

# Attitudes Towards Prostitution Among Males: A “Consumers’ Report”

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The basic attitudes toward prostitution of 140 men who have used prostitutes were examined in relation to several descriptive characteristics, as well as to MMPI-2 results for a subgroup of these men. The attitudes were assessed by subscales of the *Attitudes Toward Prostitution Scale (ATPS)*—Inaccurate Beliefs about Prostitution, Social/Legal Acceptance of Prostitution, Personal Acceptance of the Prostitute, and Negative Beliefs about Prostitution. Older and more educated participants were less likely than younger and less educated men to believe inaccurate “myths” about prostitution and more likely to indicate support that prostitution should be decriminalized. Curiously, only one-third of the men who used a prostitute reported they enjoyed sex with her, and 57 percent reported they had tried to stop use. The use of alcohol or drugs may be an important risk factor, as 29 percent of the men reported they used alcohol proximate to prostitution use. MMPI-2 results for a subgroup of men suggested that significant psychopathology may exist in as much as one-third of men arrested for prostitution use. Our results suggest “johns” are a heterogeneous group and that further research is needed to guide intervention efforts and to differentiate subtypes of men who use prostitutes.

Prostitution has been investigated and discussed in the professional literature and debated as a public policy issue for many years. The majority of the empirical research has focused on female prostitutes—the seller’s side of the market (Weiner, 1996)—and their social and economic circumstances (Sawyer, Rosser & Schroeder, 1998). Only a few studies have addressed the buyer’s side of the market (i.e., customers) (Freund & Leonard, 1991; McKeganey, 1994; Sawyer, Rosser and Schroeder, 1998; Morse, Simon, Balson, & Osofsky, 1992). Two of these studies (Freund & Leonard, 1991; Morse, Simon, Balson & Osofsky, 1992) focused on condom use with prostitutes. One (Holzman & Pines, 1982) studied “johns” (customers) from a descriptive or phenomenological perspective.

Other studies have focused on demographic characteristics, such as those which