

PORNOGRAPHY CONSUMPTION, COCAINE USE, AND CASUAL SEX AMONG U.S. ADULTS¹

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Summary.—This study utilized nationally representative longitudinal survey data from the 2006–2008 General Social Survey (GSS) to explore the interplay between U.S. adults' self-reported past pornography consumption, past cocaine use, and recent participation in casual sex. Participants in the longitudinal component of the 2006–2008 GSS were 867 women and 669 men ($N=1,536$) ranging in age from 18 to at least 89 years ($M=45.46$; $SD=16.91$). Hierarchical logistic regression analysis was employed to analyze the data. After controlling for past casual sex and demographic covariates, the interaction of past pornography consumption and past cocaine use on recent casual sex was significant. Past cocaine users were more likely than non-cocaine users to have had recent casual sex ($OR=4.56$), but past pornography consumption was unrelated to recent casual sex for past cocaine users ($OR=0.20$). Conversely, past pornography consumption was associated with an increase in the odds of recent casual sex for non-cocaine users ($OR=2.74$).

Casual sex is sex between uncommitted persons such as acquaintances, first dates, or prostitutes and clients (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). Identifying predictors of casual sex is important from a public health perspective, as casual sex increases the risk of outcomes such as sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy (Bennett & Bauman, 2000; Paul, *et al.*, 2000). A social influence that may predict casual sex is pornography consumption. Pornography may encourage casual sex by portraying casual sex as stimulating, exciting, liberating, and consequence-free (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006). A behavioral variable that may predict casual sex is past cocaine use. Cocaine use is indicative of a sensation-seeking personality (Ball, 1994). High sensation seekers are willing to take risks to achieve heightened states of physiological gratification that low sensation-seekers are not willing to take. In alignment with these postulations, cross-sectional studies have found positive associations between pornography consumption, cocaine use, sensation seeking, and participation in casual sex (Arnett, 1994; Kalichman, Heckman, & Kelly, 1996; Wright, 2011).

It is difficult to locate any research, however, that has examined the longitudinal relations between past pornography consumption, past cocaine use, and recent casual sex. Cocaine use may moderate the associa-

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tion between exposure to pornography and casual sex in one of two ways. On one hand, it is possible that only high sensation-seeking cocaine users are influenced by pornography, as low sensation-seeking non-cocaine users may have little desire to translate their fantasy experimentation with pornography into potentially risky sexual behavior. On the other hand, it is possible that high sensation-seeking cocaine users are motivated to engage in casual sex regardless of their consumption of pornography, whereas pornography exposure increases low sensation-seekers' desire for the excitement that pornography pairs with casual sex. The present study explores this interaction using nationally representative longitudinal data gathered in the United States in 2006 and 2008.

The present study makes several additional contributions to the literature, beyond being the first to examine the interaction of pornography consumption and past cocaine use on casual sex. Pornography research has primarily focused on attitudes and behaviors supportive of violence against women (Wright, *in press*). The propagation of internet pornography has led to some casual sex research, but much of this research has been conducted on adolescents outside of the United States (Lo & Wei, 2005; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006; Omori, Zhang, Allen, Ota, & Imamura, 2011). The focus on adolescents reflects the assumption that adults are not influenced by pornography, an assumption that may be erroneous (Peter & Valkenburg, 2011). Research on pornography and casual sex in the United States is important, as pornography researchers who have conducted studies in other countries repeatedly caution that their results are culturally bound (Lo & Wei, 2005; Omori *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, one experimental study has found that pornography increases viewers' intentions of having casual sex (Zillmann & Bryant, 1988), but experimental pornography research has been critiqued for imposing artificial circumstances on participants (Berkowitz & Donnerstein, 1982). Longitudinal survey studies are needed to cross-validate the results of experimental research on pornography and casual sex. Finally, most pornography research employs convenience sampling, calling into question the generalizability of whatever findings are uncovered (Ferguson & Hartley, 2009). Representative studies are needed to address this critique.

METHOD

Data were provided by the General Social Survey (GSS), the only ongoing, national, full-probability survey examining social beliefs and behaviors currently carried out in the United States (The National Data Program for the Social Sciences, 2011). GSS data are available for public analysis. Heretofore cross-sectional, in 2006 and 2008 the GSS included a panel component. Panel participants in GSSs at Time 1 in 2006 (T1) and 2008 (T2) were 1,536 adult U.S. women (56.5%) and men (43.5%). Partici-

pants ranged in age from 18 to at least 89 years ($M = 45.46$; $SD = 16.91$). Past cocaine use was assessed by asking participants whether they had used crack cocaine at any point in their lives (0 = No; 1 = Yes; 7.3% "Yes" at T1). Pornography exposure was assessed by asking participants whether or not they had viewed a pornographic film in the prior year (0 = No; 1 = Yes; 22.6% "Yes" at T1). Casual sex was assessed at T1 and T2 by calculating whether participants who had a sex partner in the prior year had engaged in committed sex (i.e., sex with a spouse or regular partner, coded 0; 82.3% at T1, 85.5% at T2) or casual sex (i.e., sex with an uncommitted partner such as an acquaintance, casual date, pick up, or prostitute, coded 1; 17.7% at T1, 14.5% at T2).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hierarchical logistic regression analysis was utilized to explore the study's research question. Age, gender, ethnicity (White/Nonwhite), education (years of school completed), and religiosity (attendance at religious services) were entered in the initial step. Prior research suggests that these characteristics may confound associations between pornography exposure and casual sex (Wright, 2011). T1 casual sex was also entered in the initial step. Controlling for T1 casual sex allowed for the prediction of interindividual change in casual sex over time (Little, Card, Preacher, & McConnell, 2009). Past pornography consumption and past cocaine use were entered second. The interaction of past pornography consumption and past cocaine use was entered last. To clarify the interaction, logistic regression simple effects tests were carried out as prescribed by Rose, Chassin, Presson, and Sherman (2000). All interval variables were mean-centered. Change in χ^2 was used to assess the contribution of the interaction term; 95%CI odds ratios were used to assess the contribution of predictor variables.

The interaction of past pornography consumption and past cocaine use was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 7.57$, $p < .01$; see Table 1). Past pornography consumption was associated with an increase ($OR = 2.74$, $95\%CI = 1.38, 5.44$) in the odds of having engaged recent casual sex for non-cocaine users. Conversely, past pornography consumption was unrelated to recent casual sex for past cocaine users ($OR = 0.20$, $95\%CI = 0.04, 1.10$). Past cocaine use, however, was associated with an increase ($OR = 4.56$, $95\%CI = 1.04, 20.11$) in the odds of having engaged in recent casual sex.

Taken together with a visual exploration of the interaction (see Fig. 1), these results suggest a ceiling effect in casual sex for past cocaine users and a pornography disinhibition effect for non-cocaine users. Past cocaine users are more likely than non-cocaine users to engage in casual sex when neither group consumes pornography. However, non-cocaine users have reports of casual sex similar to cocaine-users' if non-cocaine users have

TABLE 1
LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS PREDICTING T2 CASUAL SEX

Predictor	B	SE	Odds Ratio	95%CI Odds Ratio
T1 Casual sex*	2.70	0.34	14.88	7.67, 28.86
T1 Age	−0.02	0.01	0.98	0.96, 1.01
T1 Nonwhite	0.11	0.37	1.12	0.54, 2.33
T1 Religiosity*	−0.17	0.07	0.85	0.74, 0.97
T1 Education	−0.01	0.07	0.99	0.87, 1.12
T1 Male	−0.42	0.33	0.66	0.35, 1.25
T1 Pornography*	1.01	0.35	2.74	1.38, 5.44
T1 Cocaine use*	1.52	0.76	4.56	1.04, 20.11
T1 Pornography × T1 Cocaine use*	−2.64	0.94	0.07	0.01, 0.45

Note.—Above statistics represent the final step of a hierarchical logistic regression analysis.
*Variables significantly contributed to the model at the $p < .05$ level.

consumed pornography. One explanation for this interaction is that pornography exposure increases low sensation-seekers’ desire for the ecstasy and excitement that pornography pairs with casual sex. This explanation is in line with multi-wave longitudinal research showing that sexual media exposure leads to stronger sensation-seeking preferences, which in turn lead to increases in sexual behavior (O’Hara, Gibbons, Gerrard, Li, & Sargent, in press). Conversely, past cocaine users—given their sensation-seeking personality traits—may seek casual sex without positive media (pornography) portrayals. Future longitudinal studies should measure

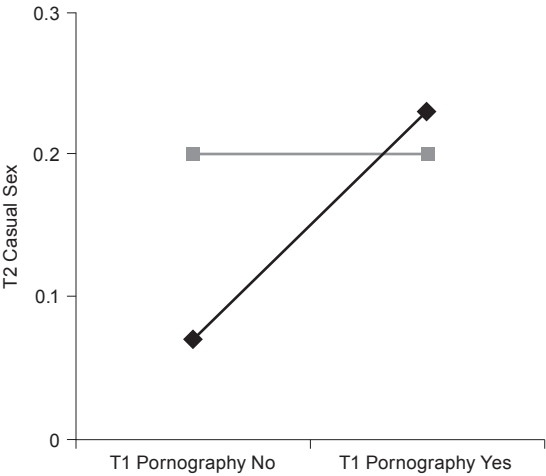


FIG. 1. Interaction of past pornography exposure and past cocaine use on recent casual sex. Non-cocaine users (◆); Cocaine users (■).

sensation-seeking, cocaine use, pornography exposure and casual sex in the same analysis to test this explanation.

Interpretative caution may be warranted in several areas. First, it must be remembered that cocaine use is a correlate of casual sex. Similar findings may not emerge if other drugs are studied. Second, although the association between pornography consumption and casual sex for non-cocaine users was significant, studies employing more encompassing assessments of pornography exposure may yield more powerful associations. Third, although there is little evidence that pornography's positive presentation of casual sex has changed in the last few years, contemporary replications would bolster the results presented here. Finally, although the panel methodology employed strongly suggests causation (Little, *et al.*, 2009), only an experimental study can definitively rule out the possibility of confounding variables.

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Accepted July 20, 2012.

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