



Theses and Dissertations

---

2014-07-01

## Me, You, and Porn: A Common-Fate Analysis of Pornography Use and Sexual Satisfaction Among Married Couples

Cameron C. Brown  
*Brigham Young University - Provo*

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



Part of the [Marriage and Family Therapy and Counseling Commons](#)

---

### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Brown, Cameron C., "Me, You, and Porn: A Common-Fate Analysis of Pornography Use and Sexual Satisfaction Among Married Couples" (2014). *Theses and Dissertations*. 5302.  
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/5302>

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 [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

Me, You, and Porn: A Common-Fate Analysis of Pornography Use and  
Sexual Satisfaction Among Married Couples

Cameron C. Brown

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

Jason S. Carroll, Chair  
Dean M. Busby  
Brian J. Willoughby  
Jeffrey H. Larson

School of Family Life  
Brigham Young University

July 2014

Copyright © 2014 Cameron C. Brown

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### Me, You, and Porn: A Common-Fate Analysis of Pornography Use and Sexual Satisfaction Among Married Couples

Cameron C. Brown  
School of Family Life, BYU  
Master of Science

Guided by recent literature and theory addressing pornography use, the current study examined the associations between pornography use and acceptance of pornography and whether they predict sexual satisfaction as reported by both husbands and wives. Using data from the Relationship Evaluation Questionnaire (RELATE) (N=335 couples), a common-fate approach was used to examine both common and unique attributes of husbands and wives among pornography use, acceptance of pornography, and sexual satisfaction. Results indicate that pornography use was positively associated with pornography acceptance, but that pornography acceptance did not mediate the relationship between pornography use and sexual satisfaction. Husbands' pornography use was negatively associated with husbands' unique sexual satisfaction while wives' pornography use was positively associated with couples' shared sexual satisfaction, but negatively associated with wives' unique sexual satisfaction. Findings emphasize pornography use as being a coupling dynamic within marriages.

Keywords: pornography, sexuality, marriage, sexual satisfaction, acceptance

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .....	iv
List of Figures .....	v
Introduction.....	1
Understanding Pornography within the Couple Context .....	3
Gender .....	4
Age .....	4
Education and Occupation .....	5
Motivation for Use .....	6
Couple Factors .....	6
Sexual Satisfaction .....	8
The Present Study .....	9
Method .....	11
Participants.....	11
Procedure.....	12
Measures .....	12
Data Analysis .....	14
Results .....	16
Discussion.....	17
Clinical Implications .....	20
Limitations and Future Research .....	22
References.....	24

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 *Bivariate Correlations* ..... 32

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. <i>Pornography Use and Sexual Satisfaction Outcome Framework</i> .....	31
Figure 2. <i>Unstandardized Coefficients from a Multilevel Structural Equation Model Incorporating Common-Fate of Husband and Wife Pornography Use and Acceptance Predicting Sexual Satisfaction as Controlled by Education, Religiosity, and Length of Relationship</i> .....	33

## Introduction

As pornography has become more accessible and normative in modern culture, researchers have begun to examine the possible effects of pornography use on a variety of personal behaviors and relationship outcomes (Bridges, & Morokoff, 2011; Carroll et al., 2008; Maddox, Rhoades, & Markman, 2009; Olmstead, Negash, Pasley, & Fincham, 2012; Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013; Yucel, & Gassanov, 2010). Recent scholarship has produced mixed results with studies pointing to pornography use having both negative and positive outcomes at an individual level. For example, individuals that consume pornography have been found to be more critical of their partner's body (Albright, 2008), less satisfied with their current sexual relationship with their partner (Maddox et al., 2009; Yucel & Gassanov, 2010), and are more likely to flirt with relationship alternatives (Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004). Studies have also found that individuals who use pornography are also more likely to participate in risky sexual behaviors (Carroll et al., 2008; Sinkovic, Stulhoger, & Bozic, 2012; Wright, 2012; Wright, 2013), incur substance abuse patterns (Carroll et al., 2008) and accept violence against women (Malamuth, Hald, & Koss, 2012). Men that engage in high amounts of pornography consumption have been found to have greater levels of depression (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011).

Other literature suggests that pornography consumption has more positive individual outcomes by assisting in sexual education and knowledge, personal body image, and being more comfortable with an individual's personal sexuality (Watson & Smith, 2012). Further, some research depicts that pornography disseminates sexual scripts which for many can be liberating (Weinberg, Williams, Kleiner, & Irizarry, 2010). It has also been illustrated that pornography not only has positive effects on sexuality, but also on attitudes about the opposite sex and users' overall quality of life (Hald & Malamuth, 2008).

Despite a growing research literature on pornography consumption and its influence on individual outcomes, very little research has been done on the effects of pornography on couple relationships. In recent years, relationship scholars have begun to shed some light on negative (Bridges, Bergner, & Hesson-McInnis, 2003; Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Lambert et al., 2012; Maddox et al., 2009; Poulsen et al., 2013; Stewart & Szymanknski, 2012; Yucel & Gassanov, 2010) and positive (Daneback, Traeen, & Mansson, 2008; Grov, Gillespie, Royce, & Lever, 2011; Popvic, 2011; ) outcomes of pornography use for couple, but despite these advancements there are still questions about what parts of couple relationships are influenced by pornography and the mechanisms by which pornography influences couples. And again, current studies on couple outcomes related to pornography have produced mixed results. For example, pornography has been reported to be a source of conflict in over 40% of casual dating relationships and in over 20% in married relationships as reported by both men and women (Carroll, Busby, Willoughby, & Brown, in review). But, other scholars have found that couples who view pornography together experience increased sexual frequency, less boredom with sex, and more open to sexual experimentation (Grov et al., 2011).

A possible explanation for the mixed findings in pornography studies to date is that scholars are typically assuming that so-called “pornography use” is the same phenomenon for different users, despite the fact that they may be viewing pornography in different ways and within different contexts. In other words, most studies to date simply use a measure of reported frequency of pornography use without probing deeper into other features of pornography use in a couple’s relationship that may distinguish various sub-types of pornography use. In the present study, I seek to further pornography research by further examining what pornography consumption within couple relationships looks like and how it influences broader patterns of

sexual satisfaction in marriage. I do this by exploring husband and wife pornography use in association with their personal and couple acceptance of pornography and their personal and couple dimensions of sexual satisfaction. I also examine how pornography acceptance mediates the influence of spousal pornography use on the personal and shared aspects of sexual satisfaction in marriage.

### **Understanding Pornography within the Couple Context**

Despite the recent influx of academic work examining pornography, current research continues to primarily focus on pornography use in terms of frequency of use and often ignores other factors of the consumption of pornography. To date, pornography studies minimally analyze the relationship contexts and processes of pornography users. Features of pornography use such as acceptance of pornography by oneself and one's partner, duration of use, the type of pornography viewed, motivations for use, casual versus compulsive use, and especially couple patterns surrounding pornography use are rarely examined.

There have been some attempts in more recent studies of pornography that look beyond frequency of use due to the belief that different contexts surrounding use lead to different outcomes on an individual and couple level. Willoughby, Carroll, Busby, and Brown (in review) recently found that a couple's beliefs and agreement surrounding pornography consumption was related to their couple outcomes. Some studies also point to the importance of the relationship status of the individual in understanding the outcomes of pornography consumption (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Olmstead et al., 2012). Some of this work also illustrates that the type of pornography being viewed as well as duration of use are important to partners within a couple context (Olmstead et al., 2012). This new literature may more fully explain conflicting results in studies to date regarding these individual and couple outcomes as well as offer a conceptual

foundation that points the field towards considering processes within the couple relationship that incorporate pornography in greater detail. The following review highlights some of the key factors, both individual and couple, that have been found to influence outcomes of pornography use.

### **Gender**

Perhaps the most consistent finding among pornography studies to date is that pornography use is predominantly a male activity (Albright, 2008; Buzzell, 2005; Carroll et al., 2008; Cooper, Morahan-Martin, Mathy, & Maheu, 2002; Cooper, Galbreath, & Becker, 2004; Emmers-Sommer, Hertlein, & Kennedy, 2013; McKee, 2007; Stack et al., 2004), although some popular culture outlets suggest that pornography use is becoming more of an accepted activity among the female population (Brennan, 2010; Carey, 2011). Carroll and colleagues (2008) found among a diverse sample of emerging adults that 87% of the male participants reported consuming pornography to some extent within the last 12 months and 20% of those men reporting daily or every-other-day use. This study also found that only 31% of the women sampled reported some level of pornography consumption and among those women that reported pornography consumption, only 3.2% reported a weekly use pattern. Albright (2008) similarly found that 75% of men report accessing or downloading pornography, while only 41% of women reported doing the same. Other research depicted men doubling women's weekly average of online sexual consumption, 2.83 hours per week contrasted to 1.36 hours per week (Cooper et al., 2002).

### **Age**

Recent literature suggests that although pornography consumption may be present across the life span, there are higher amounts of consumption among younger populations—especially

emerging adults (Buzzell, 2005; Carroll et al., 2008; Cooper et al., 2002; McKee, 2007; Traeen, Spitznogle, & Beverfjord, 2004). Among McKee's (2007) sample of Australians who reported a degree of pornography consumption, nearly 78% of them fell between the ages of 19-45 with approximately 33% falling between the ages of 26-35. One may conclude that younger populations report higher amounts of pornography consumption due to increased use of the internet and access to digital devices (Cooper, Boies, Maheu, & Greenfield, 1999; Cooper et al., 2002). Some literature suggests that the average number of hours spent online overall was greater among respondents who had engaged in pornography than those who had not (Cooper et al., 2002). Increasing numbers of young adolescents are reporting exposure to online pornography whether it is desired or not (Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2007).

### **Education and Occupation**

Some recent scholarly work has suggested that higher amounts of education and income describe those individuals that consume pornography (Buzzell, 2005; Cooper et al., 2002; Richters, Grulich, Visser, Smith, & Rissel, 2003). Although pornography is consumed by individuals in all income classes, some literature suggests that there is higher usage among those of higher income, education level, and professional status (Buzzell, 2005; Cooper et al., 2002). In one study, Richters and colleagues (2003) found that the likelihood of having visited an internet sex site was significantly greater among men with higher levels of education and white-collar or professional jobs. This finding may be due in part to higher income or well-educated individuals having greater access to the internet because this same study illustrated that the likelihood of watching an X-rated video was significantly higher among men who had not completed post-secondary education as well as working class and office occupations.

### **Motivation for Use**

Men and women have illustrated a broad spectrum of motivations for consuming pornographic material (Albright, 2008; Cooper et al., 2002). One examination of men who consider themselves to have an online sex problem, concluded that there were two over-arching motivations for the men in their sample. First, a portion of the men were found to use the internet to further their real-life sexual interactions. Second, another set of individuals use the internet as a substitute for their real-life sexual interactions (Cooper et al., 2004). Although this sample only looked at men that reported having sexual problems, these two motivation patterns may have merit among others that consume pornography as well. Studies have found that many individuals, particularly women, view pornography as: (1) a part of their love making in a relationship, (2) a way to improve their sex lives with their current partner in such ways as being open to new things, (3) a way to increase the ease of asking for sexual needs, and (4) a way to increase their overall arousal during real-life sexual interactions (Albright, 2008; Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Grov et al., 2011). Other studies have found that other individuals, particularly men, have an auto-erotic or individual-based motivation for pornography use. These users consume pornography for a more solitary sexual enhancement or an individually-focused sexual experience (Albright, 2008; Bridges & Morokoff, 2011). Some consumers of pornography have also reported that pornography can serve as a distraction, a way of coping with stress, and education of sexuality (Cooper et al., 2002).

### **Couple Factors**

While pornography consumption has become a more acceptable and normative form of sexual expression of many individuals, what happens to these individuals and their couple dynamics when they enter relationships? Despite the lack of consensus among the recent

literature, many studies suggest that relationship status plays a part in whether or not someone uses pornography and how that use impacts his or her life (Albright, 2008; Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Cooper et al., 2002; Maddox, et al., 2009). Albright and colleagues (2008) found that those who were divorced were 25% more likely to consume pornography than singles. They also found that those who reported being married were 20% less likely to consume pornography than singles. Alternatively, Cooper and colleagues (2002) reported that 43% of those that reported participating in online sexual activities, including pornography, were married. However, others argue that relationship status is not significant when evaluating pornography use (Emmers-Sommer et al., 2013).

In a recent qualitative study, Olmstead and colleagues (2012), found three common groupings from men and women's responses regarding pornography use within the couple context. The first group saw pornography consumption as inappropriate in any context single or within relationships. This group expressed concern about pornography usage because of the potential negative effects on the relationship, such as unrealistic expectations of real-life sexual experiences and sexual acts that they may feel uncomfortable performing. The second group viewed pornography use as not necessary while in a relationship because they believed that a relationship should be able to fulfill the sexual needs of each individual and thus make pornography unnecessary. The third grouping believed pornography use is acceptable in romantic relationships and reported that they saw it as a relationship enhancement tool. This acceptance of pornography use was primarily based on certain conditions such as pornography should be viewed together or the frequency, duration, and content should be within an acceptable limit. There was also one last grouping where there was no expectation of pornography use of the respondent, but use by the partner was acceptable. This pattern was exclusively found among

female participants. This group saw their partner's pornography use as inevitable, that it was something that men just do, and was a better option than infidelity.

Another recent piece by Willoughby and colleagues (in review) highlights the important role that discrepancies in pornography use between partners play in how pornography impacts couples. These scholars found that couples that demonstrated greater pornography use differences, where one partner used pornography much more than the other, were associated with more negative reports of couple well-being. This association was found to be moderated by acceptance levels of each partner in the relationship, with greater acceptance lessening the negative impact on couple outcomes. Although this study does not illustrate cause and effect of pornography use differences and negative couple outcomes, this study does suggest a link between the two and that pornography use is a dynamic that partners dance around in romantic relationships and should be furthered examined.

### **Sexual Satisfaction**

Previous literature suggests associations between pornography use and sexuality (Groves et al., 2011; Maddox et al., 2009; Yucel & Gassanov, 2010) and thus when analyzing pornography use within the couple context it is important to consider a couple's sexual dynamics as well. Sexual desire has an important role in development of a romantic relationship and is related to relationship satisfaction (Regan & Atkins, 2006). Alongside sexual desire is sexual satisfaction that recent literature has illustrated as an integral constituent of romantic relationships and marital quality (Yabiku & Gager, 2009). Sexual intimacy is seen as a powerful bonding and attachment strengthening experience within romantic relationships (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Byers (2005) found within a longitudinal study of romantic relationships, that sexual satisfaction

and relationship satisfaction change concurrently over time within the couple context reinforcing the strong association between the two.

### **The Present Study**

Not only has pornography research to date not considered the couple context thoroughly, but there is a void of theory addressing how pornography use may influence couple dynamics; attachment theory is an exception to this (Zitzman & Butler, 2005; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). As noted earlier, the picture depicted from the current pornography research is that there are differing behavior and motivational patterns between husbands and wives (Albright, 2008; Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Grov et al., 2011). Zitzman and Butler (2009) suggest that these are not merely gender differences but differences in meaning that are highly symbolic for many couples. These differences in meaning can have impact on the attachment bond in the couple.

Although some research points towards pornography being a relationship enhancer (Grov et al., 2011; Olmstead et al., 2012), Zitzman and Butler (2009) submit it as a possible potential threat to the attachment bond. Attachment is rooted in the confidence that a partner will be available, trustworthy, and simply there for the other (Olson, 2000). They build off of this understanding of attachment and suggest:

Nowhere is this attachment being for the other symbolized more powerfully or directly than in self-discipline of one's partner—in the face of powerful sexual drives—to limit sexual desire and expression to the pair-bond relationship and conform sexuality to the intimate service of the attachment relationship and their pair-bond partner. (Zitzman & Butler, 2009, p. 229)

When a partner seeks sexual experiences outside of the relationship (digital or real) seemingly the attachment relationship could be threatened and ultimately injured.

This threat to the attachment from pornography may be because of unrealistic expectations of sexual acts or body image that pornography instills (Olmstead et al, 2012; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). It may also drive the degradation of the sexual relationship to merely a physical act without the commitment and attentiveness or the psychological and emotional closeness (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Pornography may also be seen as an “easy” form of sexuality and may ultimately be preferred to real life sexual experiences because it requires less involvement and effort (Cooper, Griffin-Shelley, Delmonico, & Mathy, 2001; Zitzman & Butler, 2009).

To best utilize the matched couple data set a modified common-fate analysis was performed. Common-fate analysis is an alternative approach to an Actor/Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny & Cook, 1999) and was first introduced by Kenny and La Voie (1985). This approach to dyadic data has the basic assumption that there are variables that effect both partners in the relationship and that this effect may be similar (shared) and different (unique) for each partner (Ledermann & Kenny, 2012). For example, if a husband scores higher on a variable such as pornography acceptance than the wife, that uniqueness is noted within the model and has the ability to predict reports of sexual satisfaction. This approach assists in better understanding what is occurring within the dyad as well as between dyads (Ledermann & Kenny, 2012).

Building upon Zitzman and Butler’s (2009) theory of attachment, previous literature on pornography, and implementing common-fate analysis, I pose four research questions for how pornography use influences a couple’s relationship, particularly the level of sexual satisfaction in the relationship:

Research Question 1: Do higher reported use of pornography by wives and husbands associate with higher acceptance of pornography use?

Research Question 2: How do husbands' pornography use associate with the couples' shared and the husbands' unique sexual satisfaction?

Research Question 3: How will a wives' pornography use associate with couples' shared and wives' unique sexual satisfaction?

Research Question 4: How will pornography acceptance mediate the relationship between husbands' and wives' pornography use and the relationship outcome of sexual satisfaction?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The sample represented in this study consists of 335 heterosexual, currently married matched couples (670 individuals) who completed the Relationship Evaluation Questionnaire (RELATE) (Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi, 2001). This tool assesses participants in areas of individual, couple, familial, and cultural contexts. The RELATE questionnaire is a tool developed in 1980 and currently maintained by the RELATE Institute. It sets out to assist couples in better understanding and improving their relationship. The participants in this study were predominantly Caucasian (male= 76.1%, female= 73.1%), then African American (male= 9.0%, female= 7.8%), Latino (male= 6.3%, female= 5.1%), Asian (male= 2.7%, female 6.3%), mixed/biracial (male= 3.6%, female= 3.3%), other (male= 1.5%, female= 3.0%), and Native American (male= .6%, female= 1.5%). The mean age for males is 38.23 (*SD* 10.43) years and 36.16 (*SD* 9.88) years for females. This sample is also well educated with 71.7% of males and 77.6% of females having received their associate's degree or higher collegiate degree. A little over 38% of the couples are married to their current partner less than two years, 40% reported being married 3-15 years, and 19.2% married 16 years or longer as reported by the female partner.

The 670 participant sample consists predominantly of individuals who regard themselves as Protestant (male= 32.5%, female= 36.7%), then no affiliation (male= 25.4%, female= 24.2%), Catholic (male= 20.6%, female= 18.2%), Jewish (male= 3.6%, female= 3.9%), Latter-day Saint (male= 3.0%, female= 3.3%), and Islam (male= 0.3%, female= 0%). A portion of participants reported other religions (male= 10.7%, female= 9.9%).

### **Procedure**

These participants completed the RELATE questionnaire between 2011 and 2013 after being introduced to the tool through various means. All participants that participated in this questionnaire reported that they were in a current marital relationship by reporting “married, first marriage” or “remarried” when asked to define their current romantic relationship. Of the participants, majority reported being introduced to this questionnaire through a therapist (male= 30.7%, female= 31.9%), instructor (male= 16.1.0%, female= 35.5%), or family member (male= 31.3%, female= 10.7%). Considering the recruitment strategy and the medium of the questionnaire, the RELATE questionnaire, likely oversamples younger couples and couples with higher socioeconomic status than more nationally representative samples. All participants completed an appropriate consent form before completing the RELATE questionnaire and all data collection procedures passed institutional review.

### **Measures**

The RELATE assessment is a 300-item questionnaire designed to evaluate the relationship of individuals in dating, engaged, or married relationships. The questionnaire examines several different areas including individual, cultural, family (of origin), and couple. This in-depth evaluation of the individuals and relationship has proven to be insightful and

helpful as thousands utilize it every year. Busby and colleagues (2001) offer more information regarding the RELATE questionnaire including a detailed layout of its reliability and validity.

**Controls.** As outlined in previous literature, there are numerous variables that need to be considered when analyzing pornography use and couple sexuality. Factors such as religiosity (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Carroll, 2010), length of relationship (CITE; Carroll et al., in review), and socio-economic factors such as education (Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010) have been illustrated to influence sexuality and pornography attitudes. These controls have been applied to the current model to best address the research questions. Religiosity was assessed using one item: “How often do you attend religious services?” Education was assessed using one item: “How much education have you completed?”

**Pornography use.** Pornography use was assessed by one item asked of each participant: “During the last twelve months on how many days did you view or read pornography (i.e., movies, magazines, internet sites, adult romance novels)?” Response options were on a 6-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*none*) to 5 (*almost every day*). Two variables were formed with this measure: the husband report of pornography consumption and the wife report of pornography use.

**Pornography acceptance.** Pornography acceptance for each partner was measured by six items assessing one’s overall acceptance of pornography use individually on an overall Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). This variable was created by averaging the six item scale for the husband ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and then for the wife ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Statements included to assess acceptance were: “Viewing pornography is an acceptable way for single adults to express their sexuality,” “Pornography is an acceptable way for couples to “spice up” their love life,” and “Pornography is a form of marital infidelity (reverse coded).” When modeled as a

latent variable to illustrate husband and wife shared pornography acceptance as well as husband and wife unique acceptance, the factor loadings were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) for each partner with standardized estimates of .80 (husbands) and .77 (wives).

**Sexual satisfaction.** Sexual satisfaction was composed of six items from the questionnaire with each response ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*almost always*) on a Likert-type scale. These six items covering domains of variety, love/affection, time, and frequency consisted of questions such as, “Are you dissatisfied with the amount of variety in your sex life with your partner?” (reverse coded) and “Do you have sexual intercourse as often as you would like?” Similar to the previous variable, this variable was created by averaging the six item scale for the husband ( $\alpha = .87$ ) and then for the wife ( $\alpha = .83$ ). A latent variable was then modeled to illustrate husband and wife shared sexual satisfaction as well as husband and wife unique sexual satisfaction, the factor loadings were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) for each partner with standardized estimates of .74 for husbands and .81 for wives.

### **Data Analysis**

To examine and understand the associations between husband and wife pornography use, pornography acceptance, and sexual satisfaction, structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed using Mplus (Version 7; Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). Husband and wife pornography use were modeled as observed variables whereas pornography acceptance and sexual satisfaction were modeled as latent variables. The model estimated consisted of pornography acceptance as a mediator between pornography use (husband and wife) and relationship outcome variables of sexual satisfaction.

To answer the research questions and examine the unique and shared values of the distinguishable dyad dataset, an adapted common-fate multilevel SEM model was used. This

common-fate analysis was modified from the model presented in Peugh, DiLillo, and Panuzio (2013) where husband and wife observed variables are indicators of a common-fate latent variable that represent shared, between couple variation. In the current analysis, the common-fate variables represent the correlation between husband and wife items regarding their acceptance of pornography and sexual satisfaction. With these same variables, distinct residual variance latent variables for husbands as well as wives were used to characterize within-couple, unique variation that were not captured by the common-fate variable. These factor loadings for each of the three unique latent variables were fixed to one for unity (Griffin & Gonzalez, 1995). This model illustrated excellent model fit (Chi-square= 3.05 (df= 8),  $p > .05$ ; RMSEA = .00; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .01) (see Hu & Bentler, 1999). As previous literature has illustrated with mediating models (MacKinnon, 2008), a bootstrap was applied to the analysis to estimate appropriate standard errors for the indirect effects (5000 bootstrap draws requested).

The common-fate variables of pornography acceptance and sexual satisfaction were preferred to an APIM (Kenny & Cook, 1999) because the husband and wife measures for each of the common fate variables were highly correlated (pornography acceptance:  $r = .67$ ; sexual satisfaction:  $r = .56$ ). High Pearson Correlations between husband and wife indicate substantial amount of shared variation and thus expected to yield reliable common-fate estimates (Ledermann & Kenny, 2012). If a traditional APIM approach was modeled with these variables, collinearity between husband and wife would be present and may ultimately alter the findings. A common-fate latent variable was not created for pornography use because of the lower correlation between husband and wife ( $r = .29$ ), illustrating appropriateness for a traditional actor/partner use. Due to the complexity of the model, nine cases that contained missing data were removed from the analysis limiting our sample size to 325 dyads.

## Results

Significant results from the common-fate SEM model help answer the first research question: do higher reported use of pornography by wives and husbands associate with higher acceptance of pornography use? Specifically, both the husband's pornography use ( $B = .11, p = .001; \beta = .19$ ) and the wife's pornography use ( $B = .16, p < .05; \beta = .17$ ) were associated with the common-fate or shared variable of pornography acceptance. Wife's pornography use was also significantly related to the unique factor of wife's pornography acceptance ( $B = .16, p < .01; \beta = .26$ ).

Some significant findings assist in answering the second research question: how do husbands' pornography use associate with the couples' shared and the husbands' unique sexual satisfaction? Husband's pornography use was negatively associated with husband's own unique sexual satisfaction ( $B = -.11, p < .01; \beta = -.27$ ) while husband's pornography use was not significantly associated with the shared or relationship variable of sexual satisfaction.

Significant findings gave clarity to the third research question: how will a wives' pornography use associate with couples' shared and wives' unique sexual satisfaction?. Wife's pornography use was positively associated with the shared sexual satisfaction variable ( $B = .16, p < .05; \beta = .19$ ) but was negatively associated with wife's unique sexual satisfaction ( $B = -.24, p < .001; \beta = -.31$ ).

When attempting to answer the fourth research question, how will pornography acceptance mediate the relationship between husbands' and wives' pornography use and the relationship outcome of sexual satisfaction?, no significant findings supporting mediation were present. Indirect effects showed that pornography acceptance does not mediate between both the husband ( $B = .01, p = .70; \beta = .01$ ) and wife's ( $B = .01, p = .71; \beta = .01$ ) pornography use and

sexual satisfaction. Shared acceptance, as well as husband and wife's unique pornography acceptance, also did not significantly relate to shared or unique aspects of the sexual satisfaction variable.

### **Discussion**

The results of this study strengthen the argument that pornography is more than simply an individual behavior, but rather is best seen as a relationship phenomenon. Previous literature has pointed to pornography use by either partner in the relationship as a variable that may affect both members in the relationship (Bridges et al, 2003; Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Daneback et al, 2008; Grov et al, 2011; Maddox et al., 2009; Poulsen et al., 2013; Stewart & Szymanknski, 2012) and this study confirms that claim. As noted previously, minimal research has been done to date that examines pornography within the couple context and even fewer studies regarding pornography have been published utilizing matched couple data (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Daneback et al., 2008). This study is one of the first.

Furthermore, while there are multiple approaches to analyzing dyadic data, common-fate modeling offers a particularly valuable tool for examining what is occurring within couple relationships regarding pornography and sexual outcomes. It allows us to specifically see how spousal pornography use is specifically affecting each partner uniquely as well as a couple (shared) as a whole. This analysis approach was particularly well suited for the matched couple data utilized in this study.

Some insights can be gained from the initial process of building the common-fate model analyzed in this study. For example, one of the first items noted while building this common-fate model was the differences in pornography use between husbands and wives. As highlighted above, when attempting to create a common-fate latent variable of pornography use for both

spouses it was concluded that their pornography use patterns were too different to load together. This difference in use between husbands and wives is in line with previous pornography literature pointing to considerable differences between male and female pornography use patterns (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Carroll et al., 2008; Carroll et al., in review; Cooper et al., 2002; Poulsen et al, 2013). However, this study takes this finding a step further by confirming that these differences continue after marriage for many couples.

The specifics of my analyses also offer many insights surrounding pornography use within couple relationships. Specifically I found that husbands' pornography use is negatively related to husbands' unique sexual satisfaction in their marriages and wives' pornography use is negatively related to wives' unique sexual satisfaction too. However, wives' pornography use is positively related to the couple's shared level of sexual satisfaction. Also, my analyses found that acceptance of pornography does not mediate the relationship between husband and wife's pornography use and unique or shared sexual satisfaction. These findings were significant even after controlling for education, relationship length, and religiosity.

These findings support existing studies which suggest that men's and women's pornography use patterns generally differ not only with use, but also with outcomes both individually and relationally (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Daneback et al, 2008; Grov et al, 2011; Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). The negative relationship between husbands' pornography use and husbands' unique sexual satisfaction in marriage could be explained by prior research indicating that many individuals view pornography as a personal, rather than relational, sexual experience (Cooper et al, 2004). Some have labeled this type pornography use as "auto-erotic sexuality" (Hald, Seaman, & Linz, 2014). In this regard, pornography use may be a trade-off between a husband's auto-erotic experiences and his relational sexual satisfaction with his wife. Husbands'

pornography use may contribute to poorer individual sexual satisfaction because it may become a sexual reference point or comparison base to real sexual experiences. By exposing themselves to more pornography, husbands may create unrealistic expectations for their real life sexual relationships with their wives; expectations that their wives are not willing or able to meet. These unmet sexual expectations may lead to greater sexual frustration and less sexual satisfaction in the marriage.

A surprising finding from this study was that under the third research question there were contradictions in that wives' pornography use was positively associated with the couple's shared level of sexual satisfaction, but was negatively associated with wives' unique sexual satisfaction. Recent literature supports the belief that female pornography use has more of a positive influence on a couple's sexual relationship because it may represent more of an openness on the part of the wife to try new sexual behaviors and foster an overall more erotic climate in the relationship (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Grov et al., 2011). Other studies also illustrate that women that use pornography do so primarily to enhance their sexual relationships rather than to engage in auto-erotic sexual experiences (Cooper et al, 2004; Hald et al., 2014). The current study supported that belief within the couple's shared sexual satisfaction, but not within wives' unique sexual satisfaction. This peculiar finding needs deeper academic consideration to have a better grasp of what is actually occurring. Could it be explained by wives wanting to please their partner by creating a more erotic atmosphere in the relationship with hopes that such efforts will create greater closeness and affection in the marriage but ultimately those expectations for closeness are not met? This pattern could lead to a much more sexually or physically satisfied husband so much that his satisfaction envelopes the couple satisfaction, but leaves an individually frustrated wife. Could it be wives attempting to apply in their marriages what they have picked up from

pornographic depictions of sex in an effort to please their husbands, but find such behaviors unauthentic and contrary to their personal values? Could it simply be wives feelings pressure or unrealistic expectations that pornography may instill in its consumers (Groves et al., 2011)?

Mediation analysis considering pornography acceptance also sheds some light on how couples perceive pornography. The more frequent the husbands and wives use pornography is associated with a more accepting the climate in the relationship is toward pornography use. Despite this acceptance of pornography use by a couple, however, mediation analyses illustrated that it does not mediate or buffer the effects (positive or negative) of husband and wife pornography use on sexual satisfaction. This points to other factors surrounding pornography use and that it is not simply a consensus issue that a husband and wife need concurrence on (such as religion, smoking, or pets). Although surprising, this finding aligns with previous literature that pornography, despite context, has negative relational outcomes (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010).

### **Clinical Implications**

Although this study does not illustrate a clinical plan of treatment, the results uncover important issues for clinicians to consider in the therapy room. First, this study supports the perspective that pornography is a coupling dynamic that should be assessed by the clinician when meeting with couples or families. Pornography use within the relationship can incur both negative and positive effects on the couple sexual satisfaction, as well as individual sexual satisfaction. For many couples, sexual satisfaction is closely correlated with relationship satisfaction, thus whether a client couple is presenting with sexual concerns or otherwise, it may be in clinicians' best interest to assess for the presence and extent of pornography use.

As I noted in the introduction of this study, other research has indicated the importance of addressing pornography use patterns with couples by illustrating the negative effects on the

underlying attachment bond within the relationship (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Many relationships cite pornography use as a force for driving an emotional rift or distance between the couple as well as deteriorating established trust (Zitzman & Butler, 2009). Some relationships even perceive pornography use as a form of infidelity (Olmstead et al, 2013; Zitzman & Butler, 2009). With the knowledge that we gain from this study about pornography being a coupling issue and previous literature about its impact on the attachment bond, therapists should go beyond merely discussing pornography use behaviors but assess the threat or effect it may have on the attachment and emotional closeness of the couple.

Second, when treating couples where pornography use is present the clinician should be aware, just as in other behaviors, there are benefits and drawbacks to the behavior. Also, if the clinician sees that pornography use is negatively affecting relational outcomes or the attachment bond, he or she should not address it as a consensus issue where both husband and wife simply need to agree with one another on the extent of the use. As shown in this study, by merely addressing the acceptance of or attitude about pornography (condone or condemn) may not alter the affect pornography use may have on sexual outcomes. This model suggests that a therapist may have greater success in altering the sexual outcomes by modifying the pornography patterns themselves, rather than simply addressing attitudes about them.

Lastly, results from this study illustrate that husbands and wives are effected by pornography differently from one another. Clinicians should look for and seek to understand these differences between partners concerning their own use of pornography, its effect on their individual sexuality, and how they perceive their partner's pornography use.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although this study furthers previous literature surrounding pornography use within romantic relationships there are some limitations that need to be considered. First, the sample of this study was more educated, on average, than the general population. Second, by incorporating a common-fate analysis into the current model I was able to acquire a more detailed look into relational dynamics surrounding pornography use, but I was limited to the extent of detail that the analyses examined. Common-fate analysis did not permit cross-gender predictions among the unique variables of pornography acceptance and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, I was unable to examine the relationship between husbands' pornography use and wives' unique pornography acceptance and sexual satisfaction, as well as wives' pornography use with husbands' unique pornography acceptance and sexual satisfaction. Previous literature has shown that some couples use pornography to "spice" up their sex life (Daneback et al, 2008; Maddox et al, 2009; Olmstead et al, 2013). This model does not consider whether the reported pornography use was viewed together as a couple or alone. Lastly, the measures used in this study did not take into consideration the type of content of the pornography used or the duration of use per viewing period. This information would allow a deeper understanding of what it is about pornography that plays a role in individual outcomes and relational dynamics.

This study builds upon previous literature depicting the importance of not only seeing pornography use as an individual factor or a personal choice, but rather a dynamic that exists within and influences romantic relationships. Further research is required regarding pornography use patterns along the coupling continuum from casual dating to more committed relationships to evaluate how these couples are incorporating or reacting to the existence of pornography within their relationship. Similar work needs to also be done among varying ages, SES, and cultures to

build upon our basic understanding of pornography. Additional academic consideration is also needed in evaluating how couples negotiate individual and/or couple pornography use and how this use may contribute to their sexual scripts and sexual patterns.

## References

- Albright, J. M. (2008). Sex in America online: An exploration of sex, marital status, and sexual identity in internet sex seeking and its impacts. *Journal of Sex Research, 45*(2), 175-186. doi:10.1080/00224490801987481
- Brennan, R. (2010, June 7). Getting to know you: Let's talk about porn... *Glamour*. Retrieved from <http://www.glamour.com/sex-love-life/blogs/smitten/2010/06/getting-to-know-you-lets-talk-3.html>
- 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), 1-14.
- Bridges, A. J., & Morokoff, P. J. (2011). Sexual media use and relational satisfaction in heterosexual couples. *Personal Relationships, 18*(4), 562-585. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01328.x
- Busby, D. M., Holman, T. B., & Taniguchi, N. (2001). RELATE: Relationship evaluation of the individual, family, cultural, and couple contexts. *Family Relations, 50*, 308-316.
- Buzzell, T. (2005). Demographic characteristics of persons using pornography in three technological contexts. *Sexuality & Culture: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly, 9*(1), 28-48. doi:10.1007/BF02908761
- Byers, E. (2005). Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction: A longitudinal study of individuals in long-term relationships. *Journal of Sex Research, 42*(2), 113-118. doi:10.1080/00224490509552264
- Carey, T. (2011, April 7). Why more and more women are using pornography. *The Guardian*.

Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/apr/07/women-addicted-internet-pornography>

Carroll, J. S., Busby, D. M., Willoughby, B. J., & Brown, C. C. (2013). *The pornography gap: Differences in men's and women's pornography patterns in couple relationships*.

Manuscript submitted for publication.

Carroll, J. S., Padilla-Walker, L. M., Nelson, L. J., Olson, C. D., Barry, C., & Madsen, S. D. (2008). Generation XXX: Pornography acceptance and use among emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 23*(1), 6-30.

Cooper, A., Boies, S., Maheu, M., & Greenfield, D. (2000). Sexuality and the internet: The next sexual revolution. In L. T. Szuchman, F. Muscarella (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on human sexuality* (pp. 519-545). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Cooper, A., Galbreath, N., & Becker, M. A. (2004) Sex on the internet: Further our understanding of men with online sexual problems. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 18*(3), 223-230.

Cooper, A., Griffin-Shelley, E., Delmonico, D. L., & Mathy, R. M. (2001). Online sexual problems: Assessment and predictive variables. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity, 8*, 267-285.

Cooper, A., Morahan-Martin, J., Mathy, R. M., & Maheu, M. (2002). Toward an increased understanding of user demographics in online sexual activities. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 28*(2), 105-129. doi:10.1080/00926230252851861

Daneback, K., Traeen, B., & Mansson, S. A. (2008). Use of pornography in a random sample of Norwegian heterosexual couples. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 38*, 746-753.

Emmers-Sommer, T., Hertlein, K., & Kennedy, A. (2013). Pornography use and attitudes: An

- examination of relational and sexual openness variables between and within gender. *Marriage & Family Review*, 49(4), 349-365. doi:10.1080/01494929.2012.762449
- Griffin, D., & Gonzalez, R. (1995). Correlational analysis of dyad-level data in the exchangeable case. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118, 430–439.
- Grov, C., Gillespie, B., Royce, T., & Lever, J. (2011). Perceived consequences of casual online sexual activities on heterosexual relationships: A U. S. online survey. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 40(2), 429-439. doi:10.1007/s10508-010-9598-z
- Hald, G., & Malamuth, N. M. (2008). Self-perceived effects of pornography consumption. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 37(4), 614-625. doi:10.1007/s10508-007-9212-1
- Hald, G. M., Seaman, C., & Linz, D. (2014). Sexuality and pornography. In D. L. Tolman, L. M. Diamond, J. A. Bauermeister, W. H. George, J. G. Pfaus, & L. Ward (Eds.), *APA handbook of sexuality and psychology, Vol. 2: Contextual approaches* (pp. 3-35). Washington, DC US: American Psychological Association.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 6(1), 1-55. doi:10.1080/10705519909540118
- Kenny, D. A., & Cook, W. L. (1999). Partner effects in relationship research: Conceptual issues, analytic difficulties, and illustrations. *Personal Relationships*, 6(4), 433–448. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6811.1999.tb00202.x
- Ledermann, T., & Kenny, D. A. (2012). The common fate model for dyadic data: Variations of a theoretically important but underutilized model. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(1), 140-148. doi:10.1037/a0026624

- MacKinnon, D. P. (2008). *Introduction to statistical mediation analysis*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Maddox, A. M., Rhoades, G. K., & Markman, H. J. (2009). Viewing sexually-explicit materials alone or together: Associations with relationship quality. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 40*(2), 441-448.
- Malamuth, N. M., Hald, G., & Koss, M. (2012). Pornography, individual differences in risk and men's acceptance of violence against women in a representative sample. *Sex Roles, 66*(7-8), 427-439. doi:10.1007/s11199-011-0082-6
- McKee, A. (2007). The relationship between attitudes towards women, consumption of pornography, and other demographic variables in a survey of 1,023 consumers of pornography. *International Journal of Sexual Health, 19*(1), 31-45. doi:10.1300/J514v19n01\_05
- Mitchell, K. J., Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2007). Trends in youth reports of sexual solicitations, harassment and unwanted exposure to pornography on the internet. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 40*(2), 116-126. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.05.021
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998-2012). *Mplus user's guide*. (7<sup>th</sup> ed). Los Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén.
- Nelson, L. J., Padilla-Walker, L. M., & Carroll, J. S. (2010). "I believe it is wrong but I still do it": A comparison of religious young men who do versus do not use pornography. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 2*(3), 136-147. doi:10.1037/a0019127
- Olmstead, S. B., Negash, S., Pasley, K., & Fincham, F. D. (2013). Emerging adults' expectations

- for pornography use in the context of future committed romantic relationships: A qualitative study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 42(4), 625-635. doi:10.1007/s10508-012-9986-7
- 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: Provo, UT.
- Owen, J. J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Fincham, F. D. (2010). “Hooking up” among college students: Demographic and psychosocial correlates. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39, 653-663.
- Peugh, J. L., DiLillo, D., and Panuzio, J. (2013). Analyzing mixed-dyadic data using structural equation modeling. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 20, 314-337.
- Popovic, M. (2011). Pornography use and closeness with others in men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 40(2), 449-456. doi:10.1007/s10508-010-9648-6
- Poulsen, F. O., Busby, D. M., & Galovan, A. M. (2013). Pornography use: Who uses it and how it is associated with couple outcomes. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(1), 72-83.
- Regan, P. C., & Atkins, L. (2006). Sex differences and similarities in frequency and intensity of sexual desire. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 34(1), 95-102.  
doi:10.2224/sbp.2006.34.1.95
- Richters, J., Grulich, A. E., de Visser, R. O., Smith, A. M.A., & Rissel, C. E. (2003). Sex in Australia: Autoerotic, esoteric and other sexual practices engaged in by a representative sample of adults. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 27(2), 180–190.  
doi: 10.1111/j.1467-842X.2003.tb00806.x
- Sinkovic, M., Stulhofer, A., & Bozic, J. (2012). Revisiting the association between pornography

- use and risky sexual behaviors: The role of early exposure to pornography and sexual sensation seeking. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(7), 633-641.
- Stack, S., Wasserman, I., & Kern, R. (2004). Adult social bonds and use of internet pornography. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(1), 75-88.
- Traeen, B., Spitznogle, K., & Beverfjord, A. (2004). Attitudes and use of pornography in the Norwegian population 2002. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 41(2), 193-200.
- Watson, M., & Smith, R. D. (2012). Positive porn: Educational, medical, and clinical uses. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 7(2), 122-145.
- Weinberg, M. S., Williams, C. J., Kleiner, S., & Irizarry, Y. (2010). Pornography, normalization, and empowerment. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39(6), 1389-1401.
- Willoughby, B. J., Carroll, J. S., Busby, D. M., & Brown, C. C. *Differences in pornography use among romantic couples: Associations with satisfaction, stability, and relationship processes*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Wright, P. J. (2012). Pornography consumption, cocaine use, and casual sex among U.S. adults. *Psychological Reports*, 111(1), 305-310. doi:10.2466/18.02.13.PR0.111.4.305-310
- Wright, P. J. (2013). U.S. males and pornography, 1973–2010: Consumption, predictors, correlates. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(1), 60-71. doi:10.1080/00224499.2011.628132
- Yabiku, S. T., & Gager, C. T. (2009). Sexual frequency and the stability of marital and cohabiting unions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71(4), 983-1000. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00648.x
- Yucel, D., & Gassanov, M. A. (2010). Exploring actor and partner correlates of sexual satisfaction among married couples. *Social Science Research*, 39(5), 725-738.

Zitzman, S. T., & Butler, M. H. (2005). Attachment, addiction, and recovery: Conjoint marital therapy for recovery from a sexual addiction. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 12*(4), 311-337. doi: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*(3), 210-240. doi:10.1080/10720160903202679

Figure 1. Pornography use and sexual satisfaction outcome framework

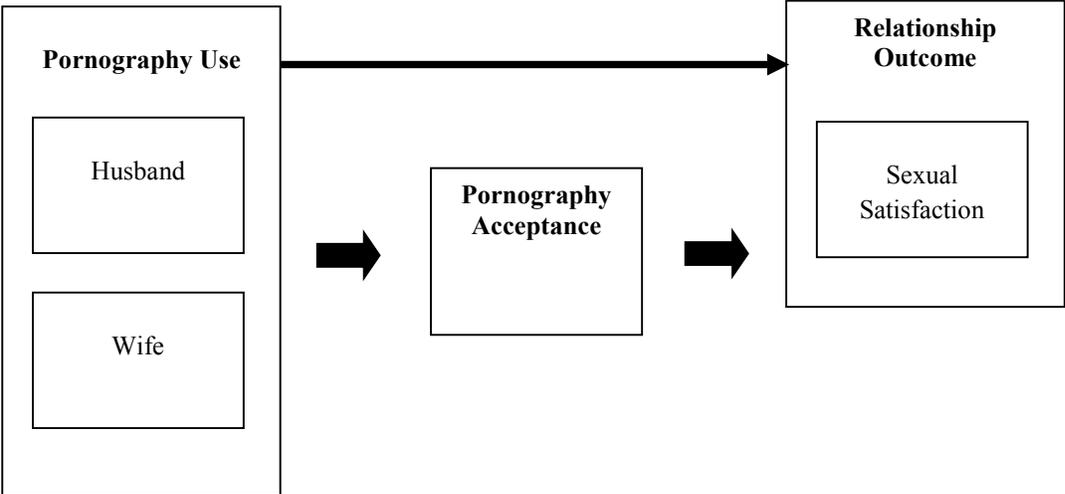


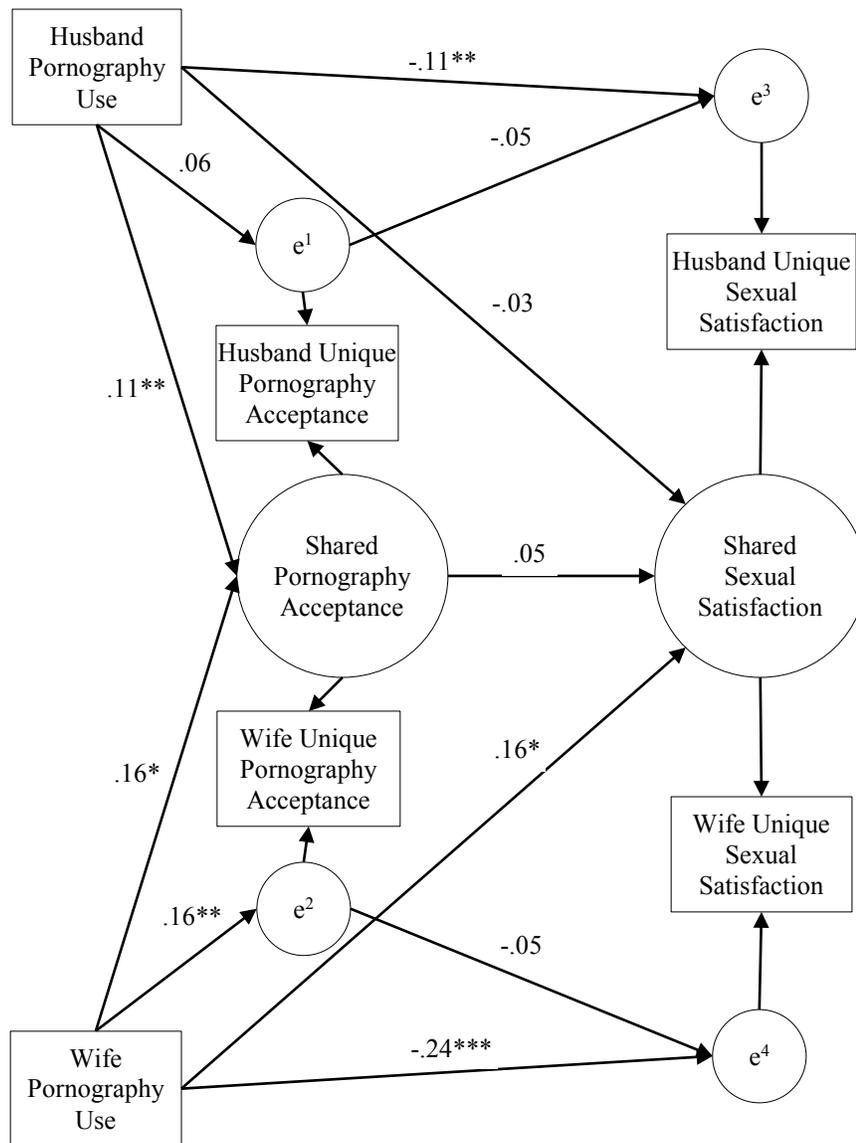
Table 1

*Bivariate Correlations*

Observed Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Husband						
1. Pornography Use	--					
2. Pornography Acceptance	.42**	--				
3. Sexual Satisfaction	-.13*	.04	--			
Wife						
4. Pornography Use	.29**	.27**	.14**	--		
5. Pornography Acceptance	.41**	.67**	.08	.41**	--	
6. Sexual Satisfaction	-.03	.05	.56**	-.06	.01	--

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Figure 2. Unstandardized coefficients from a multilevel structural equation model incorporating common-fate of husband and wife pornography use and acceptance predicting sexual satisfaction as controlled by education, religiosity, and length of relationship.



Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Model fit: Chi-square = 3.05 (df = 8),  $p > .10$ ; RMSEA = .00; CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .006.