



Reasoning with Ethics

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Ethics in action creates character.

Use this blog to:

1. Lead class discussions in social studies, civics, ethics or advisory classes.
2. Teach students skills to analyze cases with core ethical values.
3. Recognize skills in support of SEE's Tri-Factor Model of ethical functioning.

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Porn, Public Health & Choice

An online debate took place recently, mostly among conservative and libertarian writers, that ultimately included a letter from Princeton Professor Robert George to U.S. Attorney General William Barr in January. In that letter, Dr. George requested the Department of Justice begin to enforce existing obscenity laws to resist youth access to pornography. This placed Prof. George in the camp of those who would like to see government restrictions on porn versus those who do not want the government to intervene in what they perceived is a personal choice issue.

In an interview with National Review, Dr. George elaborated on his public request by noting, “it’s just impossible to claim that porn is harmless..., or that it is a purely private matter that has no impact on public interests... We know that the pornography business is built on the exploitation of women, often the trafficking of women into a form of sexual slavery. We know that pornography addiction is a huge problem with massive social consequences. So porn is a public-health and public-safety issue...and what we need are ordinary laws to regulate it...”

There is research that notes the correlational relationship between the viewing of porn and youth (particularly boys) increase in permissive sexual attitudes and casual sexual encounters, aggressive sexual activity, anti-social behavior, and decreases in self-concept and body image.

Libertarians and many liberals resist the idea of government interventions on pornography. They are concerned about increasing government power over individuals' choices. Those arguing for the government to re-regulate pornography cite the concerns of Dr. George and the harm to public health, with a specific focus on youth and women.

SEE requests students to reflect on the ethical question, should the government regulate pornography? What core values demonstrate a libertarian view (little or no regulation) and what core values are demonstrated if obscenity laws are enforced to restrict the availability of pornography?

Link to letter from Prof. George-- <https://americanprinciplesproject.org/media/professor-robert-george-asks-department-of-justice-answers-anti-porn-laws/>
National Review Interview with Robert George -- <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/01/the-case-for-wielding-obscenity-laws-against-online-pornography/>
National Institutes of Health. Adolescents and pornography: A review of 20 Years of research <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27105446>
Journal of Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 2012, The Impact of Internet Pornography on Adolescents: A Review of the Research -- [http://www2.psych.utoronto.ca/users/tafarodi/psy427/articles/Owens%20et%20al.%20\(2012\).pdf](http://www2.psych.utoronto.ca/users/tafarodi/psy427/articles/Owens%20et%20al.%20(2012).pdf)
AP Story noting states recognizing porn as public health crisis-- <https://apnews.com/9c91cfd28a7b461b87948f36117a432e>
Anti-Porn Resources-- <https://fightthenewdrug.org/3-reasons-why-watching-porn-is-harmful/>

