Americans with more-devout spouses report greater marital satisfaction, receive more frequent acts of devotion with fewer harsh words, and are less suspicious of cheating (Perry 2014, 2015a, 2016b). There are several reasons to expect these findings. First, religions generally teach

their adherents to be loving, forgiving, patient, and other qualities that promote healthy interpersonal relationships, and would certainly benefit marriage relationships (Call and Heaton 1997; Lambert and Dollahite 2006; Mahoney 2010; Marks 2005; Sullivan 2001). Religions also teach the sanctity of marriage as an institution and thus religious commitment often correlates to marriage commitment and various marriage-protecting behaviors (Allgood et al. 2009; Ellison et al. 2011; Stafford, Prabu, and McPherson 2014). Last, because deeply committed believers tend to be embedded within communities of equally committed believers, there is likely a corresponding social pressure that provides accountability for married couples, discouraging potentially negative marital behaviors (e.g., excessive porn consumption) and divorce (Brown et al. 2008; Doran and Price 2014; Waite and Lehrer 2003). For these reasons, it would be reasonable to expect religiously committed spouses to exhibit more positive marital behaviors leading to more satisfying marriage outcomes for their partners. Thus, I predict

Hypothesis 2: Spousal religiosity will be positively associated with marital quality, net of other factors.

### *Spousal Religiosity, Pornography Consumption, Gender, and Marital Quality*

How does religion influence the negative relationship between pornography consumption and marital quality? And how might this potential moderating effect differ by gender? In their recent study using pooled GSS data, Doran and Price (2014) find pornography consumption is negatively related to all measures of marital quality, and that this effect is particularly strong among men. Interestingly, when the authors split their sample into whether respondents attended religious services weekly or less than weekly, the negative relationship between respondents' pornography use and various measures of marital quality was larger in magnitude for those who attended religious services *more* frequently. In other words, pornography consumption was already negatively associated with marital quality, and for those who frequently attended religious services, this association was stronger. The authors speculate: "This [finding] could be due in part to the large positive effects conferred by church attendance: Essentially, belonging to a group that discourages pornography use puts a higher social cost on pornography" (Doran and Price 2014:495). A "social cost" could be either stigma or tensions in relationships with community-members due to one's "deviant" behavior.

Drawing on the same pooled GSS data, Patterson and Price (2012) find that the negative effect of pornography consumption on personal happiness is also stronger among those who attend religious services more frequently (see also Doran and Price 2014). Positing a similar explanation, the authors theorize, "[T]he psychic costs of engaging in a deviant activity should be higher for individuals who belong to religious groups with stronger social norms against that activity" (Patterson and Price 2012:79). "Psychic costs" here could be understood as guilt or cognitive dissonance due to behavior that is inconsistent with a community's moral standards. In these studies, it is not the "religiosity" or "religious commitment" of the respondent

per se that is measured in church attendance, but the respondents' embeddedness within a religious group that discourages pornography. The social or psychic cost of using pornography while belonging to such a group is what might decrease marital quality more drastically, according to this theory.

Arguably, being married to a devoutly religious spouse is an even greater measure of religious embeddedness than religious service attendance. Devoutly religious Americans tend to be more morally opposed to pornography, and particularly those deeply involved in sectarian or fundamentalist Protestant traditions who hold to literalist views of the Bible as well as those with high rates of religious participation (Sherkat and Ellison 1997). To more frequently consume pornography when one is married to a religiously committed spouse would likely put a greater social or psychic strain on a person and their experience of marriage that would likely not be experienced by someone married to a spouse with fewer religious convictions about pornography and less stringent definitions of fidelity. Following Doran and Price (2014), then, it would be reasonable to expect that the religious commitment of one's spouse will intensify the negative association between pornography consumption and marital quality. More formally, I predict

Hypothesis 3: Spousal religiosity will moderate the negative association between pornography consumption and marital quality such that frequent users of pornography with religiously committed spouses will report lower levels of marital satisfaction than frequent porn users with less religious spouses.

In thinking about how the moderating effect of spousal religiosity on the link between porn consumption and marital quality may differ by gender, research suggests that the negative effect of one's own pornography consumption on their intimate relationships is more severe for men than for women (Doran and Price 2014; Perry 2015b; Perry 2016a; Yucel and Gassanov 2010). And in light of the reasons that married men typically view pornography (alone for the purposes of masturbation) relative to married women (together with husbands as a part of sex) (Bridges and Morokoff 2011; Maddox et al. 2011; Manning 2006), I would expect that for married men who frequently use pornography, having a religiously committed spouse would intensify the negative relationship between porn consumption and marital satisfaction, more so than it would for married women who use pornography. Thus, I hypothesize that

Hypothesis 4: The moderating effect of spousal religiosity on the link between pornography use and marital quality will be stronger for married men than for married women.

## METHOD

### *Data*

I test the above hypotheses using data from Wave 1 of the Portraits of American Life Study (PALS), which was fielded in 2006. PALS is a nationally representative panel survey with questions focusing on a variety of topics including social networks, moral and political attitudes, and religious life. The PALS sampling frame includes the civilian, noninstitutionalized household population in the



continental United States who were 18 years of age or older at the time the survey was conducted. Surveys were administered in English or Spanish. From April to October 2006, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 2,610 respondents in their homes. Interviewers used audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) for more sensitive questions (e.g., how often they view pornography). The response rate was 58%. PALS data include sampling weights that once applied, bring the PALS sample in line with the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) three-year average estimates for 2005–2007 (Emerson, Sikkink, and James 2010). These weights are used in all analyses. Because this study focuses on marital experiences, only respondents who were married at the time of the study are included in analytical sample. The full models ultimately use data from married respondents who provided valid responses to measures of pornography use, marital quality, and sociodemographic and religious characteristics.

### *Dependent Variable*

Consistent with precedents set in previous research (Ellison et al. 2010; Ellison et al. 2011; Perry 2014; Stafford et al. 2014), I operationalize marital quality with a scale measuring respondents' overall marital satisfaction. PALS asked respondents four questions about their level of satisfaction with their spouse/relationship. The first question asked respondents, "All things considered, how would you consider your marriage relationship?" Responses ranged from (1) "completely unhappy" to (7) "completely happy," with (4) being "neither happy nor unhappy." Respondents were also asked about how satisfied they were with "the love and affection you receive from your spouse/partner," "your sex life with your spouse/partner," and "the way that you and your spouse/partner make decisions in your relationship." For these three questions, responses ranged from (1) "completely dissatisfied" to (5) "completely satisfied" with (3) being "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied." These four questions were standardized into Z-scores and summed to create a scale measuring overall marital satisfaction ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

### *Independent Variables*

Two focal predictor variables for this study are (1) the frequency of pornography consumption among respondents and (2) the importance of religion to respondents' spouses. To measure frequency of pornography use among American adults, PALS asked respondents, "In the past 12 months, how often have you viewed pornographic materials?" Responses ranged from 1 = once a day or more to 8 = never. I reverse-coded these values so that higher values meant more frequent porn viewing. Certainly, social desirability could prevent honest answers given that porn consumption in larger amounts is still viewed as morally objectionable, particularly for religious persons (Doran and Price 2014). Emerson et al. (2010) explain that for questions like this, each PALS respondent wore earphones to hear the questions prerecorded, and then entered their responses directly into the computer apart



from the knowledge or help of the interviewer. This procedure would help obviate social desirability bias for this question.

For spousal religiosity, PALS asked respondents, "Thinking about your spouse/partner, how important would you say religion or religious faith is to him or her personally?" Responses ranged from 1 = not at all important to 5 = by far the most important part of his/her life. A possible limitation of this measure is that it relies on respondents' evaluations of how important religion is to their spouses rather than spouse's own self-reported religious commitment or behaviors. The 2006 PALS also included a spousal survey that contained questions about each spouse's religious characteristics. Unfortunately, spousal participation was poor and thus the inclusion of the spouse's responses in multivariate models cuts the sample virtually in half. Thus, I opted not to use these measures as focal measures in the analysis in order to preserve sample size. However, including these measures provides a valuable and necessary cross-check and thus I incorporate these self-reported measures for spouses' religious commitment and behaviors into later analyses in order to validate the findings with the focal independent variable described above.

### *Control Variables*

Multivariate models included a host of sociodemographic and religious controls found elsewhere to be correlates or predictors of marital quality (see Ellison et al. 2010; Mahoney 2010; Perry 2014). Preliminary analyses indicated that these control variables were associated with marital satisfaction either at the bivariate level or in multivariate analyses. Age is measured in years, from 19 to 80. I constructed dichotomous dummy variables for gender (male = 1), whether respondents had biological children in the home (yes = 1), whether they had previously had a divorce or annulment (yes = 1), education (bachelor's degree or higher = 1), and region (South = 1),<sup>6</sup> and a series of dummy variables were used for race (white = reference). Household income is measured in categories from (1) less than \$5,000 to (19) \$200,000 or more.

A variety of religion controls were used so that I could isolate the influence of spousal religiosity on marital quality, net respondents' own religious characteristics. Religion controls include measures for respondents' religious tradition, theological conservatism, and religious practice. Religious tradition is measured with a modified version of the RELTRAD classification scheme (Steensland et al. 2000). As others have recently pointed out (Sherkat 2014),<sup>7</sup> there are drawbacks to the conventional RELTRAD classification. Following research by Sherkat, de Vries, and Creek (2010) showing that white evangelical Protestants and black Protestants

<sup>6</sup> I initially ran multivariate models with a series of dummy variables for education (less than high school, high school degree, some college/associates, bachelor's degree, graduate degree, other degree) and region (West, South, Northeast, Midwest). None of these differences were significant and this did not add anything to the model fit. Thus, I elected to only include the binary dummies in the final models.

<sup>7</sup> Sherkat (2014) advocates for and employs a broader array of denominational classifications that takes into account important theological differences across denominations. The smaller sample size of the 2006 PALS compared to the aggregate GSS data used by Sherkat makes his broader classification scheme less useful for the present study.

share tremendous overlap in their religious and moral convictions, I combine these two categories into a Conservative Protestant category. Importantly, this coding also allows models to pick up the influence of race and ethnicity whereas using black Protestants separately from white evangelicals potentially introduces collinearity issues that confound the effects of race. Other categories include main-line Protestant, Other Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Other, and None or Unaffiliated. Conservative Protestants are the reference category. Theological conservatism is measured with a PALS question asking respondents about whether they believed their religious text to be “fully inspired by God.” Responses included 1 = fully inspired by God, 2 = partly inspired by God, 3 = not inspired by God, and 4 = I have never heard of the religious text. I dichotomized this measure so that 1 = fully inspired by God, 0 = other.<sup>8</sup> Respondents with a 1 for this measure would be more likely to view the moral teachings of their sacred text as authoritative. Last, religious practice was measured with religious service attendance. Responses ranged from 1 = never to 8 = three times a week or more. For descriptive statistics on all variables, see Table I.

## RESULTS

Along with descriptive statistics for the whole sample, Table I presents mean comparisons for men and women on all measures in the analysis along with zero-order correlations between overall marital satisfaction and all independent variables for the full sample and for men and women separately. Significant gender differences are consistent with previous research on gender, marriage, pornography use, and religiosity. Married men report slightly higher marital satisfaction than married women and greater frequency of pornography consumption. Men also expressed that religion was more important for their spouse than women. Given that the vast majority of marriages in the 2006 PALS are heterosexual, and women tend to be more religious on average than men, the fact that married men report higher spousal religiosity is not surprising. Indeed, married women in PALS report more frequent church attendance and stronger belief in the inspiration of one's sacred text, relative to men. Married women are also less likely to be religiously unaffiliated than married men.

Looking at bivariate correlations, for the full sample, viewing pornography is negatively associated with overall marital satisfaction ( $r = -.11, p < .001$ ), suggesting that those who view pornography more often tend to be less satisfied in their marriage than those who view pornography less often or never. In contrast, spousal religiosity is positively associated with overall marital satisfaction ( $r = .16, p < .001$ ), indicating that the more important religion is to one's spouse, the more overall satisfaction they report with their marriage. When the sample is divided into

<sup>8</sup> PALS included other measures of theological conservatism including the extent to which respondents believe in a literal six-day creation account (indirectly measuring belief in biblical literalism) or the extent to which they believe their sacred text had spiritual/moral errors or scientific/historical errors (measuring belief in scriptural inerrancy). These measures yielded similar results to the measure for scriptural inspiration and did not influence the important substantive findings regarding the focal independent variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Mean Comparisons, and Bivariate Correlations

	Full			Men			Women		
	Mean or %	SD	Corr. w/DV	Mean or %	SD	Corr. w/DV	Mean or %	SD	Corr. w/DV
Overall Marital Satisfaction									
Pornography Viewing									
Spousal Religiosity									
Scale of four questions ( $\alpha = .80$ )	.12	3		.27 <sup>a</sup>	2.9		-.04 <sup>a</sup>	3.2	
Never = 1, Once a day or more = 8	1.8	1.5	-.11***	2.3 <sup>c</sup>	1.8	-.18***	1.3 <sup>c</sup>	.77	-.08*
How important is religion to your spouse/partner? Not at all = 1, Most = 5	3	1.2	.16***	3.2 <sup>c</sup>	1.2	.08*	2.9 <sup>c</sup>	1.2	.23***
Conservative Protestant									
Mainline Protestant	33%		.06*	33%		.08	32%		.05
Other Protestant	16%		-.02	14%		-.03	18%		-.01
Catholic	4%		.01	4%		.01	4%		-.02
Jewish	27%		.04	27%		.07	28%		.02
Other Religion	2%		-.06*	1%		-.06	2%		-.07
None	6%		-.03	7%		-.01	5%		-.05
Scripture Inspired	12%		-.08**	14% <sup>b</sup>		-.013***	11% <sup>b</sup>		-.02
Religious Service Attendance	61%		.09**	57% <sup>b</sup>		.16***	65% <sup>b</sup>		.02
1 = Never, 8 = Three or more times a week	3.8	2.2	.05	3.5 <sup>c</sup>	2.2	.09*	4 <sup>c</sup>	2.2	.03
Age									
Male	47	14	-.02	48	14	-.01	47	14	-.04
Biological Children in Home	52%		.05						
Previous Divorce or Annulment	53%		-.04	50% <sup>b</sup>		-.03	56% <sup>b</sup>		-.04
Bachelor's or Higher Household Income	26%		.04	27%		.01	25%		.07
Bachelor's degree or higher = 1	32%		-.04	33% <sup>a</sup>		-.07	31% <sup>a</sup>		-.01
Less than \$5,000 = 1, \$200,000 or more = 19	10.9	4.2	-.01	10.9	4.2	-.01	10.8	4.1	-.01
White									
Black	76%		.01	75%		.01	76%		.00
Hispanic	7%		-.04	7%		-.07	7%		-.02
Asian	11%		.04	11%		.05	11%		.03
Native American	6%		.01	6%		-.01	5%		.02
South	1%		-.08**	.2%		-.02	.01%		-.11**
N	34%		-.01	33%		-.02	34%		.00
	1294			676			618		

Note: <sup>a</sup>Difference between men and women significant at .05; <sup>b</sup>Difference between men and women significant at .01; <sup>c</sup>Difference between men and women significant at .001; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

married men and women, there are some notable differences. For both married men and women, pornography consumption is negatively related to marital satisfaction. However, for men ( $r = -.18, p < .001$ ) the correlation is somewhat stronger than it is for women ( $r = -.08, p < .05$ ). Conversely, spousal religiosity is positively associated with marital satisfaction for both men and women. However, the correlation is considerably stronger for women ( $r = .23, p < .001$ ) than for men ( $r = .08, p < .05$ ). Despite these differences in magnitude, it should be noted that the relationships are significant and the same direction for both married men and women.

Turning to the multivariate analyses, Table II presents ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models predicting overall marital satisfaction as well as pornography consumption. Coefficients in the far-right column help clarify what religious and sociodemographic factors are associated with more frequent porn viewing among married persons. Even after controlling for respondents' own religious characteristics, having a spouse for whom religion is more important is negatively associated with respondents' viewing pornography. Other findings are entirely consistent with previous research: those who more frequently view pornography are more likely to be religiously unaffiliated (compared to Conservative Protestant), less theologically conservative, attend religious services less frequently (marginal), younger, male, and with higher income (Doring 2009; Patterson and Price 2012; Poulsen et al. 2013; Stack et al. 2004). Behind gender and age, the strongest predictor of porn use is one's view of Scripture, which is also consistent with research rooting opposition to pornography in sectarian Protestant beliefs (Sherkat and Ellison 1997). Compared to whites, African Americans view pornography more frequently, while Asian Americans view pornography less frequently.

Models 1 and 2 predict overall marital satisfaction. Model 1 includes pornography viewing, spousal religiosity, and all control variables. Even with controls in place, viewing pornography is significantly and negatively associated with overall marital satisfaction ( $b = -.246, p < .001, \beta = -.123$ ). Spousal religiosity is significantly and positively associated with marital satisfaction ( $b = .403, p < .001, \beta = .160$ ) and is the strongest predictor in the model followed by pornography viewing. The first two hypotheses are thus affirmed. Other significant predictors of marital satisfaction are worth mentioning. Those who are older and are Native American (relative to whites) tend to be less satisfied with their marriage, while men report being more satisfied in their marriages than women. Being Jewish (compared to being Conservative Protestant) and attending religious services more frequently are also negatively related to marital satisfaction, but both findings are only marginally significant.

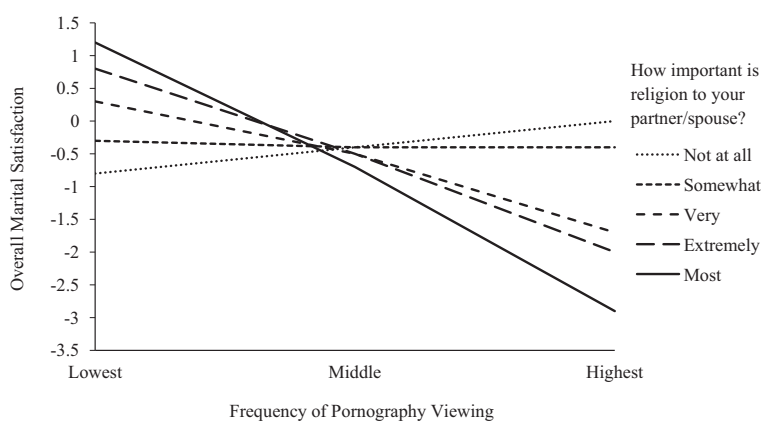
Model 2 introduces the interaction term for pornography viewing  $\times$  spousal religiosity, which is strongly and negatively associated with marital satisfaction ( $b = -.173, p < .001, \beta = -.269$ ), and is now the second strongest predictor in the model just behind spousal religiosity ( $b = .725, p < .001, \beta = .288$ ). Pornography viewing has changed its sign to positive, but has reduced to statistical nonsignificance ( $b = .225, p = .112, \beta = .113$ ). Although spousal religiosity is positively associated with marital quality in its main effect, the significant interaction effect of pornography viewing  $\times$  spousal religiosity affirms that the negative effect of pornography viewing on marital satisfaction is actually intensified or worsened as

**Table II.** Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting Marital Satisfaction and Porn Use

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2		Predicting Porn Use	
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β
Pornography Viewing	-.246*** (.062)	-.123	.225 (.141)	.113		
Spousal Religiosity	.403*** (.088)	.160	.725*** (.123)	.288	-.090* (.040)	-.071
Porn Viewing × Spousal Religiosity			-.173*** (.047)	-.269		
Conservative Protestant (ref.)						
Mainline Protestant	-.199 (.273)	-.024	-.128 (.272)	-.018	-.213 <sup>+</sup> (.122)	-.051
Other Protestant	-.186 (.462)	-.012	-.075 (.460)	-.007	.019 (.208)	.002
Catholic	.053 (.240)	.008	.164 (.241)	.021	.188 <sup>+</sup> (.108)	.055
Jewish	-1.192 <sup>+</sup> (.674)	-.051	-1.084 (.671)	-.047	.188 (.304)	.016
Other	-.251 (.409)	-.020	-.111 (.409)	-.012	.326 <sup>+</sup> (.184)	.051
Unaffiliated	-.391 (.315)	-.043	-.478 (.048)	-.056	.298* (.141)	.064
Scripture Inspired	.051 (.203)	.008	.080 (.202)	.013	-.490*** (.090)	-.157
Religious Service Attendance	-.086 <sup>+</sup> (.048)	-.064	-.107* (.048)	-.079	-.038 <sup>+</sup> (.022)	-.056
Age	-.019** (.007)	-.086	-.017* (.007)	-.081	-.020*** (.003)	-.186
Male	.388* (.181)	.064	.366* (.180)	.060	.980*** (.077)	.321
Biological Children in Home	-.290 (.190)	-.048	-.273 (.189)	.045	-.072 (.086)	-.023
Previous Divorce or Annulment	.280 (.195)	.040	.280 (.194)	.040	-.093 (.088)	-.027
Bachelor's or Higher	-.283 (.207)	-.044	-.323 (.206)	-.049	.002 (.093)	.001
Household Income	.024 (.045)	.045	.036 (.023)	.049	.032** (.011)	.087
White (ref.)						
Black	-.610 <sup>+</sup> (.336)	-.051	-.526 (.335)	-.030	.345* (.151)	.058
Hispanic	.177 (.300)	.018	.233 (.299)	.024	.058 (.135)	.012
Asian	.139 (.394)	.011	.131 (.392)	.011	-.624*** (.177)	-.096
Native American	-3.253** (1.224)	-.073	-3.095* (1.218)	-.069	-.197 (.553)	-.009
South	-.099 (.181)	-.015	-.128 (.180)	-.020	.155 <sup>+</sup> (.081)	.048
Constant	.315 (.566)		-.680 (.624)		2.599*** (.244)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.047		.057		.231	
N	1294		1294		1310	

Note: *b* = unstandardized beta; β = standardized beta. Standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>+</sup> *p* ≤ .10; \**p* ≤ .05; \*\**p* ≤ .01; \*\*\**p* ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests).



**Fig. 1.** Predicted Values of Marital Satisfaction on Spousal Religiosity and Pornography Viewing.

spousal religiosity increases. This supports the expectation stated in the third hypothesis.

Figure 1 illustrates how spousal religiosity moderates the relationship between pornography consumption and marital satisfaction. On the left side of the figure, it appears that for those who never view pornography, overall marital satisfaction increases as the religious commitment of respondents' spouses increases. However, as respondents report viewing pornography more often, those with more religious spouses report lower marital satisfaction to the point where those who view pornography most often decrease in their marital satisfaction as the religious commitment of their spouses increases. This is all while holding the respondents' own religious characteristics (religious tradition, theological conservatism, worship attendance) constant.

To provide a robustness check for the significant effects observed in Table II, Table III presents OLS regression models for each of the individual measures of marital satisfaction. Just as in Table II, for each individual measure of marital satisfaction, pornography consumption is negatively associated with marital satisfaction, while spousal religiosity is positively associated with marital satisfaction (as expected in Hypothesis 1 and 2). However, the interaction effects for pornography consumption  $\times$  spousal religiosity are negative and statistically significant for each measure of marital satisfaction (again affirming Hypothesis 3). Thus, there is a consistent trend suggesting that pornography consumption is negatively associated with marital satisfaction, but particularly so for those whose spouses are more religious.

In order to cross-check the findings reported in Tables II and III, which rely on respondents' own reporting of their spouse's religious commitment, Table IV presents OLS models predicting marital satisfaction while controlling for spouse's self-reported religious behaviors and commitment. Because spouses' self-reported religiosity measures are highly correlated, I include them in models separately.

**Table III.** Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting Individual Measures of Marital Satisfaction

Predictors	Happy With Marriage		Satisfied With Affection		Satisfied With Sex Life		Satisfied With Decision Making	
	Main Model	Interaction Model	Main Model	Interaction Model	Main Model	Interaction Model	Main Model	Interaction Model
Pornography Viewing	-.068* (.028)	.045 (.064)	-.086*** (.022)	.040 (.050)	-.101*** (.024)	.107 <sup>+</sup> (.055)	-.043* (.021)	.066 (.048)
Spousal Religiosity	.136*** (.040)	.214*** (.056)	.130*** (.031)	.216*** (.044)	.081* (.034)	.223*** (.048)	.141*** (.030)	.216*** (.042)
Porn Viewing × Spousal Religiosity		-.042* (.021)		-.046** (.017)		-.076*** (.018)		-.040* (.016)
Conservative Protestant Mainline Protestant	-.116 (.123)	-.099 (.124)	.026 (.097)	.045 (.097)	-.056 (.107)	-.025 (.106)	-.050 (.092)	-.033 (.092)
Other Protestant	-.159 (.210)	-.131 (.211)	.045 (.166)	.075 (.166)	.154 (.181)	.203 (.180)	-.225 (.157)	-.199 (.157)
Catholic	.084 (.109)	.110 (.110)	.090 (.086)	.118 (.086)	-.062 (.094)	-.013 (.094)	-.028 (.081)	-.004 (.082)
Jewish	-.131 (.307)	-.105 (.307)	-.551* (.242)	-.521* (.241)	.030 (.264)	.081 (.153)	-.657** (.229)	-.632** (.229)
Other	-.037 (.186)	-.003 (.187)	-.124 (.147)	-.086 (.147)	.091 (.160)	.153 (.160)	-.163 (.139)	-.131 (.139)
Unaffiliated	.094 (.143)	.073 (.143)	-.194 <sup>+</sup> (.112)	-.216 <sup>+</sup> (.112)	-.153 (.123)	-.191 (.123)	-.096 (.106)	-.116 (.106)
Scripture Inspired	.041 (.092)	.049 (.092)	.059 (.073)	.068 (.072)	-.099 (.080)	-.086 (.079)	.068 (.069)	.076 (.069)
Religious Service Attendance	-.012 (.022)	-.017 (.022)	-.038* (.017)	-.044* (.017)	.005 (.019)	-.004 (.019)	-.047** (.016)	-.051** (.016)
Age	.001 (.003)	.002 (.003)	-.010*** (.002)	-.009*** (.002)	-.013*** (.003)	-.012*** (.003)	.000 (.002)	.000 (.002)
Male	.188* (.082)	.183* (.082)	.168** (.065)	.163* (.065)	.070 (.071)	.060 (.070)	.074 (.061)	.069 (.061)
Biological Children in Home	.026 (.086)	.030 (.086)	-.261*** (.068)	-.261*** (.068)	-.020 (.074)	-.012 (.074)	-.060 (.064)	-.056 (.064)
Previous Divorce or Annulment	.054 (.086)	.054 (.088)	.037 (.070)	.038 (.069)	.090 (.076)	.090 (.076)	.107 (.066)	.107 (.066)



Table III. (Continued)

Predictors	Happy With Marriage		Satisfied With Affection		Satisfied With Sex Life		Satisfied With Decision Making	
	Main Model	Interaction Model	Main Model	Interaction Model	Main Model	Interaction Model	Main Model	Interaction Model
Bachelor's or Higher Household Income	-.041 (.094) .027* (.011)	-.051 (.094) .028** (.011)	-.103 (.074) .007 (.008)	-.114 (.074) .008 (.008)	-.229** (.081) .001 (.009)	-.247** (.081) .002 (.009)	.040 (.070) .008 (.008)	.031 (.070) .008 (.008)
White (ref.)								
Black	-.303* (.153)	-.283 + (.153)	-.056 (.120)	-.034 (.120)	-.057 (.131)	-.020 (.131)	-.324** (.114)	-.305** (.114)
Hispanic	-.005 (.136)	.010 (.136)	.070 (.107)	.087 (.107)	-.076 (.117)	.100 (.117)	.059 (.102)	.073 (.102)
Asian	.119 (.179)	.118 (.179)	.050 (.141)	.049 (.141)	.023 (.154)	.019 (.153)	-.046 (.133)	-.047 (.133)
Native American	-.704 (.558)	-.665 (.558)	-1.111* (.439)	-1.068* (.439)	-1.235** (.479)	-1.165* (.476)	-.793 + (.416)	-.756 + (.415)
South	-.010 (.082)	-.017 (.082)	.014 (.065)	.005 (.064)	-.020 (.071)	-.033 (.070)	-.093 (.061)	-.100 (.061)
Constant	5.123*** (.257)	4.881*** (.285)	4.533*** (.202)	4.265*** (.224)	4.631*** (.221)	4.192*** (.244)	3.856*** (.191)	3.625*** (.212)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.021	.023	.060	.065	.037	.050	.041	.045
N	1,309	1,309	1,309	1,309	1,294	1,294	1,308	1,308

Note: Only unstandardized beta coefficients are presented. Standard errors in parentheses. All models control for sociodemographic and religion controls included in Table II. Full results available upon request. +p ≤ .10; \*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*\*\*p ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests).

Table IV. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting Marital Satisfaction With Spouse's Self-Reported Religiosity Measures

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Pornography Viewing	-.326*** (.089)	.090 (.158)	-.232** (.082)	.118 (.155)	-.303*** (.087)	-.117 (.128)	-.229** (.082)	.146 (.209)
Spouse's Attendance	-.141 (.088)	.120 (.120)						
Porn Viewing × Spouse's Attendance		-.125** (.039)						
Spouse's Prayer Frequency			.012 (.054)	.156* (.077)				
Porn Viewing × Spouse's Prayer				-.073** (.027)				
Spouse's Self-Reported Frequency of Scripture Reading					.083 (.064)	.214* (.093)		
Porn Viewing × Spouse's Scripture Reading						-.074* (.037)		
Spouse's Self-Reported Importance of Religion							.065 (.127)	.312 <sup>+</sup> (.179)
Porn Viewing × Spouse's Importance of Religion								-.150* (.077)
Conservative Protestant (ref.)								
Mainline Protestant	-.519 (.394)	-.364 (.394)	-.439 (.376)	-.459 (.374)	-.668 <sup>+</sup> (.395)	-.620 (.395)	-.413 (.378)	-.330 (.380)
Other Protestant	-.009 (.738)	.345 (.740)	-.446 (.676)	-.337 (.674)	.256 (.807)	.389 (.808)	-.415 (.678)	-.337 (.678)
Catholic	.512 (.334)	.703* (.336)	.646 <sup>+</sup> (.334)	.653 (.332)	.568 (.353)	.651 <sup>+</sup> (.354)	.679 (.341)	.783 (.344)
Jewish	-2.507* (1.265)	-2.580* (1.255)	-629 (.954)	-688 (.950)	-1.023 (.997)	-1.067 (.995)	-614 (.944)	-577 (.943)
Other	-.205 (.696)	.091 (.696)	.097 (.534)	.133 (.532)	.212 (.556)	.259 (.555)	.117 (.530)	.207 (.531)
Unaffiliated	.252 (.467)	.189 (.463)	-.291 (.430)	-.456 (.432)	-.437 (.497)	-.442 (.495)	-.270 (.428)	-.324 (.428)

Table IV. (Continued)

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Scripture Inspired	.706* (.294)	.720* (.291)	.904*** (.276)	.847 (.276)	.482 + (.291)	.433 (.292)	.889 (.277)	.880 (.276)
Religious Service Attendance	.013 (.090)	-.040 (.091)	-.080 (.063)	-.097 (.063)	-.090 (.069)	-.098 (.069)	-.092 (.068)	-.102 (.068)
Age	-.020* (.010)	-.015 (.010)	-.016 + (.009)	-.015 (.009)	-.011 (.010)	-.010 (.010)	-.016 (.009)	-.015 (.009)
Male	.214 (.265)	.191 (.263)	.199 (.255)	.137 (.254)	.030 (.268)	.030 (.267)	.182 (.253)	.179 (.253)
Biological Children in Home	-.310 (.293)	-.084 (.299)	-.379 (.264)	-.355 (.263)	-.340 (.286)	-.287 (.287)	-.378 (.263)	-.319 (.264)
Previous Divorce or Annulment	.361 (.293)	.440 (.292)	.382 (.272)	.422 (.272)	.368 (.288)	.426 (.289)	.385 (.272)	.390 (.272)
Bachelor's or Higher	-.275 (.307)	-.314 (.304)	-.599* (.284)	-.624 (.283)	-.562 + (.298)	-.596* (.298)	-.597 (.283)	-.613 (.282)
Household Income	.021 (.036)	.016 (.036)	.021 (.034)	.022 (.033)	.018 (.036)	.021 (.036)	.021 (.034)	.020 (.033)
White (ref.)								
Black	-.032 (.651)	.381 (.658)	-.254 (.564)	-.135 (.564)	-.133 (.570)	.021 (.574)	-.261 (.563)	-.067 (.571)
Hispanic	-.507 (.528)	-.438 (.524)	-.405 (.512)	-.284 (.511)	-.412 (.535)	-.327 (.535)	-.403 (.512)	-.371 (.511)
Asian	.420 (.589)	.342 (.584)	.043 (.554)	.040 (.551)	.578 (.562)	.586 (.561)	.061 (.554)	.051 (.553)
Native American	-.382 (21.356)	-.151 (21.174)	-6.838*** (1.456)	-7.297 (1.460)	-3.359 (2.225)	-3.249 (2.220)	-6.837 (1.456)	-7.437 (1.485)
South	-.806*** (.268)	-.785** (.266)	-.502* (.249)	-.545 (.249)	-.539* (.267)	-.555 (.267)	-.500* (.248)	-.476 (.248)
Constant	2.137*** (.812)	.969 (.885)	1.286 + (.749)	.651 (.783)	1.471 (.808)	1.012 (.838)	1.185 (.776)	1.470 (.857)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.058	.074	.093	.101	.061	.066	.093	.097
N	551	551	688	688	578	578	688	688

Note: Only unstandardized beta coefficients are presented. Standard errors in parentheses.  
All models control for sociodemographic and religion controls included in Table II. Full results available upon request.  
+ p ≤ .10; \*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*\*\*p ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests).

Models 1 and 2 include spouse's self-reported religious service attendance. Models 3 and 4 include spouse's self-reported frequency of prayer. Models 5 and 6 include spouse's self-reported frequency of Scripture reading. And Models 7 and 8 include spouse's self-reported importance of religion.<sup>9</sup> Models 2, 4, 6, and 8 also include interaction terms for respondents' pornography use  $\times$  each self-reported spousal religiosity measure. In the main effects models, pornography consumption is significantly and negatively related to marital quality, though none of the self-reported spousal religiosity measures attain statistical significance. This may be because the sample size is approximately half that of main models in Table II. Even with the reduced sample size, however, all interaction terms are significant and in the predicted direction. Thus, even when considering spouse's self-reported religious behaviors and commitment, as spouse's religious commitment increases, the negative relationship between married respondents' pornography consumption and their marital satisfaction is intensified.

Last, in order to view how the moderation effect observed in Table II may itself be influenced by gender, Table V divides the analytic sample into men and women. In the main effect models, it appears that spousal religiosity is not a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for men, but it is highly significant for women. Assuming that almost all of the marriages in PALS are heterosexual (a safe assumption in 2006 when PALS was fielded), this would suggest that there are greater returns to marital satisfaction when women have highly religious husbands, and fewer returns to marital satisfaction when men have highly religious wives. This is possibly due to the softening effect religion has on men, influencing them to be better spouses. By contrast, religious commitment may not change women in their marriage behaviors enough to matter greatly in the satisfaction of their spouses (see Perry 2015a). Conversely, in the main effects model, pornography consumption is not a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for women, but it is strongly and negatively associated with marital satisfaction for men. This finding is consistent with previous research (Doran and Price 2014; Perry 2016a; Yucel and Gassanov 2010). In the interaction models, the term for pornography consumption  $\times$  spousal religiosity is negative and significant for men at .014. And while the interaction coefficient is also negative and slightly greater in magnitude for women ( $b = -.205$ ) than for men ( $b = -.129$ ), it does not attain statistical significance ( $p = .131$ ). Given the size of the coefficient for women relative to men, however, the nonsignificant finding is possibly due more to lower sample size for women ( $n = 618$ ) than men ( $n = 676$ ). Analyses of predicted values for both men and women reveals consistent patterns for both (results available upon request). Thus, it appears that the moderating effect of spousal religiosity on the link between pornography consumption and marital

<sup>9</sup> Spouse's religious service attendance is coded 1 = never to 8 = three or more times a week. Spouse's prayer frequency is coded 1 = never to 9 = more than three times a day. Spouse's Scripture reading is coded 0 = never to 8 = more than once a day. And importance of religion to spouse was coded 1 = not at all important to 5 = most important aspect of life. Spouse's self-reported religious service attendance, prayer frequency, Scripture reading, and importance of religion are each correlated with respondents' own evaluation of how important religion was to their spouses at .63, .72, .65, and .57, respectively. Thus, the strong correlation between spouse's self-reported religious commitment and activities with respondents' evaluations of their religious commitment strengthens confidence in the results presented in Tables II, III, and V.

Table V. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting Marital Satisfaction by Gender

Predictors	Men		Women	
	Main Model	Interaction Model	Main Model	Interaction Model
Pornography Viewing	-.237*** (.067)	.120 (.159)	-.264 (.169)	.276 (.395)
Spousal Religiosity	-.079 (.126)	.237 (.179)	.796*** (.126)	1.063*** (.217)
Porn Viewing × Spousal Religiosity		-.129* (.052)		-.205 <sup>a</sup> (.136)
Conservative Protestant (ref.)				
Mainline Protestant	-.462 (.378)	-.362 (.379)	.154 (.396)	.153 (.396)
Other Protestant	-.183 (.609)	-.070 (.608)	-.300 (.703)	-.236 (.704)
Catholic	.021 (.316)	.166 (.320)	.125 (.370)	.149 (.370)
Jewish	-1.619 (1.043)	-1.580 (1.039)	-.816 (.909)	-.719 (.911)
Other	.196 (.543)	.371 (.545)	-.449 (.630)	-.429 (.630)
Unaffiliated	-.664 (.407)	-.741 <sup>+</sup> (.407)	-.073 (.500)	-.085 (.499)
Scripture Inspired	.558* (.278)	.566* (.277)	-.330 (.310)	-.315 (.310)
Religious Service Attendance	.035 (.066)	.007 (.067)	-.177* (.070)	-.182** (.070)
Age	-.013 (.009)	-.013 (.009)	-.025* (.011)	-.023* (.011)
Biological Children in Home	-.244 (.247)	-.219 (.246)	-.492 (.296)	-.455 (.297)
Previous Divorce or Annulment	-.010 (.256)	-.006 (.255)	.488 <sup>+</sup> (.301)	.516 <sup>+</sup> (.301)
Bachelor's or Higher	-.572* (.287)	-.622* (.287)	-.129 (.302)	-.127 (.302)
Household Income	.064* (.032)	.069* (.032)	-.002 (.035)	-.001 (.035)
White (ref.)				
Black	-.814 <sup>+</sup> (.449)	-.745 <sup>+</sup> (.448)	-.335 (.508)	-.282 (.509)
Hispanic	.152 (.397)	.175 (.396)	.219 (.457)	.260 (.457)
Asian	-.197 (.516)	-.224 (.514)	.367 (.603)	.389 (.602)
Native American	-1.918 (2.758)	-1.820 (2.747)	-3.686** (1.423)	-3.569* (1.424)
South	-.073 (.241)	-.132 (.241)	-.034 (.276)	-.021 (.276)
Constant	1.105 (.731)	.148 (.825)	.321 (.944)	-.542 (1.102)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.041	.049	.070	.072
N	676		618	618

Note: Only unstandardized beta coefficients are presented. Standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>a</sup>p = .131; +p ≤ .10; \*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*\*\*p ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests).

satisfaction has largely similar effects for both married men and women. Evidentiary support for the fourth and final hypothesis is inconclusive.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined how spousal religiosity moderates the link between pornography consumption and marital quality, and how this moderating effect potentially varies by gender. Consistent with previous research, the analyses reveal that those who more frequently view pornography report lower levels of overall marital satisfaction than those who view pornography less frequently or never. Correspondingly, those with more religiously devout spouses report greater marital satisfaction, all else being equal. The interaction effects reveal, however, that rather than attenuating the negative relationship between pornography consumption and marital satisfaction, spousal religiosity actually exacerbates it. That is to say, the negative association between pornography consumption and marital satisfaction increases in magnitude as spousal religiosity increases. This effect holds whether marital satisfaction is operationalized as a scale (Table II) or with individual measures (Table III) and whether spousal religiosity is measured with respondents' evaluations their spouses' religiosity (Table II) or spouses' self-reported religiosity measures (Table IV). Moreover, dividing the sample into married men and women revealed that the moderating effect of spousal religiosity on the link between pornography consumption and marital satisfaction is generally the same for both husbands and wives (Table V).

The findings of this study hold several implications for research on pornography use, religion, and married life. Consistent with previous research, married persons who use pornography more frequently report lower levels of marital satisfaction. Findings from the current study suggest that the negative influences of married person's pornography use on their married lives is actually made worse by their spouse's religious commitment. What are the potential mechanisms at work here? Expanding on the brief theorizing done by Doran and Price (2014), it is likely that having a devoutly religious spouse increases the social and psychic costs of frequent porn viewing. More specifically, for married persons who are frequent consumers of pornography, having a devoutly religious spouse may result in (1) their feeling more guilty about their viewing pornography in light of their spouse's moral convictions, thereby associating the marriage itself with discouragement and failure, and/or (2) greater likelihood of interpersonal confrontation over their use of pornography, resulting in greater tension and marital dissatisfaction. While having a highly religious spouse in itself may be predictive of greater marital quality due to the various personal benefits the spouse brings to the couple (sanctification of marriage, fidelity, kindness, patience, forgiveness), in situations where the other spouse is violating the moral standards of the devout spouse (such as frequent porn use), the result is more costly to the marriage than if the spouse were not religious at all. In this same vein, research has shown that religious heterogamy, where one spouse is considerably more religious than the other, can have deleterious effects on marital quality. It is possible that within the context of marriage to a devoutly religious

spouse, more frequent porn consumption may either be indicative of or even exacerbate religious or moral heterogamy. While this study holds respondents' own religious characteristics constant, future research could examine whether the link between porn consumption and marital quality is particularly strong in situations where there are higher levels of religious mismatch.

Another possible mechanism is that having a religiously devout spouse might be related to lower sexual satisfaction for married persons, perhaps due to religiously devout spouses being more sexually inhibited or frigid. Combined with the negative effects of pornography consumption on marital satisfaction, having a religiously devout (and less sexually interested) partner could result in even lower marital satisfaction. However, the analyses in Table III demonstrate that spousal religiosity is actually positively related to respondents' sexual satisfaction. And when married men are considered separately, their spouse's religious commitment is unrelated to their sexual satisfaction, either positively or negatively (analysis not shown). Thus, while the moderating effect of spousal religiosity on the link between pornography use and marital satisfaction may conceivably be due somewhat to respondents' sexual frustration associated with their spouse's religious commitment, this seems less defensible than the other mechanisms discussed above.

The findings of this study also hold implications for research on religion and married life. While the majority of studies on religion and marriage outcomes suggest that religious commitment—particularly *mutual* religious commitment but also as individuals—has a salutary effect on marital quality, the current study suggests that this beneficial effect of religious commitment must be qualified. In situations where one partner is consistently violating the moral convictions of a religious spouse, the partner in violation is more likely to experience greater psychic strain and dissatisfaction in the relationship due to a combination of their behavior and their spouse's religious standards and expectations. Conversely, this study finds that among frequent pornography users who had irreligious spouses, their overall marital satisfaction did not decline, but in fact increased slightly (see Fig. 1).

Several limitations are important to acknowledge here. First, as in most studies of marital quality, the data are cross-sectional and thus causal direction cannot be demonstrated definitively. As acknowledged previously, frequent pornography consumption could be a consequence of marital dissatisfaction as well as a cause. Even though the directional relationship assumed here is supported by previous experimental and qualitative studies (Bergner and Bridges 2002; Lambert et al. 2012; Zillmann and Bryant 1988), and followed by almost all other studies on porn use and marriage outcomes, longitudinal and qualitative data would be ideal to verify causal direction (e.g., Perry 2016a, 2016c). A second limitation is that PALS does not provide the gender of respondents' spouses, and thus I cannot be completely certain that married couples are heterosexual. However, the fact that PALS was fielded in 2006 when gay marriage was only legal in one state (Massachusetts since 2003) makes it highly probable that virtually all married couples in the sample are heterosexual.

The broad and long-term social consequences of widespread pornography consumption in the United States are not yet fully understood. Yet the clear trend in studies of pornography consumption and married life suggest that pornography use



can potentially have a variety of deleterious effects on marital quality and stability. Conversely, having a religiously committed spouse tends to have a salutary effect on marital quality for a variety of different reasons. This study demonstrates the paradoxical finding that, among married persons who are frequently consuming pornography, their spouse's religious commitment intensifies the already-negative influence of porn use on their marital satisfaction. In view of the possibility that spousal religiosity likely increases the social or psychic costs of porn use for married persons, the practical consequence of the situation could be either that frequent porn users who are married will continue their use and experience less than desirable marital satisfaction, desist from their porn use and possibly enjoy greater marital satisfaction, or perhaps, opt out of marriage altogether as observed by Doran and Price (2014).

## REFERENCES

- Allgood, Scot M., Sharon Harris, Linda Skogrand, and Thomas R. Lee. 2009. "Marital Commitment and Religiosity in a Religiously Homogenous Population." *Marriage & Family Review* 45: 1: 52–67.
- Bergner, Raymond M., and Ana J. Bridges. 2002. "The Significance of Heavy Pornography Involvement for Romantic Partners: Research and Clinical Implications." *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 28: 3: 193–206.
- Bridges, Ana J., Raymond M. Bergner, and Matthew Hesson-McInnis. 2003. "Romantic Partner's Use of Pornography: Its Significance for Women." *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 29: 1: 1–14.
- Bridges, Ana J., and Patricia J. Morokoff. 2011. "Sexual Media Use and Relational Satisfaction in Heterosexual Couples." *Personal Relationships* 18: 4: 562–585.
- Brown, Edna, Terri L. Orbach, and Jose A. Bauermeister. 2008. "Religiosity and Marital Stability Among Black American and White American Couples." *Family Relations* 57: 2: 186–197.
- Burdette, Amy M., Christopher G. Ellison, Darren E. Sherkat, and Kurt A. Gore. 2007. "Are There Religious Variations in Marital Infidelity?" *Journal of Family Issues* 28: 12: 1553–1581.
- Call, Vaughn R.A., and Timothy B. Heaton. 1997. "Religious Influence on Marital Stability." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36: 3: 382–392.
- Carroll, Jason S., Laura M. Padilla-Walker, Larry J. Nelson, Chad D. Olson, Carolyn McNamara Barry, and Stephanie D. Madsen. 2008. "Generation XXX: Pornography Acceptance and Use Among Emerging Adults." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23: 1: 6–30.
- Curtis, Kristen T., and Christopher G. Ellison. 2002. "Religious Heterogamy and Marital Conflict: Findings From the National Survey of Families and Households." *Journal of Family Issues* 23: 4: 551–576.
- Daneback, Kristian, Bente Traeen, and Sven-Axel Mansson. 2009. "Use of Pornography in a Random Sample of Norwegian Heterosexual Couples." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 38: 5: 746–753.
- Doran, Kirk, and Joseph Price. 2014. "Pornography and Marriage." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 35: 4: 489–498.
- Doring, Nicola M. 2009. "The Internet's Impact on Sexuality: A Critical Review of 15 Years of Research." *Computers in Human Behavior* 25: 5: 1089–1101.
- Edelman, Benjamin. 2009. "Red Light States: Who Buys On-Line Adult Entertainment." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 23: 1: 209–220.
- Ellison, Christopher G., Amy M. Burdette, and W. Bradford Wilcox. 2010. "The Couple That Prays Together: Race and Ethnicity, Religion, and Relationship Quality Among Working-Age Adults." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72: 4: 963–975.
- Ellison, Christopher G., Andrea K. Henderson, Norval D. Glenn, and Kristine E. Harkrider. 2011. "Sanctification, Stress, and Marital Quality." *Family Relations* 60: 4: 404–420.
- Emerson, Michael O., David Sikkink, and Adele James. 2010. "The Panel Study on American Religion and Ethnicity: Background, Methods, and Selected Results." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49: 1: 162–171.
- Heaton, Timothy B. 1984. "Religious Homogamy and Marital Satisfaction Reconsidered." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 46: 3: 729–733.

- Heaton, Timothy B. 2002. "Factors Contributing to Increasing Marital Stability in the United States." *Journal of Family Issues* 23: 3: 392–409.
- Heaton, Timothy B., and Edith L. Pratt. 1990. "The Effects of Religious Homogamy on Marital Satisfaction and Stability." *Journal of Family Issues* 11: 2: 191–207.
- Lambert, Nathaniel M., and David C. Dollahite. 2006. "How Religiosity Helps Couples Prevent, Resolve, and Overcome Marital Conflict." *Family Relations* 55: 4: 439–449.
- Lambert, Nathaniel M., Sesen Negash, Tyler F. Stillman, Spencer B. Olmstead, and Frank D. Fincham. 2012. "A Love That Doesn't Last: Pornography Consumption and Weakened Commitment to One's Romantic Partner." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 31: 4: 410–438.
- Lichter, Daniel T., and Julie H. Carmalt. 2009. "Religion and Marital Quality Among Low-Income Couples." *Social Science Research* 38: 1: 168–187.
- Lindgren, James. 1993. "Defining Pornography." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 141: 4: 1153–1275.
- Maddox, Amanda M., Galena K. Rhoades, and Howard J. Markman. 2011. "Viewing Sexually-Explicit Materials Alone or Together: Associations with Relationship Quality." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 40: 2: 441–448.
- Mahoney, Annette. 2010. "Religion in Families, 1999–2009: A Relational Spirituality Framework." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72: 4: 805–827.
- Manning, Jill C. 2006. "The Impact of Internet Pornography on Marriage and the Family: A Review of the Research." *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13: 2–3: 131–165.
- Marks, Loren. 2005. "How Does Religion Influence Marriage? Christian, Jewish, Mormon, and Muslim Perspectives." *Marriage & Family Review* 38: 1: 85–111.
- Myers, Scott M. 2006. "Religious Homogamy and Marital Quality: Historical and Generational Patterns, 1980–1997." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68: 2: 292–304.
- Ortega, Suzanne T., Hugh P. Whitt, and J. Allen William. 1988. "Religious Homogamy and Marital Happiness." *Journal of Family Issues* 9: 2: 224–239.
- Patterson, Richard, and Joseph Price. 2012. "Pornography, Religion, and the Happiness Gap: Does Pornography Impact the Actively Religious Differently?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51: 1: 79–89.
- Perry, Samuel L. 2014. "A Match Made in Heaven? Religion-Based Marriage Decisions, Marital Quality, and the Moderating Effects of Spouse's Religious Commitment." *Social Indicators Research* 123: 1: 203–225.
- Perry, Samuel L. 2015a. "Spouse's Religious Commitment and Marital Quality: Clarifying the Role of Gender." *Social Science Quarterly*. doi:10.1111/ssqu.12224.
- Perry, Samuel L. 2015b. "Pornography Consumption as a Threat to Religious Socialization." *Sociology of Religion* 76: 4: 436–458.
- Perry, Samuel L. 2016a. "Does Viewing Pornography Reduce Marital Quality Over Time? Evidence from Longitudinal Data." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (forthcoming).
- Perry, Samuel L. 2016b. "Perceived Spousal Religiosity and Marital Quality Across Racial and Ethnic Groups." *Family Relations* (forthcoming).
- Perry, Samuel L. 2016c. "Does Viewing Pornography Diminish Religiosity Over Time? Evidence From Two-Wave Panel Data." *Journal of Sex Research* (forthcoming).
- Poulsen, Franklin O., Dean M. Busby, and Adam M. Galovan. 2013. "Pornography Use: Who Uses It and How It Is Associated With Couple Outcomes." *Journal of Sex Research* 50: 1: 72–83.
- Shehan, Constance L., E. Wilbur Bock, and Gary R. Lee. 1990. "Religious Heterogamy, Religiosity, and Marital Happiness: The Case of Catholics." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 52: 1: 73–79.
- Sherkat, Darren. 2014. *Changing Faith: The Dynamics and Consequences of Americans' Shifting Religious Identities*. New York: New York University Press.
- Sherkat, Darren, Kylan Mattias de Vries, and Stacia Creek. 2010. "Race, Religion, and Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage." *Social Science Quarterly* 91: 1: 80–98.
- Sherkat, Darren, and Christopher G. Ellison. 1997. "The Cognitive Structure of a Moral Crusade: Conservative Protestantism and Opposition to Pornography." *Social Forces* 75: 3: 957–980.
- Short, Mary B., Lora Black, Angela H. Smith, Chad T. Wetterneck, and Daryl E. Wells. 2012. "A Review of Internet Pornography Use Research: Methodology and Content From the Past 10 Years." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 15: 1: 13–23.
- Stack, Steven, Ira Wasserman, and Roger Kern. 2004. "Adult Social Bonds and Use of Internet Pornography." *Social Science Quarterly* 85: 1: 75–88.
- Stafford, Laura, David Prabu, and Sterling McPherson. 2014. "Sanctity of Marriage and Marital Quality." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 31: 1: 54–70.

- Steensland, Brian, Jerry Z. Park, Mark Regnerus, W. Lynn Robinson, Bradford Wilcox, and Robert Woodberry. 2000. "The Measure of American Religion: Toward Improving the State of the Art." *Social Forces* 79: 1: 291–318.
- Stewart, Destin N., and Dawn M. Szymanski. 2012. "Young Adult Women's Reports of Their Male Romantic Partner's Pornography Use as a Correlate of Their Self-Esteem, Relationship Quality, and Sexual Satisfaction." *Sex Roles* 67: 5–6: 257–271.
- Sullivan, Kieren T. 2001. "Understanding the Relationship Between Religiosity and Marriage: An Investigation of the Immediate and Longitudinal Effects of Religiosity on Newlywed Couples." *Journal of Family Psychology* 15: 4: 610–626.
- Vaaler, Margaret L., Christopher G. Ellison, and Daniel L. Powers. 2009. "Religious Influences on the Risk of Marital Dissolution." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71: 4: 917–934.
- Waite, Linda J., and Evelyn L. Lehrer. 2003. "The Benefits From Marriage and Religion in the United States: A Comparative Analysis." *Population and Development Review* 29: 2: 255–275.
- Wilcox, W. Bradford, and Jeffrey Dew. 2013. "The Social and Cultural Predictors of Generosity in Marriage: Gender Egalitarianism, Religiosity, and Familism." *Journal of Family Issues*. doi:10.1177/0192513X13513581.
- Wilson, John, and Marc Musick. 1996. "Religion and Marital Dependency." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35: 1: 30–40.
- Yucel, Deniz, and Margaret A. Gassanov. 2010. "Exploring Actor and Partner Correlates of Sexual Satisfaction Among Married Couples." *Social Science Research* 39: 5: 725–738.
- Zillmann, Dolf, and Jennings Bryant. 1988. "Pornography's Impact on Sexual Satisfaction." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 18: 5: 438–453.