

## **Attitudes Toward Pornography and Characteristics Attributed to Pornography Actors**

Jennee A. Evans-DeCicco, and Gloria Cowan  
*Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, March 2001

Synopsis written by Rus Ervin Funk, MSW  
Center for Women and Families, Louisville, KY

This article examines how one's attitudes about pornography impacted their attitudes towards male and female pornography actors. Although little is known about the actual motivation and attributes of the actors in pornography, there is much mythology surrounding these actors. This research aimed to determine the degree to which a person's views towards pornography impacted their attitudes on the actors in pornography.

165 university students were surveyed (63% women and 37% men). The age range was 18 – 48 with a mean of just over 21. 43% were European American, 12% were African American, 10% were Asian American, 27% were Latino, and 3% were Native American. Using two scales created by the authors (the Attitudes Towards Pornography Scale, and the Beliefs About Pornography Actors Scale), the authors examined the views of these students and explored the interaction between attitudes towards pornography and work motivation of pornography actors. The specific motivations for male and female actors were identical, although assessed separately. The motivations included: "coerced into work," "like the work," "lack of alternative employment opportunities," "for the money," "fulfilling fantasy," and "sexual liberation." These six possible motivations were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from not at all to very.

### **RESULTS**

Attitudes towards pornography had a main effect on the overall beliefs about both female and male pornography actors, with anti-pornography attitudes associated with more negative views of pornography actors. Female pornography actors were not viewed significantly more negatively than male actors; however the authors did find a "significant interaction" between participant gender and the gender of the actor. Female participants rated male pornography actors more positively than female pornography actors; where male participants rated both female and male actors equally.

In general, the women participants had a more negative attitude toward pornography than did men. However, those attitudes towards pornography were found to be unrelated to the perceived motivations for male and female pornography actors. Attitudes toward pornography were found to be negatively related to the belief that women are coerced into pornography. There were differences found between the perceived motivations of male vs. female pornography actors, with female pornography actors perceived to be more motivated by coercion, and because they need the money; whereas male pornography actor were perceived to be motivated because they like the work, are fulfilling a fantasy, and/or for sexual liberation. Male pornography actors were

perceived to be motivated by positive factors where as female actors were perceived to be motivated by negative factors.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings suggest that one's attitude toward pornography does influence perceptions and attributions about pornography actors, although, as the authors note, other factors may also influence these beliefs. There were gender differences found – both about male and female actors as well as by the male and female participants. These differences are worthy of further exploration and study. And while women tended to view female pornography actors more negatively than male actors, both women and men assumed that women actors are more likely to be coerced, to come from homes where they were physically or sexually abused, and are teenage runaways.

## **COMMENTARY**

This research project examines some unexplored questions about the relationship of gender, attitudes towards pornography and perceptions about pornography actors. The data was a bit confusing as it is unclear what is meant by “negative” views of pornography actors. The implications of this research are also helpful in examining educational programs about pornography – and ones that more accurately depict the realities of pornography actors; which this research suggests, may have an impact on their views on pornography and perhaps, their use thereof.

As the authors themselves state, “...a more effective way of evaluating the pornography industry would be to focus on the effects that it has on the large society, rather than the personality and motivational variables of the individuals who are paid to act in it.”