



Theses and Dissertations

2022-06-13

Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use: A Grounded Theory

Misha Duncan Crawford
Brigham Young University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Crawford, Misha Duncan, "Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use: A Grounded Theory" (2022). *Theses and Dissertations*. 9553.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/9553>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use:

A Grounded Theory

Misha Duncan Crawford

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Mark Butler, Chair
Loren Marks
Chelom Leavitt

School of Family Life
Brigham Young University

Copyright © 2022 Misha Duncan Crawford

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use: A Grounded Theory

Misha Duncan Crawford
School of Family Life, Brigham Young University
Master of Science

Empirical research suggests that married women may more commonly experience spousal pornography use as a relational attachment threat and are more likely to experience negatively associated relational outcomes such as distress and loss of trust. The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory of women's response to concealed spousal pornography use. This study included the experiences of 30 women who reported spousal pornography use as a threat to relational attachment and demonstrated evidence of individual and relational healing thereafter. The research question, "How do women describe the experience of learning of their spouse's pornography use and the individual and relationship sequelae that follow?" was explored using grounded theory methods to analyze de-identified blog accounts emphasizing response to a spouse viewing pornography in marital relationships. The results describe a process model highlighting three interrelated informant categories—emotional response, mental response, and physical response—and one resultant category—behavioral response. Implications include the importance of open communication regarding pornography use within relationships, the necessity for individual and relational healing following betrayal trauma, and the role of therapeutic intervention in shaping adaptive healing processes.

Keywords: pornography, marital relationships, women, attachment theory, healing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	iv
Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use: A Grounded Theory	1
Literature Review	2
Attachment Theory.....	2
Pornography Use as an Attachment Threat.....	3
Prevalence	3
Gender Discrepancy.....	4
Relational Implications	5
Deception.....	7
Women's Response to Partner Pornography Use.....	7
Gaps in the Literature	9
Purpose of the Study.....	9
Methodology	10
Sampling and Participants	10
Data Analysis.....	12
Researcher Reflexivity.....	14
Trustworthiness and Credibility	15
Results	15
Description of the Grounded Theory of Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use.....	15
Major Category 1: Emotional Response	17
Major Category 2: Mental Response	20
Major Category 3: Physical Response	23
Major Category 4: Behavioral Response	23
Discussion	27
Clinical Implications and Applications	30
Limitations and Future Research.....	33
References	35

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Process Model of Women’s Response to Spousal Pornography Use.....50

Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use: A Grounded Theory

The growing use of pornography in modern society has led researchers to examine relational outcomes associated with pornography use. Although the research community has reported both positive (Butler et al., 2018) and negative associated individual outcomes (Sommet & Berent, 2022), pornography use is generally associated with problematic relational outcomes including decreased relational satisfaction, stability, and commitment (Perry, 2017; Szymanski et al., 2015; Willoughby et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021). Consequently, some partners experience their spouse viewing pornography as a betrayal that casts doubt on attachment security within the marriage (Bridges et al., 2003; Zitzman & Butler, 2005, 2009).

Although foundational elements of attachment can be negatively impacted for both genders (Butler, 2019), female partners more commonly tend to perceive their spouse's pornography use more commonly as an attachment threat and experience associated distress (Szymanski et al., 2015). Research indicates that this increased likelihood may be due to gender discrepancy in use and perception of pornography, implications for relational and sexual quality, and deception surrounding pornography use (Carroll et al., 2017; Maddox et al., 2011; Willoughby et al., 2021). Further, relational distress linked to pornography use is significantly higher in marital relationships, as there is a firmer expectation for commitment and often a deeper investment (Bridges et al., 2003). Nearly one-third of engaged and married women consider pornography a form of marital infidelity (Carroll et al., 2017).

Despite the growing rate of pornography use by male spouses and associated negative outcomes more commonly experienced by women, research investigating the lived experience of women who view spousal pornography use as an attachment threat is limited (Stewart &

Szymanski, 2012). Although existing research documents women's general attitudes and perception of spousal pornography use, the exact individual and relational processes surrounding the discovery and disclosure of spousal pornography use are not well understood. Processual experience is often best examined through qualitative study (Dawson, 2014).

Literature Review

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory offers an empirically well-established (Bowlby, 1969, 1988; Cassidy & Shaver, 2002, 2008, 2016; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) theory of adult love and connection. Attachment theorists hold that humans have a fundamental need to be deeply connected to others and posit attachment as the inborn human bonding system designed for optimal survival and development (Butler, 2019). Alongside the parent-child tie, adult pair-bond attachment is the basis of enduring connection and commitment in both the couple and familial systems (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). Many features of human sexuality uniquely foster and help maintain an enduring attachment bond between partners, promoting a durable procreative family structure and an optimal foundation for individual thriving (Butler, 2019; Hazan & Diamond, 2000; Van Ijzendoorn & Sagi-Schwartz, 2008).

Secure pair-bond attachment is fostered and sustained within couples through partners' reliable accessibility, responsiveness, and supportive engagement (Sandberg et al., 2012). The confidence that one's partner will demonstrate a trustworthy presence in the relationship creates a safe, stable base from which individuals can engage in exploratory, generative, and self-actualizing behavior (Olson, 2000). Secure attachment in couple relationships has been consistently linked to higher relational quality (Feeney, 2008), and is considered a foundational marker of marital health by many marriage and family therapy scholars (Johnson, 2019).

Attachment theory provides an explanation for many psychological and behavioral responses that accompany threats to secure attachment in relationships. “Loss of connection with an attachment figure can induce a particular kind of fear—a primal panic, heightening attachment needs and proximity seeking” (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010, p. 3). From this perspective, responses to separation (whether physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual) such as distress, anger, clinging, and grieving can be seen as attempts to reconnect with a seemingly detached loved one (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008). At moments of threat or disconnection from an attachment figure, the attachment system—a threat response system—is triggered and behavioral responses are organized to increase emotional connection and restore a felt sense of security (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). It is through this attachment lens that the current study examines the process of women’s response to spousal pornography use and sequelae experiences.

Pornography Use as an Attachment Threat

Research suggests that women’s experience of pornography use as an attachment threat may be rooted in a combination of the growing prevalence of pornography use, gender discrepancy in use and perception of pornography, implications of pornography use on relational and sexual quality, and common deception surrounding its use.

Prevalence

Pornography use in the U.S. has grown exponentially, becoming a normative experience for most men and for an increasing number of women (Price et al., 2016; Willoughby et al., 2021). The technological reality that about 90% of U.S. residents have access to the internet via traditional devices or a smartphone has enabled far more individuals in the choice to use pornography (Martin, 2021), propelled by accessibility, affordability, and anonymity (Cooper,

1998). Consequently, the behavior has become a frequent pastime in the everyday life of many people (Campbell & Kohut, 2017), and individuals, couples, and families across the demographic spectrum are being impacted by pornography use as never before (Manning, 2006).

Gender Discrepancy

Although pornography use is escalating for all genders, a sizeable gap still exists between men and women when it comes to personal use (Carroll et al., 2017). A prevalent pattern is for many women who report little or no use to be partnered with men who regularly use pornography (Willoughby et al., 2021), with women about twice as likely to report never viewing pornography compared to men (i.e., married women = 65% vs. married men = 37%).

Men and women in committed relationships are particularly disparate in frequency, with men being over six times more likely to report using pornography at least weekly compared to their female counterparts. Though many romantic couples now utilize pornography as a regular part of their couple intimacy (Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018), married men remain about four times more likely to report patterns of viewing pornography *always* alone compared to married women, who largely report primarily or completely couple-based use (Willoughby et al., 2021).

Women's lower engagement in pornography viewing is likely influenced by female perceptions of the nature and implications of pornography use (Carroll et al., 2017). Recent estimates of pornography acceptance show that more than half of married women believe viewing pornography is unacceptable, and almost half agree that pornography objectifies and degrades men and women (Willoughby et al., 2021). Women generally report more discomfort and lower acceptance of pornography use than males (Carroll et al., 2008; Maddox et al., 2011), with nearly one-third of engaged and married women considering pornography a form of marital infidelity (Bridges et al., 2003; Carroll et al., 2017; see also Zitzman & Butler, 2009). In a study

highlighting jealousy and infidelity as causes of relationship strife and dissolution, 83% of women indicated that emotional infidelity was even more distressing than sexual infidelity (Buss, 2018), which may help account for why pornography use is experienced by many women as not entirely different than actual sexual infidelity. These differences in use and perception between genders may importantly contribute to relational implications and associated deception.

Relational Implications

The growing prevalence of pornography has led researchers to explore the implications of pornography use within romantic couple relationships (Dalecki & Price, 1994; Hald & Stulhofer, 2016). The recent *National Couples and Pornography Survey* found that pornography use within couples was negatively associated with a range of indicators of relationship quality (Willoughby et al., 2021). Relationship stability, commitment, and relationship satisfaction all consistently decreased as the relative frequency of pornography use of at least one partner increased within couples. One-in-five couples report pornography-related conflict in their marriage, and couples have increasingly been seeking professional help for pornography-related relationship distress (Ayres & Haddock, 2009). Given the heretofore prevalence of pornography use in society, there is some evidence that individuals may underreport pornography use and associated implications due to the desire to positively self-present (Rasmussen et al., 2018).

Research suggests that pornography's depiction, socialization, and scripting of intimate relationships is disruptive to secure attachment and that impaired attachment can in turn negatively impact relationship and family well-being (Butler, 2019; Feeney, 2008; Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018). The safe expectation of one's partner being faithfully present for the other (Olson, 2000) risks erosion inasmuch as relationships in which a partner used pornography were characterized by an increase in positive attitudes toward extramarital sex, increased infidelity,

partners being more likely to flirt with others outside their relationship, and a decrease in viewing frequent or occasional infidelity as cause for divorce (Lambert et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2014).

Further, research indicates that while pornography use may yield short-term sexual satisfaction, the sexual and relational scripts it presents are incongruent with long-term sexual quality and satisfaction for both those who view pornography and their partners (Leonhardt et al., 2019; Zillmann & Bryant, 1988). Viewing pornography is linked to lower satisfaction in terms of partner's physical appearance, behavior, affection, and sexual performance, and presents an unrealistic picture against which partners feel they must compete (Perry, 2017). Physiologically, regularly consuming pornography can condition individuals' sexual arousal template to be amplified and responsive to pornographic depictions over reality and relational sexuality, leading individuals to become less satisfied with real-life partner sex in comparison with pornographic representations (Wright et al., 2021). Over time, both men and women who view pornography show a preference for masturbation to pornography over partnered sex and weakened perceptions of how satisfying one's relationship and sex is with one's own partner. A decrease in sexual satisfaction can correspond tightly with deterioration of relationship quality and satisfaction (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Sprecher, 2002).

Expectations and behavior scripted by pornography use, whether enacted or not, can jeopardize secure attachment and are likely to result in distress (Dewitte et al., 2010; Leonhardt, 2019). Male pornography use is associated with increased relationship distress and more psychological distress in female partners regardless of the women's own attitudes toward pornography (Szymanski et al., 2015; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Maddox and colleagues (2011) found that partners' mutual use of pornography was correlated with lower levels of distress but

noted that couples who never viewed pornography had the best outcomes across relationship wellbeing indices. It should be noted that negative outcomes including relational distress are often significantly heightened when partners are married, as opposed to dating, as there is often a deeper investment and a firmer expectation of commitment (Bridges et al., 2003). This may importantly contribute to the experience of pornography use as a marital attachment threat.

Deception

Deception and secrecy commonly surrounding pornography use are likely additional contributors to weakened foundational elements of secure attachment such as safety and trust (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Feeney & Noller, 1990). Patterns of concealment in close relationships can contribute to feelings of exclusion, reduced trust, and increased conflict, which are associated with negative relational attachment outcomes (Butler et al., 2009). Research indicates that only 46% of women are aware of the extent of their partner's pornography use, with 54% of men reporting more (37%) or less (17%) pornography use than their female partners believed was occurring (Carroll et al., 2017). Further, one in four men reports actively hiding his pornography use from his partner (Willoughby et al., 2021), which concealment could catalyze a woman's less secure sense of attachment (Regnerus et al., 2016; Willoughby & Leonhardt, 2018).

Women's Response to Partner Pornography Use

In extant qualitative research, the discovery of a spouse's pornography use was related to various self-reported negative individual and relational outcomes, with women often reporting an emotionally intense and disruptive experience (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Participants reported feeling a loss of trust in their male partners' communications, assurances, and commitments after discovering pornography use, as well as a decrease in respect for him. Trust, attachment security,

and self-esteem were compromised for married women, as they felt insecure in their roles as wives and unable to meet marital expectations as a wife. Some women reported changes in the ways they viewed their partner, using negative descriptors such as “liar,” “inadequate,” or suffering from a “sick” condition (Bergner & Bridges 2002, p. 199), and others felt that they had “lost” their partner to pornography (Bridges et al., 2003, p. 10).

Research also indicates that the nature of discovery can impact the severity of women’s perception and response. Women who discovered their partner’s pornography use—as opposed to having it disclosed—viewed it as a traumatic event and experienced emotions that were similar to those experienced by women whose partner cheated on them (Newstrom & Harris, 2016). Conversely, honesty is known to moderate the severity of attachment threat through higher relationship satisfaction and lower levels of distress for women (Crawford & Butler, 2021; Resch & Alderson, 2014). When men disclose the nature of their pornography use to their partners, this honesty helps to lessen the loss of trust within the relationship. Even in situations of long-standing betrayal from infidelity, disclosure and honesty were foundational for healing and an improved relationship (Schneider et al., 2007).

Related qualitative research has explored the potential for infidelity to be characterized as an attachment injury resulting in betrayal trauma (Warach & Josephs, 2021). Betrayal traumas involve a depended-upon person breaking an explicit or implied social agreement, such that a violation of trust occurs (Freyd, 1996). Betrayal trauma can evoke intense fear and be damaging to well-being, relationships, self-concept, and beliefs about others and the world (Freyd et al., 2005). Other researchers explored the process of healing from betrayal trauma caused by infidelity and therapist behaviors that facilitate that healing (Bird et al., 2007; Butler et al., 2021; Glass, 2002). In the context of healing from the betrayal of infidelity, offenders and aggrieved

partners manifest distinct trajectories, with asynchronous progression and timelines (Butler et al., 2021; Fife et al., 2022). High levels of relationship distress, emotional reactivity, and interactional volatility are common (see Butler & Gardner, 2003), with both partners experiencing confusion and ambivalence about the relationship, often in alternating or asynchronous waves (Butler et al., 2021).

Gaps in the Literature

Research indicates the potential for spousal pornography use to threaten relational attachment through gender discrepancy in perception and use, concomitant deception, and associated negative relational outcomes (Carroll et al., 2017; Willoughby et al., 2021). Qualitative research has illuminated individual and relationship outcomes associated with discovery as well as women's general perceptions and attitudes toward partner pornography use (Bridges et al., 2003; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). However, despite the prevalent rate of pornography use by male spouses and associated negative outcomes more commonly experienced by women, research investigating women's lived individual and relationship responses to the discovery or disclosure of this attachment threat is limited (Stewart & Szymanski, 2012). Existing literature could benefit from a processual, holistic lens into women's response to spousal pornography use (Charmaz, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The current study will provide a qualitative, grounded theory methods approach to exploring married women's response to the disclosure or discovery of spousal pornography use (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The following research question will be used to guide the investigation:

How do women describe the experience of learning of their spouse's pornography use and the individual and relationship sequelae that follow?

The purpose of the current research is to contribute to existing literature related to individual and relationship healing from perceived problematic pornography use. Investigating this topic can illuminate and elucidate the unique nature of pornography use as an attachment threat in marital relationships, due in part to its perceived relation to infidelity (Jain & Sen, 2018), and can further aid therapists in shaping individual and couple patterns of healing (Butler et al., 2020). Helping couples to achieve, maintain, and enjoy the well-known benefits of secure attachment is a worthwhile concern and endeavor (Feeney & Noller, 1990).

Methodology

Sampling and Participants

This study received exempt status from the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects prior to data collection. This exploration used a non-probability purposive sampling strategy to identify and select 30 information-rich blogpost experiences (Patton, 2014). The blogposts were publicly available (without subscription or membership), archival survey-level data, and each blog was de-identified with only a URL and ID # attached. The sample was drawn from a population of women who experienced spousal pornography use as an attachment threat and chose to write about it on the “blogosphere.” Blogposts provide rich and presumably authentic personal, processual accounts, unbiased by an interview process (Jones & Alony, 2008) and were an appropriate and valuable data source for this study, focusing as it does on a processual profile of spousal responses. Based on sample sizes used in related qualitative studies and the purpose of the current investigation, this sample size was sufficient to obtain depth of participants’ lived experience as it related to response to a spouse’s pornography use and the individual and relationship sequelae that follow.

The following search terms and words were used to locate relevant blogposts on common blogging platforms: “healing from my spouse’s/husband’s pornography use,” “women’s/couple healing from pornography,” “sexual media use,” “wife, pornography, husband, healing,” “Blogger, Tumblr, Weebly, Wix, Wordpress.” The “reference” sections of blogpost hits were checked for citations to other relevant blogs. Basic identifiers for pornography use applied in this study were (1) sexually oriented materials (pictorial or textual) that (2) only involves persons in indirect (not face-to-face) interactions (e.g., pictures, videos, internet chat rooms, interactive gaming, etc.) (Zitzman & Butler, 2005). Blogposts accepted for inclusion were published between 2000 and 2020 because of the increased availability of internet pornography and user-friendly blogging software that occurred in the 2000s (Siles, 2011). Additionally, accounts were only included if (1) the account was written from the first-person perspective of the betrayed partner (wife), (2) the participant experienced their spouse’s pornography use as a threat to their feelings of safety and security in the relationship, and (3) there was significant evidence that the participant was in a committed, marital relationship with the loved one who viewed pornography. The third criterion was to ensure that interpersonal commitment was established between romantic partners, providing a firmer partner expectation for a securely attached relationship (Bridges et al., 2003). Blogposts in which pornography use led to or involved infidelity/extramarital sexual behaviors were excluded, narrowing the focus to pornography use as a singular threat distinct from infidelity. Additionally, as part of a larger study addressing attachment healing after experiencing a spouse’s pornography use as an attachment threat, each blogpost experience contained some degree of relational or individual healing (i.e., a stronger relationship, security, peace, etc.) and inclusion was further narrowed to couples who stayed married after experiencing pornography use as an attachment threat.

The sample was not screened based on socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or education. However, religious affiliation was documented, as research shows religiosity to be negatively correlated with pornography acceptance and use (Carroll et al., 2008). Twelve participants self-disclosed religious affiliation while 18 did not: General Christian (2), Catholic (3), Born-again Christian (1), Baptist (1), and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (5). Fourteen participants reported marital relationship length, ranging from 5-22 years (\bar{x} = 12.2). Because this was an exploratory study capturing a relatively understudied phenomenon, the present investigation focused exclusively on heterosexual individuals to align with previous studies that have investigated healing from problematic pornography use in heterosexual couples (Ford et al., 2012; Zitzman & Butler, 2005). Future studies may reveal that the experience of spousal pornography use in homosexual dyadic partnerships is qualitatively different from heterosexual experiences.

Data Analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using a grounded theory inductive approach as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and intricately outlined by Marks (2015). This qualitative design was best suited to address the research question as it aims to generate an explanatory theory, rooted in the data, for a process about which little is known (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), and can provide “intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 19). The process consists of four main stages: open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and forming theory.

A research team consisting of one master's student and two undergraduate students employed processes of (a) coding, (b) numerical content analysis (NCA), (c) across-blog comparison, and (d) combination/elimination of themes as detailed by Marks (2015). Open

coding included a line-by-line reading of the transcripts and labeling words or phrases with terms to capture the process or meaning suggested. The research team coded for attachment trauma or rupture as influenced by the type, duration, and extent of the betrayal; the method of discovery; the level of deceit; the perception of the betrayal; and past experience with attachment threats (Laaser et al., 2017; Weeks & Fife, 2014). The team primarily used gerunds (words ending in -ing) to help focus on processual actions (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Some examples of early codes generated from the open coding process were as follows: Feeling Anger, Feeling Unprepared, Struggling with Comparison, Blaming Self, and Appreciating Honesty.

In the axial coding stage of analysis, frequently occurring or analytically significant codes were developed into 4 core themes to refine, sort, and synthesize data. Conceptually similar codes were abstracted and aggregated into subthemes within each core category. Forming theory and axial coding occurred simultaneously and recursively (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). As with the initial codes, a constant comparative method was employed to confirm or challenge these themes (Boeije, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and the team referred back to the data to find more evidence when themes needed more refinement (Marks, 2015). To ensure validity of the core themes, the primary researcher (author) consulted with both an MFT versed in betrayal trauma and healing as well as an expert in qualitative grounded theory methods to safeguard against biases of one-person analyses and to help keep conclusions as grounded in the participants' responses and perspectives as possible. The primary researcher then revisited each of the blogpost experiences and compiled the excerpts that represented each core theme in a way that sequentially or conceptually presented an authentic, valid, and coherent composite array of quotes/data for each of the core themes (one file per core theme) (Marks, 2015).

Through selective coding, the primary researcher identified relationships and interactions between concepts through inductive reasoning and corroboration with the previously mentioned content and method experts and identified any recurring patterns across themes (Lazenbatt & Elliott, 2005). As analysis progressed throughout the study, themes and subthemes were arranged into a process model telling a composite story that demonstrates fidelity to the collective dimensions of participants' experiences explaining women's responses to spousal pornography use. Writing memos was helpful to develop analytic ideas, situate categories within the emerging theory, and record comparisons between categories (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Memos were also used reflexively to account for researcher presence and role in the analysis (McGrath, 2021).

Researcher Reflexivity

In the qualitative research process, the researcher is the primary instrument for identifying relevant data and analyzing it (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Reflexivity includes a self-monitoring of one's a priori assumptions and views, and a consideration of how these influenced the research process. In this study, I (author) am a European American, Christian female in my mid-20s. I am aware of my own attachment history and relationships, and I approached the study with the assumption that pornography use has the potential to harm relational attachment for some women and can subsequently necessitate relational work for attachment healing to occur. The analytical team were family systems scholars and practitioners: one with extensive experience with grounded theory methods in qualitative research and the other an MFT with 25 years' experience helping individuals and couples work to overcome problematic pornography use. Throughout the research process, the author remained reflexive about possible personal influence through open discussions about the data gathering and analytic decisions that were being made, as well as maintaining a memo trail of thoughts, observations,

and decisions during each stage. The author endeavored to root the results tightly in the reported experiences of the research participants.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

As the focus of the current investigation was to provide a process model rooted in participant experiential accounts, setting aside presumptions and biases throughout the research process was essential to remaining objective and open to the data as revealed by participants (Wa-Mbaleka, 2020). Various methods were employed to maintain rigor and establish credible findings. Consistent memo work—recording both analytical and researcher reflexivity memos elaborating on the development of codes, themes, and meanings—assisted in helping the researcher remain transparent as to potential biases and beliefs that influence how the data is read and interpreted (Smith, 2003). Additionally, a research team served as secondary coders and the aforementioned content and analysis advisors were consulted at multiple points throughout the study. The research team was involved in discussion of conceptual similarities and differences in codes as well as theoretical development. A judicious selection of participant quotes is included within the results section to further validate the trustworthiness of the research.

Results

Description of the Grounded Theory of Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use

Although elements of each participant's relationship background and experience of spousal pornography use as an attachment threat was unique, the analysis resulted in a coherent grounded theory describing a general process of women's response. The theory is comprised of three major interrelated informant categories and one resultant category, as presented in Figure 1: emotional response, mental response, physical response, and behavioral response. Processually,

discovery or disclosure of a spouse's pornography use—the trigger which threatens core attachment—initiates a threat response system which then informs behavioral coping.

The first major category is *emotional response* (Niedenthal et al., 1999), symbolized in Figure 1 by a circle overlapping with mental and physical response and characterized as part of the threat response system. The emotional sphere of response, capturing initial feelings, emotional reactivity, and emotional flooding, was the most prominently spoken of by the participants. The foremost emotional responses mentioned by participants were feeling pained, feeling angry, and feeling alone.

The second major category is *mental response*, which involves thought patterns, cognitive distortions, and mental health (Ehlers & Clark, 2000). The most commonly expressed mental responses were self-blame and persistent worry. Mental response is represented by a circle interconnected with emotional and physical response and categorized as part of the threat response system.

The third major category is *physical response*, concerned with somatic symptoms and physiologic sensations that accompanied emotional and mental responses (Hoehn-Saric et al., 2004; McFarlane, 2010). The most common of these was the report that participants felt “sick” to their stomach, nearly throwing up. The physical sphere is represented by the third overlapping circle categorized as part of the threat response system.

Although accounts of emotional and mental response were more common than accounts of physical response, all three of these major categories were heavily interconnected, each feeding into, responding to, and amplifying the others as represented by the overlap of spheres (Berkowitz, 2000; The emotional, mental, and physical informant response categories led to the fourth resultant category, behavioral response.

Behavioral response is concerned with observable protective adjustment and coping (Jones & Monfils, 2016; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Throughout participant experiences, behavioral responses were evoked by the underlying complex emotional, mental, and physical changes that resulted as a response to experienced threat. The three informant spheres resulted or culminated in a range of maladaptive and adaptive behaviors such as setting boundaries and engaging in hypervigilant controlling behaviors.

Major Category 1: Emotional Response

Emotional response was the most common and frequent focus within participants' reported experiences. Major emotional responses included feeling emotionally pained, a loss of emotional security, anger, emotionally overwhelmed, and shame, outlined in order of reported prevalence.

Emotionally Pained. The women in the sample first and foremost described the deep pain and hurt that resulted from betrayal. Many felt that they were rejected or replaced with pornography. They used descriptors such as "heartbroken," "wrecked," and "devastated." Many felt distraught that they were not enough for their husband or felt that they were less than porn. The self-worth and self-esteem of women commonly declined as they struggled with comparison. One woman shared, "I was so destroyed over his secret pornographic addiction because I felt like I didn't measure up to those other women online. I was convinced that he couldn't honestly think I was attractive with all my imperfections." Many women also described grieving what used to be in their relationship or what could have been. One woman expressed, "For a while after, I constantly had a feeling of great loss deep down. I would find myself crying uncontrollably and grieving like someone had died. Like something had been taken from me. We had lost a lot."

Loss of Emotional Security. Women consistently described a loss of emotional security with their spouse, a key element of secure attachment. Women described feelings of betrayal leading them to lose trust in their partner and feel very alone. One woman explained,

Do you know what it's like to have your husband lie to you to your face? Do you know what it's like to feel stupid for believing him? It hurts. It rips a hole in everything you have known. Everything you have built your life around. Then you find yourself in a dark hole wondering what else he's capable of lying about... It's hard to trust again.

With decreased trust, women described a visceral feeling and experience of being unsafe and insecure with their husband. Women struggled to be intimate and vulnerable with their husbands, withholding both emotionally and physically. One woman asked, “How do we regain intimacy with our partners when we are unsure if we can trust them? How do we give the gift of ourselves, physically and emotionally, when the act of betrayal could be just a few short steps away to another room?” Another stated, “I couldn't look at him, talk to him, change in front of him. I had shared my life and body with him, and only him. He in turn looked at other naked women.” Further, without a secure base of trust and intimacy with their spouse, a majority of the sample expressed feeling very alone. One woman wrote, “I felt alone. I didn't have anyone to talk to. No one to give me guidance. No one to tell me it would be okay.” Loss of emotional security ultimately evoked the primary emotion of fear—fear for the future, fear of additional betrayal, fear of being vulnerable, and fear of losing their husband permanently.

Anger. A majority of participants reported feeling initial anger toward their husband, toward the pornography itself, or toward God. One woman recounted, “I was angry, so angry. I felt a deep sense of anger towards every woman my husband watched and imagined himself to be with while I was away.” Participants recalled resentment and difficulty forgiving because of

the seeming injustice of the situation. Wives felt victimized, like they didn't deserve their husband's behavior. One Latter-day Saint woman reflected, "I had kept myself worthy for an eternal temple marriage only to feel like I was being used and discarded for images of immoral women."

Emotionally Overwhelmed. The knowledge of a spouse's pornography use came to many as a complete shock. Many women reported being completely unsuspecting and overcome with feelings of disbelief. One participant wrote, "Call it stupidity or ignorance on my part, I never dreamed my husband would look me in the eyes and lie." Many women likewise reported feeling naïve, and "totally unequipped to respond." Both the weight of the truth and having to process many levels of foundation-shattering information at once led many women to shut down, detach emotionally, and bottle up feelings without engaging in emotional regulation or processing. One woman recalled, "It was as though I turned myself off and retreated into myself to avoid what I was subjecting myself to."

Shame. Feelings of shame reflected embarrassment or indignity arising from beliefs that the husband's behavior was dishonorable or "sinful." Women reported feeling ashamed, dirty, and uncomfortable with his porn use. One wife described, "Just thinking about my husband watching them would cause a cloud of darkness and shame to wash over me." Feelings of shame stemmed from internalized self-blame, feeling "used," and feeling that their marriage or husband's behavior fell short of social expectations. Shame contributed to isolation and delay reaching out for support. One woman wrote, "Because of this huge part of my life that was so full of shame and fear, I lived alone with the pain."

Major Category 2: Mental Response

The mental responses of the participants encompassed cognitive processes employed by participants to navigate and make sense of the sudden rupture of relational homeostasis and accompanying shock. This sphere involved thought patterns, cognitive distortions, and reflections on mental health. Major mental responses included questioning beliefs, avoidance, ruminating, blaming, and declining mental health, outlined in order of reported prevalence.

Questioning Beliefs. When participants learned of their spouse's pornography use, they commonly reported confusion from a misalignment between preexisting beliefs and the present situation. This contributed to participants feeling conflicted and "at a loss of what to do." To make sense of this discordant experience and awareness, participants suspended, questioned, and upended previous beliefs in order to piece together the reality of their life, relationship, husband's and own identity, and potential future into a psychologically coherent and manageable whole. Specifically, participants reexamined beliefs about the nature of their relationship, wondering if their whole relationship was a lie, or what else their husband had lied about. One participant voiced, "Does he even love me? Question after question flooded my mind and stirred up anxiety until it felt hard to breathe."

For many, viewing pornography did not seem to align with beliefs about their husband's character. One woman expressed, "I loved [Husband] so much and I couldn't understand why he was doing this to me, to us, to himself." Many participant's thoughts reverted to their choice of spouse and wondered if they really knew who he was. All five reported members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints mentioned doubt in the previously-felt divine endorsement of their marriage. One member shared, "I had fasted and prayed about the decision to marry my husband. I didn't understand how God could let this happen to us." Another said, "When we

made this commitment I knew that it was forever, I knew that this was the man I was going to be with for the rest of my life here on earth and in the eternities to come. Now, I don't know if that is still true..."

For many, learning of their spouse's pornography use provided an explanation for past situations, helping participants make sense of problematic and confusing relationship dynamics: "I realized the late nights every weekend, the way we could never fully be intimate, the feeling that there was something hidden about my husband, how I never really felt as one with him, were becoming clear." For some, finally knowing what was behind past perplexing experiences brought a feeling of relief and cognitive alignment.

Avoidance. Many participants' thought processes demonstrated desire for escape or relief from the problem at hand—a "flight" response to stress and distress. Most common was participants contemplating leaving their spouse, though ultimately, they determined to stay for various reasons. (In our participant sample, the choice to remain in the relationship was an inclusion criteria, in order to develop a full processual model of couples across an entire healing trajectory.) One woman demonstrated resilience in her rationale: "I was done with my marriage...but, I couldn't in good conscience leave [Husband] without knowing I had done everything in my power to make my marriage healthy, I'm just not built that way." Some women would minimize the problem, some denied or ignored the problem, and others generally expressed wanting the problem gone or not wanting to hear about it. One participant wrote, "I was horrified and ashamed. I forgave him and we never spoke of it again. But it happened again and again. We tried to ignore it. Tried to hide it. Tried to prepare for it. We spoke of it to no one. We ran from it."

Ruminating. The women in the sample commonly reported persistent worry—cognitive rumination and anxiety—about their spouse’s pornography use, feeling suspicious or paranoid that their husband was continuing to view pornography or on the verge of relapse. Participants reported that they were unable to stop thinking about their husband’s behavior or were constantly anxious that their husband must be thinking about pornography. Some women reported a frequent mental replay of offenses: “Images of what I saw on his computer would constantly come back to haunt me. The women he was into, I would keep getting images of how my husband must have looked at them or thought about them.” One woman reported that even a year after hearing about her spouse’s pornography use, his behavior still crossed her mind “at least once a day.”

Blaming. Half of the participants cast blame for the cause of the pornography use and associated distress. Most commonly, women blamed themselves. One woman explained, “I felt responsible for his pornography use and the deterioration of our marriage. I was sure it was my fault for “letting myself go” after having kids. If I were smarter, prettier, skinnier or sexier, this wouldn’t have happened. Maybe if I was a better, less demanding wife and just gave him what he needed, he wouldn’t feel the need to look at that stuff.” A few women blamed the negative changes taking place within their husband and in their relationship on other causes such as stress from school, job, or the birth of a child. However, as one woman noted, “Continually trying to fix the wrong problem led me to feel crazy and hopeless.”

Declining Mental Health. Although many participants exhibited symptoms of anxiety and depression throughout their experience, nine participants explicitly reported a diagnostic decline in mental health. Five participants reported depression and two reported anxiety. One woman explained, “Anxiety and depression are common among spouses because you go insane

worrying about things you cannot actually control. You worry about what your spouse did or didn't do; what they haven't told you, what half-truths they told you; what they might do tomorrow or next year. You errantly believe that worrying will help you control your situation, but it really just wraps you in a cocoon of misery that makes your world very small." Further, two participants reported suicidality with one sharing, "At times, the paranoia would get so intense the only way to end it seemed like suicide."

Major Category 3: Physical Response

Physical responses were always coupled and conflated with emotional and mental processes in reaction to spousal pornography use as a perceived attachment threat. Major physical responses included heavy crying, upset stomach, difficulty breathing, and exhaustion.

Physiological responses naturally accompanied anxious cognitions and distressing emotions. One participant wrote, "During this time, I frequently had...breakdowns, where I would fall apart and spend hours crying." Another commented, "My stomach went into an upheaval. I felt like I needed to run to the bathroom and throw up." Difficulty breathing often accompanied anxious thoughts, and participants reported feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausted in response to the general stress and struggling to sleep at night.

Major Category 4: Behavioral Response

Subsequent to the emotional, mental, and physical experience and processing categorized as the threat response system, the majority of participants responded with conceptually similar adaptive and maladaptive behaviors. Prevalent behavioral responses included engaging in controlling behavior, seeking support, holding boundaries, maintaining anonymity, and fawning behavior.

Controlling Behavior. In efforts to regain psychological control, stability, and empowerment amidst an ambiguous and unpredictable situation, women frequently engaged in behaviors intended to police, demand, or predict the husband's behavior—a “fight” response to distress. It was common for women to take personal responsibility and try to prevent their husband from viewing pornography by checking internet history, nagging him, or even warning him to avert his eyes from potentially pornographic images. One participant reflected,

I tried to play all sorts of roles in the first few months as I dealt with this new information. Sometimes I acted like his mother instead of his wife. Other times I acted like his judge, imposing guilt or punishments I deemed appropriate. I resorted to nagging or controlling, babysitting him, distrusting most everything and checking computers and devices behind his back. It was exhausting and completely unhelpful.

Some women demanded that the husband end the behavior by threatening him not to let it happen again with accompanying ultimatums. For some couples, an ultimatum motivated the husband to seek professional help, but for others it was unhelpful. One wife said, “I threatened divorce if it ever happened again (which my husband took to heart and so he started lying and hiding things from me).” Other pressuring, demanding behaviors included imposing punishments, reprimanding, and yelling. Women's efforts to help them feel in control also included educating themselves more about addiction, men's sexuality, and the specific nature of their husband's pornography viewing. This was adaptive for some women to gain “tools to help deal with it,” but maladaptive for others when it was too detailed and upsetting: “One of the biggest mistakes I made early on was probing for specific details. How did you access the pornography and when? How many times? What did you search for and what did you see?”

Seeking Support. Following feelings of hurt and isolation, a natural response for women was to seek external support. However, because wives and husbands felt and sought to avoid shame, they desired anonymity, and family members and close friends were not always considered as an option for support. Many women first turned to private religious practices such as prayer to seek divine guidance and help. One woman recorded, “I cried and prayed, trying to understand it and make sense of it all.” Women would also commonly search the internet for help, but were often disappointed with the lack of available resources. Eventually, a majority of women in this sample turned to either therapy or support groups for external support. One woman counseled, “Qualified and trained counselors in this field are difficult to find on your own, but are necessary as you find healing.”

Holding Boundaries. Women would set explicit and implicit boundaries with their spouses to create separation and space following the attachment threat. Many women created physical distance by going for a drive, moving the husband’s things into a spare bedroom, or separating for short periods of time. One participant shared, “After he was in bed, I slid under the covers but hugged the edge. I wanted as much space between us as possible.” Four women reported setting a sexual boundary of abstinence: “I asked for a period of sexual abstinence for 90 days, both to allow me to heal and regain trust and to help my husband break his dependence on sex and lust – which often included me.”

Maintaining Anonymity. Perceived or real social stigma and shame surrounding pornography use motivated wives and husbands to conceal their struggle from friends, family, and others. Keeping the problem a secret and constantly trying to present a façade of normality among loved ones was reported to contribute to feelings of isolation and poor mental health. One participant shared, “The hardest thing about this journey is that I have had to suffer in silence.”

Another elaborated on this difficulty:

I desperately wanted to tell my mother. Although she lived close by and wondered why I seemed to be struggling, my husband insisted that I couldn't tell her—she would never look at him or treat him the same again. I wanted to open up about my worries and concerns to one of my close friends or sisters, but I could never bring myself to do it. I knew my husband would be extremely upset if I told anyone and I was afraid of making him angry. I did not want to betray his confidence and so I always kept silent.

Fawning. Many behavioral responses were indicative of women abandoning their own needs to earn approval from their husband and ensure that the pornography use was not their fault. These behaviors may have also reflected attempts to gain control over the situation through one's own behavior. Fawning—also called the “please and appease” response (Ryder, 2022)—involved wanting to please their husband and eradicate the “need” for pornography use. This included trying to become a better wife, trying to be sexier, and offering sex. One woman reflected, “I thought if I could somehow fix myself enough, I could make the problem go away. I tried to love my husband more, communicate better, be patient, look past his faults and be a better wife.” Another felt, “There were these expectations that I felt I had to live up to. Having sex with him was a show. I felt like I had to perform exactly like the women he watched.” Two participants reported losing excessive weight. One said, “I thought that if I lost weight and got skinny he wouldn't look at porn.” The other admitted to losing 43 pounds overtime: “I had a great body, but it didn't fix our marriage or make me feel better about myself.” As well, a few wives tried watching pornography with their husband, but all came to the same conclusion: “It only took a few times of watching together to "enhance our sex life" to realize [it was] doing more harm than good.”

One implicit behavioral response was that all women chose to write and share their experiences on the “blogosphere” in efforts to help other women going through the same situation to not feel so alone. One woman shared:

I hope that by opening up, some other wife out there doesn't feel like she's terribly alone and that no one in the world could ever understand the endless hell she's living in by suffering in the silence of her husband's addiction that she's keeping a secret from everyone around her. I know what that's like.

Many other women mentioned that writing down and sharing their experience was beneficial to their own emotional processing and healing progression.

Discussion

This study benefited from a depth of understanding provided by women who chose to share their lived experience despite concerns of anonymity and social stigma. The research question, How do women describe the experience of learning of their spouse's pornography use? was explored as precursive understanding to the process of attachment healing among women who perceived pornography use as an attachment threat. The study moved beyond exploring female attitudes, perceptions, and outcomes of pornography use to contribute underlying explanations through greater understanding of processual individual and relational dynamics.

The grounded theory that developed from this analysis illustrated the process of response to a spouse's pornography use and concomitant deception. Across the board, women described a threat response system of interconnected emotional, mental, and physical responses that processed a diversion from key elements of secure attachment such as safety, trust, and intimacy. The threat response system then advised behavioral coping responses which were utilized to help individuals regain predictability and stability. Future investigations are needed to test this model

with more diverse samples using more traditional empirical measurement and analyses.

Nevertheless, the model provides a useful, preliminary template for understanding the response process of a group of women who viewed spousal pornography use as an attachment threat, highlighting significant phenomenological aspects as a foundation for general awareness, clinical intervention, and further research.

Overall, the experiences of women in the study confirm high levels of partner deception regarding spousal pornography use (Willoughby et al., 2021). The degree of deception did seem to intensify experienced distress, with many women expressing appreciation when honesty was involved in disclosure. Three participants reported knowing about their spouse's pornography use all along, but conveyed that underestimating the individual and relationship implications of pornography use contributed to their experience of distress. The prevalence of deception and potential for honesty to moderate distress suggests that couples openly communicate about pornography use within their relationships (Crawford & Butler, 2021).

Although there were many newfound concepts, participant experiences were remarkably consistent and described symptoms of attachment insecurity and betrayal trauma which coincide with existing literature (Freyd et al., 2005; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). Namely, attachment theory explanations aligned with many of the emotional responses experienced by the women in the sample including distress, anger, grieving, and fear or "primal panic" resulting from a loss of connection (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010, p. 3). Heightened attachment needs motivated many women to engage in both maladaptive and adaptive proximity seeking behavior such as fawning and seeking support. Mental responses particularly aligned with symptoms of betrayal trauma outlined by Freyd and colleagues (2005). Participants experienced a decrease in self-esteem, a decrease in mental well-being, and damage to beliefs about self and others manifesting in self-

blame and black-and-white thinking about the husband and relationship. Other trauma symptoms included difficulty breathing, reexperiencing, uncontrollable thoughts, avoidance, and insomnia (Pacella et al., 2013).

An aim of the study was to elucidate the nature of pornography use as a distinct attachment threat in marital relationships, as compared to infidelity. Perception of pornography use as a form of infidelity or a steppingstone to it seemed to stem from expectations for secure commitment, contrast to one's own personal faithfulness, and struggle with comparison to pornography. Threat response findings appeared to align with Butler and colleagues' (2021) description of couple's response to infidelity, highlighting relational distress and emotional reactivity, interactional volatility, and confusion about the relationship. Although viewing pornography is not committing "infidelity" in the traditional sense of the word, spousal pornography use posed a threat akin to infidelity through weakened attachment and betrayal, leading women in the sample to respond in emotionally, mentally, and physically similar ways and experience many of the same negative individual and relational outcomes associated with infidelity (Wetchler, 2005). More research is needed to identify and confirm conceptual similarities between infidelity and spousal pornography use. However, these findings strengthened a sense of correlation between infidelity research and pornography research, suggesting value in further utilizing infidelity research as an informant for healing from the attachment threat of spousal pornography use.

Clinical Implications and Applications

An additional purpose of the study was to aid clinical therapists in shaping individual and couple patterns of healing as a precursor to successful therapy. Results of the study highlight the

obscurity of spousal pornography use as an attachment threat, with many women experiencing severe shock and feeling under or unprepared to navigate this issue within their relationship.

Relatedly, many of the strategies participants employed to return the relationship to a controlled homeostasis were paradoxically counterproductive to individual and attachment healing (such as hypervigilant controlling behaviors, ruminating, shutting down emotionally, isolating, and self-blame). This suggests a need for greater general understanding, professional training, and resources surrounding response and healing for those who experience spousal pornography use as an attachment threat.

Further, the stigma and shame surrounding pornography use and associated relational implications delayed participants from seeking support and professional help. Shame stunts productive action by leading individuals to feel trapped, powerless, and isolated (Brown, 2006), which isolation can further intensify many emotional, mental, and physical issues. When pornography use is perceived as an addiction, it can be particularly shameful in nature (Gilliland et al., 2011). Theory and empirical research point to increased communication as a predictor of decreased shame (Brown, 2006; Dirkse et al., 2014), highlighting the need for social support and therapeutic intervention. Among participants, 11 out of 30 women reported going to therapy following their trauma. One woman noted, “[Therapy] was absolutely key for me and our recovery” and suggested that others would benefit from therapists familiar with patterns and symptoms of betrayal trauma. Therapists may need to attend to individual trauma before or alongside dealing with a couple’s relational injury (Johnson & Williams-Keeler, 1998).

Main emotional response findings reinforce the need for individual self-care and healing for the emotional well-being of those who experience spousal pornography use as an attachment threat. Specifically, therapists can support individuals through emotional processing and

regulation of commonly reported feelings such as anger, hurt, and decreased self-worth.

Therapists can act as compassionate witnesses in hearing, understanding, and empathizing with the stories of those who have been physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually wounded (Weingarten, 2000). Therapists can help clients to normalize and appraise their experience and suggest cognitive-affective strategies for managing intrusive and distressing rumination (Chang & Sanna, 2001; Schwarz & Prout, 1991).

Self-blame and questioning beliefs were among the most common mental responses necessitating individual healing and professional help, mentioned alongside a notable severity of mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, and suicidality. Extant research suggests that women may be at greater risk for self-blame than men, which self-blame is associated with depression, shame, guilt, and social isolation (Wolfe & Kimerling, 1997). Mental response findings encourage the therapist to maintain a role in helping the client make sense of the attachment threat and rationally challenge self-blame and other defeating cognitive distortions (Kliethermes et al., 2017). Mindfulness interventions have also proven beneficial in helping individuals to process difficult events, slow down negative thought processes, reduce shame and self-blame, and improve mental health (Au et al., 2017; Frewen et al., 2008; Grossman et al., 2004; Leavitt et al., 2019).

Behavioral responses ranged from maladaptive to adaptive and commonly included controlling behaviors and holding boundaries. Based on behavioral findings, therapists can work with clients to collaboratively navigate the balance between supportive accountability behaviors and controlling hypervigilant (“policing”) behaviors, which are futile attempts to control (Bernstein et al., 2015). In the place of partner control, therapists can teach aggrieved spouses

boundary assertion—the client cannot control their partner, but they can control their distance and degree of differentiation (Whitfield, 1993).

Results from all categories within the model of response indicate a need to restore sexual quality within marital relationships where partners experience pornography use as an attachment threat. Research and limited clinical observation suggest that pornography use is associated with common sexual problems such as inhibited sexual desire for both spouses, erectile dysfunction, and preference for pornography use over partnered sex (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019; Wright et al., 2021). Emotional response findings reinforce that women's feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and a decrease in trust and intimacy run counter to relational sexual quality (Kleinplatz et al., 2009).

Anxiety is specifically known to affect sexual arousal and functioning (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). Sexual mindfulness techniques can be introduced to help women decrease anxiety within their sexual relationship (Brassard et al., 2015), and are positively related to individuals' sexual satisfaction, relational satisfaction, and self-esteem (Leavitt et al., 2019). Because pornography use can script one's sexual arousal template to be pornography-oriented rather than partner-oriented (Leonhardt et al., 2019), therapists would also do well to develop and incorporate strategies such as mindfulness techniques and sensate focus (Weiner & Avery-Clark, 2014), to reorient spouses' sexual arousal template toward attachment-relational elements.

Ultimately, secure attachment fosters the highest sexual and relational quality within couples (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Kleinplatz et al., 2009). Potentially, the emotional, mental, physical, and behavioral components within the model of women's response to spousal pornography use can inform therapists, practitioners, and other women who experience this phenomenon of distinct ways to direct individual and couple patterns toward this aim.

Limitations and Future Research

This was an exploratory study into the processual response of 30 women who experienced their spouse's pornography use as a threat on attachment; analysis of subsequent attachment healing will follow. Although a participant sample of 30 was deemed an adequate sample size for the qualitative purpose of this study, the grounded theory and findings cannot be generalized due to a lack of representation in areas such as religion, age, income, education levels, and race. This should be taken into account when applying the model in diverse communities.

The sample included a specific group of women who were willing to publicly share their experiences, often for the altruistic purpose of helping other women benefit or heal from their experience. This may imply certain intrinsic characteristics that could influence response to the phenomenon. As well, data included were from women who stayed with their spouses and experienced some degree of individual or attachment healing following the attachment threat.

Other accounts from women who experienced sexual infidelity or divorce following the betrayal trauma of pornography use could provide additional insight into multiple relational trajectories and pathways. Additionally, while this study identified those who perceive spousal pornography use as an attachment threat, some women may not perceive spousal pornography use as a threat to their relationship or experience negative outcomes similar to those reported.

There are limitations to research when conditions are self-reported and subjective by nature. Aspects of the participants' accounts were retrospective and interpreted through a future lens with the potential that their retrospection was influenced by their current relationship and circumstances (Shaver & Hazan, 1987). We recognize that participant subjectivity may be construed as a hindrance to reliability; on the other hand, participants' subjective reports are the

most valuable sources of information for grounded theory construction, and hearing lived stories directly from those who experienced them is vital to building a rich, processual, developmental model and theory of women's responses to the betrayal trauma of spousal pornography use. Future investigations can then test this model using more traditional empirical measurement and analyses of women's responses.

Additionally, inasmuch as the current study addressed the experiences of married women, future research could explore partner pornography use among couples with differing levels of relationship commitment (i.e. dating, engaged, cohabiting, etc.). Further, the degree of pornography use was most often reported to be problematic, compulsive, or addictive. Among the participants, 26 of the sample of 30 women labelled their husband's problematic use as an "addiction." This could hint that the general response to pornography use in this sample may have been intensified by feelings of powerlessness associated with ongoing use or an ambiguous end to the problem. Future investigations could directly assess degree of use as a factor when evaluating variations in women's response.

This study provided a meaningful exploratory foundation for understanding women's experiences surrounding discovery or disclosure of a spouse's problematic pornography use. Undertaking sensitive qualitative research is necessary if we are to develop a holistic, processual, and longitudinal understanding of varying issues that affect people in society, including pornography use (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008).

References

- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Au, T. M., Sauer-Zavala, S., King, M. W., Petrocchi, N., Barlow, D. H., & Litz, B. T. (2017). Compassion-based therapy for trauma-related shame and posttraumatic stress: Initial evaluation using a multiple baseline design. *Behavior Therapy, 48*(2), 207-221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2016.11.012>
- Ayres, M. M., & Haddock, S. A. (2009). Therapists' approaches in working with heterosexual couples struggling with male partner's online sexual behavior. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity, 16*, 55–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720160802711952>
- Bergner, R. M., & Bridges, A. J. (2002). The significance of heavy pornography involvement for romantic partners: Research and clinical implications. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 28*, 193–206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/009262302760328235>
- Berkowitz, L. (2000). *Causes and consequences of feelings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bernstein, R. E., Delker, B. C., Knight, J. A., & Freyd, J. J. (2015). Hypervigilance in college students: Associations with betrayal and dissociation and psychometric properties in a Brief Hypervigilance Scale. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 7*(5), 448–455. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000070>
- Bird, M. H., Butler, M. H., & Fife, S. T. (2007). The process of couple healing following infidelity: A qualitative study. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 6*(4), 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1300/J398v06n04_01

- Boeije, H. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality and Quantity*, 36(4), 391-409.
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020909529486>
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss* (Vol. 1). Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. Basic Books.
- Brassard, A., Dupuy, E., Bergeron, S., & Shaver, P. R. (2015). Attachment insecurities and women's sexual function and satisfaction: The mediating roles of sexual self-esteem, sexual anxiety, and sexual assertiveness. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 52(1), 110-119.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2013.838744>
- Bridges, A. J., Bergner, R. M., & Hesson-McInnis, M. (2003). Romantic partners' use of pornography: Its significance for women. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 29, 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/009262302760328235>
- Brown, B. (2006). Shame resilience theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame. *Families in Society*, 87(1), 43-52. <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.3483>
- Buss, D. M. (2018). Sexual and emotional infidelity: Evolved gender differences in jealousy prove robust and replicable. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13, 155–160.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617698225>
- Butler, M. H. (2019). Procreative well-being and pornography—analyzing the script. Public health implications revealed through an ethological lens. *Marriage & Family Review*, 55(6), 544-583. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2019.1588187>

- Butler, M. H., & Gardner, B. C. (2003). Adapting enactments to couple reactivity: Five developmental stages. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 29(3), 311-327. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2003.tb01209.x>
- Butler, M. H., Gossner, J. D., & Fife, S. T. (2021). Partners taking turns leaning in and leaning out: Trusting in the healing arc of attachment dynamics following betrayal. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2021.1926388>
- Butler, M. H., Harper, J. M., & Seedall, R. B. (2009). Facilitated disclosure vs. clinical accommodation of infidelity secrets: An early pivot point in couple therapy. Part 1: Couple relationship ethics, pragmatics, and attachment. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 35(1), 125-143. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2008.00106.x>
- Butler, M. H., Pereyra, S. A., Draper, T. W., Leonhardt, N. D., & Skinner, K. B. (2018). Pornography use and loneliness: A bidirectional recursive model and pilot investigation. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 44(2), 127-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2017.1321601>
- Butler, M. H., Spencer, T. J., & Seedall, R. B. (2020). Reshaping couple configurations that get in the way of relationship repair and healing. *Family Process*, 59(3), 1334-1352. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12475>
- Campbell, L., & Kohut, T. (2017). The use and effects of pornography in romantic relationships. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 13, 6-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2016.03.004>
- Carroll, J. S., Busby, D. M., Willoughby, B. J., & Brown, C. C. (2017). The porn gap: Differences in men's and women's pornography patterns in couple relationships. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, 16, 146-163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2016.1238796>

- Carroll, J. S., Padilla-Walker, L. M., Nelson, L. J., Olson, C. D., Barry, C. M., & Madsen, S. D. (2008). Generation XXX pornography acceptance and use among emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 23*, 6–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558407306348>
- Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. R. (Eds.). (2002). *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*. Rough Guides.
- Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. R. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. R. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Chang, E. C., & Sanna, L. J. (2001). Optimism, pessimism, and positive and negative affectivity in middle-aged adults: A test of a cognitive-affective model of psychological adjustment. *Psychology and Aging, 16*(3), 524–531. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0882-7974.16.3.524>
- Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: A qualitative method for advancing social justice research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 3*(7), 507-535.
- Charmaz, K., & Thornberg, R. (2021). The pursuit of quality in grounded theory. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18*(3), 305-327.
- Cooper, A. (1998). Sexuality and the internet: Surfing into the new millennium. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior, 1*(2), 187-193. <http://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.1998.1.187>
- Crawford, M. D., & Butler, M. H. (2021, July 7). The truth hurts less: Pornography use disclosure vs. deception. *Institute for Family Studies*. <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-truth-hurts-less-pornography-use-disclosure-vs-deception>
- Dalecki, M. G., & Price, J. (1994). Dimensions of pornography. *Sociological Spectrum, 14*(3), 205-219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02732173.1994.9982064>

- Dawson, P. (2014). The processual perspective: Studying change in organisations. In H. Hasan (Ed.), *Being practical with theory: A window into business research* (pp. 64- 66). University of Wollongong.
- Dewitte, M., De Houwer, J., Goubert, L., & Buysse, A. (2010). A multi-modal approach to the study of attachment-related distress. *Biological Psychology*, 85(1), 149-162.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsycho.2010.06.006>
- Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2008). Risk to researchers in qualitative research on sensitive topics: Issues and strategies. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(1), 133–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307309007>
- Dirkse, D., Lamont, L., Li, Y., Simonič, A., Bebb, G., & Giese–Davis, J. (2014). Shame, guilt, and communication in lung cancer patients and their partners. *Current Oncology*, 21(5), 718-722. <https://doi.org/10.3747/co.21.2034>
- Dwulit, A. D., & Rzymiski, P. (2019). The potential associations of pornography use with sexual dysfunctions: An integrative literature review of observational studies. *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 8(7), 914. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm8070914>
- Ehlers, A., & Clark, D. M. (2000). A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 38(4), 319-345. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967\(99\)00123-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967(99)00123-0)
- Feeney, J. A. (2008). Adult romantic attachment: Developments in the study of couple relationships. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 456–481). Guilford Press.
- Feeney, J. A., & Noller, P. (1990). Attachment style as a predictor of adult romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58(2), 281.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.58.2.281>

- Fife, S. T., Theobald, A. C., Gossner, J. D., Yakum, B. N., & White, K. L. (2022). Individual healing from infidelity and breakup for emerging adults: A grounded theory. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 39*(6), 1814-1838.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075211067441>
- Ford, J. J., Durtschi, J. A., & Franklin, D. L. (2012). Structural therapy with a couple battling pornography addiction. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 40*(4), 336-348.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01926187.2012.685003>
- Frewen, P. A., Evans, E. M., Maraj, N., Dozois, D. J., & Partridge, K. (2008). Letting go: Mindfulness and negative automatic thinking. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 32*(6), 758-774. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10608-007-9142-1>
- Freyd, J. J. (1996). *Betrayal trauma: The logic behind forgetting childhood abuse*. Harvard University Press.
- Freyd, J. J., Klest, B., & Allard, C. B. (2005). Betrayal trauma: Relationship to physical health, psychological distress, and a written disclosure intervention. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation, 6*(3), 83-104. https://doi.org/10.1300/J229v06n03_04
- Gilliland, R., South, M., Carpenter, B. N., & Hardy, S. A. (2011). The roles of shame and guilt in hypersexual behavior. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 18*(1), 12-29.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10720162.2011.551182>
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2017). *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge.
- Glass, S. P. (2002). Couple therapy after the trauma of infidelity. In A. S. Gurman & N. S. Jacobson (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (p. 488–507). Guilford Press.

- Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S., & Walach, H. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, *57*(1), 35-43. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-3999\(03\)00573-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-3999(03)00573-7)
- Hald, G. M., & Stulhofer, A. (2016). What types of pornography do people use and do they cluster? Assessing types and categories of pornography consumption in a large-scale online sample. *Journal of Sex Research*, *53*, 849–859. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2015.1065953>
- Hazan, C., & Diamond, L. M. (2000). The place of attachment in human mating. *Review of General Psychology*, *4*(2), 186-204. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.4.2.186>
- Hazan, C., & Zeifman, D. (1999). Pair bonds as attachments: Evaluating the evidence. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 336-354). Guilford Press.
- Henderson-King, D. H., & Veroff, J. (1994). Sexual satisfaction and marital well-being in the first years of marriage. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *11*(4), 509-534. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407594114002>
- Hoehn-Saric, R., McLeod, D. R., Funderburk, F., & Kowalski, P. (2004). Somatic symptoms and physiologic responses in generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder: An ambulatory monitor study. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, *61*(9), 913-921. <https://doi:10.1001/archpsyc.61.9.913>
- Jain, G., & Sen, S. (2018). Adultery in the age of technology: Complexities and methodological challenges in studying internet infidelity. *Internet Infidelity*, 31-43. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5412-9_3

Johnson, S. (2019). Attachment in action—changing the face of 21st century couple therapy. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 25*, 101-104.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.03.007>

Johnson, S., & Williams-Keeler, L. (1998). Creating healing relationships for couples dealing with trauma: The use of emotionally focused marital therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 24*(1), 25-40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.1998.tb01061.x>

Johnson, S., & Zuccarini, D. (2010). Integrating sex and attachment in emotionally focused couple therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 36*(4), 431-445.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2009.00155.x>

Jones, M., & Alony, I. (2008). Blogs—the new source of data analysis. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology, 5*, 433-446.

Jones, C. E., & Monfils, M. H. (2016). Fight, flight, or freeze? The answer may depend on your sex. *Trends in Neurosciences, 39*(2), 51-53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tins.2015.12.010>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2009). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. Hachette Books.

Kleinplatz, P. J., Ménard, A. D., Paquet, M. P., Paradis, N., Campbell, M., Zuccarino, D., & Mehak, L. (2009). The components of optimal sexuality: A portrait of “great sex”.

Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 18(1-2), 1-13.

Kliethermes, M. D., Drewry, K., & Wamser-Nanney, R. (2017). Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. In M. A. Landolt, M. Cloitre, & U. Schnyder (Eds.), *Evidence-based treatments for trauma related disorders in children and adolescents* (pp. 167-186).

Springer International Publishing.

- Laaser, D., Putney, H. L., Bundick, M., Delmonico, D. L., & Griffin, E. J. (2017). Posttraumatic growth in relationally betrayed women. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 43*(3), 435-447. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12211>
- Lambert, N. M., Negash, S., Stillman, T. F., Olmstead, S. B., & Fincham, F. D. (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. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2012.31.4.410>
- Lazenbatt, A., & Elliott, N. (2005). How to recognise a 'quality' grounded theory research study. *The Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing, 22*(3), 48-52.
- Leavitt, C. E., Lefkowitz, E. S., & Waterman, E. A. (2019). The role of sexual mindfulness in sexual wellbeing, relational wellbeing, and self-esteem. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 45*(6), 497-509. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2019.1572680>
- Leonhardt, N. D., Spencer, T. J., Butler, M. H., & Theobald, A. C. (2019). An organizational framework for sexual media's influence on short-term versus long-term sexual quality. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 48*, 2233–2249. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1209-4>
- Maddox, A. M., Rhoades, G. K., & Markman, H. J. (2011). Viewing sexually-explicit materials alone or together: Associations with relationship quality. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 40*(2), 441-448. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-009-9585-4>
- Manning, J. C. (2006). The impact of internet pornography on marriage and the family: A review of the research. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 13*, 131–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720160600870711>

- Marks, L. D. (2015). A pragmatic, step-by-step guide for qualitative methods: Capturing the disaster and long-term recovery stories of Katrina and Rita. *Current Psychology, 34*(3), 494-505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-015-9342-x>
- Martin, M. (2021). *Computer and internet use in the United States: 2018*. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2021/acs/acs-49.html>
- McCubbin, H. I., & Patterson, J. M. (1983). The family stress process: The double ABCX model of adjustment and adaptation. *Marriage & Family Review, 6*(1-2), 7-37. https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v06n01_02
- McGrath, R. (2021). Journalling and memoing: Reflexive qualitative research tools. In *Handbook of qualitative research methodologies in workplace contexts*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- McFarlane A. C. (2010). The long-term costs of traumatic stress: Intertwined physical and psychological consequences. *World Psychiatry: Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), 9*(1), 3–10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2051-5545.2010.tb00254.x>
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change*. Guilford Press.
- Newstrom, N. P., & Harris, S. M. (2016). Pornography and couples: What does the research tell us? *Contemporary Family Therapy, 38*(4), 412-423. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-016-9396-4>
- Niedenthal, P. M., Halberstadt, J. B., & Innes-Ker, Å. H. (1999). Emotional response categorization. *Psychological Review, 106*(2), 337. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.106.2.337>

- Olson, T. D. (2000). Chastity and fidelity in marriage and family relationships. In D. C. Dollahite (Ed.), *Strengthening our families: An in-depth look at the Proclamation on the Family* (pp. 154–166). School of Family Life, Brigham Young University.
- Pacella, M. L., Hruska, B., & Delahanty, D. L. (2013). The physical health consequences of PTSD and PTSD symptoms: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 27(1), 33-46. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2012.08.004>
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage Publications.
- Perry, S. L. (2017). Does viewing pornography reduce marital quality over time? Evidence from longitudinal data. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 46, 549–559. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-016-0770-y>
- Price, J., Patterson, R., Regnerus, M., & Walley, J. (2016). How much more XXX is Generation X consuming? Evidence of changing attitudes and behaviors related to pornography since 1973. *Journal of Sex Research*, 53, 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2014.1003773>
- Rasmussen, K. R., Grubbs, J. B., Pargament, K. I., & Exline, J. J. (2018). Social desirability bias in pornography-related self-reports: The role of religion. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(3), 381-394.
- Regnerus, M., Gordon, D., & Price, J. (2016). Documenting pornography use in America: A comparative analysis of methodological approaches. *Journal of Sex Research*, 53(7), 873–881. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2015.1096886>

- Resch, M. N., & Alderson, K. G. (2014). Female partners of men who use pornography: Are honesty and mutual use associated with relationship satisfaction? *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 40*, 410–424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2012.751077>
- Ryder, G. (2022, January 9). Fawn Response: Adding to The Fight, Flight, or Freeze Framework. *Psych Central*. <https://psychcentral.com/health/fawn-response>
- Sandberg, J. G., Busby, D. M., Johnson, S. M., & Yoshida, K. (2012). The brief accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement (BARE) scale: A tool for measuring attachment behavior in couple relationships. *Family Process, 51*(4), 512-526. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2012.01422.x>
- Schneider, J. P., Corley, M. D., & Irons, R. K. (2007). Surviving disclosure of infidelity: Results of an international survey of 164 recovering sex addicts and partners. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention, 5*(3), 189-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720169808400162>
- Schwarz, R. A., & Prout, M. F. (1991). Integrative approaches in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 28*(2), 364. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.28.2.364>
- Shaver, P., & Hazan, C. (1987). Being lonely, falling in love. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 2*(2), 105.
- Shaver, P. R., & Mikulincer, M. (2008). Adult attachment and cognitive and affective reactions to positive and negative events. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2*(5), 1844-1865. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00146.x>

- Siles, I. (2011). From online filter to web format: Articulating materiality and meaning in the early history of blogs. *Social Studies of Science, 41*, 737–758.
<https://doi:10.1177/0306312711420190>
- Smith, J. A. (Ed.). (2003). *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Sommet, N., & Berent, J. (2022). Porn use and men's and women's sexual performance: Evidence from a large longitudinal sample. *Psychological Medicine, 1-10*.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S003329172100516X>
- Sprecher, S. (2002). Sexual satisfaction in premarital relationships: Associations with satisfaction, love, commitment, and stability. *Journal of Sex Research, 39*(3), 190-196.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490209552141>
- Stewart, D. N., & Szymanski, D. M. (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), 257-271.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0164-0>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research*. Sage Publications.
- Szymanski, D. M., Feltman, C. E., & Dunn, T. L. (2015). Male partners' perceived pornography use and women's relational and psychological health: The roles of trust, attitudes, and investment. *Sex Roles, 73*, 187–199. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0518-5>
- Thornberg, R., & Charmaz, K. (2014). Grounded theory and theoretical coding. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (Vol. 5, pp. 153–169). Sage Publications.

- Van Ijzendoorn, M. H., & Sagi-Schwartz, A. (2008). Cross-cultural patterns of attachment: Universal and contextual dimensions. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 880–905). Guilford Press.
- Wa-Mbaleka, S. (2020). The researcher as an instrument. In A. P. Costa, L. P. Reis, & A. Moreira (Eds.), *Computer supported qualitative research* (Vol. 1068, pp. 33–41). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-31787-4_3
- Warach, B., & Josephs, L. (2021). The aftershocks of infidelity: A review of infidelity-based attachment trauma. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 36*(1), 68-90.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2019.1577961>
- Weeks, G. R., & Fife, S. T. (2014). *Couples in treatment: Techniques and approaches for effective practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203865699>
- Weiner, L., & Avery-Clark, C. (2014). Sensate focus: Clarifying the Masters and Johnson's model. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 29*(3), 307-319.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2014.892920>
- Weingarten, K. (2000). Witnessing, wonder, and hope. *Family Process, 39*(4), 389-402.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2000.39401.x>
- Wetchler, J. L. (2005). Infidelity. In F. P. Piercy, K. M. Hertlein, & J. L. Wetchler (Eds.), *Handbook of the clinical treatment of infidelity* (Vol. 4, pp. 2-3). The Haworth Press.
- Whitfield, C. L. (1993). *Boundaries and relationships: Knowing, protecting and enjoying the self*. Health Communications, Inc.
- Willoughby, B. J., & Leonhardt N. D. (2018). Behind closed doors: Individual and joint pornography use among romantic couples. *Journal of Sex Research, 57*(1), 77-91,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2018.1541440>

- Willoughby, B. J., Rhoades, G., & Carroll, J. S. (2021, November). *The porn gap: How is pornography impacting relationships between men and women today?* The Wheatley Institution. <https://wheatley.byu.edu/National-Couples-and-Pornography-Survey2021/>
- Wolfe, J., & Kimerling, R. (1997). Gender issues in the assessment of posttraumatic stress disorder. In J. P. Wilson & T. M. Keane (Eds.), *Assessing psychological trauma and PTSD* (pp. 192–238). Guilford Press.
- Wright, P. J., Bryant, P., Herbenick, D., & Tokunaga, R. S. (2021). Pornography and sexual dissatisfaction: The role of pornographic arousal, upward pornographic comparisons, and preference for pornographic masturbation. *Human Communication Research, 47*(2), 192–214. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqab001>
- Wright, P. J., Tokunaga, R. S., & Bae, S. (2014). More than a dalliance? Pornography consumption and extramarital sex attitudes among married US adults. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 3*(2), 97. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000024>
- Zillmann, D., & Bryant, J. (1988). Pornography's impact on sexual satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 18*(5), 438–453. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1988.tb00027.x>
- Zitzman, S. T., & Butler, M. H. (2005). Attachment, addiction, and recovery: Conjoint marital therapy for recovery from a sexual addiction. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity: The Journal for Treatment and Prevention, 12*, 311–337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720160500362652>
- Zitzman, S. T., & Butler, M. H. (2009). Wives' experience of husbands' pornography use and concomitant deception as an attachment threat in the adult pair-bond relationship. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 16*, 210–240. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/10720160903202679>

Figure 1

Process Model of Women's Response to Spousal Pornography Use

