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IDEAS THAT LEAD

Why the Freedom of
Driving Still Matters

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Lifting the Veil on the
Marriage Secret

Could We Prevent Human Trafficking
by Regulating Online Porn?

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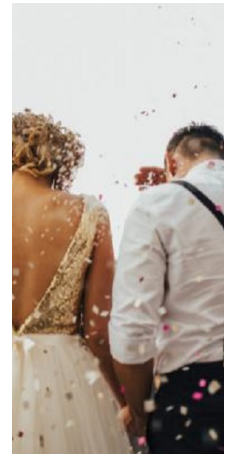
Patrick Keeney

Most of us have heard it said that a lot of science and engineering went into bringing you the automobile gleaming beneath your gaze in the showroom. A lot goes into the act of driving as well. And while many people no doubt find driving banal or worse, Patrick Keeney believes there's also a lot at stake. To drive, he writes, is to exercise our skill at being free, to display our competence, to accelerate for the sheer joy of it, and to negate the technocrats who strive to make our lives idiot-proof and safe. To steer our very lives, as it were. To Keeney and the author of the book he reviews in this essay, few places are better than behind the wheel, breathing the heady air of freedom.

Lifting the Veil on the Marriage Secret **PAGE 6**

Peter Shawn Taylor

Whatever we might think of marriage and divorce, few of us would claim they are *unimportant*. The topic has occupied not only the hearts of billions but the minds of great thinkers through the ages. Why, John Milton wrote a whole book on divorce way back in the 1600s. So why have the great thinkers at Canada's top statistical agency – who spend their days ferreting out the most trivial of trends – closed their minds to the entire subject? Might the numbers point in some politically incorrect directions? Peter Shawn Taylor dives into the subject with gusto and reports on the modern-day benefits of one of humankind's oldest institutions.



Could We Prevent Human Trafficking by Regulating Online Porn? **PAGE 12**

Devin Drover

To suggest something ought to be done about unrestricted online pornography is likely to be thought of as out-of-touch, heavy-handed, hopelessly idealistic or, paradoxically, sexist. Yet the damage wrought upon innocent young lives by ruthless elements in the porn sector is all-too real; the academic and legal evidence about the phenomenon's global toll is there for anyone who cares to look. While recognizing that simply banning all porn will never happen in today's cultural and legal environment, Devin Drover lays out a carefully researched and soberly argued case that protecting the innocent against the industry's vilest excesses lies well within the reach of our politicians.

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Why the Freedom of Driving Still Matters

By Patrick Keeney



We live in a big country – [Canada has](#) more than 1 million kilometres of roads – and driving has been something of a birthright for about five generations of Canadians. Like many of my compatriots, I'm an enthusiast for cars, trucks, and motorcycles – anything with an internal combustion motor and wheels. Lamentably, I'm a bad mechanic. I have the dubious distinction of being the only student ever to have failed Auto Mechanics 12 at Centennial High School in Coquitlam, B.C.

But I have a passion for cars. My favourite vehicle was a 1957 Chevy Apache Panel Van, the former property of Ridgeway Plumbing. I bought it for \$100. It

had an inline-six engine and “three on the tree”, meaning not only did its transmission require manual shifting, there were only three forward gears (not, say, nine as you'll find today), and the nearly foot-long shifter was mounted to the steering column, the “tree”. The keys were missing, but it was easy to hotwire using alligator clips and the two wires dangling below the dash. I gave it a new paint job using a can of blue C.I.L. house paint and a roller, installed an eight-track cassette player, and laid an orange shag carpet in the back. A friend painted R. Crumb's Mr. Natural on the sides, along with “Keep On Truckin'.” To my teenaged sensibilities, it was a thing of beauty. I've

long lost track of it, but as Neil Young sang in his paean to his Pontiac Hearse, “Long may you run.”

Even more than having and appreciating vehicles, though, I love to *drive* – to go places where I want to go, when I want to go there, along the route and at the pace that I choose, along with planned and unplanned stops, activities and side-trips. I love the feeling of having mastered every move that goes into driving well. There's something wonderfully vital about a 12-hour solo haul, such as my recent Thai road-trip from Hua Hin – a town three hours south of Bangkok – northward 700 kilometres to the city of Chiang Mai. Watching the sun come up as I approached Bangkok meant that I'd beaten the city's notorious morning rush hour. It felt good.

We are told, however, that something called “the future” has decreed that the era of driverless cars is upon us and that this will be an enormous boon for humanity. As the actuarial tables of insurance companies attest, we humans aren't particularly good drivers. According to the advocates of driverless cars, by ceding control of our vehicles to impersonal algorithms, there will be fewer traffic jams, fewer accidents, less parking congestion, fewer highway fatalities, and less harm to the environment. It's an impressive list and a *coup* of some consequence. Or perhaps it's impressive

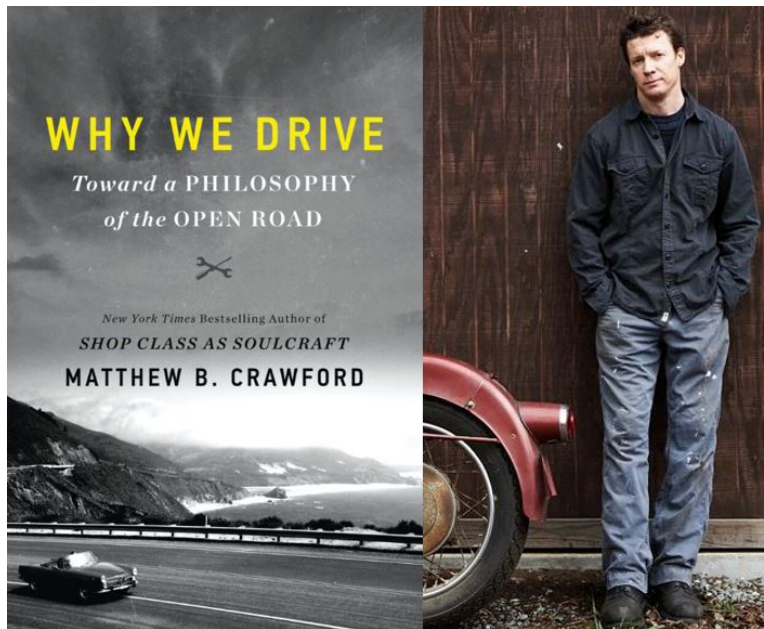


The 57 Chevy, similar to the author's first vehicle. Long may she run.

insofar as we are willing to accept the boosterism of the technocratic elites promoting driverless cars.

Matthew Crawford thinks that in ceding human control over our vehicles, something crucial to our wellbeing may be at stake, and we would do well to pause and consider the directions in which we may be headed. His recently published [Why We Drive: Toward a Philosophy of the Open Road](#) is an extended meditation of what the advent of driverless cars means for our culture.

The 360-page book is unlike anything I've read. It's a combination of philosophy, autobiography, reflections on gender and family, cautions about the too-cozy relationship between big tech and the administrative state, a tribute to the enduring relevance of [Alexis de Tocqueville](#) in understanding American life, a celebration of the sheer joy of driving and motorsports, a defense of republican virtue,



gearhead, as well as an engaging and quirky writer. He also happens to have studied physics and holds a Ph.D. in political philosophy from the University of Chicago. He thinks deeply, often and in offbeat ways about individuality and personal freedom and how these might be protected and preserved in our current times. One of his key ideas is that personal

are animals with bodies so that the world reveals itself to us not through theory and propositions, but through our senses and bodily interactions. Ultimately, what is at stake in the debate over driverless cars is the “disposition to find one’s way through the world by the exercise of one’s own powers.” One can instantly see how a technocratic elite that functions mainly on abstractions, often in defiance of physical reality, and is increasingly intolerant of dissent, would spurn if not fear and

loathe Crawford’s central ideas. And why those of us struggling to hold onto our own increasingly circumscribed freedoms would find inspiration.

For, over the past 20-odd years, philosophers and cognitive scientists have come to understand that our actions and conduct are indeed predicated on “embodied cognition.” That is, our basic motor functions and mobility are ultimately the basis for even our higher intellectual capacities. Which suggests, in turn, that technology or processes promising to relieve us of seemingly onerous physical chores are actually threats not only to our freedom, but our ability to engage with and learn from the world around us:

“To the extent that we are disburdening ourselves, via technology, of being mentally involved in our own navigation and locomotion, we would seem to be embarking on quite a significant social experiment. [It] should be undertaken in full awareness that our mobility as self-directed, embodied beings is fundamental to our nature...and to the distinctly human experience of identity.”

Crawford labels *Why We Drive* political “if we take that term in its broadest sense.”

The world reveals itself to us not through theory and propositions, but through our senses and bodily interactions. Ultimately, what is at stake in the debate over driverless cars is the “disposition to find one’s way through the world by the exercise of one’s own powers.”

and something resembling a [Chilton’s Manual](#) for hot-rodding a 1975 VW Bug. For the latter, Crawford helpfully provides drawings and technical specifications for boring out the cylinders of the air-cooled VW motor designed in 1938 by Ferdinand Porsche. He also thoughtfully throws in the specifications for the necessarily altered crankshaft.

In brief, Crawford is a proud, knowledgeable and unapologetic

freedom requires that we accept – even embrace – a certain amount of risk in the things we do. Crawford thinks there is something singular about driving and our relationship with our vehicles and employs what he calls “philosophical anthropology” to answer the book’s fundamental question: “What is so special about driving?”

The answer, and the book’s central premise, arises from the quotidian fact that we are *embodied* creatures. That is, we

He thinks that the boosters of driverless cars are “unimpressed with pleasure as an ideal and suspicious of individual judgment.” In other words, they are promoting a vision that sits ill with our political traditions. Crawford argues that we need to recover and reclaim the joy and excitement of driving by exploiting the sensory-motor capacities we have developed through human evolution. Driving is, in a word, fun.

With driverless cars, we are about to change our status from drivers, individuals who exercise agency and find joy in perception, steering, navigation and decision-making – our very own daily form of captaincy – to passengers who are subject to a new system of algorithmic control with no room for human agency. We are in danger of becoming a new class of administrative subjects who will be managed by an “all-colonizing” technocratic elite. Crawford raises the perplexing question of why the world’s largest advertising agency, Google, [should be making such a massive investment](#) in driverless cars. The answer is disturbing:

“By colonizing your commute, the patterns of your movement through the world will be made available to those who wish to know you more intimately – for the sake of developing a deep, proprietary science of steering your behaviour. Self-driving cars must be understood as one more escalation in the war to claim and monetize every moment of life that might otherwise offer a bit of private headspace.”

That proposition will come as quite a leap if not utterly implausible to many, confirmation of long-held suspicions to some. For Crawford, the connection is plain and is essentially a matter of life and death, for driving is one of the remaining domains involving human skill, freedom, and individual responsibility. The experience of using a car or motorcycle acts as a “kind of prosthetic which amplifies our embodied capacities.”



Powerless: The self-driving car removes the need for our senses and ultimately our freedoms.

Robocars threaten the human spirit, in part by eliminating contingency and danger from human life, substituting in its place the certainties of a machine-generated culture and the fiat of the administrative state. Many millions, convinced of the innate superiority of digital technology over the human mind (or at least over *other* human minds), will find those very features comforting and attractive.

Yet when left to our own devices, it's quite extraordinary how we manage to acquire driving skills and negotiate driving conditions, particularly in urban settings. When I first arrived in Chiang Mai, a city of about 1 million, I was petrified by its traffic chaos. Families of four would weave about on a small scooter, while taxis, Tuk-tuks, and Red Trucks would stop anywhere to

pick up fares. Cars would lane-split to take advantage of an opening. To save time, vehicles would dart the wrong way down one-way streets. Motorcycles and scooters appeared from nowhere and followed their own rules.

Eventually I screwed up the courage to drive and quickly learned that far from the chaotic jungle of my first impressions, the traffic in Chiang Mai ebbs and flows like a choreographed dance. Or perhaps like improvisational jazz, where the challenge is for the player to become fluent in the rhythms and riffs and improvise accordingly. Negotiating ancient, narrow streets in the Old City kept me hyper-alert. My motto became, “Expect anyone to do anything at any time.” The dictum serves me well, as one constantly meets with



The author has mastered the Thai driving dance.

unexpected contingencies. Near-misses are routine.

I also embarked on what became a series of cross-country sojourns (Thailand stretches 1,900 km from north to south), often heading for the beaches in the country's south. I discovered that Thai drivers are preternaturally patient with their fellow-motorists. Road rage is virtually unknown and, amazingly, one rarely hears a horn honked in anger. Driving there teaches the virtues of patience, tolerance, and forgiveness. Perhaps it's the Buddhist culture.

The experience exemplified for me one of Crawford's animating themes, namely that driving is not only about individual freedom but a form of organic civic life, a realm of interaction that demands cooperation and coordination predicated on "embodied cognition." A sort of social intelligence is at work on highways and city streets, one in which drivers seek collectively to smooth the flow of traffic. In contrast to algorithmic rule-following, Crawford writes, "Driving a car in the uncontrolled environment of the street...is done best if we can rely instead on the 'fast, frugal' pathways of embodied cognition." He elaborates:

"What human beings are doing when they solve problems together is very different from rule-following. What we do is continually update our predictions of the world, including others' behavior, and modify our own behavior so as to make it more easily predictable by others. This is a cognitive strategy bequeathed to us by evolution... In such a scene, we are exercising endowments that are fundamental to the kind of creatures we happen to be."

In this context, Crawford approvingly cites de Tocqueville, who pointed out that collective self-government is fostered by citizens engaging in shared, practical activities, the disappearance of which invariably erodes the bonds of civil society. In Crawford's hands, the advent of autonomous cars becomes a "meditation



Honing "social intelligence", exercising independent judgment and engaging with the world are all enabled by driving ourselves.

on the meaning of self-government." In the end, social intelligence – the collective practical activities of which de Tocqueville wrote – depends on embodied humans. It simply doesn't lend itself to machine-executable logic. Nor, one expects, can humanity's social intelligence improve when the settings in which it is crafted and applied are taken away.

The debate about the driverless vehicle, then, is about more than merely its costs, complexity, convenience or whether it can be made truly safe. It represents another battle in the ongoing war between technocratic security (or at least the promise thereof) and human freedom. A recurring theme in the book is the attempt by politicians and automakers to make cars safe and immune to human error. [Dmitri Dolgov](#), head of Google's Self-driving Car Project, claims that human drivers need to be "less idiotic." In the public mind, automation is joined to the moral imperative of safety, neither of which admits any limit

to its expansion. "Safetyism" is a closed-loop, designed to reduce human idiocy and increase human security by legitimizing ever-more automation.

Crawford has written before about [safetyism](#), and how in pursuing the Holy Grail of "safety" a bullet-proof halo of public-spiritedness can be used to disguise what in fact are political and aesthetic preferences. He challenges the regime of infinite safety by raising the troubling question of whether computers and human intelligence can be made to work together.

Automobiles are incontrovertibly safer today due to innumerable innovations from seatbelts to anti-lock braking systems. But the historical shift in the auto industry's focus from mechanical advances that simply work better and no longer fail catastrophically (like, say, rack-and-pinion steering) to electronic systems whose sensors and autonomous functioning shove aside human judgment has had the perverse effect of altering our "risk



The author will spurn self-driving vehicles “for as long as driven cars (or motorbikes) remain available and my health allows.”

budget” and can actually make us drive less carefully.

The E.U. has, for example, decreed that by 2023 all vehicles must be equipped with audible signals that alert the driver to various dangers, such as lane departures and speed warnings. The danger is that some drivers may substitute the secondary task of listening to alarm bells for the primary task of paying attention to the

deterioration is well underway, along with increasing distraction from touch-screen-based control systems that, by definition, must be viewed rather than simply felt like old-school knobs and levers.

Nevertheless, the design ethic of our age dictates that mechanical and physical realities must pass through increasing numbers of electronic filters before they reach the driver, a development that has attenuated the natural bonds between action and perception. Crawford draws on an analogy from hockey: “An expert hockey player’s attention isn’t directed to his stick, it is directed *through* his stick to the puck...”

In like fashion, a real “driver’s car” performs a similar sort of disappearing act, becoming a transparent conduit between the driver and the road. As motorsport fans know, human drivers can be very impressive when equipped with the tools to preserve the bonds between perception and action. However, Crawford laments, “What we have currently is a dysfunctional hybrid that makes little use of the exquisite connections between mind and body.”

The severing of action and perception in automotive design represents a larger truth about contemporary society: “In ever more areas of life, algorithms are coming

vast majority of ticketed commuters were from Maryland and Virginia, hence not D.C. voters. For D.C. politicians, notes Crawford, it was “essentially free money... insulated from political blowback.”

And of course, the case of D.C. is hardly unique. Crawford writes:

“We seem to be entering a new dispensation. Qualities once prized, such as spiritedness and a capacity for independent judgment, are starting to appear dysfunctional. If they are to operate smoothly, our machines require deference. Perhaps what is required is an adaptation of the human spirit, to make it more smoothly compatible with a world that is to be run by a bureaucracy of machines.”

In this age of algorithms, driving recommends itself as one way to fight this enervation of the human spirit. We are animals with bodies, and to drive is to exercise our skill at being free, to display our competence, to accelerate for the sheer joy of it, and to negate the technocrats who strive to make our lives idiot-proof and safe. Crawford convincingly and eloquently argues in this delightfully original and entertaining book that driving is a skill worth preserving.

For my part, I intend to remain captain, navigator, helmsman and event planner of my personal bubble of freedom for as long as driven cars remain available and my health allows. Our country and our continent hold many of the world’s finest drives. Use your freedom while you still have it.

The severing of action and perception in automotive design represents a larger truth about contemporary life: “In ever more areas of life, algorithms are coming to substitute for judgment exercised by identifiable human beings who can be held to account.”

road. This problem is called the “primary-secondary task inversion” and is a familiar problem for pilots in highly automated airplanes. Yet this is a bigger problem in a car than in an airplane. While pilots might have minutes to make corrections, a driver often has only a fraction of a second to “get back in the loop, assess the situation, and respond appropriately.” There’s voluminous anecdotal evidence from drivers that this

to substitute for judgment exercised by identifiable human beings who can be held to account.” This is a sinister aspect of automated decision-making, one which places authority beyond scrutiny. The author cites the District of Columbia’s red-light photo-radar cameras. They were installed at intersections with the greatest flow and the shortest yellow lights, rather than those with the most accidents. The

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Lifting the Veil on the Marriage Secret

By Peter Shawn Taylor

With so much interest paid these days to health risks, mortality rates and governments' role in encouraging optimal public behaviour, the following study probably should have received more attention that it has.

[“Predicting mortality from 57 economic, behavioural, social and psychological factors”](#), by University of British Columbia health psychologist Eli Puterman and six co-authors, was published last month in the prestigious, peer-reviewed journal *Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences*. While it has garnered very little media coverage, the results seem particularly noteworthy. Using a large data set of over 13,000 middle-aged American

adults covering a period of 22 years, Puterman sorted through 57 diverse non-medical life factors – including poverty, parental education, sleep patterns, depression, religiosity, pessimism and housing – to see which are most significant in predicting lifespan.

Of the top three, most readers can likely guess the first and third most important predictors of a shortened life. They are smoking and alcohol abuse. But the second slot might not be so obvious. Or commonly considered to be a health risk. It is divorce. And in eighth spot, just below financial difficulties and unemployment, is never having been married in the first place.

While his results rely on American data, Puterman considers them equally applicable to Canadians. “I suspect we would see a similar risk of mortality in Canada – with divorce showing up as a top ten factor as well,” he says in an interview. “While it may be surprising for many to see divorce in second place, as a psychologist I know how important social relationships really are.” Puterman points to the marital union as a key source of companionship, financial security and a myriad of other underappreciated health and social benefits. If Puterman’s results are valid, and they do seem solidly founded, then married people may truly be happier, healthier and longer-lived. Divorce and permanent singlehood, considered as the absence of marriage and all its protective features, are thus serious threats to public health and personal wellbeing.

But if the advantages to being married are so clear – and the risks of not being wedded so pressing – why is this such a big surprise to anyone? And what should we be doing about it?

With These Stats I Thee Wed

Whatever benefits it may entail, marriage is no longer the dominant social force it once was. As recently as the 1980s, more than 80 percent of Canadian families were comprised of married couples. Today, it’s closer to 65 percent as the combined share of common-law and lone-parent families has more than doubled over this time. The age of first marriage continues to climb while the absolute number of weddings in Canada has been falling for decades, despite rapid population growth. Single-person households have shown unprecedented growth in recent years. Plus, a majority of Canadians apparently agree that marriage is no longer a necessary step for people who want to spend the rest of their lives together, according to [recent opinion polls](#).

“Families are changing, and as a result marriage has been in decline for decades,” admits Peter Jon Mitchell, acting program director of [Cardus Family](#), a Canadian

Top Ten Non-Medical Factors in Predicting Mortality Rates

1. Current Smoker
2. History of Divorce
3. Alcohol Abuse
4. Recent Financial Difficulties
5. History of Unemployment
5. History of Smoking
7. Lower Life Satisfaction
8. Never Married
9. History of Food Stamps
10. Negative Affectivity

Source: "Predicting mortality from 57 economic, behavioral, social, and psychological factors," by Eli Puterman et al. in *Proceedings of the National Academies of Science*. June 2020.

social policy think tank with a conservative bent that's trying to revive interest in, or at least attention paid to, the institution of marriage. It appears to be a losing game. Despite the implications of Puterman's study, as well as ample evidence from other studies and research, the subject of matrimony has reached such a parlous state that Statistics Canada no longer even bothers to track marriage and divorce rates. Whatever Canadians might think about getting married, we don't actually know how many of them are getting hitched or unhitched these days.

In 2011 StatsCan released its [last report](#) on marriage and divorce rates, using data collected in 2008 from the provinces and the federal Department of Justice. It has since eliminated this publication as a cost-saving measure. While the provinces continue to track their own figures, there is no central, consistently published source of information on how many Canadians are marrying or divorcing, their ages and a

host of other biographical detail of potential significance to researchers and policy makers.

"The collection of marriage and divorce rates is critical to ensuring an accurate study and understanding of domestic social policy – from education to elder care," says Mitchell. Any inquiry into the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown and how this might affect social unions, for example, will be hampered by a lack of evidence. Soon after the pandemic hit, predictions began that the accompanying social isolation would lead to a surge in suicides, divorces, spousal abuse and, on the happier side, births. While each of these trends is important and of keen interest to researchers, only some will be formally tracked and compiled.

Good data is also crucial to figuring out how Canada measures up against other countries still producing coherent figures. While StatsCan does estimate marriage and divorce figures using the Census,

this guesswork lacks the precision of the true numbers. Many Canadian academic papers and studies now simply end their investigations at 2008, the year reliable statistics run out. [Some researchers](#) have tried to replicate the necessary figures using alternative data sources, such as tax records, with mixed results.

The disappearance of marriage and divorce statistics was part of a broader budget-balancing process at the statistical agency, rather than an overt blow against marriage itself. But the loss of this key source of information makes it more difficult to track the course of conventional family patterns. "I expect the decline in marriage has played part in the decision [to cancel the annual marriage and divorce report]," says Mitchell, noting the statistical agency first started tracking step-families (in which at least one child is the product of a previous union) in 2011, the year it stopped following marriages and divorces. Cardus Family has made repeated requests for StatsCan to resume its old reports, including a [petition last year](#) signed by numerous high-profile economists, media personalities and other researchers. "We've had some good conversations," he says. But so far, no actual data.

To fill this gap, Cardus Family recently unveiled its own online data source, the [Canadian Marriage Map](#). While it cannot replace the missing key information on actual marriage and divorce rates, Cardus' marriage info portal attempts to create a central repository of reliable figures on the subject. (See attached charts.) And, despite the lack of official attention, marriage still has a powerful story to tell.

The Good News about Marriage

As Puterman's work suggests, marriage delivers many surprisingly significant health benefits. [A broad range of evidence](#) reveals [happily married couples](#) enjoy longer lives, less stress, better sex and happier children. They are less likely to engage in risky behaviour and more likely to recover from health problems. Perhaps the most striking example of this phenomenon can be found



Good data is crucial to good policy: Peter Jon Mitchell, acting program director of Cardus Family, is pushing Statistics Canada to reinstate annual marriage and divorce rate reports that ended in 2011.

in a 2013 study in the [Journal of Clinical Oncology](#) that shows married patients are less likely to suffer from cancer, more likely to get treatment if they are diagnosed and more likely to survive after treatment. For five of the ten cancers studied, the study states, “the survival benefit associated with marriage was larger than the published survival benefit of chemotherapy.”

Why is there such a big health advantage to being married? There are two competing theories: [selection](#) and [protection](#). It is possible that stable, well-adjusted and healthy people are more likely to select a compatible mate. In other words, marriage is coincidental rather than causal. Another, not necessarily mutually exclusive, theory is that being married confers certain protective benefits on both spouses. Having someone who loves and cares for you, worries over your health and makes sure you follow doctors’ orders may offer an advantage that single folks and individuals in less permanent relationships can’t replicate. Regardless of the underlying reasons, it seems to work. As Mitchell observes wryly: “If marriage was a pill, we’d all want it.”



Nine out of ten poets agree: Marriage combines love, sex and emotional intimacy into a single, permanent and joyful union.

Beyond living longer and better, married people also gain a wide range of financial benefits. A 2014 report from Cardus (then called the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada), [“The Marriage Gap between Rich and Poor Canadians”](#), by former Statistics Canada chief economist Philip Cross, co-authored by Mitchell, pointed out that marriage is a powerful defence against poverty and inequality.

“The differences in marital status between income groups is quite dramatic,” the report found. The share of married couples in the bottom quartile of income is a mere 12 percent. At the top of the heap, 86 percent of households in the top fifth of the income distribution are married. This outcome is not merely the result of the top quartile being filled with older,

more successful couples. Rather, married couples of all ages tend to accumulate in the highest income bracket. Marriage, in other words, is a marker not of age but of success.

Living as a couple obviously offers many advantages in terms of saving on expenses, [yet substantial research from a wide variety of other sources](#) suggests there is still a significant difference between

married and cohabitating spouses. Cohabitating partners are less likely to pool their money, and thus their unions tend to be weaker. Married couples are more likely to combine their earnings and plan their finances as a single, cohesive unit. And the essential factor appears to be the official nature of the married relationship. This difference appears valid even when cohabitation becomes the dominant

type of family formation, as is the case in Quebec.

And then there’s probably the most important benefit of all: love. An effervescent attraction of sex, emotional intimacy and camaraderie is generally what brings couples together and why people make vows to each other in the first place, not the cold calculation of



I do, in this order: Wilcox's Success Sequence entails graduation, employment, marriage and then children

expected lifespans, cancer survival rates or household budgeting procedures. We mate because we are drawn to it as a biological imperative and an innate need – regardless of the consequences.

As the Romantic poet Lord Byron wrote, “All tragedies are finished by a death, all comedies are ended by a marriage. The future states of both are left to faith.” Somewhat more prosaically, early 20th century lecturer and advice columnist William Lyon Phelps later advised that, “The highest happiness on Earth is the happiness of marriage.”

The Marriage Secret, American-style

While the U.S. has not been immune to the secular decline in marriage rates experienced by Canada, better data and more attention paid make it possible to tease out in greater detail what is really going on inside marital unions. Bradford Wilcox, a sociologist at the University of Virginia and head of the school's [National Marriage Project](#), is one of the best known marriage researchers in the U.S. Based on his research, Wilcox proposes the concept of a “marriage divide,” similar to Cardus’ work on the income inequality aspects of wedlock.

“The big picture is one of decline in marriage since the 1970s,” says Wilcox in an interview. “But there is also a countervailing pattern at work in which the top portion of the income distribution appears to have recognized the benefits of marriage and are acting accordingly.” His work shows that the marriage

rate for college-educated couples has stabilized while it continues to fall for other demographics. “There is an incredibly strong body of research that tells us strong marriages are tied to positive outcomes for physical, emotional and economic well-being,” he says. “And this has become a kind of secret knowledge for a certain segment of the population.”

Wilcox is best known in the U.S. for his promotion of what's known as the [Success Sequence](#). This is the concept that young adults have the best chance of success if they progress through life in a particular order: first, graduate high school or college; second, get a job; third, marry and *then* have children. “We know that young people are more likely to flourish and realize the American Dream if they take these three steps in order,” says Wilcox. According to

his research, only 3 percent of U.S. adults who complete these three steps in order will end up poor by their late 20s or early 30s. “Young adults who do not follow the sequence are much more likely to fall into poverty,” he says.

The inclusion of marriage in this conception of a successful life has been attacked by many critics who reject Wilcox's focus on marriage and claim the only step necessary for a lifetime of success is to get “[a decent job](#).” To this, Wilcox retorts that marriage remains foundational as both a pillar of stability and a source of financial security: “Single parents are far less likely to be employed full time and much more likely to struggle with work and family.” While having a job may be crucial to achieving a good life, having a good, stable home life is often



What should governments do about marriage? At the very least they shouldn't be discouraging it. Certain government programs, including GIS in Canada, can contain disincentives for married folk.

a necessary precondition to getting and keeping that job. In fact, evidence strongly suggests the two are symbiotic. “Marriage is no panacea,” Wilcox admits, “But putting marriage before the baby carriage remains one of the three pillars to prosperity.”

It's a Good Thing. Now What?

Having established the large and quite desirable advantages to being married, what should anyone be doing about the institution's long-term decline? The most popular response is nothing. Typical of most Canadian social scientists, UBC's Puterman is aghast at the thought of any government involvement in interpersonal affairs. “That would be beyond the pale,” he says of the suggestion that, given the findings of his own research, governments might in some way promote the benefits of marriage or the disadvantages of divorce. “The last thing we want to do is to blame someone for divorcing.” Rather, he says, government should provide emotional support for people having trouble with their relationships. Teaching mindfulness in school, he suggests, would be another good idea.

It is certainly true that no-one wants federally-licensed busybodies admonishing young adults to find mates as quickly as possible. But it's not as if public health officials are silent on a wide variety of other deeply personal aspects of life. “Governments have no hesitation in telling people all about the dangers of smoking,” says Wilcox. The same goes for a host of other officially-disproved activities, such as



A blow to the Wedding Industrial Complex: Could the coronavirus herald a new era of modest and more affordable weddings?

everyone gets very quiet,” notes Wilcox. “Why? There is a double standard at work here.”

Wilcox suggests governments should at least publicly acknowledge the obvious personal and social advantages of marriage and, in particular, the significance of the Success Sequence. And government

unintentionally favour singles over couples. Some programs, like the American [Medicaid and food stamps programs](#), as well as Canada's [Guaranteed Income Supplement](#) (GIS) for seniors, even make it advantageous for married couples to divorce and live separately in order to maximize benefits.

Finally, given the importance of having a good, full-time job, Wilcox is also outspoken on the need for better vocational training and other improvements in the prospects of men and women to earn a comfortable living without having to go to college. “We need to do more to strengthen the returns to work, and especially middle-income employment,” he says. After all, the top fifth are doing just fine as it is; it's the lower-income categories whose family life is more likely to be troubled.

Mitchell has far less ambitious goals for Canada; just getting up-to-date national statistics is his first goal. “Marriage is certainly more talked-about and valued in the U.S.,” he observes, somewhat enviously, given Wilcox's prominence in public policy debates south of the border. “It is an individual decision, to be sure, but marriage also has a social function that's equally important. And I hope that eventually we can have a conversation about that in Canada as well.” Beyond simply talking more about marriage, Mitchell would also like to see an end to the “marriage penalty” oddity in the GIS. And it would be nice if other non-government organizations besides his own took up the cause of spreading the good news about marriage, and why common-law relationships generally don't offer the

The inclusion of marriage in the conception of a successful life has been attacked by many critics who reject Wilcox's focus on marriage and claim the only step necessary for a lifetime of success is to get “a decent job.”

drinking alcohol or soft drinks, eating fatty foods, commuting by car, not wearing a mask, and on and on. “But the moment you start talking about marriage and divorce,

programs could be tweaked to be either neutral or positive towards marriage. There are “marriage penalties” in some U.S. and Canadian welfare programs that

same advantages. “How can we portray marriage in a more positive way?” he asks.

Again, no one wants bureaucrats lecturing citizens on the dangers of

spinsterhood. Marriage is a deeply personal commitment best left to the individuals involved. And it isn't for everyone. Neither is a dysfunctional marriage a benefit to either party, nor children; in many cases divorce is simply the best solution. All this is widely accepted among marriage proponents and their critics alike.

But given the vast panoply of scientifically-valid evidence showing how getting and staying married is a very good

When times get tough, the financial security aspects of living as a couple may make divorce less attractive.

Further, these grim times might also be brightening the prospects for marriage in the future. When asked in surveys why marriage has fallen out of favour, young Canadian respondents often say they can't afford to get married. While this belies the evidence on the economic aspects of joint budgeting and resource-

There are “marriage penalties” in some U.S. and Canadian welfare programs that unintentionally favour singles over couples. Some even make it advantageous for married couples to divorce and live separately in order to maximize benefits.

thing – and getting divorced is the opposite – surely disseminating this information in a clear and factual way qualifies as the very essence of public health advocacy. Instead, Canadian politicians apparently prefer to ignore the entire topic, right down to having the statistics simply disappear.

Love and Marriage in a Time of Covid

Curiously enough, the coronavirus pandemic and economic lockdown seem to have revived interest in marriage and divorce statistics, at least in the popular press. There has been plenty of discussion about whether social distancing will make it more difficult to find a mate, as well as speculation that with spouses spending so much time together, we should expect to see a boom in divorces.

Here Mitchell allows himself a modest sense of optimism. While Canada's divorce statistics end at 2008, just as the Great Recession was taking hold, recent academic work that seeks to replicate this data using tax returns suggests there was a slight decrease in the divorce rate in the years following the economic downturn.

pooling, such opinions are likely the product of changing cultural norms (aided and abetted by cable television) that have pushed wedding ceremonies to absurd standards of ostentation, indulgence and sheer expense.

During the pandemic, however, it has become commonplace to host remote marriages via Zoom. And smaller, more modest in-person wedding ceremonies are also becoming fashionable again. “People are still getting married, but they are simplifying the event,” observes Mitchell, a long-time critic of expensive weddings. “If the coronavirus happens to weaken the Wedding Industrial Complex by making it easier and cheaper to get married – then I think that will be a good thing.”

Consider it some happy news on the marriage front. It's a start.

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Could We Prevent Human Trafficking by Regulating Online Porn?

By Devin Drover

The sweeping reshaping of our economy and culture by the Internet over the past two decades has created unique problems for policy-makers, who must grapple with how if at all they should respond to some of the Internet's less desirable consequences. Among these is of course pornography. Its proliferation in magnitude and variety into a multi-billion-dollar phenomenon that can accurately if sadly be referred to as an "industry" was supercharged by the expansion of Internet coverage and speed. Not surprisingly, this has created or accelerated a range of societal problems.

The most nefarious is the industry's ties to [illegal sex-trafficking](#), including of children. This is a globe-spanning netherworld of destroyed young lives (mostly but not exclusively female), distraught families, debauched purveyors, corruption and violence. It is thoroughly if somewhat clinically described in a paper by Catharine A. MacKinnon, linked above, in the *Michigan Journal of International Law*: "Pimps are typically paid for the sexual use of the real people who are bought and

sold to engage in the sex acts for money that are what most pornography is made of. The pornographers then are paid to repimp these people in the pornography itself, producing sexual pleasure for the consumers and immense profits for the pornographers, which both seek to repeat."

The large majority of online pornography is certainly believed to comprise consenting adults, and this part of the industry operates mainly in the open. Aging "porn stars" have become virtual household names, while porn-purveyors host scheduled "awards" and even brag about what they claim are



Global netherworld: Usually young and female, sex-trafficking victims are sometimes sold onward to porn purveyors.

philanthropic endeavours. They also tout special software and controls they say are aimed at keeping out any material involving under-aged or otherwise non-consenting participants.

Still, disturbing reports keep resurfacing that such material does get posted by online ventures that operate openly and otherwise legally. Canada itself may not be immune. Hundreds if not thousands of pornographic videos featuring non-consenting participants recently made it onto a gigantically popular, largely Canadian venture called “Pornhub”.

In March – on International Women’s Day – [dozens of demonstrators](#) gathered outside some nondescript commercial offices in Montreal to demand closure of that operation, a subsidiary of an even larger multi-media porn purveyor called MindGeek (registered in Luxembourg, with operations in numerous countries). Pornhub had posted content from a U.S. provider, called Girls Do Porn, four of whose employees [the FBI last October charged with](#) “sex trafficking by force” of young women. Pornhub removed the content and continued to insist that it follows protocols to avoid such illegalities.

Despite such disturbing revelations, Canadian legislators have remained silent on the issue. It is time for Canadian politicians and activists to consider the harms caused or at least facilitated by the online pornography industry and confront the problem.

Understanding the Context

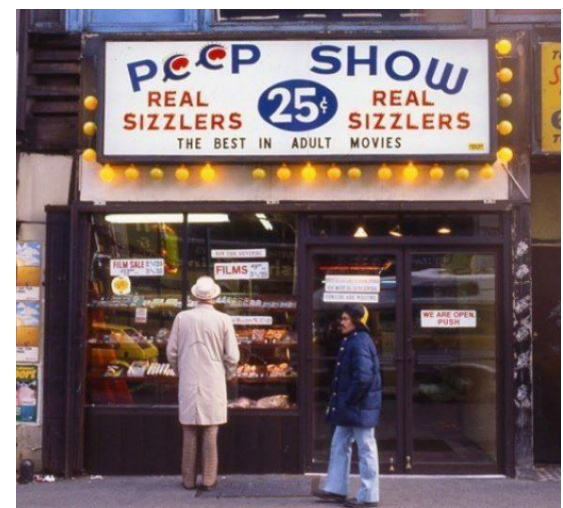
Since the emergence of online pornography in the mid-1990s, production and consumption of legal and illegal porn have proliferated around the world. “Ease of access, the partial anonymity provided by the Internet, developments in digital photography, issues surrounding the policing of international networks, and the limited risk of detection have all contributed to the exponential growth in its availability,” writes Yaman Akdeniz, Professor of Law at Columbia University’s Human Rights Law Research Center, in his 2016 book,

[Internet Child Pornography and the Law: National and International Responses](#). What barely a generation-and-a-half ago might have been considered some of the hardest-core adult porn is nowadays instantly available free of charge even on mainstream search engines.

Prior to this, access to porn was limited to materials and settings that the consumer needed to obtain or visit physically. This included attending movie theatres and “peep shows”, renting video cassette tapes (or, before that, bulky canisters of 8 mm film), or purchasing printed magazines. For decades, the combination of more conservative social norms and laws, the intrinsic seediness and sometimes physical danger of the settings, and the impracticalities of some of the media placed informal but remarkably effective limits on the amount and distribution of porn. The few historical “mainstream” pornography ventures, such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines, seem almost quaint in retrospect, with the formerly world-famous “Centerfold” now reduced to a Wikipedia entry.

The invention of modern web-browsing meant that users could simply open their personal computing device, connect to the Internet and gain near-ubiquitous access to pornographic media. Unlike the material historically accessed in the physical space, online pornography remains predominately unregulated. While young people wishing to purchase a magazine or rent a video would have to provide photo-i.d., today consumers are able to access many of these websites without any system of age-verification.

Pornographic websites are thought to make up [10-30 percent](#) of current Internet content and a large proportion of Internet use. Pornhub alone boasts over 42 billion visits and 6 million video uploads



Relics of the pre-Internet era: Playboy and peep shows.

annually. Porn consumption cuts across demographic lines, with some reports suggesting that [64 percent of young people aged 13-24](#) actively seek out pornography on a weekly or more frequent basis.

The type and content of online pornography also differ from the past. Regular TV, cable and streaming video programs are providing what used to be called “soft-core” porn – the sort of stuff that once populated *Playboy*. While such material is also sprinkled throughout the Internet, real online porn nearly always features “hard-core” content – uncensored penetrative sex of all kinds, often with

multiple participants. Further, most of this content distributed online is “amateur”-produced. This means it is more likely to flout the legal regulations of the relevant jurisdiction. This has made it easier for videos depicting illegal content – such as underage “performers” or non-consenting participants – to be published online.

Understanding the Problem

Pornography’s online proliferation has triggered or at least exacerbated a variety of societal consequences which have come under increased academic scrutiny in recent years.

The impacts on children who are able to access much of this content without having to validate their age are well-documented. For most younger kids, exposure to Internet pornography is believed [to be inadvertent](#), occurring either purely by accident (such as through pop-up advertisements) or by being shown or linked to it by someone else without asking for it. This exposure can cause [emotional and psychological harm](#), such as depressive symptoms, and even troubling effects on a child’s sexual development, including muddling their understanding of consent by increasing their willingness to engage in sexually inappropriate conduct. Sharon Cooper, a forensic pediatrician and faculty member at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, [argues in this paper](#) that children are more vulnerable to sexual harms



Evidence suggests links between porn-exposure and sexual aggression.



Murky players: “Girls Do Porn” employees Michael James Pratt (left), a fugitive, and (right) Matthew Isaac Wolfe, arrested.

children they are actually experiencing what they see.

The problems are far from limited to early exposure of children, however. Numerous studies covering ages 18 and up have revealed evidence of a link between exposure to pornography and male sexual aggression against women.

they are more likely to perpetrate sexual coercion and aggression. Another study demonstrated increased sexual aggression in the form of teen dating violence among teens who watched violent pornography. [A meta-study conducted in 2015](#) analyzing research from seven countries found statistically significant association between

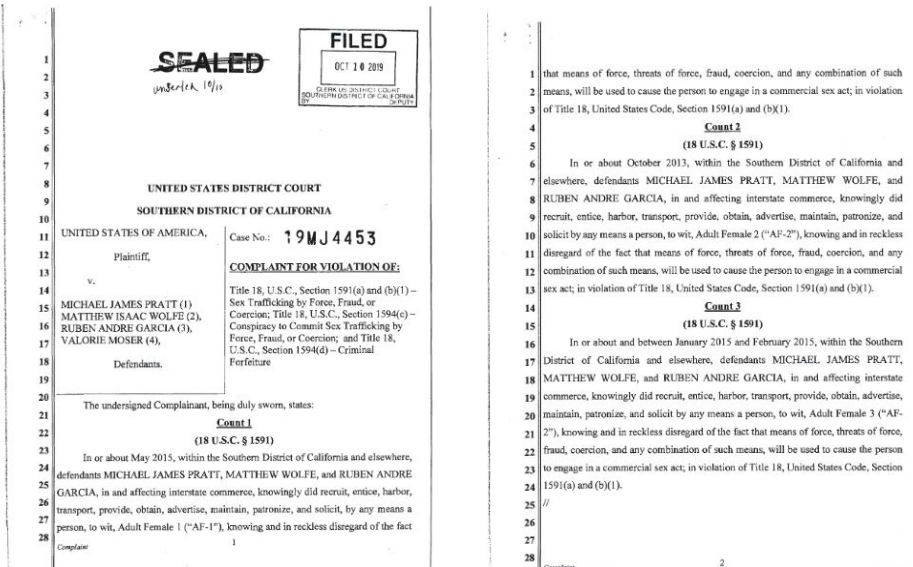
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evident in pornography, such as those portraying a lack of emotional relationship between consensual partners or, in some instances, violence or rape. This is due to their brain chemistry, which convinces

One study of high-frequency adult male porn users showed that such men are more likely to admit they would rape or sexually harass a woman if they knew they could get away with it, and concluded

porn consumption and sexual aggression among both males and females.

The porn industry plumbs truly murky depths, however, through its purported links to sex-trafficking. These include



Unsealed copy of the United States District Court Southern District of California's complaint against pornographers for sex trafficking and conspiracy to commit sex trafficking.

pornographic producers actually paying procurers ("pimps") for the purpose of trafficking victims to be used in pornographic videos, or traffickers enticing women with promises of a "modelling" career or other opportunities, only to abuse them. Trafficked victims are in no position to refuse to participate, and the coercion exercised by the procurers means that, whether below or above a jurisdiction's age of consent, the victims are legally unable to give consent. Failure to do so would put them at risk of serious physical harm.

Examples abound. Two American men were [sentenced to multiple life imprisonment terms in 2012](#) for sex trafficking after they lured aspiring models to South Florida with the pretense of auditions for roles that never really existed. Instead, they gave the victims alcohol laced with date-rape drugs, then had them engage in on-camera sexual acts. The videos were edited, produced and

sold over the Internet. The year before, a Missouri man was [indicted](#) for sex-trafficking a 16-year-old, mentally disabled girl whom he would sexually abuse on live Internet sessions. According to the indictment, he would also pimp the girl to others for money, keeping the unwilling victim in line through regular threats of injury or death. He pled guilty and was [sentenced to 20 years](#) in prison.

What Are We Doing About It? Not Much

Despite the demonstrable range of harms to participants and consumers of pornography, Canadian governments have done little to address concerns about the online pornography industry. This is partly due to pornographic materials being classified as protected expression under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The 1992 case known as *R v Butler*

became the defining Supreme Court of Canada decision on pornography. In its effectively unanimous decision authored by Mr. Justice John Sopinka, the Court ruled that the creation of pornographic material – even porn bereft of any "plot" or script and entirely depicting sexual activity – at minimum conveys meaning to its creator by nature of its being captured or recorded. This, therefore, is protected expression under section 2(b) of the Charter. The Court did find, however, that limits on pornographic expression could be justified under section 1 when the content was found to be "obscene" – a definition set by the Court to include pornography demonstrating explicit sex with violence or explicit sex subjecting participants to degrading or dehumanizing treatment.

Canadian criminal law also does little to curb the problems associated with online pornography, although it would seem to provide the necessary legal teeth to go after anything depicting or involving children. Besides prohibiting the creation and online distribution of (the narrowly defined) "obscene" pornographic content, s. 163.1 of the Criminal Code criminalizes showing sexually explicit material to minors for the purpose of luring or trying to induce sexual abuse. Unlike other forms of pornography, all child pornography is deemed dehumanizing, degrading and violent by nature and, therefore, is not protected expression under the Charter.

In 2014 the Stephen Harper government amended the Criminal Code via the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act* to stop the unauthorized distribution of intimate images and other forms of "cyber-bullying". Passed over the objections of the NDP, [the new law](#) included provisions criminalizing so-called "revenge porn", in which someone shares intimate images or videos of another adult or teenager online without their consent. The law included complementary legislative amendments to facilitate removing such images from the Internet.

Because videos can be uploaded to porn sites without any proof of consent from those depicted, however, revenge porn victims may not even be aware they are

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on public display and being “monetized” through in-site ads. Even when the videos are discovered, it can be a lengthy process before they are removed, [if at all](#).

But vastly more damaging than revenge porn is actual human trafficking, usually of women, ripped or lured from their homes and transported surreptitiously, often across continents or oceans, to be handed off to their new exploiters. Globally, reported human trafficking has been [increasing in recent years](#), with over 25,000 cases in 2016 alone. The vast majority is for sexual exploitation. The RCMP [has estimated](#) that 600-800 people are trafficked into Canada annually and an additional 1,500-2,200 are trafficked through Canada into the United States. In response, in 2012 the Harper government established the [National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking](#), and in 2019 the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking launched Canada’s [first National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) for tip-reporting and crisis management.

The latest attempts at directly targeting human trafficking into Canada may help combat sexual exploitation that occurs in online pornography. [In May](#), Alberta Premier Jason Kenney formed a new provincial task force to halt human trafficking in the province, while recognizing that sexual exploitation occurs in Alberta against people of all ages, ethnicities and genders. Country music star Paul Brandt,

“While this is very hard to imagine, it’s even more inconceivable that it happens here in Alberta, but it does.” Other provinces and the federal government could benefit by following suit.

What Can We Do? Lessons from Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States

Other English-speaking countries have been more willing to grapple directly with online pornography. Australia has adopted an [uncompromisingly tough anti-pornography policy](#). There, the Internet is governed under the country’s *Broadcasting Services Amendment Act of 1999* (BSA). The BSA’s complaint-based regime requires domestic data servers hosting objectionable content to remove the material upon receipt of a takedown notice distributed by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), the government regulatory agency responsible for evaluating complaints from Internet users within the country. Under the BSA’s definitions, all pornographic content falls into a prohibited category, making it an offence for Australian Internet service providers (ISPs) even to host such content.

Canada might wish to steer away from Australia’s clear and seemingly comprehensive censorship approach, however. First, it would be unlikely to

to offshore servers, where little can be done about it even if the ACMA makes a complaint to overseas law enforcement agencies.

Efforts to restrict access to Internet pornography in the United States have proved mostly fruitless. Analogous to the situation in Canada, this is predominately due to jurisprudence, namely interpretation of the Constitution’s First Amendment guarantee of free speech.

The U.S. Congress has, however, [achieved some success](#) in requiring record-keeping by pornographers in order to protect young individuals and other victims from being exploited during production, passing the *Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act* in 1988. It covers both “original” and “secondary producers” of pornography, which have been interpreted to include those who manage computer sites or services that feature pornographic content. They must retain records demonstrating that all performers were over 18. Despite constitutional challenges, the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeal in 2009 held the regulations to be constitutional and the Supreme Court declined to hear the case.

The U.S. approach might provide a workable and Charter-proof avenue for Canada. Here, individuals currently require only an e-mail address to create an online porn account at sites like

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who earlier this year [publicly dedicated his life to combating human trafficking](#), was named task force chair. “Human trafficking is an issue without borders, with perpetrators secretly victimizing the lives of others for profits, which their victims never see,” Brandt stated upon his appointment.

withstand a Charter challenge. Second, even if it did survive, it would not likely be effective. [Opponents of Australia’s legislative scheme rightly point out](#) the legislation’s jurisdictional weakness. It practically compels Australian pornographers to move their content

Pornhub, upon which they can commence posting content without any verification. Requiring companies such as MindGeek – the privately-owned company that owns Pornhub along with many other “adult” websites and production companies – to keep a catalogue of identification for

the individuals in videos they host could dissuade them from hosting questionable content.

The United Kingdom currently has three measures to regulate or restrict access to online pornography. Like Canada, the country criminalizes violent or “[extreme pornography](#)”. It requests that ISPs engage in self-regulation to [web-block illegal pornographic content](#). And it requires online streaming services to comply with [film classification regulations](#) that block access to content deemed unacceptable. Unacceptable content includes depictions of “age play” (in which one or more parties pretend or appear to be under-age), which might encourage incest or sex with children, portrayal of sexual activity involving a real or apparent lack of consent, and penetration by any object likely to cause physical harm.

The UK recently attempted to move beyond the self-regulatory model through its [Digital Economy Act 2017](#). Passed under Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May, it aimed to address longstanding public concern about the availability of pornography to children and the related long-term harm. Among its provisions were requiring commercial porn sites to implement age-verification systems for users and to block non-complying material. This established a general rule that Internet pornography should not be made available to UK residents without a mechanism to prohibit access to persons under 18. The provision was to be enforced

by an age-verification regulator designated by the Secretary of State.

[The Digital Economy Act came under withering criticism](#), however, with the Conservatives being accused of going too far in allegedly censoring the Internet. After Boris Johnson became Prime Minister last year, the government announced it would drop the new law’s key provisions.

Conclusion

Concerns about jurisdictional challenges, opposition to Internet censorship, the sheer popularity and monetary impact of porn and, perhaps, popular embarrassment at being thought socially out-of-step have made it difficult to deal with the problems of online pornography. With the exception of a few individual Conservative legislators, such as Alberta MP [Arnold Viersan](#), and former Manitoba [MP Joy Smith](#), who currently heads the [Joy Smith Foundation](#) to combat human trafficking, exploitation and abuse, Canadian politicians are mostly turning a blind eye to sexual exploitation occurring in our communities and online. As a starting point, concerned MPs should introduce regulations (if need be, as private members), including increased record-keeping requirements, for online porn distributors, while continuing to combat sexual trafficking and violence. In doing so, our communities could become safer and the horrific human toll could be reduced.

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Lonely voices: Alberta MP Arnold Viersan and former Manitoba MP Joy Smith want anti-human trafficking policies with real teeth.

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