

Tattoo Time:

A Comparison of Elderly and Middle-Aged Women with Tattoos

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Tattoo Time

Numerous studies have been conducted on women and tattoos. Some of the factors examined have been credibility, attractiveness, promiscuity, tattoo style and age. However, regarding age, not all age categories have been explored. For example, the studies reviewed for this paper did not compare middle-aged women to elderly women. This paper will review three studies and discuss a research proposal examining the perception college age students have of women with tattoos, specifically middle-aged and elderly women.

In a study conducted by the University of Liverpool, a research team studied perceptions of women with tattoos in areas of attractiveness, promiscuity and alcohol consumption versus untattooed women (Swami & Furnham, 2007). The team did not form a hypothesis based on earlier studies but Swami and Furnham believed evidence would show that women with tattoos would be rated as less attractive, more promiscuous and more likely to drink in excess compared to women without tattoos. The average age of the participants was 19 years with 84 women and 76 men making up the sample. The stimuli they chose to use was a line drawing of an average sized female body that was manipulated by using a graphics design program. They created two images of Caucasian women wearing a two-piece swimsuit; one with blonde hair and one with brunette hair. Participants were asked to rate the images on a Likert type scale on how physically attractive, how likely the woman is promiscuous and the number of drinks the woman consumed on an average night out. Swami and Furnham found that women with tattoos are less attractive, more promiscuous and consumed more alcohol compared to women without tattoos supporting their beliefs. This study pertains to my research proposal because it confirmed that women with tattoos are judged more negatively than women without tattoos; however, it does not address the

age of women. A later study conducted by a Florida university looked at the age of women with tattoos.

Research conducted by the University of Central Florida examined the perceptions held of tattooed women by college age students (Musambira, Raymond & Hastings, 2016). The research team hypothesized that 1) older and younger women with tattoos are deemed less credible than without tattoos, 2) younger and older women with masculine tattoos are deemed less attractive than women with feminine tattoos and 3) women with tattoos are deemed more promiscuous than women without tattoos. Musambira et al. conducted a between-subjects 2x3 experimental design and used a Likerty-type scale to measure respondents' responses for all the dependent variables, credibility, attractiveness and promiscuity. Musambira et al. selected models that were similar in height, weight and appearance and images with tattoos were digitally inserted. Lighting, background, clothing choices and poses were also the same for each model. For credibility, they found that tattoo style (masculine versus feminine) was a factor and both women with tattoos were less credible than without a tattoo. However, the younger woman with a feminine tattoo was viewed more credible than if she had a masculine style tattoo. Additionally, no tattoos were perceived as most credible for both models which supported their hypothesis. The older woman with a masculine tattoo was deemed less attractive than with a feminine tattoo, however the younger woman with a masculine tattoo was not rated as less attractive, partially supporting their hypothesis. For promiscuity, the hypothesis was partially supported; the younger woman was rated as more promiscuous with tattoos than without, however the older woman was not rated as more promiscuous with or without tattoos. Overall, the results of the study support a having a tattoo and tattoo style matters in the perception of

older women's credibility, attractiveness and promiscuity. This article relates to the Tattoo Time proposal because it shows that age makes a difference in the perception of women with tattoos.

A Canadian study examined undergraduate students' attitudes towards women with tattoos. Hawkes, Senn and Thorn (2004) hypothesized that men would evaluate women with tattoos more negatively than women rated them and that larger, visible tattoos on women would garner the most negative responses. Hawkes et al. conducted a between-subjects design experimental study with 268 participants. The independent variables were size of tattoo and visibility of tattoo, the dependent variable was the level of negative attitude and the control stimulus was "no tattoo". Participants were separated into groups and given packets that contained instructions, descriptions, questionnaires and were asked to read a base description of a woman's appearance and scenario and then answer questionnaires on what they read. Hawkes et al. found that men without tattoos held the most negative opinions and that the size of visibility of tattoos garnered the most negative views confirming their hypothesis. This study provided confirmation that visibility of tattoos and gender affect perceptions of women with tattoos, however it was an age neutral design.

I expect to find that college age students will view elderly women with tattoos more positively than middle-aged women with tattoos. Women age 35-59 are raising families, in the workforce and not quite eligible for retirement and subject to harsh judgement for having tattoos compared to younger and elderly women. Women under 35 and elderly women over 60, I believe are at an age where they can be more carefree, potentially have less responsibility and are more easily accepted by society for self-expression in the form of body modifications.

Method

Participants

Participants for this study will be recruited from Angelo State University utilizing the SONA system, an on-line research management tool that is available to the university psychology students. The target recruitment goal is 100 full or part-time students that will receive extra credit in exchange for their participation. Participants will sign up for the study through SONA. The data collect on participants will be kept confidential as directed by law and university policy.

Design

This study seeks to determine whether college students perceive older women with tattoos more positively than middle-aged women with tattoos or more negatively. This research project is an experimental study with the age of the women and tattoo status as the independent variables. A within-subjects design will be used with level of positive or negative perception as the dependent variable. The control variable is images of the models without tattoos. I chose to do a within-subjects design to see how the same individuals respond to the same stimuli. Due to the small sample size, the within-subjects design holds greater statistical power.

Stimuli

A series of images featuring women in two age categories with and without tattoos will be presented in a PowerPoint presentation. All images are of Caucasian women with tattoos varying in style, size and location on the upper torso. The two age categories are elderly women over 60 and middle age women between 35-59. There are six images for each age group with three images having no tattoos and three images with tattoos. The tattoos are all in color and located either on the arms or upper chest. All images are from Google using the 'free image to use and share' feature.

Measures

A 14-item 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) will be created and used for the questionnaires. The questionnaires are to assess levels of positive or negative responses. Examples of questions include *I think this person is responsible*, *I think this person has strong morals* and *I think this person is impulsive*. Demographic information for age, gender and race/ethnicity will be collected on all participants to describe the participant sample. Additionally, demographic information can be beneficial for future researchers searching for potential correlations including race and ethnicity.

Procedure

This study will be conducted in the Angelo State University testing lab located on campus. Each participant will be greeted upon arrival at the testing lab and they will be asked to silence and stow away cellphones if they have one. Next, participants will be thanked, asked to sign a consent form and if they have any questions to be answered before getting started with the study. After questions are answered and consent forms are signed, questionnaires will be passed out to the participants. I will verbally instruct the participants that they will have 60 seconds to view each image and to answer a series of questions on each one. Participants will also be instructed not to discuss the images or questions during the study. In order to ensure confidentiality, participants will be asked to place their completed surveys in a folder after they have reviewed all the images and answered the questionnaires for each one. The folder will be located on a table at the exit of the lab. A debriefing sheet describing the type of research, the goal of the study and how to learn more regarding the results of the study will be available at the lab exit for the participants to take at the conclusion of the study. Additionally, the debriefing form will provide contact information for the supervising faculty member for this research project.

Expected Results

This study seeks to determine whether elderly women with tattoos are perceived more positively than middle-aged women with tattoos by college-aged students. Since this study is a within-subjects design, I plan to use a paired-samples t-test to determine the scores. I predict that elderly women will have significantly more positive ratings than middle-aged women. The independent variable being manipulated in this study is the age of the women (35-59 and 60+) (two levels) and tattoo status (two levels). The continuous dependent variable this study will measure is the perception levels for 1) older women with tattoos, 2) older women without tattoos, 3) younger women with tattoos and 4) younger women without tattoos. The control variable is the images of women without tattoos. Higher scores on the survey questions indicate more positive feelings except for two reverse-coded questions.

Discussion

I predict the results of this study will find that elderly women with tattoos are viewed more positively than middle-aged women with tattoos. The results I expect will show a significant p value. The implications I expect as a result of this study is that it will show that middle-aged women continue to have social stereotypes about how they should look. Previous research has shown that women are judged more negatively for having tattoos compared to men. However, the younger women with tattoos are typically viewed more favorably than the older women with tattoos. As tattooing has grown in popularity, women find themselves in a world where getting tattoos are more common, but the stigma has not changed. Because middle-aged women and the expectations society has of them are more negative in general, it is important to further investigate the perceptions of women with tattoos to better understand and overcome the negative stereotypes prevalent in our society.

References

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