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Star Power and Acting Out Behaviour: Do Swelled Heads Cause Inappropriate Behavior or is it Just Who these People Really Are Deep Down?

*World Divided over Nature of Acting out Politicians, Celebrities and
Movie Stars – and Tolerance, Forgiveness*

New York – So, just what's going on when a politician, celebrity or movie star, seemingly at the top of their game and with everything going for them, acts out in some strange or inappropriate behavior that causes them to literally self destruct?

Is it that the position of power or fawning fans that drive them to some new planet where they think they're allowed to do whatever they want because they think they can and get away with it, or that no-one will notice or care? Or is it that this inappropriate, and sometimes completely immoral, acting out is actually the real persona that's emerging in this Jekyll and Hyde moment?

A new poll of 18,722 adults (see full methodology below) conducted by global research company Ipsos for Reuters News finds half (54%) of world citizens agree that when sports celebrities, politicians or movie stars 'do something that is a personal embarrassment or causes personal shame or destruction', the explanation closest to the truth is 'that's just who they really are deep down.' The other half (46%) agree with the alternative view that 'power, influence and ego causes them to think that they can behave this way and get away with doing it.'



Residents of France appear to be the most convinced that positions of power lead to these sorts of behaviours – fully 80% agree with the ‘cause’ hypothesis. In Hungary, on the other hand, a similar proportion (78%) takes the alternative view that it is just ‘who they really are.’

Who They Are or What They’ve Become?

When asked to consider sports celebrities, politicians or movie stars who ‘do something that is a personal embarrassment or causes personal shame or destruction’, as reported ‘almost every day in the news’. These behaviours include ‘getting caught having sex with another person even though they are married, or taking photos of their body and sending it to other people with sexually explicit messages, or by inappropriate sex acts or relationships’.

The poll finds that half (54%) of global citizens agree ‘these types of people do these sort of things because that's just who they really are deep down as individuals and they believe they can get away with doing it, not because of any power, influence or ego they may have.’

The other half (46%), alternatively, agree ‘these types of people do these sort of things because the power, influence and ego causes them to think that they can behave this way and get away with doing it and it's not really what they are truly like as individuals deep down’.

Despite the global stalemate on the issue, there is definitive belief in France; four in five (80%) say power and influence causes the inappropriate behaviour. After France, agreement with this point of view is highest in Belgium (64%), Germany (62%), China (57%) and South Africa (52%).

There are clear national position-takers on the other side as well. Four in five (78%)



Hungarians agree the acts represent 'who they really are'. Seven in ten (68%) of those in Japan feel this way, followed by Poland (63%), Russia (62%), Great Britain (61%) and Indonesia (60%).

Forgive and Forget?

Global citizens as a whole are split not only on what causes these morally inappropriate behaviours, but also on how tolerant and forgiving they'd be. Respondents were asked to assess how they would feel if, in their own country, 'a major politician got caught doing something that was said to be sexually or morally inappropriate but not criminal.'

Just over half (56%) agree they would **not** be likely to be tolerant and forgiving – one in five (21%) expecting they would be 'not at all likely' and a third (35%) 'not very likely'. The other half (44%) expect they **would** be likely to be tolerant and forgiving. Only one in ten (11%) agree they would be 'very likely' to feel this way and 33% 'somewhat likely'. The world may be split but the intensity of views is stronger on the less tolerant side.

Japan is the country surveyed that has taken the strongest stance on the issue with seven in ten (72%) believing they would not be tolerant and forgiving. Hungary (69%) and South Korea (69%) follow with Indonesia (68%) and France (66%) are most likely to say they would not be likely to forgive.

The most forgiving of the countries surveyed appear to be Mexico (57%), Belgium (55%), Argentina (54%), Australia (53%) and Spain (52%), though there is not a strong majority in any of these countries.

Interestingly, those who own a business (49%) and those who are considered to be senior executives or decision makers in their company (49%) are more likely to expect



they would be forgiving than those who do not own a business (43%) or hold these positions of influence (43%). Could their own positions of power be driving them to take a more sympathetic stance?

More Men than Women?

Respondents were asked to assess the gender hypothesis: 'it seems nowadays that more men than women who are in the public eye get caught doing something eliciting or morally questionable.'

The global response was another impasse: half (51%) think the theory closest to the truth is that 'just as many women in the public eye actually do these types of things but don't get caught or reported.' The other half (49%) think the proposition that 'more men than women in the public eye actually do these things' is more likely to be true.

There appears to be the most definitive belief on this issue in Russia, where seven in ten (73%) agree just as many women do these things but don't get caught. After Russia, those most likely to think this way are in Germany (63%), Argentina (61%), Hungary (59%), China (58%) and South Africa (58%).

Support for the alternative view, that in fact more men actually do these things, is highest in Indonesia (63%), Sweden (61%), France (58%), Spain (56%) and Japan (56%).

Interestingly, there is disagreement among the genders on this point. Men are more likely (55%) than women (47%) to agree that just as many women engage in these behaviours. Women, on the other hand, are more likely (53%) than men (45%) to agree that more men actually engage in these behaviours.

The survey instrument is conducted monthly in 24 countries via the Ipsos Online Panel system. The countries reporting herein are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China,



France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States of America. Note that QCW2. cause/who they are was not asked in Saudi Arabia and QCW4. Tolerance and forgiveness was not asked in China. An international sample of 18,722 adults aged 18-64 in the US and Canada, and age 16-64 in all other countries, were interviewed between July 5th and July 18th, 2011. Approximately 1000+ individuals participated on a country by country basis with the exception of Argentina, Indonesia, Mexico, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Russia and Turkey, where each have a sample 500+. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to the most recent country Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points for a sample of 1,000 and an estimated margin of error of +/- 4.5 percentage points for a sample of 500 19 times out of 20 per country of what the results would have been had the entire population of the specifically aged adults in that country been polled.

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For more information on this news release, please contact:

John Wright

Senior Vice President and Managing Director

Public Opinion Polling, Ipsos Public Affairs

Tel: (416) 324-2002

Mobile: (416) 919-2101



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