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Body Alterations: Tattoos

Conversation starters, job stoppers, and permanent accessories are all words used to describe tattoos. They can grab strangers' attention and universally vary in meaning to each person who gets them. Tattoos are becoming more of a phenomenon now than ever, and their acceptance is constantly changing. According to Pew Research Center.com, "32% of Americans have a tattoo, including 22% who have more than one" (Pew). This citation says that roughly 53% of all Americans have one or more tattoos, showcasing that tattoos are becoming more common now than ever. And that is why we decided to explore tattoos for this project.

For our group project, we created a survey asking various questions about tattoos and how people generally felt about them. Through this survey, we wanted to determine if those with tattoos are more likely to believe the acceptance of tattoos is evolving, while those without tattoos are more prone to judge those who do have them. We received ample responses that will be discussed later in this group paper. By creating and sending out our survey, we can reach a generalized conclusion about the stance of multiple generations and genders with varying backgrounds and morals. We explored so much more throughout this survey, which will be discussed later in this paper.

Literature review: Maggie Graham

Just like every communication study or scholarly phenomenon, for this group research project, we explored other communication scholars and their studies to see if we could find something similar to our study, and here is what we found as a group.

One example of a similar study was by *The Social Science Journal*. This scholarly journal and platform did surveys that were formed around tattoo prejudice. The first survey had to do with the number of tattoos an individual had. The article states ***“that the more tattoos an individual had, the more stigmatized they felt”*** (The Social Science Journal). This citation says that when the individual felt more stigma, they would cover their tattoos more often and even get them removed in some cases. In another study done by *The Social Science Journal*, they interviewed college students. One hundred ninety-six of these college students were tattooed, while the other 257 were not.

When interviewing them, they found that if the students had friends or family who had tattoos or were tattooed, they felt less stigma around those with tattoos. They added that the only stigma that tended to show itself was different health risks or amounts of pain due to getting tattoos. “I’ve gotten in so many arguments with people over tattoos, ‘Why would you get that many?’ or ‘Why would you get them on your face?’ I’m like, ‘Why do you wear jewelry? Why do you buy rings?’ ‘Well, you can take those off.’ I’m like, ‘So? I don’t want to take mine off,’” Long stated.

The subsequent study not only showed how more Americans were getting or had tattoos but also concluded that females are more stigmatized than males when it comes to having tattoos. If females had tattoos, they were often seen as ***“more promiscuous, as being heavy drinkers,***

less attractive, less caring, less intelligent, and less honest" (The Social Science Journal).

Overall, this study showed that even though tattoos are becoming normalized, those who get them are still being seen through a negative lens. Also, in this study, those with tattoos judged others with tattoos like a non tattooed person did, which was not what the hypothesis predicted. These two studies paved the way for our group project, and these two bone-chilling studies made our group want to explore this phenomenon on our own. They inspired us to go after this topic we were all passionate about.

Design: Ashley Berghorst

For our group project, we found the design of our study to be simple but effective. Our group knew from the start that we wanted to experiment with tattoos. From there, we created specific questions and reviewed each as a group to ensure they would be powerful assets to our study. The questions ranged from *"How many tattoos do you have?"* to *"What is your stance on tattoos?"* We asked roughly eight powerful questions about tattoos and four bonus questions for backup questions. We then published our survey using Google Forms and spent two weeks sending, sharing, posting, and networking our survey to a wide demographic of people aged 18 and up.

Our group created this powerful survey that we sent out to family, friends, peers, etc... With the survey only open for a couple of days, there were 150 plus responses gathered. This survey gave respondents the option to give detailed paragraph answers and open-ended answers that gave the respondents a chance to voice their own opinions, as well as some multiple-choice options. This was a knockout of the park for us as a group, as we could dig deeper into the diverse data collected. This ample amount of responses made it easier for us to sort, collect,

organize, and make graphics and other visual aids for our group presentation. The findings left us shocked and surprised, which will be discussed in the next section of this group research paper.

Findings: Brandon Cominsky

After expiring this survey after two weeks of collecting responses, we found shocking results as a group. For starters, we found that of all 150 plus collected responses, roughly **64.6%** or 104 respondents from our survey claim to have a tattoo. At the same time, roughly **35.4%** or 57 respondents claim not to have a tattoo. These numbers showcase that tattoos are becoming more commonly inserted on individuals' skin and that more people are getting tattoos now than ever. And only 57 people in our overall survey and study claimed not having a tattoo and not wanting one as a whole. These numbers were surprisingly higher than we anticipated as we asked individuals aged 18 and older, and we still found that most of our respondents had a tattoo or were seeking to get one as a whole.

Another interesting finding was that roughly **78.8%** of all survey respondents claim to have anywhere from 0-5 tattoos. This number surprised me as I expected a significantly lower number of tattoos an individual would seek. The remaining percentages were people with 5+ tattoos on their bodies. These percentages were significantly higher than we expected as a group, and we downplayed the amount of tattoos and visuals we encounter daily, which may have on their bodies as a whole. Also, roughly **67.7%** of all respondents in our survey say that their tattoos have a meaning behind them. At the same time, **32.3%** of respondents claim to have a tattoo for another purpose or reason. I anticipated that only half of our respondents would have a tattoo with a significant meaning. I expected more respondents to have a silly or dumb tattoo. However, most of our respondents claimed to have a tattoo that has a personal meaning to them

or that their tattoos are significant. As a group, we were personally surprised by these statistics from our study, and we all expected lower percentages across the board. These numbers showed us that no matter how silly a tattoo may look on the outside, there is still the underlying possibility that the tattoo has a special meaning for its silliness and that we may be too quick to judge tattoos.

Something else that stood out to us as a group was that **72.7%** of respondents in our survey who do not have a tattoo claim that they love tattoos. While **23%** of non-tattoo-seeking individuals claim they have no preference for them. These numbers surprised us as a group as we expected people to have at least some judge's perceptions or personal negative beliefs about tattoos. We expected more individuals to have a negative connotation to tattoos. However, after our study and survey, we found that most respondents love tattoos, while 23% did not care for or against tattoos and did not mind them.

These numbers showcased that tattoos are often perceived negatively through social media and media outlets and that most people in our survey didn't mind them. And roughly 98.1% (158) of all survey respondents felt the acceptance of tattoos is evolving. At the same time, **1.9%** (3) felt that accepting tattoos is not evolving. These numbers show us that even individuals without tattoos feel that the acceptance of tattoos is evolving as a whole and that no matter if you have a tattoo or you do not, most of our respondents felt that the acceptance and evolution of tattoos are increasing daily.

Reflection: Brandon Cominsky

After conducting our group's two-week study, we all agreed that the overall methodology could be improved. We could have included some visual components other than quantitative

data, like personal interviews with visuals with or without tattoos, to add another level of depth and research to this overall presentation. We could have included more research methods other than surveys to create a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to make our presentation more defined and detailed. A blended presentation could have been an excellent aspect to have included in our overall research.

Another thing we could have done differently in our study was to include specific age demographics. We could have asked individuals what their ages were to collect media ages and figure out the average age at which individuals got their first tattoo to add a more shocking factor to the presentation if it was younger than 18. We could have also asked teenagers aged 16-17 how they felt about tattoos, and we could have also used this teenage demographic in our study. We could have included minors in the age frame of 16-17 to add a new factor to our study of how minors perceive tattoos as a whole.

One final thing that could have been done differently would be to include more visual aids other than pie charts. Adding a word cloud or including more memorable quotes could have added an excellent visual component to the presentation and could have left the audience shocked reading certain words about how people feel about tattoos. Including more visual components could have been good to ensure the audience we were presenting to could also understand the content on a deeper level.

Conclusion: Lexi Ryan

After the findings of our study, we as a group concluded that our hypothesis was semi-correct. Our hypothesis was half correct and half wrong because it was demonstrated that those who do not have tattoos do not judge others for having tattoos but instead judge the placements of their

tattoos as a whole. Also, according to the survey, the majority of those who do not have tattoos end up appreciating tattoos and believe that the acceptance of tattoos is evolving. After the findings of this study, we have learned that both groups of individuals, the ones with and without tattoos, feel that tattoos, in general, are evolving and being more accepted as a whole. And that tattoos are becoming a more common phenomenon now than ever before as a whole.

Works Cited

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