Discussant: "Pornography and Divorce"

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Conference on Legal Empirical Studies
Stanford University
November 10, 2012

Agenda

Hypothesis: Pornography use in a married setting causes divorce.

- Strengths / Design comments
- Areas for improvement / strengthening findings

Overall Comments

- under-researched, complicated issue,
- important and helpful to understand these effects,
- very clearly written paper,
- generally underpowered results.

Data and Design Suggestions

• Are there regulatory changes in access to magazine sales that could be used to infer impact, especially at the state level?

• The process is unclear: did men always buy PB and their wives only just discovered it, or did they started buying it then suddenly find themselves divorced? Why did men start buying PB after marriage?

• Can other factors be better captured? societal tolerance (mentions of divorce in popular culture and the media) not captured in time or state variables. Porn buyers may be different.

• Nevada to be included? if people go there to be divorced it seems there is more urgency, should support your hypothesis (why NV insignificant in panel reg?)

Data and Design Suggestions

- Time w/o subscription compared to averaged PB with and w/o subscription. These should be consistent metrics.

- Why averaged PB subscription? magazine buying seems more furtive than subscriptions, would expect different effects on divorce.

- Time seems relative to PB sales (.6 corr unsurprising). Casts doubt on its effectiveness as an instrument.

- differing time series lengths troublesome, should be documented clearly. PT, Time, and divorce data.

Data and Design Suggestions

• How do we know its the married folks making the porn purchases?

• Double counting by including both PT and PB in regressions seems ok - people might buy both and this might be an even stronger predictor of divorce?

• Include much more substantial controls (Age/race/#kids/religiousness/wealth changes, review literature on causes of divorce).

• Might be instructive to model divorce rates from before 1960 to 1998 and view PB as an intervention.

• What about Hustler and other porn magazines? Better to create a "porn aggregate" variable rather than focus on one magazine.

Data and Design Suggestions

• Control for overall magazine sales generally,

• Is video data available?

• Internet access data through subscriptions?

• Can you find external data on length of time to divorce, and use that to guide lag estimates?

• How is the strong relationship between divorce and current PB explained? Perhaps that should be a baseline to control for this effect, since that seems spurious or unrelated to the hypothesis.

• Why 9 regions and not states? Need to justify

Data and Design Suggestions

• Are there surveys on porn use? When do people start? How persistent is the use? Do they stop when married? and then return?

• No need to report uncontrolled regressions, just most suitable models.

• Tables should be co-located with the narrative.