

## “Third Person Effect and Internet Pornography in China”

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The present study investigates predictors of Chinese perceptions of Internet pornography, using TPE theory. Although the web opens a window for people to search for information and entertainment, online platforms have greatly increased public access to pornography (e.g., Lee & Tamborini, 2005). The sexual materials account for a large proportion of circulated Internet flow (Wu, 2009; Liang & Lu, 2012; O’Donnell & Milner, 2007). Unlike Western democratic nations-- where the distribution of sexual materials is protected by freedom of expression laws and commercial interests-- in China, the distribution of pornographic materials is illegal (Lo et al., 2013).

Davison (1983) first proposed the TPE hypothesis to explicate how people perceive the media’s influence to be greater on others than it is one’s self. The gaps between self and others perception were found to be significant in a variety of contexts, such as political news, violent media content, video games and the advertisements (Scharer & Leone, 2006). The current study explores the validity of this TPE perceptual component in the greater Chinese college student population, utilizing a wider range of locales than past work. In addition, the present study investigates predictors of Chinese perceptions of Internet pornography, using TPE theory. We focus, in particular, on the impact of social distance, perceived sex knowledge, perceived feminism, perceived sexual conservatism, perceived collectivism and frequency of pornography exposure on third-person judgments. These TPE perceptual dynamics are further examined in relation to pro-censorship behaviors.

The data was collected in an online survey following a snowball sampling process among current Chinese undergraduate and graduate students in February, 2014. After dropping invalid responses, we had 533 respondents who drawn from 30 of the 34 total provinces in China. These 533 respondents include 302 undergraduate students and 231 graduate students.

Using the paired t-test and ordered logistic regression analysis, the results indicated a significant difference between the perceived effects on self and others. Respondents perceive greater effects of Internet pornography on others than on self. Second, the study confirmed the theoretical linkage between perceived effects on others and respondent support for censorship of pornography. People perceive greater negative effects of Internet pornography on others are more likely to support for censorship of pornography. Third, study results revealed that the self-others perceptual gap was influenced by social distance between self and others, perceived feminism and perceived sexual conservatism (See the table below). The statistical findings indicate that the closer social distance between self and others, the smaller self-others perceptual gap; the people with greater perceived feminism and perceived sexual conservatism are more likely to perceive greater self-others gap.

In short, this study gains insight on the antecedents of TPE, providing support on the validity of TPE in the context of Internet pornography in China.

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