PORNOGRAPHY USE: THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS FOR

RELIGIOUS EMERGING ADULTS

by

Lea Ann Garcia

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Pornography use has become the norm instead of the exception among emerging adults (18 – 26-year-olds) and has been found to be associated with increased sexual permissiveness and sexual shame outcomes among the general population, but does the same hold true for religious emerging adults who maintain a moral opposition to viewing pornography? Within the context of recent developmental theory research among emerging adults, this study examined associations between pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame. This research hypothesized that religiosity and age would moderate the relationships between pornography use and sexual permissiveness, and pornography use and sexual shame. The results showed that religiosity does moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness resulting in a negative correlation.

Keywords: pornography, sexual permissiveness, sexual shame, religiosity, emerging adult

Dedication

This dissertation is the culmination of the last seven and a half years of my life. During that time, it was not without times when I thought it would never come to fruition. Without the constant love and encouragement from my family and friends, it would not have been possible.

First, I want to thank my forever friends: Deanna, Arenda, Kim, Ronda, and Linda. You were my constant prayer partners, and those prayers brought me comfort, peace, and clarity in the most difficult of times. You didn't forget me, even when at times it must have felt as if I had forgotten you.

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My most significant accomplishment in life is my children, and I am incredibly grateful that Carissa, Courtney, and Seth and their spouses Brett and Roman who graciously and lovingly tolerated me being in school for so many years. Their confidence in me only encouraged me to persevere. I cannot forget to mention the newest addition to our family, Archer Lee. You came during the final year of this process. You have brought such joy into our lives, and you spurred

me on to complete this dissertation so I could spend more time with you. You will not remember this time, but I hope those that go before you serve to inspire you never to stop learning.

Junior, you have been my life partner and best friend for almost 39 years. You never questioned or discouraged me during my 15 years of educational endeavors. You were my constant encourager during my darkest days. You never doubted my abilities, and your calm, laid-back demeanor only helped to create a safe and loving environment in our home. I love you forever and a day, and I dedicate this dissertation to you as it would have never been possible without your constant love and care. Last but not least, I must give all the honor and glory to my Lord and Savior from whom all blessings flow.

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My dissertation chair, Dr. Fred Volk, proved to be the driving force behind the completion of this dissertation. I first met Dr. Volk when I took his statistics class. It was with extreme dread and anxiety that I approached this subject, but Dr. Volk approached the topics and his students with passion and enthusiasm. Dr. Volk was not my first choice for a dissertation chair, because his intelligence intimidated me, but God intervened and knew that Dr. Volk was the chair that I needed to be successful. Dr. Volk and I worked together for 18 months on my dissertation. It was not without its challenges, but Dr. Volk was always available, and we talked on a weekly basis. He was encouraging but expected my best and did not accept mediocre work. Dr. Volk, I cannot thank you enough for sharing your time, energy, and vast knowledge with me. Words cannot express my deep appreciation for your wisdom and mentorship. It has honestly been a life-changing experience.

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List of Abbreviations

Amazon.com Mechanical Turk (Mturk)

Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS)

Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale-Permissiveness (BSASPER)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Kyle Inventory of Sexual Shame (KISS)

Negative Self-Evaluation (NSE)

Pornography Use by Hours (P_UseHou)

Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10)

Religious Commitment Inventory-Personal (RCI_Per)

Test of Self-Conscious Affect-3 (TOSCA-3)

Test of Self-Conscious Affect – Shame (TOSCA_Shame)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Pornography comes in a wide array of mediums, but Internet pornography seems to be the most dominant form due to Cooper's (1998) Triple-A factors, which endows the Internet user with unprecendented affordability, accessibility, and anonymity (Beaver & Paul, 2011; Cooper, 1998; Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000; Gardner, 2001; Green, Carnes, Carens, & Weinman, 2012; Hertlein & Stevenson, 2010; Jones & Hertlein, 2012; Kalman, 2008; Manning, 2006; Wetterneck, Burgess, Short, Smith, & Cervantes, 2012). Pornography is more widely available today than ever before due to the prevalence of the Internet through smartphones and is credited with the increase in its usage (Manning, 2006; Twohig, Crosby, & Cox, 2009).

Sexual content and images have been available for centuries, but it had only been since the proliferation of the Internet two decades ago (Grubbs, Braden, Kraus, Wilt, & Wright, 2017; Michael & Plaza, 1997) that it has become the norm instead of the exception (Paul, 2006). Today, anyone with access to the Internet can choose to view pornography 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Manning, 2006). Pornography use is most prevalent among emerging adults (18-26-year-olds) with the average of age of initial exposure being 11-years-of-age and peaking at age 22 (Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006). Emerging adults are the largest group of Internet pornography users with this population unable to remember a time without easy access to the Internet and pornography (Boies, 2002; O'Reilly, Knox & Zusman, 2007; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

Religious individuals view less pornography but are not immune from the allure of Internet pornography, with 47.6% of those that report being religious viewing pornography at some time during their lifetime, and 11% admitting to being regular users of Internet

pornography (Baltazar, Helm, McBride, Hopkins, & Stevens, 2010; Grubbs, Braden, Kraus, Wilt, & Wright, 2017). Religious individuals continue to view pornography while reporting an abhorrence of the practice (MacInnis & Hodson, 2016). Religious emerging adults may prefer the use of pornography over non-marital sexual activity (Rhea & Issler, 2015). Abell, Steenbergh, and Bolvin (2006) suggested that religious emerging adults may view Internet pornography as an acceptable alternative to non-marital sexual activity and as a result, seem to be able to tolerate the incongruence between beliefs and actions when it comes to pornography use than overt sexual misbehavior. While they believe the use of pornography is wrong and unacceptable, they view it as the lesser of two evils when comparing with sexual involvement with another person (Rhea & Issler, 2015). Even though religiously committed emerging adults seem to be able to rationalize the use of pornography, they cannot seem to escape the consequences and feelings of sexual shame that come with their actions (Grubbs, Exline, Pargament, Hook, & Carlisle, 2015; Murray & Ciarrocchi, 2007).

Background to the Problem

In this post-industrialized society, the process of coming of age as an adult has transitioned into a lengthy and changing journey from adolescence (Arnett, 2004; Cote, 2002). In the past, adulthood was accomplished through the completion an education, marrying, having a home, and establishing a career, and usually not long after the end of adolescence. Today, the journey into adulthood stretches into the 30's (Cote & Levine, 2002; Smith, 2009). This new and distinct phase of life which encompasses those in the age group of 18 – 26-years-of-age is referred to as emerging adulthood. The most critical developmental component of this period is

the development of one's identity (Arnett, 2004; Ehrsensaft et al., 2003; Hagan & Foster, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2011).

Developmental Theory

In the 21st century, young adults spend as long as ten years exploring their identity in a new and expanded stage of life. As a result, Arnett (2000, 2004), Ehrsensaft (2003), and Hagan & Foster (2003) proposed an expansion of Erikson's (1950) adolescent developmental life stage. The emerging adult developmental stage allowed for an expanded time for identity formation and a successful transition into adulthood (Schwartz et al., 2010). Erikson (1950) first introduced developmental life stages with adolescence lasting from approximately 12 to 18-years of age followed by young adulthood from 18 to 40-years-of-age. This definition remained the norm and prevailing theory in industrialized societies when young people got married and started careers by 20-years-of-age, but by the end of the 1900's, this was no longer true. The average age of marriage had increased significantly, and more young people were attending college instead of going straight into the workforce. Sexual standards also changed drastically in the new century as non-marital sex and cohabitation became culturally acceptable. Thus, emerging adulthood as a psychosocial developmental stage is a much-needed addition to Erikson's model (Arnett, 2004; Ehrsensaft et al., 2003; Hagan & Foster, 2003), with the most crucial function of this stage being identity formation (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Identity formation. Erikson (1968) refers to emerging adulthood as identity formation versus role confusion. Erikson proposed eight stages of human development with the fifth stage encompassing identity formation or the development of a distinct and unique personality by the individual. The process according to Erikson begins in adolescence and is completed by 18-years-of-age, but in post-industrialized society, adolescence has been prolonged into an emerging

adult stage, extending identity formation into the late 20's or early 30's (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Erhsensaft, 2003; Hagan & Foster, 2003). Identity formation consists of the physical, sexual, cognitive, and moral development of an individual which enables the individual to function as an adult in society (Marcia, 2002). Along with the formation of an adult-identity, comes self-esteem, purpose, control, and self-efficacy (Cote & Levine, 2002). Marcia (2002) sees identity formation as the central purpose and task of emerging adulthood, and successfully navigating this developmental stage is necessary for a successful transition into adulthood.

Emerging adults. Arnett (2000, 2004), Ehrsensaft (2003), and Hagan and Foster (2003) proposed a new way of thinking about development with this additional period between adolescence and young adulthood, emerging adulthood. Emerging adults are neither adolescents nor young adults and have their distinct developmental characteristics. Erikson (1950, 1968) had discussed the possibility of a prolonged adolescent period 50 years ago, and this period has become a reality in our society with the delay of marriage and parenthood. Erikson felt this extended adolescent period was necessary for identity exploration. Today more identity exploration seems to be undertaken during the post-adolescent or emerging adulthood period. Romantic and sexual experimentation along with risky behavior peaks during emerging adulthood as part of identity exploration, because it is less likely to be monitored by parents or a companion (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Ehrsensaft, 2003; Hagan & Foster, 2003). Emerging adulthood has become a time for exploring and understanding sexual behaviors (Vosilenko, Maas, & Lefkowitz, 2015).

Demographics defines the emerging adult more than his or her age. Most young people leave their parents' homes by the age of 18 or 19 with about one-third leaving for college to live in dorms but are still financially dependent on their parents (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Ehrsensaft,

2003; Hagan & Foster, 2003). Forty percent leave their childhood home to live on their own and work with two-thirds cohabitating. Only 10% of men and 30% of women will remain at home until marriage with 40% moving back into their parents' homes at least once during this period (Arnett, 2004). About one-third who graduate with an undergraduate degree will go on to a post-graduate program immediately (Arnett, 2000, 2004). Emerging adults do not view themselves as adults until they feel responsible, financially independent, and can make decisions for themselves. For most, this usually happens by the time they are in their late 20's (Arnett, 2000, Cote, 2002; Cote & Levine, 2002; Smith, 2009).

The rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood in the past included: leaving the parent's home, college, financial independence, career, marriage, and ultimately children; with true adulthood not being obtained until marriage. Today young adults are being rushed into adolescence and adulthood but seem to delay full adulthood with all its responsibilities longer than ever before in history (Arnett, 2004; Cote, 2002; Cote & Levine, 2002; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011; Smith, 2009). As of 2000, only 46% of women and 31% of men had reached these adult milestones by the age of 30-years-old (Arnett, 2004). Young adults are working their way through the phases to adulthood at a much slower rate than before. They expect to complete their education, establish a career and obtain financial stability before even considering marriage or starting a family (Arnett, 2004; Cote, 2002; Cote & Levine, 2002; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011; Smith, 2009).

Marital Timing

Twenge, Sherman, and Wells (2015) refer to those born during the 17-year period from 1982 to 1999 as Millennials, Gen Y or Generation Me as those that are currently considered as emerging adults. Emerging adults seems to be the generation that is most accepting of sex

outside of marriage, but they do not condone cheating on a marriage partner with another individual. As culture changes, so do its values. The millennial culture is more focused on individual rights and less on societal rules and norms. This trend seems to accompany shifting marriage norms. Willoughby, Hall, and Goff (2015) found that marriage is no longer a rite of passage for adulthood. Marriage rates are decreasing as the average marriage age is increasing. The median marriage age has risen six years from 1970 to 2010. The median marriage age of women has increased from 21 to 27 years and for men from 23 to 29 years, with religious young adults getting married at a younger age than non-religious individuals. Forty-nine percent of conservative Protestant young women and 36% of the men marry before the age of 24 and hold a more positive view of marriage (Regnerus & Uecker, 201; Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015).

Twenge, Sherman, and Wells (2015) found that along with the delay of a committed relationship comes a generation that is more permissive and accepting of non-marital sex. Marriage reached an all-time low in the U.S. in 2014. As a result, young adults are spending more years unmarried with more opportunities to have sex with multiple partners. Millennials became adults at the height of the AIDS epidemics, but remain very casual in sexual relationships. The AIDS scare may have caused millennials to decrease the number of sexual partners, but it did little for the delay in becoming involved in committed long-term relationships or marriage (Twenge et al., 2015). Willoughby, Hall, and Goff (2015) found that marriage remains important to emerging adults, but they are delaying marriage and making education and career development a top priority to create a better possibility of a successful and stable marriage. Ninety-three to 96% of young adults want to get married someday in the future. They have a deep respect for marriage, but they want it to be better than their parents with 50 to 70% cohabiting before marrying (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). Carroll (2008) found that pornography

use was associated with later marital timing beliefs among men and women. Emerging adult women are looking for ways to release sexual tension without the time and energy a committed romantic relationship would entail. Whether this is through "hookups" (casual sex) or pornography use, young adult women are avoiding anything that might derail their education and career goals (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

Sexual Behavior

Twenge, Sherman, and Wells (2015) found millennials to be less likely to be sexually active as teenagers or young adults compared to previous generations due to millennials living with parents longer and marrying later. Another possible reason could be the increase in abstinence education and purity pledges during the teenage years of this generation (Twenge, Sherman & Wells, 2015). Further research is needed to explore the possibility that the rise in Internet pornography use might also be contributing to the sexual inactivity among millennials. Regnerus and Uecker (2011) found the primary motivators for religious emerging adults attempting to remain sexually pure are religious commitment and a set of moral values usually reinforced by their parents and the church. Marriage continues to be important to this population, but they seem to be determined to wait until education and career goals are met before undertaking marriage and a family. The premise seems to be the desire to be a better spouse and parent than their parents (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). But with the delay of a committed relationship and marriage comes a need to release natural sexual tension and pornography use seems to serve as a safe way to meet those natural desires (Carroll et al., 2008; Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2015). Emerging adults value their adult freedom without the adult responsibilities and remain open to exploration of new ideas including time for exploring and

understanding sexual behaviors (Regnerus & Uecker, 2001; Vosilenko, Maas, & Lefkowitz, 2015).

Regnerus and Uecker (2011) found the term premarital sex as something of a misnomer. Originally the term was used to describe a couple engaging in a sexual relationship before the couple married. Today, with 84% of emerging adults have already engaged in sexual activity, and the majority of sexual relationships not resulting in marriage, the term premarital sex is better described as any sexual intercourse before marriage. A better term for this behavior might be non-marital sex (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

Emerging adults seem to adhere to the idea of "serial monogamy" or the idea that you can have multiple short-termed intimate relationships with only one partner at a time is morally acceptable. As a result, emerging adults are more concerned with monogamy in an intimate relationship than the frequency or duration of the relationships (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). For young adults attempting to remain virgins until marriage, the primary motivators are religiosity and morality. Since church attendance is a crucial source of social interaction for religious young adults, this activity increases the possibility of sexual activity and eventual loss of virginity. As a result, church attendance seems to be somewhat of a two-edged sword for the young adult. On the one hand, a church provides support and comradery with like-minded young adults, but with this familiarity and closeness comes the possibility of eventually giving in to their sexual urges (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

Pornography Use

The ease of viewing pornography through the Triple-A Engine of affordability, anonymity, and accessibility seems to be the reason for increased pornography use (Beaver & Paul, 2011; Cooper, 1998; Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000; Gardner, 2001; Green, Carnes,

Carens, & Weinman, 2012; Hertlein & Stevenson, 2010; Jones & Hertlein, 2012; Kalman, 2008; Manning, 2006; Wetterneck, Burgess, Short, Smith, & Cervantes, 2012). Carroll and colleagues (2008) found sexual arousal and curiosity to be the primary motivators for Internet pornography use among emerging adults with an increasing number of users being young adult women who find it a seemingly safe way to explore their sexuality. Among emerging adults, 67% of young men and 49% of young women state that pornography is an acceptable activity while 87% of young men and 31% of young women reported viewing pornography on a regular basis with use peaking at age 22 and subsequently decreasing (Carroll et al., 2008). The Internet is the most common channel for pornography with approximately 20-33% of Americans using Internet pornography on a regular basis (Ayres & Haddock, 2009; Beaver & Paul, 2011; D'Orlando, 2011; Kalman, 2008; Luder et al., 2011; Paul & Shim, 2008; Poulsen, Busby, & Galovan, 2013). Pornography seems to be a common practice among young adults and can also be linked to negative mental health outcomes especially among young adult women while male pornography use is an indicator of risky behavior (Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015). Regnerus and Uecker (2011) found that thirty percent of emerging adults reported viewing pornography out of curiosity, 19% were seeking sexual arousal, and 13% were hoping to become a better sexual partner. They also found that the primary motivation behind emerging adults' pornography use is to fulfill curiosity and to become sexually aroused. Masturbation usually accompanies pornography use as a way to relieve sexual tension but is a weak substitute for sexual intercourse and lacks the emotional connection that comes with sexual intercourse and is thus less-satisfying (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). Emerging adult women seem to view pornography as a safe way to explore their sexuality, and more sexual partners indicate a higher tolerance and use of

pornography. Pornography users are more accepting of non-marital cohabitation, but still want to get married and become parents someday (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

Pornography effects. Research has found some positive aspects of pornography use such as stress relief, sexual education, and as a coping mechanism to relieve stress, depression, anger, low self-esteem, and boredom (Grubbs, Braden, Kraus, Wilt, & Wright, 2017; Short, Black, Smith, Wetterneck, & Wells, 2012). Some researchers claim that it is the ultimate freedom of sexual expression, imparting a feeling of power and liberty (Abell, Steenbergh, & Bolvin, 2006; Brown and L'Engle, 2009; Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000; Davis, 2001). McElroy (2004) found that pornography use creates a safe environment for sexual exploration and curiosity. But frequent online pornography use seems to also be a predictor of risky behavior such as binge drinking, low self-esteem, and depression (Carroll et al., 2008; Cox, Mills-Koonce, Propper, & Gariepy, 2010; Levenson, Aldwin, & D'Mello, 2005).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Festinger (1962) first introduced the theory of cognitive dissonance to explain why individuals will work to create consistency or dissonance-reducing changes when they are confronted with a series of options that are inconsistent with their ideals or beliefs. Cognitive dissonance serves as a motivator for change whether in beliefs or actions and as a way to maintain an individual's self-esteem or ego. The most notable way of reducing dissonance would be to change one's beliefs to come closer to one's actions (Aronson, 1968; Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Festinger, 1957, 1962; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976).

Moral dissonance. Rabin (1994) approaches cognitive dissonance from the moral perspective (moral dissonance) in which the unpleasantness of dissonance will cause an individual to convince themselves that an immoral activity is morally acceptable and in turn

persuade others thus perpetuating the vice. As a result, the more negative feedback one receives, the more likely they are to continue and increase the immoral behavior. Rabin (1994) found two ways exist to reduce cognitive dissonance. Individuals may either change their behavior or change their beliefs. The most common rationale is that the more objectionable the immoral activity, the more the individual struggles with their conscience; and as a result, the activity is decreased. The more uncomfortable the effects of the moral dissonance, the more likely individuals are to change their moral beliefs to convince themselves that the activity is not immoral (Rabin, 1994).

Rabin (1994) adds a social component when beliefs are connected to social issues. The more people change their moral beliefs, the more difficult it is for others to maintain their beliefs. The immoral activity eventually becomes socially acceptable; as a result, moral dissonance could lead to more of the offending behavior and not less. Religious indoctrination of strict biblical principles concerning non-marital sex, pornography, and homosexuality could have the opposite of the intended effect and be increasing these behaviors (Rabin, 1994).

Religious dissonance. Hook (2015) found that cognitive dissonance brought about by sexual incongruence is more common among religious individuals influenced particularly by the conservative religious teaching that sexual contact is only acceptable within the confines of a heterosexual marriage including solitary activities such as masturbation and pornography use. Societal changes and beliefs concerning sexuality have made it more difficult to adhere to conservative religious teachings concerning sexual activities; and as a result, an increase in cognitive dissonance among religious emerging adults. Religious individuals not only cope with the distress of the sexual dissonance but also the shame and guilt that accompanies those feelings (Hook et al., 2015).

Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007) explored the religious decline of emerging adults and found that cognitive dissonance was created as young adults participated in activities that disregarded the moral teachings of their religion such as drinking, drugs, and sex. As a result, emerging adults begin to draw away from organized religion and view it as less important in their lives. They attempt to lessen the effects of dissonance by distancing themselves from their moral religious upbringing as their concerns for a career and financial stability overshadow their concerns for morals and beliefs (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007).

Incongruence

Rhea and Issler (2015) found that pornography use among religious emerging adults has become "culturally normalized" by this population's persistent use of pornography (Rhea & Issler, 2015, p. 155). They provide a possible explanation that emerging adults may be able to rationalize two opposing views such as believing that pornography is wrong but still being a consumer of pornography. This generation seems to be more capable and willing to internalize two polar opposite views. Emerging adults can normalize their sexual behavior by either "compartmentalizing" the behavior or tolerating the "dissonance" caused by two opposing beliefs (Rhea & Issler, 2015, p. 163). The use of pornography is rationalized or considered acceptable when compared to having sex with another person. Religious emerging adults may be using pornography to release sexual tension instead of sex with another person and rationalize an ongoing use of pornography when compared to other sexual behaviors. In the Postmodern Age, religious individuals depend on personal experience to determine truth; as a result, the Bible is not considered absolute truth (Rhea & Issler, 2015). This postmodern belief system could explain how religious emerging adults can tolerate opposing views concerning pornography, and may gradually decrease their religious commitment over time (Hook et al., 2015). Those that

have the strongest religious commitments may have the most challenging time achieving sexual

congruence which could lead to physical and emotional problems. Strong religious individuals

also view their sexual behavior as an addiction even if it does not meet that criterion. As a result,

a therapist should assess not only the actual problematic behavior but also the level of distress

that is caused by it. It must be the client's decision whether to change the behavior, change their

moral standards, or accept the behavior (Hook et al., 2015).

<div align="center">**Sexual Shame**</div>

While quite a bit of research exists on sexual behavior and guilt, very little research has

focused on sexual shame (Murray & Ciarrocchi, 2007). Shame is not living up to one's

expectations for self; and as a result, feelings of failure. Shame differs from guilt. Guilt seeks

confession and forgiveness while shame leads to hiding, secrecy, and feelings of rejection

(Morrison, 2011). Guilt is more about the behavior while shame is about the person and the

person's lack of worth due to their perceived shameful behavior (Murray & Ciarrocchi, 2007).

Religious individuals are more likely to report shame when their behaviors are not congruent

with their religious beliefs. In relation to pornography use, religious parents instill the belief that

pornography is morally wrong; as a result, religious young adults get caught in a vicious cycle of

shame and guilt that they are unprepared to handle. Pornography is used as a distraction from

loneliness and boredom resulting in a maladaptive coping mechanism. Shame is not a predictor

of pornography use, but a result and a method of dealing with shame (Gilliland, South,

Carpenter, & Hardy, 2011). Religion seems to promote shame with its condemnation of sexual

urges and pleasure. While religion plays a societal role in regulating sexual behavior, it has both

positive and negative ramifications. Moral disapproval of sexual abuse and rape has led to laws

condemning these behaviors, but some religious teachings concerning appropriate sexual

behavior have promoted damaging shame and guilt. As a result, religiosity seems to encourage shame and guilt as a consequence of condemning non-marital sexual behavior (Murray & Ciarrocchi, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to examine the relationship between pornography use, age, religiosity, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame. Age and religiosity will be studied as a moderator of the association between pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame. Findings from this study will attempt to advance the pornography research by focusing on the implications of pornography use on sexual permissiveness and add to the limited study on sexual shame among religious emerging adults.

Research Questions

The primary goal of this research is to examine the potential role of age and religiosity among religious emerging adults on the association between pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame. Outcome variables include sexual permissiveness and sexual shame with age and religiosity as moderators. The specific research questions are as follows:

RQ1: Does pornography use relate to sexual permissiveness?

RQ1A: Does religiosity moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness?

RQ1B: Does age moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness?

RQ2: Does pornography use relate to sexual shame?

RQ2A: Does religiosity moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame?

RQ2B: Does age moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame?

Limitations/Delimitations

The review of the literature on the topic of emerging adult pornography use, religiosity, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame suggests the conclusion that religious emerging adults are using pornography as a way to avoid sexual permissiveness but at the cost of increased sexual shame. However, this area of study will benefit from a focus on emerging adults particularly those that are religious and how the pornography use has affected their sexual behavior and shame.

Definitions

For this study, the following terms are operationalized as follows:

Emerging adulthood: New psychosocial stage of life encompassing the period between adolescence and adulthood, 18 – 26-years-old with the most crucial function being identity formation (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Ehhrsensaft et al., 2003; Hagan & Foster, 2003).

Non-marital sexual behavior: Any sexual intercourse outside of a marriage relationship (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

Current pornography users: Individuals having viewed Internet pornography within the last six months.

Premarital sex: Any sexual intercourse before marriage (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

Religiosity: Internalized religious beliefs and the actual practice of those beliefs (Worthington, 2003).

Sexual permissiveness: An individual's views on casual sex (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Reich, 2006).

Sexual shame: The feeling of being unworthy or unacceptable in response to sexual behaviors (Kyle, 2013).

Shame-proneness: The likelihood of feeling unworthy or unacceptable (Tangney & Dearing, 2000; Tangney, Dearing, Wagner & Gramzow, 2000).

Significance of the Study

The period between adolescence and adulthood referred to as emerging adults is an important life transition. It is during this time that emerging adults explore their natural and developmentally appropriate sexual urges (Arnett, 2000, 2004). Religious parents and the church are quick to teach and condemn pornography use as morally wrong without seeing the importance of providing tools and information for dealing with the ramifications once the use occurs. With emerging adults being the primary consumers of internet pornography and the increased use of pornography among religious emerging adults, it is essential to study the motivations and effects of this increased use.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This research looks at the associations between pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame and whether age and religiosity moderate these associations. The outcome variable of sexual permissiveness is measured using the Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS) (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Reich, 2006). The sexual shame variable is measured using the Kyle Inventory of Sexual Shame (KISS) (Kyle, 2013), and the Test of Self-Conscious Affect-3 (TOSCA-3) (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, &

Gramzow, 2000). The religiosity moderator is measured using the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) (Worthington, 2003).

Organization of Remaining Chapters

Chapter Two consists of a more extensive review of the existing literature summarizing the current research on pornography use, emerging adults' identity formation, sexual permissiveness, cognitive dissonance theory and sexual shame. The independent variable of pornography use is discussed, laying a theoretical foundation for the development of the outcome variables of sexual permissiveness and sexual shame. Age and religiosity will be studied to determine possible moderating factors for pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame. The effects of pornography use on psychological outcomes will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with the study, research questions, hypotheses, and a summary. Chapter Three will provide an overview of the method outlining the design, assessments, procedures, research design, data analysis, assumptions, and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter Four will present the research questions and results of the study. Chapter Five will conclude with a final summary of the research, conclusions, and recommendations for response and future research.

Chapter Summary

While pornography use has become the norm instead of the exception among emerging adults including religious emerging adults, it is associated with various outcomes including increased sexual permissiveness and sexual shame (Rhea & Issler, 2015). Previous research indicates that pornography use is associated with risky behaviors and have ramifications for

physical, psychological and sexual health (Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015;

Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015). In the present study, sexual permissiveness and sexual shame

outcomes are examined empirically.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Twenge, Sherman, and Wells (2015) found emerging adults are taking as long as ten years to reach full independent adulthood, they are spending more time single; and as a result, spending more time exploring their sexuality through sexual permissiveness and pornography use. Emerging adults are more accepting of non-marital sexual behaviors, and pornography use seems to promote that behavior (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2015). Religious institutions continue to use shame as a way to try and curb this increasing sexual permissiveness but may have unwittingly encouraged pornography use as emerging adults use viewing pornography as a way to deal with shame and sexual urges (Gilliland, South, Carpenter, & Hardy, 2011; Murray, Ciarrocchi, & Murray-Swank, 2007). In an attempt to deal with the sexual incongruence that occurs between beliefs and actions, emerging adults may view pornography use as the lesser of two evils when compared to a sexual relationship with another individual (Rhea & Issler, 2015). As they seem to have the ability to rationalize the use of pornography, they do not seem to be able to escape the shame that accompanies the pornography use (Murray & Ciarrocchi, 2007). In the present study, these concepts were applied to the potential role of pornography use among religious emerging adults; specifically, the associations between religious commitment, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame.

Emerging Adults

Identity exploration that was once relegated to adolescence has been delayed to the emerging adult phase of life. Children are being pushed into adolescence and seemingly adulthood earlier than ever before in history (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). In the past, adulthood meant work, home, marriage, and children. Today, this is a slower process with only one in four

25-year-olds meeting this criterion as compared to 77% in 1960. As a result, emerging adulthood is a developmental life stage that can take up to ten years to complete, and with the delay of independent adulthood comes the opportunity for more freedom to explore sexual identity including sexual relationships and pornography (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

Developmental Theory

Erikson (1968) theorized that a person's movement from adolescence to adulthood involved a gradual development of an internal identity brought about by encountering a series of crises encompassing occupation choice, worldview, and sexual behavior. These crises bring about the need to find oneself. Identity becomes a crisis when what a person was as a child does not meet the needs of the new environment and demands of the new adult world outside of the family. When Erikson (1950) first developed developmental life stages, the world was a place where individuals married and began careers immediately after high school; and as a result, marked the end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood. Erikson (1950, 1968) subsequently explored an extended adolescent period that involved more time for identity exploration. As the social norms changed and evolved so did the need for another developmental stage that addressed the delayed identity formation period.

Arnett (2000, 2004, 2007) first theorized a new developmental stage that he called emerging adults which encompassed 18 – 26-years-old. He suggested that emerging adulthood is a life stage that is defined as a time of identity exploration, demographic changes, freedom, and optimism. Erikson (1950) placed identity exploration squarely in the age of adolescence. According to Arnett (2000, 2004, 2007), emerging adults are working towards adulthood when they optimistically believe they will have a successful career along with marriage and children with the ultimate goal of being more successful and stable than their parents. The need for this

new stage only became apparent and necessary at the end of the 20th century as economic and cultural changes developed in this post-industrialized society. Demographically, those in their early twenties are no longer getting married but postponing marriage into their late twenties, and continuing education after high school is no longer for the few but is the norm (Arnett, 2000, 2004, 2007).

Arnett (2000, 2004, 2007) found that emerging adults have a demographic instability that is peculiar to their age group that continues to emphasize the exploration phase. Adolescents that typically live with their parents are unmarried without children, and in school, while those in their 30's have established their own home, are married, have children, and are no longer in school. The majority of emerging adults have left their parents' homes but have a wide variety of living situations. Emerging adulthood is a period of limited independence as they explore living on their own with additional responsibilities but still having to depend on parents for some financial support with about half having to move back into their parents' homes at some time during this period (Arnett, 2000, 2004, 2007). More emerging adults are opting for a post-high school education which takes longer to complete, thus lengthening the time for identity exploration. Emerging adults do not fully accept the label of an adult until they have completed school, have a career, and established a home with a spouse and children. It is at this time that they truly consider themselves independent from their parents, responsible, and self-sufficient. Few emerging adults flounder and fail to move into young adulthood with its adult responsibilities. By the time they are 30-years-old, 75% have married, started a family, establish a home and career, and are financially independent (Arnett, 2000, 2004, 2007). Religiosity or the way individuals express their beliefs through actions (Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno, 2003) according

to Hoare (2002) is directly connected to identity formation with spirituality at its core (Berzonsky, 1989; Erikson, 1968; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Marcia, 1966).

As emerging adults struggle to develop their identity fully, sexuality is one of the domains that has a profound effect on development. The Internet is a convenient and readily accessible source of information concerning sexuality. Emerging adults have never known a time without the Internet (Rhea & Issler, 2015). Thus Internet pornography has always been accessible 24 hours a day in every home that has Internet access, and with this accessibility, emerging adults become the primary consumers of Internet pornography (Boies, 2002; O'Reilly, Knox, & Zusman, 2007; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). Furthermore, 80 – 90% of Internet pornography is free to the user (Doran, 2008). Probably the most alluring feature of Internet pornography among religious emerging adults is the sense of anonymity which gives the perception that no one will ever find out about their pornography use (Rhea & Issler, 2015) with 79% having viewed pornography in the last year (Chelsen, 2011).

Emerging adults are neither adolescents, young adults, nor adults (see Fig. 2.1). It is a distinct period that is characterized by personal evolution and malleability. The young adult is a better description of a person in the thirties when adult responsibilities and accomplishments have been attained. As a result, adolescence, emerging adult, young adults, and adults are each distinct developmental life stages that are characterized by different demographics and life priorities (Arnett, 2000, 2004, 2007).
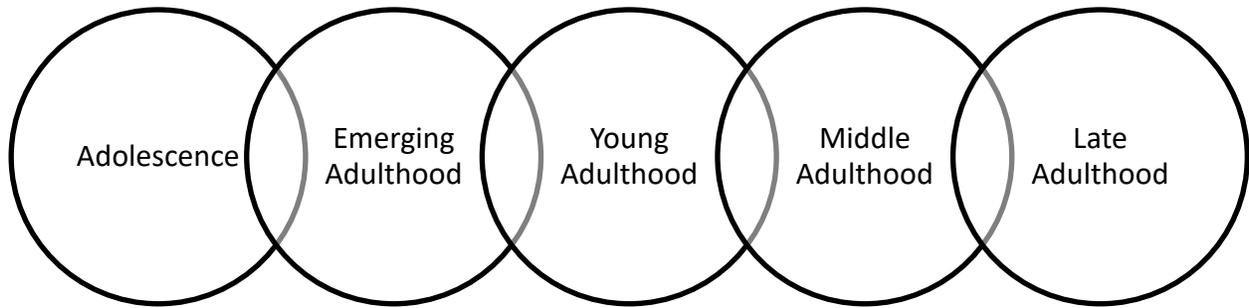
Figure 2.1. Visual of Arnett (2007) Adult Life Course.

Marital Timing

Pew Research (2013) uncovered a new trend of more emerging adults living at home and delaying marriage in their 2012 survey, with 36% residing with parents and men being more likely to be living with parents than women. Contributing factors seem to be economics, education, and cultural factors. Emerging adults are better educated than previous generations with 60% continuing their education beyond high school. The conventional living arrangement of married and living with a spouse dropped from 56% to 27% from 1968 to 2007. The decline in marriage from 30% to 25% from 2007 to 2012 seems to have contributed to more emerging adults living in their parents' homes. Along with the decline in marriage came an increase of those living with a roommate or cohabiting increasing from 5.5% to 26% in the same period (Pew Research, 2013).

US Department of Health and Human Services (March 22, 2012) found that marriage is a milestone event on the path to adulthood for emerging adults. While emerging adults expect to marry, they are postponing marriage later in life and instead choosing to cohabitate. Cohabitation seems to be occurring at the time most emerging adults would have married and it delays the timing of the first marriage until late in the 20's or early 30's. The increase in cohabitation signals an increase in the time emerging adults spend in singlehood (Pew Research, 2013; US

Department of Health and Human Services, March 22, 2012). More education with its added

financial stability also delays marriage but also increases the likelihood of getting married and

staying married. Twenty percent of those lacking a high school diploma are cohabitating before

marriage while only 6.8% of those with a college degree cohabitate. As a result, the median

marriage age has risen to 25.8-years for women and 28.3-years for men except for those who are

religious who are more likely to marry before 25-years-of-age (51%). Education also ensures a

more long-term marriage commitment with those with some college more likely to be married

after 20 years. The longevity of marriage improves with those who never cohabitated before

marriage with 57% of those not cohabitating being still married after 20 years (US Department of

Health and Human Services, March 22, 2012). Parents and emerging adults share the belief that

even though marriage is important, it should be delayed until after education and career

(Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015). Sixty-six percent of college students believe that full-time

employment is mandatory before even considering marriage (Willoughby, Olson, Carroll,

Nelson, & Miller, 2012). Emerging adults equate financial security or men and women with more

stability and better prospects for a successful marriage (Carroll et al., 2007).

Marriage remains a vital life goal but other life events are taking a priority in the timeline

of emerging adulthood, pushing marriage to the late 20's or early 30's (Carroll et al., 2007, 2009;

Cherlin, 2009; Johnson & Dye, 2005; Willoughby, Hall, & Luczak, 2013). Marital Horizon

Theory explores the idea that postponing marriage will increase sexual permissiveness and

pornography use during emerging adulthood (Clark, Poulin, & Kohler, 2009; Willoughby &

Dworkin, 2009). To further explain Marital Horizon Theory, Willoughby, Hall, and Luczak

(2013) developed Marital Paradigm Theory as a way to further understand and explain how

marital beliefs affect life decisions whether healthy or unhealthy. Marital Paradigm Theory not

only includes beliefs about getting married, but also beliefs about being married including those concerning marital centrality (importance of marriage), longevity, and development. Marital centrality may be the key to valuable insights into the sexual behavior and pornography use of emerging adults. It appears that the more marital centrality or the higher the priority marriage is for the emerging adults, the less risk-taking and sexual behavior occur (Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015). Burr, Day, and Bahr (1993) found that those that had a desire to marry younger had an increase in sexual behaviors such as pornography which they explained through anticipatory socialization. Anticipatory socialization is the theory that those who anticipate impending nuptials begin to increase their sexual activity in preparation for the upcoming marriage.

Sexual Behavior

In the last four decades, emerging adults have become more accepting of non-marital sexual intercourse but still view extramarital sexual intercourse as unacceptable. They willingly engage in sexual activities with more partners, even casual acquaintances (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2015). Greenfield (2013) attributes this shift in the culture to a rising individualism that rejects traditions and moral rules along with a decline in church attendance. Emerging adults hold the most permissive attitudes concerning sexual behavior than any other generation though they have fewer partners (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2015). Emerging adulthood is an essential phase for exploring new sexual behaviors and developing a sexual identity (Arnett, 2000; Lefkowitz, 2005; Vosilenko, Maas, & Lefkowitz, 2015).

A societal double standard exists when it comes to non-marital sexual behavior. Women are expected to wait to be in a committed relationship before considering participating in sexual activities, but the same does not seem to hold true for men (Vosilenko, Maas, & Lefkowitz, 2015). Women are expected to be more sexually responsible for avoiding out of wedlock

pregnancies and reputation damage (Tolman, 2002; Tolman & Diamond, 2001). Women see

their virginity as something to be saved for a committed relationship, while men are more likely

to see their virginity as a negative to be discarded as quickly as possible (Carpenter, 2002).

Burdette, Hill, Ellison, and Glenn (2009) found that religion affects sexual behavior,

especially among religious young women. While all major religions place restrictions on sexual

behavior among those that are not married, each denomination has its version of sexual purity.

Conservative Protestants are probably the strictest in their views encouraging courtship instead

of dating. Evangelical college students are focused on remaining pure for their future marriage

partner and only dating those individuals who would be an acceptable future spouse (Freitas,

2008). Both Evangelicals and Catholics hold to the idea that sexual relations are only appropriate

within a marital union and any sex outside of marriage would be a sin (Burdette, Hill, Ellison, &

Glenn, 2009). Burdette, Hill, Ellison, and Glenn (2009)'s research produced mixed results on

whether strict sexual abstinence doctrines decrease the sexual activity of religious emerging

adults. It may have detoured casual sexual activity among religious emerging adults but not all

sexual activity. Religious emerging adults seem to be able to justify their sexual behavior by

limiting sexual activity within a committed relationship that could lead to marriage, but it may all

depend on the strength of religious commitment. Religious colleges may add another layer of

constraint from sexual behavior by mandating church attendance, requiring religious coursework,

and limiting access to the opposite sex. These religious college communities promote adherence

to a sexual code of conduct through a collective social environment of shared morality (Burdette,

Hill, Ellison, & Glenn, 2009; Freitas, 2008). Jones, Darroch, and Singh (2005) found that

frequency of religious attendance reduced the likelihood of sexual activity and also delayed the

first sexual encounter while increasing the probability of fewer sexual partners. Religious

emerging adults have been taught that viewing pornography is wrong, a sin, and should be avoided, but the majority have not developed a rationale and belief system that would enable them to handle the allure of Internet pornography once they have been exposed (Rhea & Issler, 2015).

Pornography Use

Hald and Malamuth (2008) defined pornography as "any material aiming at creating or enhancing sexual feelings or thoughts in the recipient and at the same time, contain explicit exposure and descriptions of the genitals as well as open sexual acts" (p. 616). Pornography comes in a multitude of mediums, but Internet pornography is a unique compared to all other forms of pornography especially when considering Cooper's (1998) Triple-A Engine which theorizes that affordability, accessibility, and anonymity make Internet pornography different and more potent. The anonymous nature of Internet pornography draws religious individuals to it even as the mainstream culture normalizes pornography use (Rhea & Issler, 2005).

The majority of research on the influences of pornography on sexual behavior has focused on sexual script theory (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Sexual scripts are the internalized cultural messages that guide an individual's sexual behaviors (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). As a result, pornography could be influencing current sexual scripts among emerging adults, especially where it concerns casual sex (Weinberg, Williams, & Kleiner, 2010; Wright, 2011). Social cognitive theory proposed by Bandura suggests that risky sexual behaviors could be learned (Bandura, 1986). As a result, viewing risky sexual behaviors in pornography with no adverse consequences may encourage risky sexual behavior by those watching it (Seto, Marie, & Barbaree, 2001).

Emerging Adults

Pornography use is common and most prevalent among emerging adults, and this generation had never known a time when Internet pornography was not readily available (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). During this age of sexual exploration, pornography use may be one-way emerging adults experiment and explore their sexuality with the primary motivators being sexual arousal and curiosity (Boies, 2002; Carroll et al., 2008). There is the added appeal of being able to release sexual tension without the commitment or demands of a relationship (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). With emerging adults spending more time single before getting married, they have more time to explore their sexuality through a variety of sexual activities including pornography (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2015). Carroll (2008) found that 87% of emerging adult men viewed pornography with 20% viewing pornography on a daily basis and only 67% reporting that this was acceptable use. Only 31% of emerging adult women viewed any pornography with only 3% viewing on a daily basis and 49% feeling that it was acceptable although there is an increasing trend among religious women. Use does seem to peak at age 22 and continues to decrease after that. Religion was found to add a preventive factor as Stack (2004) found that religious individuals were 26% less likely to use pornography, but with a rise in the number of religious emerging adult women viewing pornography as a safe way to explore their sexuality and gain education (Rhea & Issler, 2015). Nelson, Padilla-Walker, and Carroll's (2010) research found that one's childhood and present religious activities, as well as family religious practices, decreased the likelihood of pornography use among emerging adults. It seems that just being taught that pornography use is unacceptable and wrong is not enough to prevent future pornography use. The teaching must be reinforced with regular participation in religious

activities to avoid the possibility of pornography use during emerging adulthood and the negative

ramifications (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Carroll, 2010).

Pornography Effects

Pornography use has also been found to be associated with and a predictor of risky or

deviant behavior that may result in severe physical, psychological, and sexual health issues

(Carroll et al., 2008; Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015; Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015),

with religious individuals reporting higher levels of psychological distress (Grubbs et al., 2015).

Pornography use seems to also be problematic for those who view it as unacceptable; and as a

result, the incongruence of beliefs may stunt identity development among emerging adults.

Carroll (2008) found that pornography use was linked to increased alcohol use, binge drinking,

permissive sexual behaviors, and cohabitation among religious emerging adults. Nelson, Padilla-

Walker, and Carroll (2010) also found that emerging adult men who use pornography reported a

decrease in family and relationship identity development and self-worth, along with an increase

in symptoms of depression. Pornography use seems to influence identity development and social

behavior throughout life (Abell, Steenbergh, & Bolvin, 2006). The impact on identity

development is concerning since identity exploration is a defining and vital component of

emerging adulthood. The proper formation f identity marks the start of full adulthood for

emerging adults (Arnett, 2004). As a result, religious emerging adults must find a way to

navigate the dissonance that comes with using pornography as it goes against what they believe

to be morally acceptable (Rhea & Issler, 2015).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Festinger (1957, 1962) first defined cognitive dissonance as two pieces of information that are inconsistent with each other and cause feelings of distress for the individual. The individual will then attempt to relieve the distress produced by the inconsistency and reduce the dissonance and recover consistency. The ability to reduce the dissonance also reduces the distress caused by the dissonance. Information that is inconsistent will create cognitive dissonance and will motivate change through several dissonance-reducing changes (Bem, 1967; Elliott & Devine, 1994; Festinger, 1957, 1962). Dissonance-reducing changes could be either a change in opinion or beliefs or a change in behavior which is not as easy as it sounds. Changing beliefs or behaviors may be difficult. As a result, dissonance may persist for lengthy periods of time as the individual learns to tolerate or cope with the uncomfortable feelings of dissonance. Over a lifetime, individuals develop beliefs or opinions of what is consistent or believable for them. Expectations are formed of the way things should be, and it is learned from family, education, society, friends, and religious upbringing. When events do not go as expected, cognitive dissonance or discomfort is experienced. All individuals do not share the same beliefs or expectations; a situation or event might create dissonance for one individual but consonance or agreement for another (Bem, 1967; Elliott & Devine, 1994; Festinger, 1957, 1962).

Since the original conception of Festinger's (1957, 1962) cognitive dissonance theory, others have worked to refine and define the theory (Aronson, 1968, 1980; Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976). Festinger (1957, 1962) initially postulated that dissonance causes motivation while Brehm and Cohen (1962) expanded that definition by concurring that it was only motivational when the individual held a strong commitment to the incongruent action or behavior. Aronson (1968, 1980) and Steele and Liu (1983) further explored the motivational

factor by tying it to the need to preserve the individual's self-esteem. In 1976, Wicklund and Brehm added personal responsibility as a component necessary for dissonance reduction.

Festinger (1957, 1962) found several methods that may be employed to reduce dissonance; an individual may persuade themselves that the action is okay or they may personally justify the behavior. Dissonance-reduction will work to increase the desirability of the chosen behavior and decrease the desirability of the rejected behavior. The more deviant the behavior is from the individual's belief system, the greater the dissonance, and with greater justification comes less dissonance. Dissonance can only be reduced by changing the personal beliefs or changing the behavior (Festinger, 1957, 1962). In the case of pornography, an individual must decide to quit viewing pornography or change the belief that pornography is morally wrong. For religious emerging adults this could be rationalizing pornography use as the lesser of two evils when compared to having a sexual relationship with another individual (Rhea & Issler, 2015).

Moral Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance occurs when an individual does something that goes against his belief system and thus creating an uncomfortable feeling for the individual. In comparison, moral dissonance is when an individual does something that goes against moral values that result in emotional and physical distress (Festinger, 1957; Rabin, 1994). The further the deviation from the moral beliefs, the more the individual's conscience will react. To reduce moral dissonance, an individual can choose to change the behavior or change the beliefs. Rabin (1994) found that increasing the discomfort of an immoral activity may increase the occurrence of the immorality. Cognitive dissonance increases the distress of acting immorally, but to decrease the dissonance instead of changing the behavior, the individual will have to convince himself that the immoral

activity is moral. As individuals alter their moral beliefs, the result is a change in the moral beliefs of society (Rabin, 1994). For example, in the past, divorce was unacceptable in our communities and couples who divorced would even be ostracized, but as more couples divorced and convinced themselves that it was morally acceptable to get a divorce, society changed its moral stance and no longer views divorce as unacceptable. Pornography use seems to be gradually gaining use and could eventually gain societal acceptance.

Religious Dissonance

Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007) found that organized religion will lose more members among emerging adults than any other stage of life with 30% to 40% not attending religious services. As emerging adults move out of their parents' homes, they are exposed to new ideas and more freedom which may not coincide with the religious teachings from their childhood and adolescence. Some of these new ideas may include substance use, cohabitation, and non-marital sex (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). Once these activities are terminated, usually through marriage and children, church attendance will regain a renewed value and priority (Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1996). Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007) found higher education, cognitive dissonance, and life are the three most commonly considered possibilities for the decline of church attendance among emerging adults. Emerging adults do not attend religious services as often as they did when they lived in their parents' homes, but 82% consider themselves religious with 86% retaining their religious affiliation. This population for the first time is encountering some independence; and as a result, responsibilities in the form of school, work, and increased freedom to choose activities including pornography use which may naturally take precedence over religious attendance (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007).

Carroll (2008) found that 67% of emerging adult young men felt that viewing pornography was acceptable behavior while only 49% of emerging adult young women expressed that viewing pornography was an appropriate way to explore sexuality. A general acceptance or normalcy of pornography use among emerging adults was observed by Goodson, McCormick, and Evans (2000). With the discrepancy between pornography use and reported acceptance, it would seem that dissonance would be occurring among this population, but little research exists regarding cognitive dissonance and pornography use (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Carroll, 2010; Stone, 2008). Many religions consider pornography use equal with committing adultery; as a result, religious dissonance will probably occur as emerging religious adults are viewing pornography against the teachings of their religious upbringing (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Carroll, 2010).

Murray-Swank, Pargament, and Mahoney (2005) explored the link between sexuality and spirituality through the lens of sanctification. According to dualistic theology, the spirit is stronger than the body and thus sex is an animalistic body function that must be brought under control and restraint. The majority of religious groups hold firmly to the belief that sex is only acceptable within the confines of marriage. Religion, for the most part, uses guilt and shame to encourage restraint of sexual urges especially as it pertains to non-marital sex (Langston, 1973). Those that report being religious also indicate that they are having less non-marital sex and fewer partners. One particular study found that those that described themselves as being religious at 11-years-of-age were more likely to still be virgins at 21-years-of-age, and those that remained religiously active at ages 11 and 21 were four times more likely to be virgins than those who reported not being religious (Paul, Fitzjohn, Eberhart-Phillips, Herbison, & Dickson, 2000).

Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory provides a possible explanation why someone religious could be okay with using pornography. If that individual believes that porn is wrong but continues to view it then according to cognitive dissonance theory, a dissonance or inconsistency will occur. When this happens, that person will attempt to reduce the dissonance by changing his beliefs concerning pornography use (Murray-Swank, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2005). As a result, religious emerging adults may be more prone to cognitive dissonance from sexual incongruence brought on by conservative religious teachings (Hook et al., 2015).

Sexual Incongruence

Hook (2015) found that religion teaches emerging adults that sexual behavior is only acceptable within the confines of marriage, even going as far as condemning the release of sexual tension without a partner such as masturbation which usually accompanies the viewing of pornography. The possibility of dissonance has increased over the last several decades with easy access to Internet pornography and prolonged singlehood, as emerging adults delay marriage for education, career, and financial stability (Hook et al., 2015). The inability to maintain sexual congruence can lead to guilt, shame, and a lack of self-forgiveness that leads to spiritual struggles (Worthington, 2013). Sexual incongruence also may lead to religious individuals considering normal sexual exploration as pathological and addiction without meeting the diagnostic criteria for addiction (Kwee, Dominguez, & Ferrell, 2007). Grubbs, Exline, Pargament, Hook, and Carlisle (2015) found that religiousness predicted a perception of addiction that created distress and sexual incongruence which led to cognitive dissonance among religious emerging adult. Hook (2015) found that highly religious individuals experienced less sexual congruence while also reporting less sexual activity; as a result, it may be more difficult for religious individuals to maintain sexual congruence due to a stricter set of moral beliefs

concerning sexual behavior. When religious emerging adults fail to sustain sexual congruence, they encounter feelings of failure and shame.

Shame

Morrison (2011) defines shame as a feeling of falling short of personal expectations. It is the difference between an individual's ideal or perfected self, and the reality of who the individual perceives he is in his own eyes. The difference between these two perceptions of self-determines the extent of the shameful feelings. Feelings of failure are at the heart of shame and involve negative self-evaluation and avoidance through withdrawal. It is essential to make the distinction between shame and guilt since many times the two go hand-in-hand. Shame is a feeling of personal inferiority and failure while guilt occurs when an actual deed hurts someone else (Morrison, 2011). Guilt says "what I did is unacceptable or bad" while shame says "I am an unacceptable or bad person" (Gilliland, South, Carpenter, & Hardy, 2011). Shame is usually concealed and hidden while guilt often leads to confession and seeking forgiveness. Forgiveness is sought to resolve the guilt while only personal acceptance can fix sham. Shame may present as anger turned inward and self-hate with a fear of abandonment which usually will manifest as depression (Morrison, 2011). Tangney and Dearing (2002) found that guilt is the healthier emotion as it frequently leads to remedying the wrong, in contrast to shame which avoids dealing with the wrong.

Moral emotions influence moral decisions and behavior (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). They are the heart of the motivation to do what is good and right for others and society as a whole (Haidt, 2003; Kroll & Egan, 2004). Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek (2007) consider shame, guilt, and embarrassment to be negative or self-conscious moral emotions contrasted by

elevation, gratitude, and pride as positive moral emotions with empathy being a morally emotional process. For example, when an individual does something bad or sinful, one feels the negative emotions of shame, guilt, or embarrassment, and when something that is viewed as right is done, one feels the positive emotions of thankfulness and pride. As a result, moral emotions are intrinsic motivators for a safe and lawful society (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007).

Sexual Shame

Reid (2010) found that shame is the most significant predictor of hyper-sexuality and that hyper-sexuality may be a coping mechanism to deal with shame while shame may also be a result of hypersexual behavior thus creating an endless cycle of behavior and shame feeding each other endlessly (Gilliland, South, Carpenter, & Hardy, 2011). Murray, Ciarrocchi, and Murray-Swank (2007) describe sexual shame as the self-condemnation that comes after a perceived experience of sexual misbehavior that results in severe emotional distress. Alienation from God seems to be a predictor of shame and an increase in engaging in shame-based activities. Pornography use by religious emerging adults leads to sexual shame and feelings of alienation from God, resulting in an inability to forgive oneself. Despite the vast amount of research on shame very little research has been conducted concerning sexual shame. Women seem to suffer more shame than men concerning their sexual behavior as society views sex as more acceptable for men than women (Fugere, Escoto, Cousins, Riggs, & Haerich, 2008).

Shame Proneness

Shame is a moral emotional trait linked to moral behavior or standards. Moral standards are an individual's moral norms or beliefs which are developed through religious and ethical standards and may have negative consequences when society also views the behavior as wrong. Moral emotions are important in understanding why individuals participate in behaviors that are

counter to their moral beliefs (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Moral emotions are linked

to the best interest of society (Haidt, 2003) and provide the motivation to do good and not evil

(Kroll & Egan, 2004). Shame is usually viewed as a harmful emotion, but Cohen, Wolf, Panter,

and Insko (2011) concluded that shame was only harmful and maladaptive when accompanied

by withdrawal behaviors which take on anti-social tendencies. Individuals high in shame

accompanied by negative self-evaluation (NSE) are more like to make ethical decisions and

share many of the same positive characteristics as those high in guilt. As a result, shame-NSE is

more moral than shame-withdrawal and has more prosocial tendencies (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, &

Insko, 2011).

Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek (2007) consider shame one of the self-conscious

emotions along with guilt, embarrassment, and pride. The emotions are triggered either

consciously or unconsciously through self-evaluation. Self-conscious moral emotions provide

immediate feedback either in anticipation of a behavior or as a result of a behavior. As a result,

these emotions are a powerful motivator in moral choice whether the behavior is anticipatory or

consequential. Dispositional attribution is another area of continuing research that involves

shame-proneness as an inherent personality trait that may explain the shame emotion in response

to a wide variety of situations and behaviors such as pornography use (Tangney, 1990).

Effects of Shame

Tangney (2007) found that shame is a negative and harmful emotion that involves

attempts to hide, deny, or defend the shameful behavior. It involves egocentricity and a lack of

empathy for others. Shame is linked to anger and blaming that ultimately alienates the individual

from others. It seems to be the more distressing emotion when compared to guilt, because of the

connection to the evaluation of self as a bad person and not just the behavior. Feelings of failure

and worthlessness usually accompany shame. Shame-proneness comes with a multitude of psychological problems which can include eating disorders, PTSD, and suicidal ideation (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Cohen, Wolf, Panter, and Insko (2011) found individuals high in shame-NSE can be neurotic, distraught, depressed, and suffer from low self-esteem and low self-compassion. But shame proneness has a morally positive side as it encourages honesty, ethical and moral behavior, but it carries with it a high emotional price that is not associated with guilt proneness. Shame-withdrawal seems to be the unhealthier shame trait which is usually accompanied by anger, aggression, and antisocial tendencies. Shame also impedes empathetic concern for others and tends to be egocentric and focused on the individual's distress. Shame-prone individuals have a tendency to only think of themselves and this egocentricity clouds any ability to see the pain and distress of others. Along with the egocentricity comes a destructive personality that is manifested as anger and tendency to blame others. The anger can be hostile and destructive to self and others; that carries consequences for relationships. Even though shame seems to be a painful and devastating emotion, it does not seem to motivate individuals to avoid doing wrong and may make things worse with shame being linked to illegal and risky behaviors (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007).

Chapter Summary

This review offers a thorough analysis of the literature relating to emerging adults' religiosity and pornography use and how this affects their sexual permissiveness and sexual shame. The findings increase the knowledge on pornography use among emerging adults particularly religious emerging adults. As a result, the information gleaned from this study could

provide open avenues to further studies concerning intervention and prevention methods which could reduce the negative effects of pornography use.

Hypotheses

Pornography use has become the norm among emerging adults including the religious, and this use seems to be associated with increased sexual permissiveness and shame (Carroll et al., 2008; Rhea & Issler, 2015; Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2015). Rhea and Issler (2015) found that religious emerging adults continue to see pornography use as sinful but the lesser of two evils when compared to sexual permissiveness. Emerging adults cite religiosity and morality as important motivations to remain virgins until marriage with 19% of emerging adults using pornography for sexual arousal (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). Even though religiously committed emerging adults seem to be able to rationalize the use of pornography, they are still unable to avoid the feelings of shame that accompany their sexual behavior as religion seems to use shame as condemnation for sinful sexual behavior (Murray & Ciarrocchi, 2007).

Hypothesis 1

Religious emerging adult pornography users (used in the last six months) will be more likely to report a decrease in sexual permissiveness. The primary reason for religious emerging adults to remain sexually pure seems to be religious commitment and a set of values influenced by the conservative religious teaching that sexual activities are only acceptable within a heterosexual marriage including solitary activities such as masturbation and pornography use (Hook et al., 2015; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). Viewing pornography with no negative consequences may encourage risky sexual behavior (Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015;

Seto, Marie, & Barbaree, 2001; Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015). Carroll (2008) found that women view pornography as a safe way to explore their sexuality.

H1: It is hypothesized that pornography use and sexual permissiveness will be moderated by age and religiosity such that the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness will be attenuated for younger religious users.

Hypothesis 2

Religious emerging adult pornography users will be more likely to report an increase in sexual shame. Shame is the most significant predictor of hyper-sexuality and may be the coping mechanism used to deal with shame. While shame may also be the result of hyper-sexuality, it creates an endless cycle of behavior and shame (Gilliland et al., 2011; Reid, 2010). Murray and Ciarrocchi (2007) found that religious individuals are more likely to report shame when their behavior is incongruent with their religious beliefs; as a result, religion seems to promote shame as a method of curbing sexual behavior and may have unknowingly encouraged pornography use. Shame is not a predictor of pornography use but a result and a way of dealing with shame (Gilliland et al., 2011; Murray, Ciarrocchi, & Murray-Swank, 2007).

H2: It is hypothesized that the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame will be moderated by age and religiosity. More specifically, the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame is attenuated for younger religious users.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The methodology discussed in this chapter assesses the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness, pornography use and sexual shame and whether age and religiosity moderate these relationships. Correspondingly, the purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses will also be discussed. Also included in this chapter are participant recruitment, measures, research procedures, and data analysis.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of pornography use and its relationship to sexual permissiveness and sexual shame. The study also looks at how pornography use is moderated by age and religiosity and how that affects the relationship with sexual permissiveness and sexual shame. The insights gained could serve to help mental health providers to treat those that use pornography more efficiently.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Does pornography use relate to sexual permissiveness?

Hypothesis 1: Adult current pornography users will be more likely to report higher levels of sexual permissiveness.

Null hypothesis: No relationship will be found between pornography use and sexual permissiveness.

Research Question 1a: Does age moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness?

Hypothesis 1a: Pornography use and sexual permissiveness will be moderated by age such that the relationships between pornography use and sexual permissiveness will be attenuated for younger religious users.

Null hypothesis: Age will have no effect on the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness.

Research Question 1b: Does religiosity moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness?

Hypothesis 1b: Pornography use and sexual permissiveness will be moderated by religiosity such that the relationships between pornography use and sexual permissiveness will be attenuated for younger religious users.

Null hypothesis: Religiosity will have no effect on the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness.

Research Question 2: Does pornography use relate to sexual shame?

Hypothesis 2: Adult current pornography users will be more likely to report an increase in sexual shame.

Null hypothesis: No relationship will be found between pornography use and sexual shame.

Research Question 2a: Does age moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame?

Hypothesis 2a: Pornography use and sexual shame will be moderated by age such that the relationships between pornography and sexual shame will be attenuated for younger religious users.

Null hypothesis: Age will have no effect on the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame.

Research Question 2b: Does religiosity moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame?

Hypothesis 2b: Pornography use and sexual shame will be moderated by religiosity such that the relationships between pornography and sexual shame will be attenuated for younger religious users.

Null hypothesis: Religiosity will have no effect on the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame.

Research Design

The study used a non-experimental cross-sectional design and did not include any treatment or interventions. Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mturk. Mturk provides greater generalizability of results with the increase in participant diversity

Selection of Participants

Participants were recruited through Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (Mturk) system, an online data collection service that enables paying for completing tasks. Researchers in the behavioral and social sciences can use this system to recruit large samples in relatively short periods of time and with relatively small costs. This method of data collection is just as reliable as and more diverse than traditional methods that usually involve recruiting college students (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). To be eligible for the present study, participants must be 18 – 40 years of age and self-identify as current Internet pornography users (used in the last six months).

Research Instruments

Participants were asked to complete basic demographic information and pertinent measures to the study following informed consent procedures. Pertinent measures included information regarding religious commitment (RCI-10, Worthington et al., 2003), sexual attitudes (BSAS, (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Reich, 2006), and sexual shame (KISS, Kyle, 2013; and TOSCA-3, Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, & Gramzow, 2000). The Appendices contains all the measures collected.

Demographic information. The necessary demographic data collected from the participants are: including gender, age, race, sexual preference, education, employment status, annual income, marital status, relationship status, sexual activity (last six months), religion, and pornography use to determine respondent suitability for this study.

Pornography use. Participants were asked questions concerning pornography use and masturbation frequency.

Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10). Worthington (2003) developed the RCI-10 to assess the correlations between internalized religious beliefs and the actual practice of those beliefs. The measurement is both a cognitive and behavioral assessment that has been used in numerous studies and proven to be both a reliable and valid instrument. The RCI-10 shows a strong correlation with church attendance, religious commitment, and strength of spiritual beliefs (RCI-10, see Appendix C, Worthington et al., 2003). For this study, the RCI-10 was used to assess for personal religious beliefs and behaviors which are essential components in evaluating the relationship of religious commitment with sexual permissiveness and shame.

Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS). In the 1980s, Hendrick and Hendrick (1987) developed the original Sexual Attitudes Scale in response to the lack of a single assessment

capable of measuring several attitudes or multidimensional perspective of sexual attitudes and emotions. The original scale has been widely used, but over time a need developed for a briefer more useable measure which resulted in the 23-item, 4-factor Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS) used to measure an individual's multidimensional sexual attitudes, emotions, and behaviors using a Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (see Appendix A). The brief scale maintained the same four subscales of Permissiveness, Birth Control (formerly Sexual Practices), Communion, and Instrumentality. The first ten items assess permissiveness or an individual's views on casual sex. The next three items measure views on responsible sex or birth control. Questions 14 – 18 assess for an emotional view of sexuality or communion. The final five questions broach the subject of instrumentality or objectivities of sexuality. The brief form is comparable to the original long version in the consistency of subscale inter-correlations and correlations with other relevant measures. Revalidation of the briefer form indicated that the scale is more valid and reliable than the original scale and applicable for research and clinical use. Thus, it is used in this study to assess the four constructs of sexual attitudes: Permissiveness, Birth Control, Communion, and Instrumentality. (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Reich, 2006).

The BSAS is used for this study instead of the long form for its brevity and ease of use. Hendrick, Hendrick, and Reich (2006) found the brief form to be effective for research and clinical applications, and it assesses sexual emotions and attitudes in a multidimensional way. Single dimension assessments fail to fully explain the full range and dimensions of sexual attitudes as does the BSAS. The brief form is also an updated version of the original Sexual Attitudes Scale and has better psychometric properties than the previous version. The subscales intercorrelate and correlate with other measures with 23 of the original 43 items in identical

forms. The BSAS will assess the emotional and sexual attitudes of the respondents concerning sexual permissiveness, birth control, sexual communion, and instrumentality, but this study looked specifically at sexual permissiveness as it relates to religious commitment and pornography use (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Reich, 2006).

Kyle Inventory of Sexual Shame (KISS). Kyle (2013) developed the KISS in response to the absence of an assessment that measured the specific construct of sexual shame. It is a relatively new assessment that measures sexual shame or the feeling of being unworthy or unacceptable in response to sexual behaviors (see Appendix B). The KISS will assess the construct of sexual shame as it relates to past and current sexual experiences. It consists of a 20-item, 6-point scale that measures an individual's level of sexual shame along with three demographic questions, a therapy inquiry question, and a final question assessing for contributing factors to sexual shame. Kyle's pilot dissertation study consisting of 102 participants demonstrated that the instrument has excellent internal consistency, reliability, and validity (Kyle, 2013). For this study, sexual shame will be assessed as it relates to religious commitment and pornography use.

Test of Self-Conscious Affect-3 (TOSCA-3). Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, and Gramzow (2000) developed the TOSCA-3 based on the original Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA) with a total of 16 scenarios (5 positive and 11 negative) with five questions relating to the positive scenarios and four questions referring to the negative scenarios. These questions use a 5-point Likert scale from not likely to very likely for each scenario. The positive scenario questions assess shame-proneness, alpha pride, beta pride, externalization, and shame-proneness. The negative scenario questions evaluate shame-proneness, externalization, guilt-proneness, and detachment or unconcern. The positive scenario questions are deleted from the assessment in this

study eliminating the pride subscales that are not needed for this study (Tangney & Dearing, 2002, see Appendix D). For the purpose of this study, the TOSCA-3 will be used to measure shame-proneness as it relates to religious commitment and pornography use.

Research Procedures

All procedures for this study, including recruitment, consent, participation, and payment occurred online via Amazon Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Approximate time to complete all measures was 20 - 45 minutes. Requests for survey participation was posted on Mturk, and all participants self-selected into the study. Participants were paid $1.00 via the Mturk system for their participation.

Data Processing and Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25 with the Process macro for SPSS was used for data screening and analysis (Hayes, 2013). Initially, incomplete or missing data were excluded for the analysis along with incorrect respondents to catch trial items. Screening was also completed for frequency, time, variance, and outliers. Hierarchical regression and independent t-tests were used to test the relationship and moderation research questions being used to test for moderation.

For hypotheses 1, moderation was proposed. As can be seen in Figure 3.1, age and religiosity are hypothesized as moderators between the influence of pornography use and sexual permissiveness. These hypotheses are summarized visually in Figure 3.1, where pornography use is depicted as the independent variable and sexual permissiveness as the outcome.

Figure 3.1. Visual depiction of Hypothesis 1

For hypotheses 2 moderation was proposed. As can be seen in Figure 3.2, age and religiosity are hypothesized as moderators between the influence of pornography use and sexual shame. These hypotheses are summarized visually in Figure 3.2, where pornography use is depicted as the independent variable and sexual shame as the outcome.

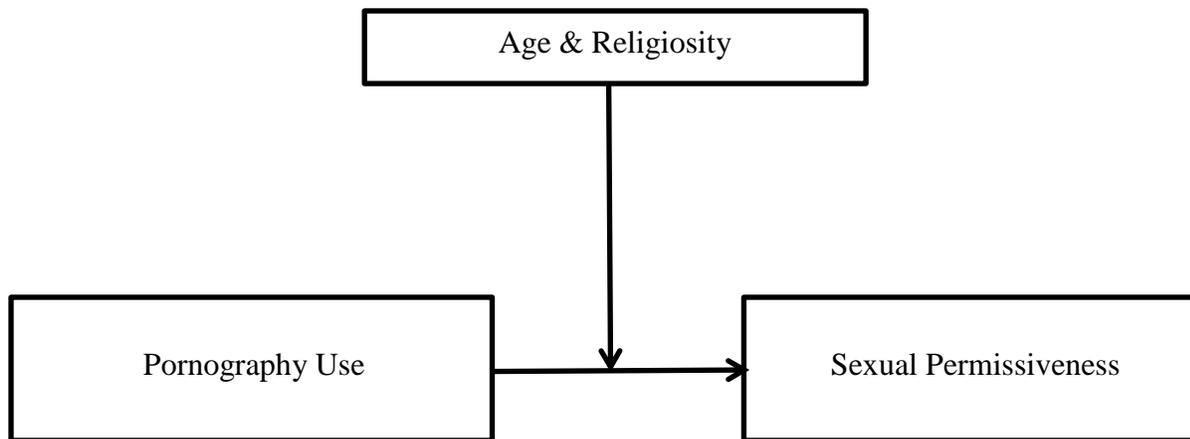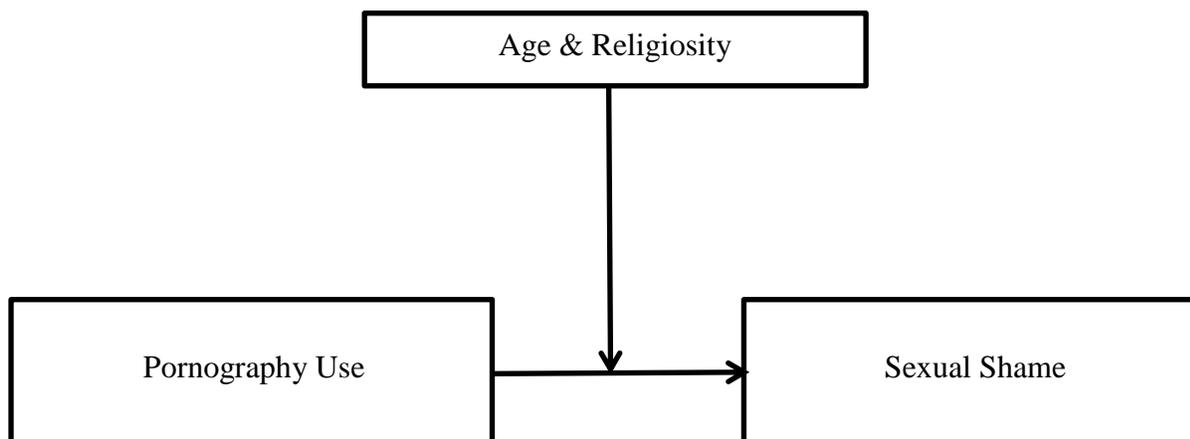*Figure 3.2.* Visual depiction of Hypotheses 2

Ethical Concerns

All procedures in this study were submitted to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review. The methods in this study involve participants disclosing sensitive information, such as past and current use of pornography, sexual behaviors, and attitudes. In order to minimize potential risks to the participants, all responses were anonymous. Payments to participants were made through Amazon.com Mturk, which insured participant anonymity. As a result, no information can be connected with an individual participant.

It is possible that participants could experience discomfort or psychological distress while participating in the survey. Considering the sensitive nature of the questions used, participation in the survey could cause participants to become aware of uncomfortable thoughts and issues that they had not otherwise considered before participation in this study. The risk was minimized as much as possible through the use of measures that have been used widely in research. Participants were provided an online counseling resource as part of the informed consent as a precaution if a participant did express emotional distress during the survey.

The potential risks were minimal and appropriate considering the potential benefits of this research. Limited research has been performed with the study variables; and as a result, may prove useful for increasing awareness of risks and motivations linked to pornography use among religious emerging adults. The conclusions of this study may also prove helpful for prevention and intervention strategies.

Chapter Summary

To summarize, the purpose of the study was to investigate: a) the associations between pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame, and b) whether age and religiosity

moderates these associations. The study used a cross-sectional survey that includes retrospective reports of pornography use by emerging adults who self-identified as current pornography users. Data were analyzed using a series of independent *t*-tests and hierarchical regression. All regression procedures were based on published methods for testing moderation.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between pornography use to sexual permissiveness and sexual shame and to determine whether age and religiosity moderate those relationships. The study specifically sought to address the following research questions. First, what is the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness and is that relationship moderated by age and religiosity. Secondly, what is the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame and is that relationship moderated by age and religiosity. This study consisted of a sample of 186 valid participants who completed measures assessing pornography use, religiosity, sexual attitudes, and sexual shame.

The first research question was examined using Pearson's *r* to determine the strength of the correlation between pornography use and sexual permissiveness, and multivariate regression analysis was used to determine whether age and religiosity moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness. The second research question also used Pearson's *r* correlation coefficients to determine the correlation between pornography use and sexual shame with multivariate regression analysis used to determine whether age and religiosity moderates the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame. This chapter presents the results and summary of the findings along with hypotheses and statistical analyses of the two research questions guiding this study.

Data Screening

Data were screened using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. Data were obtained in March of 2018 from an initial sampling of 1279 participants. Pornography use was assessed through

demographic questions and included frequency of pornography use. Participants also completed measures that assessed sexual permissiveness, religiosity, shame, and shame proneness. Initial data screenings were completed to eliminate those participants who appeared to be answering survey questions quickly or haphazardly. Once the initial screening was complete 1197 participants remained. Screening for parameters reduced the final sample size to 186 participants.

Demographics

The sample consisted of male and female participants ($N = 186$), of whom 51.6% were male, and 45.7% were female with 2.7% identifying their gender as other. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 40-years-of-age (M = 28.20, SD = 5.14). The majority of the sample was Caucasian (66.1%) with 19.9 % African American, 5.9% Hispanic, 5.4% Asian, 0.5% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 2.2% other. Most participants (38.2%) reported their highest level of education as a bachelor's degree. The remaining participants reported a high school diploma or GED (16.7%), college sophomore (9.7%), master's degree (8.1%), trade or technical school (5.4%), college freshman (6.5%), college junior (4.8%), college senior (6.5%), professional degree (2.7%), doctorate (1.1%), and less than a high school diploma (0.5%). Just over 80% of the participants reported an annual household income of less than $70,000 above (see Table 4.1). When reporting on current relationship status, 51.6% reported single (not currently in a relationship), 25.3% single (never in a relationship), 23.1% in a non-committed dating relationship. Participants reported the following religious affiliations: 42.5% None, 17.2% Catholic, 15.1% Christian (non-denominational), 8.6% Protestant, 2.7% New Age or Wiccan, 1.6% Jewish, 1.6%, 1.6% Muslim, 1.1% Buddhist, .5% Mormon, and 8.6% Other. See Table 4.1 for demographic information.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

	N or Range	% or *M*
Age	19-40	28.2
Gender		
Male	96	51.6
Female	85	45.7
Other	5	2.7
Racial Identity		
Caucasian/White	123	66.1
African American	37	19.9
Asian	10	5.4
Hispanic	11	5.9
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	.5
Other	4	2.2
Educational Background		
Less than High School	1	.5
High School diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)	31	16.7
College Freshman	12	6.5
College Sophomore	18	9.7
College Junior	9	4.8
College Senior	12	6.5
Trade, Technical, or Vocational Training	10	5.4
Bachelor's Degree	71	38.2
Master's Degree	15	8.1
Professional Degree	5	2.7
Doctorate	2	1.1
Employment Status		
Employed for Wages	111	59.7
Self-Employed	35	18.8
Not Employed	15	8.1
Homemakers	2	1.1
Students	19	10.2
Military	1	.5
Retired	1	.5
Unable to Work	2	1.1
Marital History		
Never Married	172	92.5
Married Once	11	5.9

Married Twice	2	1.1
Current Relationships Status		
Currently Single – Never in a Relationship	47	25.3
Single – Not Currently in a Relationship	96	51.6
Non-committed Dating Relationship	43	23.1
Religion		
Protestant (e.g., Methodist, Baptist, or other Non-Catholic Christian Denomination)	16	8.6
Catholic	32	17.2
Christian (Non-Denominational)	28	15.1
Mormon	1	.5
Muslim	3	1.6
Hindu	1	.5
Jewish	3	1.6
Buddhist	2	1.1
New Age or Wiccan	5	2.7
None	79	42.5
Other	16	8.6

The average number of hours that participants reported using pornography per week was 3.09 ($SD = 5.693$). Participants were asked how many times they use pornography in the last week, month, and 6months. The responses that they could choose from included 0 times, 1-3 times, 4-6 times, 7-9 times, and 10 or more times. See Table 4.2 for pornography use statistics.

Table 4.2

Pornography Use Statistics

	N or Range	% or *M*
Average Hours of Pornography Used per Week	0-72	2.54
Pornography Use in the Past Week		
0 Times	54	29.0
1-3 Times	69	37.1
4-6 Times	31	16.7
7-9 Times	15	8.1
10 or More Times	17	9.1
Pornography Use in the Past Month		

0 Times	23	12.4
1-3 Times	42	22.6
4-6 Times	42	22.6
7-9 Times	17	9.1
10 or More Times	62	33.3
Pornography Use in the Past Six Months		
0 Times	10	5.4
1-3 Times	23	12.4
4-6 Times	25	13.4
7-9 Times	23	12.4
10 or More Times	105	56.5

Sample Means

The minimum score, maximum score, mean, and standard deviation were calculated for

all of the measures used. The results are recorded in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Pearson's r, Means, and SDs

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Age	1	-.036	.050	-.181*	-.062	.091	-.019
(2) Church Attendance		1	.026	1.066	.031	-.059	.525**
(3) BSAS-Permissiveness			1	.000	-.023	.071	-.035
(4) TOSCA-Shame				1	.338**	-.113	.035
(5) KISS-Sexual Shame					1	.032	.269**
(6) Weekly Pornography Use						1	.009
(7) Religious Commitment							1
Mean	28.28	4.96	3.37	36.74	3.01	2.31	1.89
SD	5.07	11.19	.86	8.60	.65	2.82	1.07
N	174	174	174	166	174	174	142
Minimum	19	0	1	11	1.65	0	1
Maximum	40	56	5	54	4.85	15	5

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25 with the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017). Participants who did not complete all the items for any measure were excluded from the analysis. Pearson's *r* correlations were calculated to determine the relationship of pornography use to sexual shame and sexual permissiveness. Moderation models were tested using multivariate regression and results of these analyses are discussed.

Hypothesis 1

Sexual permissiveness and pornography use. Pearson's *r* was used to assess the relationship between weekly pornography use and *BSAS-Permissiveness*. The analysis yielded a weak correlation ($r(174) = .071, p = .353$) which would suggest that other variables are more significant understanding the relationship between pornography use and permissive attitudes about sexual behavior. Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Age. Moderation analysis was performed using Hayes Process Macro 3.0 (Hayes, 2017) for SPSS to determine the degree that age moderates the relationship between pornography use and *BSAS-Permissiveness*. Research question 1a asked whether age moderates the relationship between pornography use and *BSAS-Permissiveness*. Hayes (2017) Conditional Process Analysis PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to test the moderation or interaction model. Model one used hours of pornography use per week as the predictor variable and *BSAS-Permissiveness* as the outcome variable. The proposed moderator for this model was age. A diagram of the theoretical model is presented in Figure 4.1, and Figure 4.2 represents the statistical model. Pornography use and Age were mean-centered prior to analysis for ease of reporting results (Dala & Zickar, 2012) and ease of regression coefficient interpretation (Hayes, 2017).
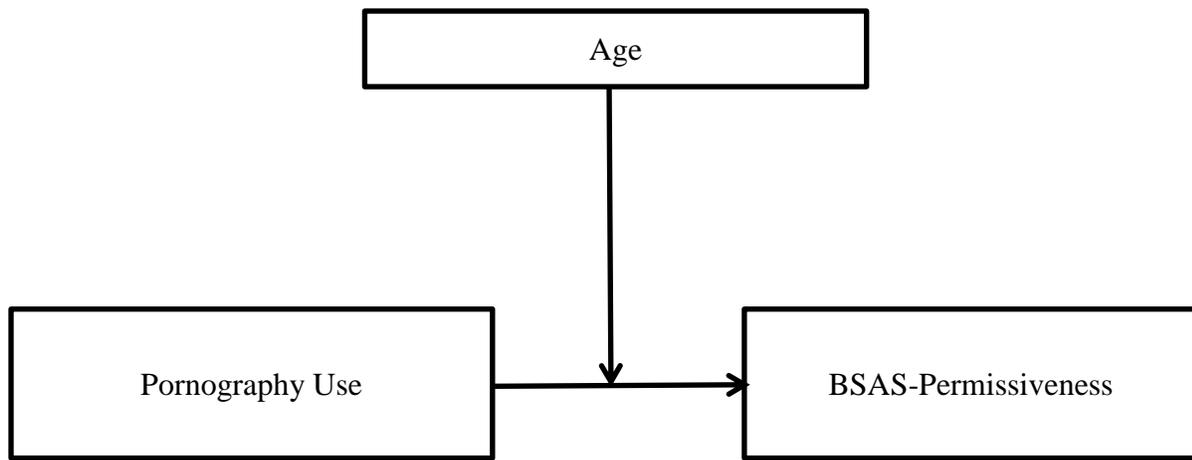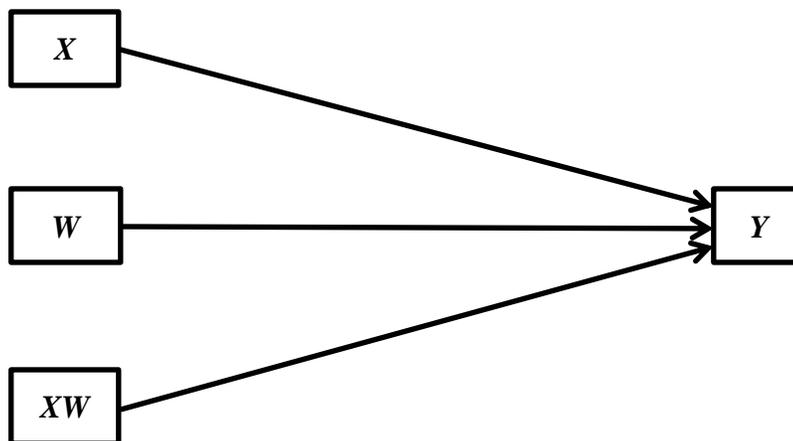
Figure 4.1. Hypothesized Theoretical Model 1a

Figure 4.2. Hypothesized Statistical Model.

Model 1a was statistically significant ($F(3,170)$, $p = .023$, $R^2 = .055$). Thus, the predictors

and their interaction account for 5.5% of the variance in *BSAS-Permissiveness*. For the predictor

of pornography use ($b = .041$, $t(1.725)$, $p = .086$). Pornography use in hours was not a

statistically significant predictor of *BSAS-Permissiveness*. Age ($b = .009$, $t(.733)$, $p = .464$) is

also not a statistically significant predictor of *BSAS-Permissiveness*. However, the overall model

was supported, and the interaction between pornography use and age was statistically significant

($b = .012$, $t(-2.926)$, $p = .004$, accounting for 4.8% of the variance in *BSAS-Permissiveness*). The

confidence interval for the interaction based on 5,000 bootstrap samples did not include zero (-

.020 to -.004), supporting Hypothesis 1a (see Figure 4.3). The interaction is illustrated at the 16th,

50th, and 84th percentile of pornography use and age. The results of the model are shown in Table

4.4.

Table 4.4

Process Model Results for Model One for Hypothesis 1a

Source	b	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.386	.064	53.005***	3.260	3.513
Frequency of Use	.041	.024	1.725	-.006	.088
Age	.009	.013	.733	-.016	.034
Frequency of use X Age	-.012	.004	-2.926**	-.020	-.004

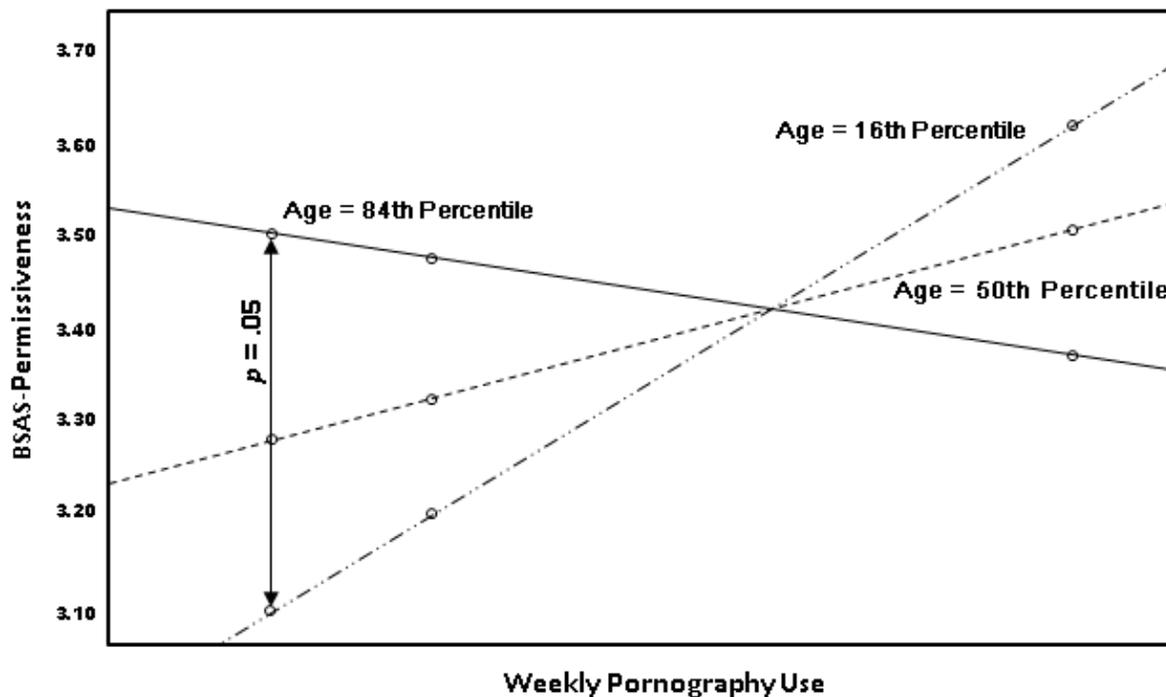*Note.* * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4.3. Interaction of Pornography Use X Age on BSAS-Permissiveness.

Religiosity. Moderation analysis was performed using Hayes Process Macro 3.0 (Hayes, 2017) for SPSS to determine the degree that religiosity moderates the relationship between pornography use and *BSAS-Permissiveness*. Research question 1b asked whether religiosity moderates the relationship between pornography use and *BSAS-Permissiveness*. Hayes (2017) Conditional Process Analysis PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to test the moderation or interaction model. Model one used hours of pornography use per week as the predictor variable and *BSAS-Permissiveness* as the outcome variable. The proposed moderator for this model was religiosity. A diagram of the theoretical model is presented in Figure 4.4, and Figure 4.2 represents the statistical model. Pornography use and religiosity were mean-centered prior to analysis.
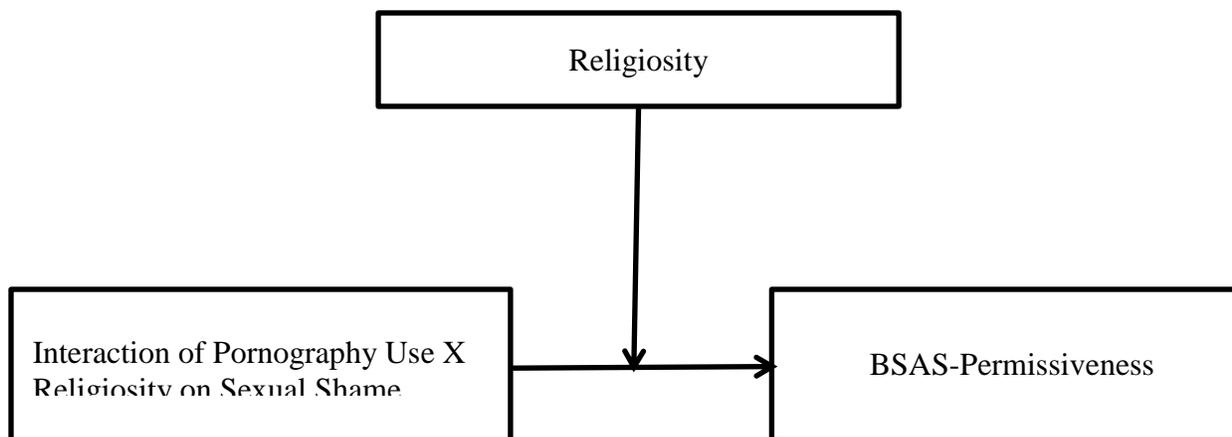
Religiosity

Interaction of Pornography Use X
Religiosity on Sexual Shame

BSAS-Permissiveness

Figure 4.4. Hypothesized Theoretical Model 1b

Model 1b was not statistically significant ($F(3,138)$, $p = .388$, $R^2 = .022$). Thus, the predictors and their interaction account for 2.2% of the variance in *BSAS-Permissiveness*. For the predictor of pornography use ($b = .001$, $t(.033)$, $p = .973$). Pornography use in hours was not a statistically significant predictor of *BSAS-Permissiveness*. Religiosity ($b = -.032$, $t(-.475)$, $p = .636$) is also not a statistically significant predictor of *BSAS-Permissiveness*. The overall model was not supported, and the interaction between pornography use and religiosity was nearly statistically significant ($b = -.046$, $t(-1.671)$, $p = .097$)). The confidence interval for the interaction based on 5,000 bootstrap samples included zero (-.099 to .008), rejecting Hypothesis 1b (see Figure 4.5). It is important to note that the interaction accounted for 2% of the variance and was nearly statistically significant. The interaction is illustrated at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentile of pornography use and religiosity. The results of the model are displayed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Process Model Results for Model One for Hypothesis 1b

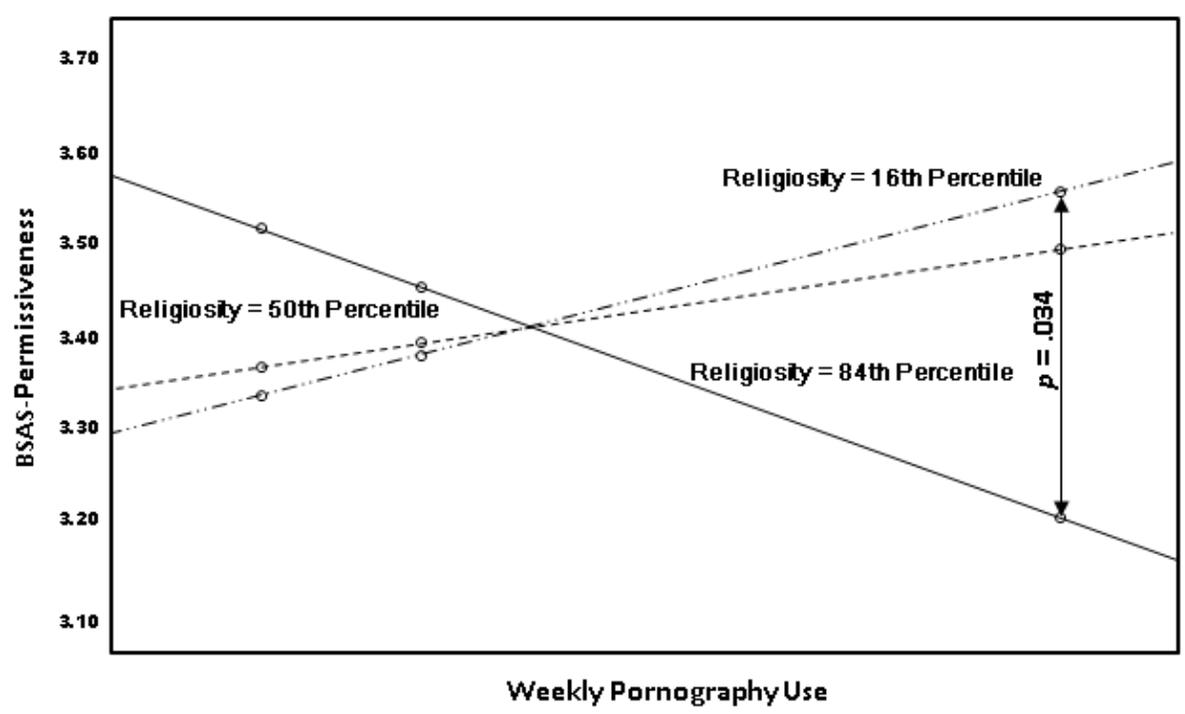| Source	b	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.401	.072	47.029***	3.258	3.544
Frequency of Use	.001	.025	.033	-.049	.050
Religiosity	-.032	.068	-.475	-.166	.102
Frequency of use X Religiosity	-.046	.027	-1.671	-.099	.008

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4.5. Interaction of Pornography Use X Religiosity on BSAS-Permissiveness.

Hypothesis 2

  Sexual shame and pornography use. Pearson's *r* was used to assess the relationship between weekly pornography use and *Sexual Shame*. The analysis yielded a weak non-significant correlation ($r(174) = -.113$, $p = .146$) and would suggest that other variables are important to consider in understanding the relationship between pornography use and permissive attitudes about sexual behavior. Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

  Age. Moderation analysis was performed using Hayes Process Macro 3.0 (Hayes, 2017) for SPSS to determine the degree that age moderates the relationship between pornography use and *Sexual Shame*. Research question 2a asked whether age moderates the relationship between pornography use and *Sexual Shame*. Hayes (2017) Conditional Process Analysis PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to test the moderation or interaction model. Model one used hours of pornography use per week as the predictor variable and *Sexual Shame* as the outcome variable. Trait shame proneness was used as a covariate. The proposed moderator for this model was age. A diagram of the theoretical model is presented in Figure 4.6, and Figure 4.2 represents the statistical model. Pornography use and Age were mean-centered prior to analysis.
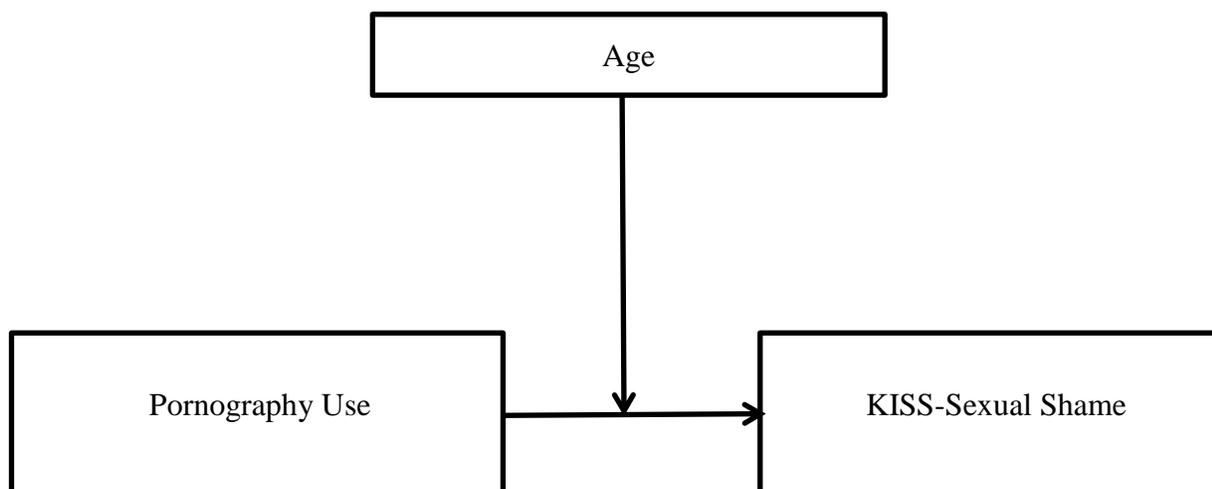

Figure 4.6. Hypothesized Theoretical Model 2a

Model 2a was statistically significant ($F(4,161)$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .122$). Thus, covariate, the predictors, and their interaction account for 12.2% of the variance in *Sexual Shame*. For the predictor of pornography use ($b = .021$, $t(1.126)$, $p = .262$). Pornography use in hours was not a statistically significant predictor of *Sexual Shame*. Age ($b = .000$, $t(-.017)$, $p = .986$) is also a not statistically significant predictor of *Sexual Shame*, and the interaction between pornography use and age was not statistically significant ($b = .001$, $t(.227)$, $p = .821$). Only the covariate of trait shame proneness was statistically significant. The results of the model are displayed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.6

Process Model Results for Model One for Hypothesis 2a

Source	b	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.037	.216	9.414***	1.610	2.465
Shame Proneness	.026	.006	4.616***	.015	.038
Frequency of Use	.021	.018	1.126	-.016	.057
Age	.009	.013	.733	-.016	.034
Frequency of use X Age	.001	.006	.227	.015	.038

Note. $* p < .05.$ $** p < .01.$ $*** p < .001.$

Religiosity. Moderation analysis was performed using Hayes Process Macro 3.0 (Hayes, 2017) for SPSS to determine the degree that religiosity moderates the relationship between pornography use and *Sexual Shame*. Research question 2b asked whether religiosity moderates the relationship between pornography use and *Sexual Shame*. Hayes (2017) conditional process analysis PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to test the moderation or interaction model. Model one used hours of pornography use per week as the predictor variable and *Sexual Shame* as the outcome variable. The proposed moderator for this model was religiosity. A diagram of the

theoretical model is presented in Figure 4.7, and Figure 4.2 represents the statistical model.

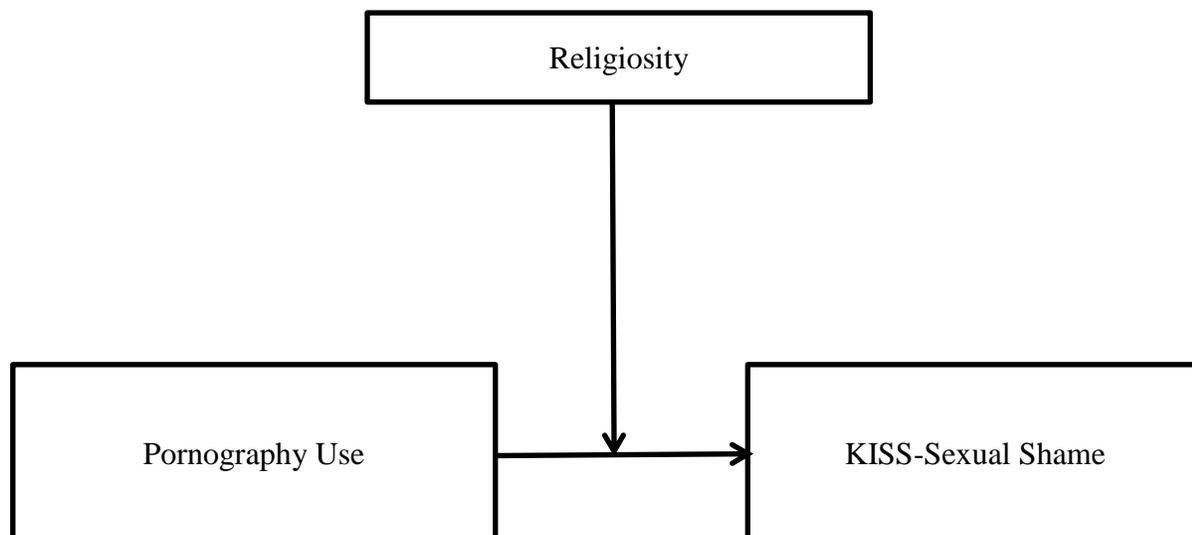Pornography use and religiosity were mean-centered prior to analysis.

Figure 4.7. Hypothesized Theoretical Model 2b

Model 2b was statistically significant ($F(4,130)$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .245$). Thus, the covariate, predictors and their interaction account for 24.5% of the variance in *Sexual Shame*. For the predictor of pornography use ($b = .029$, $t(1.474)$, $p = .143$). Pornography use in hours was not a statistically significant predictor of *Sexual Shame*. Religiosity ($b = .172$, $t(3.628)$, $p < .001$) is a statistically significant predictor of *Sexual Shame*. The overall model was supported, and the interaction between pornography use and religiosity was nearly statistically significant ($b = .037$, $t(1.779)$, $p = .078$)). The confidence interval for the interaction based on 5,000 bootstrap samples included zero (-.004 to .077), rejecting Hypothesis 2b (see Figure 4.8). It is important to note that the interaction was nearly statistically significant. The interaction is illustrated at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentile of pornography use and religiosity. The results of the model are displayed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Process Model Results for Model One for Hypothesis 2b

Source	b	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.842	.251	7.329***	1.345	2.339
Shame Proneness	.032	.021	4.781***	.019	.045
Frequency of Use	.029	.020	1.474	-.010	.067
Religiosity	.172	.047	3.628***	.078	.265
Frequency of use X Religiosity	.037	.021	1.779	-.004	.045

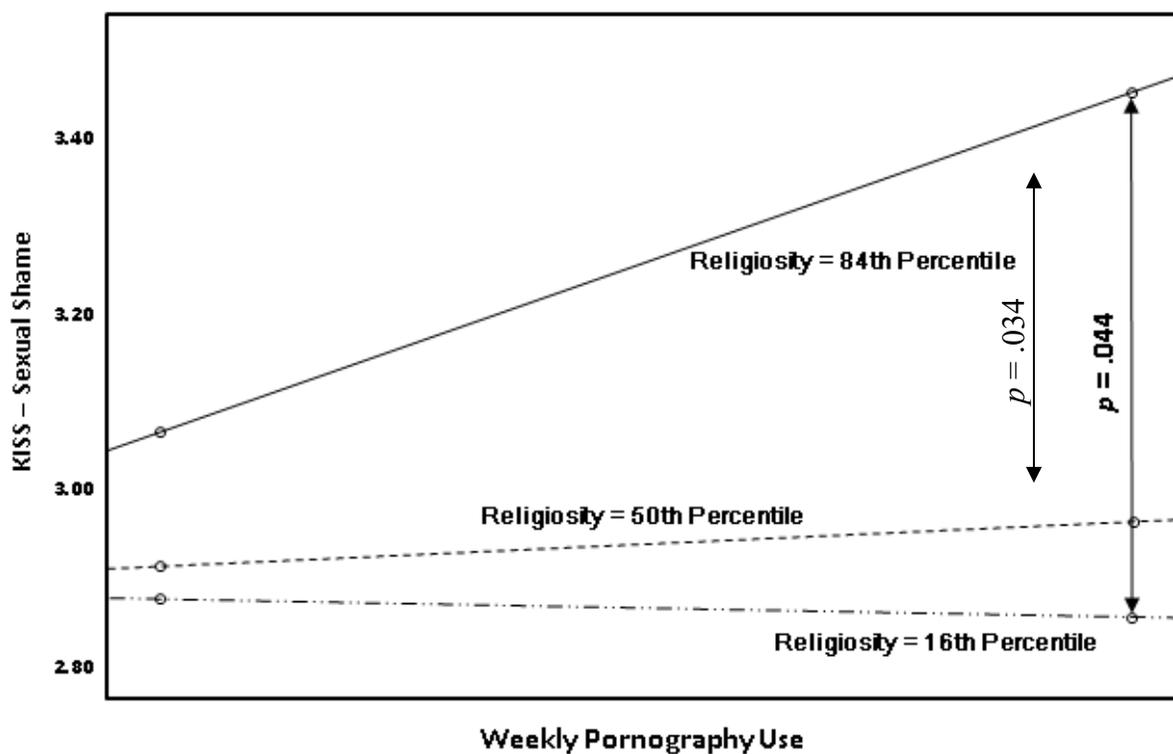*Note.* * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4.8. Interaction of Pornography Use X Religiosity on Sexual Shame.

Chapter Summary

A participant sample of 186 current pornography users (in the last six months) was used in this study. Pearson's *r* coefficient correlations were used to explore the research questions: What is the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness and sexual shame? Hypothesis one and two concerning the relationships between pornography use to sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame only produced weak correlations, and neither hypothesis was supported. All the overall moderation models were supported except for the degree religiosity moderates the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness. Pornography use was not found to be a statistically significant predictor of sexual permissiveness or sexual shame as was the same for age, but the shame proneness covariate was a significant predictor of sexual shame. As hypothesized, religiosity is a significant predictor of sexual shame but not sexual permissiveness.

One statistically significant interaction was supported for sexual permissiveness between pornography use and age with the interaction between pornography use and religiosity being very close to significant. For the sexual shame interactions, age was not significant while religiosity was close to being statistically significant for pornography use. Only hypothesis 1a was supported with 1b, 2a, and 2b being rejected. These models accounted for a small percentage of variance, and further research is indicated to understand better how other factors are related to pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame. The correlations and interactions between pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame suggests the conclusion that religiosity is a significant moderation as illustrated in Figure 4.9. Further discussion of the results is provided in chapter five.
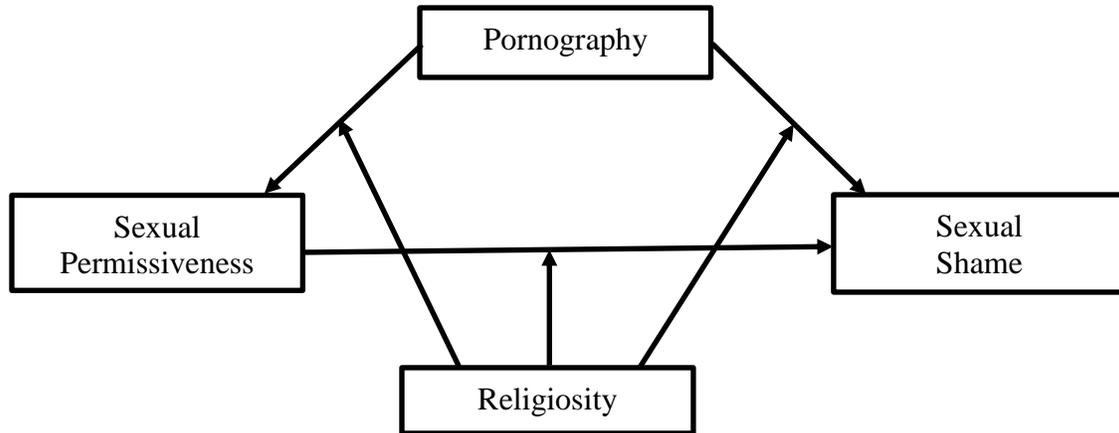
Figure 4.9. Resulting Theoretical Model

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was based on well recognized and researched theories in the areas of pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame. Pornography use is on the rise and has become the norm instead of the exception among emerging young adults (Paul, 2006; Schulenburg & Zarret, 2006). Research also indicates that pornography use increases risky behavior such as sexual permissiveness (Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015). Also, shame has been associated both with pornography use and sexual permissiveness, and the research indicates that pornography use may increase as a way to alleviate increased feelings of shame (Gilliland, South, Carpenter, & Hardy, 2011). Some recent research has suggested that religious individuals may be using pornography as a means to satisfy sexual urges without sexual contact with another individual (Rhea & Issler, 2015). This study was undertaken to explore the relationship between pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame. Specifically, to answer the following research questions: (1) What is the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness, (2) Does age and/or religiosity influence sexual permissiveness among current pornography users, (3) What is the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame, and (4) Does age and/or religiosity influence sexual shame among current pornography users.

The previous chapter provided the basis of this chapter by presenting and exploring the data analysis and the results. This chapter will give further explanation and significance of the findings of this quantitative study along with a brief discussion of the findings for each research question. The chapter concludes with implications for practice and research, recommendations for future research, and limitations.

Summary of Findings and Implications

Amazon Mturk was used to recruit 1,279 participants for this survey. Participants completed multiple assessments including a pornography use survey, BSAS, KISS, TOSCA-3, and RCI-10. Only single current pornography users ($n = 186$) were included in the study. Participants were between the ages of 19 and 40 ($M = 28.2$) with the majority of participants being males (51.6%), Caucasian (66.1%), single, employed (59.7%), with a bachelor's degree (38.2%), non-religious (42.5%), and a combination of Christian and Catholic (40.9%). The majority of participants (56.5%) reported having viewed pornography ten or more times in the last six months with an average of 2.54 hours per week. The majority of participants were not currently in a relationship (51.6%) with 23.1% in a non-committed relationship. It should be noted that 25.3% of the single participants, 19 – 40-years-of-age reported never being in a relationship. This population seems worthy of further research concerning why they have never been in a relationship and is this related to their pornography use?

This study tested two models to detect correlations between variables as well as identify moderating effects between pornography use and the outcome variables of sexual permissiveness and sexual shame. Overall, Model 1/Age was supported with a significant interaction between pornography use and age accounting for 4.8% of variance on sexual permissiveness. The most interesting results were found in model 1 with religiosity interacting with pornography use being close to significant with 2% of variance on sexual permissiveness. The second model showed no significant interactions between age moderating the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame, but the covariate of shame proneness had a significant interaction with pornography use and sexual shame. Consistent with previous research, a significant relationship

was found between religiosity and sexual shame, and the interaction between pornography use and religiosity was nearly significant.

Current research literature consistently shows correlations between pornography use and increased sexual permissiveness and sexual shame. With a significant increase in pornography use even among religious individuals, the literature supporting the link between pornography use, sexual permissiveness, and sexual shame through the lens of religious individuals may help therapists and religious communities better serve these young adults. The findings of this study fit within this scope of research.

Research Question One

Research question one explored the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness among single adults, 18 – 40-years-of-age. It was hypothesized (Hypothesis 1) that a positive correlation would exist between pornography use and sexual permissiveness. Hypothesis 1 was not supported but did show a weak correlation which would suggest that other variables should be considered when exploring the relationship between pornography use and sexually permissive attitudes.

Research question 1a. This first moderation question explored the interaction between age and pornography use in relation to sexual permissiveness, and it was hypothesized (Hypothesis 1a) that pornography use and sexual permissiveness would be moderated by age and that relationship would be weaker for younger religious users. This age moderation hypothesis was the only hypothesis with a strong statistical significance along with the interaction between pornography use and age and which accounted for 4.8% of the variance in BSAS-Permissiveness. The interaction is displayed at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentile of pornography use and age as presented in Figure 4.3. The graph shows the interaction between pornography

use and age, as it relates to sexual permissiveness. Pornography use and age are negatively correlated with sexual permissiveness. As a result, it seems that younger adults may be using pornography to moderate sexual attitudes and activities. As this interaction has only been suggested in the previous literature, the finding in this study would serve to extend the literature and encourage future research in this area (Rhea & Issler, 2015).

Research question 1b. The second moderation question explored the interaction between pornography use and religiosity and the relationship to sexual permissiveness. Hypothesis 1b hypothesized that pornography use and sexual permissiveness would be moderated by religiosity and weakened for younger religious users. The hypothesis was rejected, but it is worth noting that the interaction between pornography use and religiosity was close to statistically significant with a $p = .034$ between the 16th and 84th percentiles. Figure 4.5 displays the interaction between religiosity and pornography use as it relates to sexual permissiveness. As a result, it would seem that those that are more religious may be using pornography to moderate sexual permissiveness. This is a new finding that has not currently been explored in the literature and serves to encourage further research in the area of pornography being used as a moderation tool for sexual permissiveness.

Research Question Two

Does a significant relationship exist between pornography use and sexual shame among single adults, 18 – 40-years-of-age? It was hypothesized that adult pornography users would be more likely to report an increase in sexual shame. Hypothesis 2 was not supported but also showed a weak correlation as did hypothesis 1, which would suggest that other variables should also be considered in future research when exploring the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame.

Research question 2a. Research question 2a presented the question whether age moderates the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame. Neither pornography use or age were statistically significant predictors of sexual shame, and no interaction existed between pornography use and age. Only the shame proneness covariate was significant at $p <$ .001. Further research should explore the area of shame proneness and the relationship to pornography use and sexual shame.

Research question 2b. In the final research question, religiosity was proposed as a moderator of the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame. The overall model was statistically significant with religiosity as a predictor of sexual shame. Pornography use was not a predictor of sexual shame and hypothesis 2b was rejected, but the interaction between pornography use and age was nearly significant. The interaction is pictured in Figure 4.9 and shows a positive correlation for sexual shame and pornography use for those who report being more religious. It seems to suggest that those who report being more religious also attest to more sexual shame with pornography use. The results add to the research linking religiosity and sexual shame and serve to explain increased pornography use among religious young adults (Grubbs et al., 2015). Further research is needed in this area as the research in the area of sexual shame is not extensive at this time.

Limitations of the Study

The majority of survey participants were Caucasian (66.1%) and had bachelor's degrees (38.2%) further research could strive for more diverse populations that would include more minorities and those that are less educated. All measurements were based on cross-sectional self-reports including the pornography use reports which can yield biased results (Hassan, 2005). A

continuing limitation of self-report retrospective surveys is that participants might underreport

activities or not be totally honest with responses especially when answering questions concerning

sensitive areas. Also, this is a fairly small sample of single adult pornography users, and it should

be suggested that this study be replicated with a larger population of single adults and possibly

longitudinal instead of cross-sectional. The ability to generalize this study to the general

population may be biased by the younger college-educated sample group. It could call into

question whether this sample is representative of the mass majority of pornography users.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should continue to explore the moderating effect of religiosity on

pornography use and sexual permissiveness as this study was the first of its kind to gather data

pertaining to this interaction. Other variables and moderators including shame proneness, moral

disapproval, and relationship status should be included to increase the variance and create an

increased understanding of the growing pornography use among religious individuals. The

majority of pornography research has looked at male users, but pornography use among women

has been growing faster than that of men, particularly in the religious population in recent years.

This would seem to be an area for future research.

Relationship status revealed a demographic among single young adults that could prove

to be an interesting variable for future research. Among the single population of 19 – 40-year-

olds, 25.3% reported never being in a relationship. Future studies may want to explore the reason

for the lack of relationships and the correlation to pornography use. Future studies should also

consider including married individuals along with singles in the survey population to explore the

correlations with sexual permissiveness. Also, the implications of the rising pornography use

should be explored possibly longitudinally to follow single pornography users into marriage relationships to explore how pornography use during the singlehood years affects future marriage relationships. Replicating this study as a mixed methods study would be useful to explore the negative correlation between pornography use and sexual permissiveness among religious single adults.

Vast amounts of research exist on shame, but there has been sparse study concerning sexual shame which could benefit the work of therapists working with pornography users, especially women who seem to suffer more from sexual shame than men (Fugere, Escoto, Cousins, Riggs, & Haerich, 2008). Shame proneness is also a fairly new research area which should be further explored as it relates to sexual shame and sexual permissiveness.

Implications for Practice

Although the religious community perceives any of use of pornography as sinful or immoral, it has become a developmental milestone for emerging adults in our society with the majority of individuals exposed to pornography in adolescence (Bryant & Brown, 1989). Parents and the church are quick to condemn sexual activities and pornography use as morally wrong and to be avoided, but do not provide adolescents and young adults with information and tools needed for remedial action when such misdeeds have occurred. As a result, it is imperative to study the motivations and effects of pornography use to be able to treat it more effectively. Previous research indicates that pornography use increases risky behaviors and can affect physical, psychological, and sexual health (Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015; Willoughby, Hall, & Goff, 2015). The information in this study provides further understanding for better studies concerning interventions and prevention methods to reduce the adverse effects

of pornography use and sexual shame by promoting education and the incorporation of coping skills for emotional regulation in place of unwanted pornography use. Other treatments could include mindfulness techniques, self-compassion, emotional regulation, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. This study could also be vital information for religious institutions seeking ways to better serve their members in developing acceptable coping mechanisms and counseling treatment for those who struggle with pornography use and sexual shame specifically among the religious community.

The results of this study have significant implications for clinical practice with those struggling with sexual shame as the result of pornography use. As discussed in this study those that report being more religious indicate that they experience more sexual shame from pornography use. This may be the result of dissonance as their religious teachings are incongruent with their pornography use. From a clinical perspective, sexual shame could result in problems with increased hypersexual behavior as a means of coping with the increase in sexual shame, creating an endless cycle of behavior and shame (Gilliland, South, Carpenter, & Hardy, 2011). Is it possible that normalizing the pornography use could interrupt the cycle of use and shame for those that are not clinically addicted to pornography?

Chapter Summary

A summary of the findings, conclusions, implications for practice, research, and recommendations, and limitations of the study are discussed in this final chapter. The main findings of this study were that age seems to moderate the relationship between pornography use and sexual permissiveness. The most significant result from this study was the interaction between pornography use and religiosity on sexual permissiveness. Pornography use and

religiosity was close to significant and seem to show that more religious individuals are using pornography to moderate sexual permissiveness. Religiosity also appears to a significant predictor of sexual shame and this interaction seems to indicate that those that are more religious report more shame with pornography use.

Study Summary

Pornography use is most prevalent among emerging adults (18 – 26-year-old) peaking at the age of 22 (Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006), and 11% of religious individuals reporting viewing pornography on a regular basis while still having a moral objection to the practice. (Baltazar, Helm, McBride, Hopkins, & Stevens, 2010; Grubbs, Braden, Draus, Wilt, & Wright, 2017; MacInnis & Hodson, 2016). But why do religious young adults view internet pornography? Abell, Steenbergh, and Bolvin (2006) suggested that religious emerging adults may be using pornography as an acceptable alternative to non-marital sexual activity. This suggestion became the driving force for this study and seems to support the hypothesis that religiosity is a moderator between pornography use and sexual permissiveness. Even though religious young adults seem to be able to tolerate the incongruence that comes with violating their moral beliefs, they are still unable to escape the feelings of sexual shame (Grubbs, Exline, Pargament, Hook, & Carlisle, 2015; Murray & Ciarrocchi, Murray-Swank, 2007). This research also supports the assumption that religiosity moderates the relationship between pornography use and sexual shame such that religiosity increases sexual shame. Previous research found that shame was not a predictor of pornography use but a result (Gilliland, South, Carpenter, & Hardy, 2011). As a result, religiosity seems to promote shame as a consequence of pornography use (Murray & Ciarrocchi, Murray-Swank, 2007). The correlations and interactions between pornography use, sexual

permissiveness, and sexual shame supports the conclusion that religious young adults are using pornography as a way to avoid sexual relationships outside of marriage but at the cost of an increase in sexual shame. For religious young adults, pornography seems to have become the lesser of two evils when compared to sexual activities with another individual.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to be in a research survey, which is a study about the Impact of Family-of-Origin Experience, Spirituality, Sexual Behavior, Sexual Attitudes, Relationships, and attitudes about pornography. As compensation, one dollar will be made available to participants who complete it. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the survey. You have received the opportunity to participate in this survey through your arrangement with Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private and anonymous. We are asking for your honest response to all the questions. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to the records. Publications from this research study will only report on statistical information, as no personal information will be requested from you.

Contacts and questions

The researcher conducting this study is Fred Volk. Please feel free to send the questions you may have at any time during the course of this study by email: fvolk@liberty.edu. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him via email. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), then you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Suite 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu. In case you may need to talk to a counselor after taking the survey, though this is not an endorsement of the following free online counseling service, you may contact http://www.onlinecounselling4u.com/. Again, this is only a suggested resource to assist you just in case you need counseling assistance after completing the

survey.

Risks and Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from your participation in this survey. Risk is mostly limited to social impact should an individual's responses be released. Therefore the responses will be collected anonymously with no identifying information. You will receive $1 (one U.S. dollar) for completing this survey. The findings from this study have important implications for counselors and counseling services.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to complete the questionnaire. As part of this survey, you will be asked several questions about yourself, as well as questions about your family-of-origin, your beliefs, your attitudes, and your behavior. This survey will take between 20 and 45 minutes to complete.

Compensation

As compensation, one U.S. Dollar ($1) will be made available to participants who complete it.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Thank you for your interest in participating in this survey. Your participation is voluntary and you can quit at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. Researchers reserve the right to refuse compensation if you do not indicate that you have willingly agreed to participate in this survey.

Statement of Consent

Please click "yes" if you agree with the following statement: "I have read the above information, and I consent to participate in the study *and for my data to be analyzed for the*

purposes of the study." All information you provide in this survey is completely anonymous. By

answering yes to the question below, you are agreeing to participate in this study.

Yes

No

Appendix B

Demographic Items

1. What is your gender?

      Male   Female   Other

2. What is your age?

3. What is your race?

      Caucasian/White   African American

      American Indian or Alaska Native

      Asian   Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

      Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin   Other

4. What sexes are you attracted to?

      Men only   Women Only   Men and Women   Neither Men nor Women

5. What is your highest completed educational level?

      No schooling completed   Less than high school

      High school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED)   College Freshman

      College Sophomore   College Junior   College Senior

      Trade/technical/vocational training   Bachelor's degree   Master's degree

      Professional degree   Doctorate Degree

6. Employment Status: Are you currently...?

      Employed for wages   Self-employed   Not employed

      A homemaker   A Student   Military

      Retired   Unable to work

7. What is your household's annual income?

Under $10,000 $10,000-$19,999 $20,000-$29,000 $30,000-$39,999

$40,000-$49,999 $50,000-$59,999 $60,000-$69,999 $70,000-$99,999

Over $100,000

8. How many times have you been married?

Never married   Once   Twice   Three times   More than three times

9. How long have you been married to your current spouse (leave blank if never married).

0-5 years   6-10 years   11-15 years   16-20 years   More than 20 years

10. What is your current relationship status? Please choose only one of the following:

Single (I have never been in a serious relationship.)

Single (I am not currently in a serious relationship, but have been in the past.)

Non-committed Dating Relationship   Monogamous Dating Relationship

Married/Life Partner   Married, but Legally Separated

Divorced   Widowed

11. Have you been sexually active in the last six months with your current romantic partner?

No   Yes   I don't have a current romantic partner

12. In terms of religion, how would you describe yourself? Choose one of the following

answers:

Protestant (e.g. Methodist, Baptist, or some other Non-Catholic Christian denomination)

Catholic   Christian (Non-Denominational)   Mormon

Jehovah's Witness   Muslim   Hindu

Jewish   Buddhist   New Age/Wiccan

Taoist   None   Other

Appendix C

Frequency of Pornography Use

1. How old were you when you first were exposed to pornography?

2. Were you alone in that first instance or were you with others? Please describe (include how many people, your relationship with them, and their ages) or write "alone." Also, include any other information that you might think is important.

3. Have you ever intentionally used pornography for the purposes of sexual gratification?

   Yes   No

4. How old were you when you first became a pornography user (accessed pornography at least once every six months)?

5. How many times have you used pornography in the last week?

   0 times   1-3 times   4-6 times   7-9 times   10 or more times

How many times have you used pornography in the last month?

   0 times   1-3 times   4-6 times   7-9 times   10 or more times

How many times have you used pornography in the last six months?

   0 times   1-3 times   4-6 times   7-9 times   10 or more times

6. On average, how many hours a week do you use pornography?

7. About how many times do you masturbate per week?