

Disconnect to Marriage

Lillian Laboy

Nyack College MA in Mental Health Counseling

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Author Note

This paper is in partial fulfillment of requirements for Counseling Issues and Human Sexuality (GCN710) with Rebecca Webster, PhD.

**Abstract**

If you ask someone on the street what percentage of marriages, they feel, end in divorce, most will say 50% but based on research, that number is closer to 45%. Still not a great number.

Many would agree that marriages are dissolved most often because the couples drift apart or they report that their spouse was not meeting their needs. Excluding violence, this student will detail four of the most commonly reported reasons for dissolution of a marriage based on research.

They are: Sexual Disconnect, Pornography, Addictions and Affairs. Additionally, the subject of Pre-marital Sex will also be discussed even though it is the opinion of this student that its effect on the dissolution of a marriage is minimal.

### **Disconnect to Marriage**

This student was asked to write this paper as part of a class requirement. The topic of disconnect in Marriage is very subjective depending on who you are speaking to as well as the events that are presently occurring in the relationship.

While researching this subject, it was enlightening to come across a lot of “self-help” type literature and counseling materials that have been created to assist those that are interested in preserving their marital union. Although this paper is only covering the areas of disconnect identified as Sexual disconnect, Pornography, Addictions and Affairs, there are a number of other reasons as to why a marriage may be dissolved. Pre-marital sex also plays an important role in a marriage so it will be included in this paper but its effect on a disconnect in marriage is considered minimal by many.

### **Discussion**

“Until death do us part” can be commonly heard in almost all marriage ceremonies in the United States but more and more, marriages are dissolved within the first five years of saying their vows. “The *belief* that marriage should last forever and be sexually exclusive is both a historical and contemporary ideal; this premise has not changed over time” (Campbell & Wright, 2010).

What has changed is the reason people decide to get married. Some still wed for love, but others will enter into the marriage union as a result of social pressures, the desire to have children or because of their age.

“Research on predictors of relationship stability among heterosexual people has found that couples who get married at young ages, who cohabit rather than marry, who initiate sexual activity sooner, who have had more sexual partners, and who do not have children, have less stable relationships over time” (Balsam, Rothblum & Wickham, 2017).

### ***Pre-marital Sex***

By definition, “premarital sex involves any kind of sexual contact prior to entering into a legal marriage relationship” (“Premarital sex – why are Christians so strongly against it? | GotQuestions.org”, 2020).

There is an ongoing debate as to whether or not pre-marital sex can have a negative effect on a couple’s marriage. There are some who believe that pre-marital sex can be beneficial and an important part of developing intimacy with your partner prior to getting married.

But there is a population who have no desire or thoughts of marriage while working on themselves i.e. career or education, who feel that fulfilling their sexual needs without being in a committed relationship is a win-win.

Let's review Judy's story (named changed for her privacy). This student has been friends with Judy for over 20 years. Judy lived at home with her mom, worked as a nurse, and working towards a PhD. Judy loved to travel all over the world, so she was basically working just to accrue vacation hours and paychecks for her next trip. With her busy work schedule and studies, Judy believed she had no time to devote to another person and/or cultivate a relationship. As a result, Judy had what many would call, "a friend with benefits (FWB)."

It was one specific person that she hung out with periodically with no romantic interest in him at all. At one point or another, everyone in the office had met Judy's FWB whether it was after the office Christmas party or after she had come back from one of her trips and he was picking her up at work for dinner. Although many people at work thought Judy should really date the guy because he seemed really sweet on her, Judy has no interest.

Fast forward to present day and Judy can be found living with someone (not her previous FWB), is now addressed as Dr.(Judy's last name) and continues to travel regularly for speaking engagements at healthcare conventions. She still has no interest in marriage, or children, but she is happy in her present cohabitation arrangements.

Without getting too far off topic, many children of divorce such as Judy in the synopsis above make a conscientious decision not to marry as a result of their own childhood experience. "Much of our culture does promote the idea that our greatest fulfillment is to be found in sex and marriage" (Vines, p.17) and for those who do not wish to get married, there is a challenge to get the need for sexual fulfillment met.

Culture and worldview also impact an individual's experience with pre-marital sex, historically women more than men.

Some of the social and emotional effects of premarital sex for women can include regret soon after the act of sex, emptiness if relationship expectations are not met, and a fear as being seen as less desirable should the relationship end in a breakup. For both men and women, there is the fear of an unplanned pregnancy or getting a sexually transmitted disease.

There is additional pressure to abstain from pre-marital sex if the individual is growing up in a Christian home where the belief is that "God designed sex to be enjoyed within a committed marital relationship of one man and one woman. To remove it from that context is to pervert its use and severely limit its enjoyment" ("Premarital sex – why are Christians so strongly against it? | GotQuestions.org", 2020).

The Bible has a number of passages that reflect God's will to be that a man will leave his family to become "one flesh" with his wife. If both parties wait to engage in sexual contact the night of their wedding, it is believed that the experience will be beneficial to both the husband and wife as sexuality and intimacy will be something learned together throughout your marriage.

### ***Pornography***

"Pornography, which tends to portray sexuality for its own sake, did not emerge as a distinct, separate category until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the United States" (Carroll, p. 476). Since then, pornography is everywhere. The newsstand, in commercials, movies, and the internet. Anyone can gain access to pornography at any time and its effect on a relationship can be devastating.

In 2008, the movie *Fireproof* depicted a marriage that was almost destroyed by the husband's addiction to pornography. The depictions of sexual contact in pornography are actor portrayals and reflect (at times) unrealistic reactions and/or behaviors during sex. Many will feel that they will need to perform this way in order to please their partner which can bring disappointment in the bedroom.

Over time, many who watch a lot of pornography become addicted and find that they are unable to perform unless they view this media prior to their own sexual contact with their partner. This can place a strain on your relationship because your partner will feel that they are 'not enough' to bring you pleasure.

In addition, someone who watches this media may request that their partner re-enact a scene that they enjoyed as part of role-play which can be acceptable by a supportive partner but again, if an individual can only perform sexually in this manner, this too can cause a strain in the relationship over time.

A woman we will call Rose is presently separated from her husband of 18 years because he became addicted to pornography, unbeknownst to her. He began asking Rose to allow another woman to join them in the bedroom and also expressed an earnest desire to videotape their sexual intimacy. When she refused both requests repeatedly, her husband began an affair with a woman who did not mind being videotaped, and Rose found the videos on his cellphone in February of 2019.

Although pornography is a multimillion-dollar industry, it is not for everyone. The worldview of pornography for many, is viewed as a negative and detrimental practice in the long run.

Rose, who was raised in a Christian household firmly believes, “people have an inherent human desire to sin, and that pornography reinforces that tendency and so undermines the family, traditional authority, and the moral fabric of society” (Carroll, p. 487). As a result, she could not forgive her husband for his affair, so they are presently separated while finalizing their divorce. This marriage union produced no children.

### ***Addictions***

Addictions come in many forms: Substance or alcohol abuse, tobacco, gambling, shopping, sex or pornography, food, and video games. Frequently, these addictions have been known to take priority over your personal relationships, and sometimes even work.

Regardless of what form of addiction exists, it will cause a rift in your marital union unless the addiction is acknowledged, and treatment is begun. “It is not necessarily always the case that the addiction is the single factor or the cause of the divorce, but it very often is a contributing factor to it in a surprisingly high percentage of American divorce cases” (“Addiction and Divorce - Why Do These Two Occur So Frequently Today?”, 2020).

### ***Sexual Disconnect***

There is nothing more difficult than not being able to connect to your spouse in a sexually intimate way. It can cause a number of challenges that can affect your whole relationship. It can be a wonderful experience, or it can be a chore.

At the root of sexual disconnect is communication and lack of trust. Your partner wants to please you as much as you want to please them. It is important to develop a relationship built on trust and communication, especially in the bedroom. Do not let it get this far...

A woman we will call Louise, was having a lot of issues in her marriage. Her spouse was of the mindset that women are to be home barefoot and pregnant. She had to do everything for her husband including the grocery shopping with their young daughter in tow as he would not babysit their child while Louise ran errands.

“Divorce researchers have also noted gender differences in predictors of divorce... women are more likely to initiate divorce, whereas “men seem to have a higher tolerance for bad marriages”” (Balsam, Rothblum & Wickham, 2017).

It got to the point where Louise felt she had to leave her husband because she was not able to communicate with him and she developed a lot of anger towards him and their relationship. She shared that one day during intercourse, she was looking up at him and thought to herself, “if I had a weapon in my hand right now, I would hit him across the head with it.”

Communication regarding sexual intimacy should begin the very first time the couple decides to take this step in their relationship.

### ***Affairs***

When one person in a marital union begins to feel that they have fallen out of love or does not feel supported, the danger of an extramarital affair starts to creep into some relationships. “Depending on how infidelity is assessed, national estimates indicate that 20-25% of individuals participate in extramarital sex at some point throughout the course of marriage” (Campbell & Wright, 2010).

There are those individuals who remain in the marriage and just learn to live with the situation but that will also have a negative effect in the individuals physical and mental health in the long run.

In all types of marital disconnect, the couple is strongly advised to seek counseling or speak with their Pastor early on for guidance. This shows your partner that you are committed to the relationship and each other.

“Overt marital conflict involves some level of negatively balanced behavior, whether this is directed toward engaging in the conflict or avoiding it” (Fincham & Beach, 1999). Working together in therapeutic alliance with a trusted third party will give the couple the tools to weather any storm.

### **Conclusion**

“Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals” (Muehlhoff 2010, p. 105).

The success of the marital union is dependently solely on the couple and their desire to work through the conflict. Should one or the other choose to remain the marital union and the conflicts remain unresolved, it can affect the physical and mental health of one or both parties as well as any children in the relationship.

“It seems clear that we have to identify the circumstances in which conflict behaviors are likely to result in enhancement rather than deterioration of marital relationships” (Fincham & Beach, 1999).

## References

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**GRADING Syllabus and Rubric Requirements: Lillian Laboy -82**

Great job including all required sections. When your voice and writing showed you had good ideas and things to say, but the structure, flow and style of your writing made communication of these ideas difficult to understand at times. I would suggest using Nyack's writing center to give suggestions in the future to help your ideas shine. Overreliance on direct quotes, needed more summarization of sources: "Carroll (2015) noted that sexual disconnect..." Also, you set the stage with all the problems but needed more critical thinking/analysis/engagement with "so what?" or drawing conclusions on how the counseling or church may be of help to this issue, what are some potential solutions? Overall, nice job working to address a complex topic.

<b>Required Sections (40)</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Critical Thinking (40)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Grammar &amp; Formatting (20)</b>	<b>12</b>
8-10 pages of content	☐	Identifies the argument question or issue	☐	Graduate Level writing	Difficulty
Cover page, abstract and Reference page	☐	Interprets evidence and sources	Would be better to focus on digesting source material and then writing on that point	Few or no grammatical and spelling mistakes	☐
1 website	☐	Analyzes and Evaluates Alternatives	☐	Uses proper APA formatting	Several APA mistakes
2 books	☐	Considers alternative perspectives and positions	☐		
3 peer reviewed journal articles	☐	Draws conclusions	Lacked through discussion of conclusions or solutions		
Section: Literature Review	☐	Presents results in a logical and organized fashion	Organization difficult to follow at times		
Section: Discussion	☐				
Section:	☐				

Conclusion					
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