Effects of Body Art on Perceived Deviancy

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Abstract

This study will measure the effect of body art (tattoos and piercings) on individuals and their perceived deviancy by others. The students majoring in psychology will be randomly assigned to a group based on the time they signed up on Longwood University’s Sona-system. The independent variable of this study will be the presence of body art on the individual. All participants will experience one of the two levels of the independent variable; the first level will be a photo showing a male with no body art and the second level will be the same individual with body art. All participants will view one of the two photos for 30 seconds. After viewing the photo, the participants will fill out a Likert scale questionnaire asking how likely they believe the individual is to participate in the four deviant activities listed: binge drinking, cheating in class, stealing from others and participating in unprotected sex. This scale will range from very unlikely to very likely. The dependent variable in this study is the perceived deviancy of the individual. I hypothesize that the majority of the participants viewing the photo showing the individual with body art will be viewed as more likely to engage in deviant activities than compared to the image showing the same individual without body art. My finding will support that individuals with body art are more likely to be perceived to partake in deviant activities.

Effects of Body Art on Perceived Deviancy

There is an increasing amount of body art (ranging from tattoos to body piercings) on young adults in today’s society; it has become so common, it is now considered part of the social norm, whether you have one tattoo or piercing or multiple covering your body (Armstrong, Owen, Koch & Roberts, 2004). As once believed, tattoos are not just a way to signify religious beliefs or gang association; individuals use piercings and tattoos as a representation of self: a way to express themselves to the world around them.

Tattoos and body piercings were, and to some people, are still correlated to deviant behaviors. Past research shows that tattooed individuals are, in general, somewhat more likely to abuse alcohol, use illegal drugs, be arrested more often, have more sex partners, and engage in unprotected sexual intercourse with strangers than are those without a tattoo (Greif, Hewitt and Armstrong, 1999). This is not always the case; some individuals could use body art in respect to a loved one passing or to show remembrance of one (Anderson & Taylor, 2008), unaware that they are being stigmatized to a group seen as deviant. The likelihood that individuals obtain a tattoo or piercing in regards to social deviance is slim and uncommon. Tattoos are so much more than a desirable and decorative art; they tell the stories of individuals (Beeler, 2005). Because body art is becoming more common among younger individuals and seen more in today’s society, the connection linking body art to deviant activities is not as strong as past research once suggested.

Even with body art becoming increasingly more normative within young adults, there lays a stereotype somewhere between the amount of tattoos and piercings and one’s role in social deviancy. A single dolphin or rose on one’s ankle is seemingly benign and not especially rebellious compared to multiple tattoos or a fully tattooed sleeve or intimate piercings of the nipples or genitals (Koch & Roberts, 2007). While there are some who pierce their body and get a tattoo for no reason, there are also individuals out there who brand themselves to a group, to show belonging, to be part of something bigger than them, something that could or already have led to risky behaviors. By getting a tattoo, you are scarring your skin permanently. Most research shows that younger adults are more willing to put ink on their body than someone who is older (Burnside, 2013). Putting something on or in your body permanently is a risky behavior in itself because the probability of your young adolescent-self liking the same taste as the older-self is small and not likely. Past research advocates that adolescents who take part in deviant activities at a young age will continue to engage in such behavior even as the extremity of the act increases (Burger & Finkel, 2002). Burger and Finkel (2002) state that receiving a tattoo is a crucial step towards the direction of social deviancy. As previously stated, adolescents participating in a risky behavior such as getting a tattoo are more likely to continue to partake in risky behaviors and deviant activities than adolescents who do not receive a tattoo.

Former research indicated that college students with more than one body piercing were more likely to engage in risky behavior than those who never had piercings (Armstrong, Owen, Roberts, & Koch, 2004). The participants in this study were undergrad college students enrolled in an introductory sociology class. The researchers collected data from the students by using a descriptive survey research design such as a questionnaire. The results for this study showed that college students with piercings engaged in more risky behaviors such as weekly binge drinking and monthly marijuana use than those who did not have piercings. Previous data matches this with a somewhat related aspect that individuals with more than one piercing or tattoo shows a higher correlation to deviant behavior. So many young individuals today have their ears pierced or their nose pierced because of how they believe it makes them look, whether that signifies girly, edgy or just something wanted. It’s become so collective in the community around them that the link to social deviance and body art is decreasing more and more rapidly each year.

This study compares the effect of body art to the perceived deviancy of young adolescents. In past research, stated above, outcomes were different and the correlation between deviant behaviors and multiple tattoos or piercings made sense. In today’s society, it is a frequent sight anywhere you go that you will see someone with some form of body art, whether it be small like their ears pierced or something more obvious, like a tattoo sleeve. The purpose of this current study is to prove that body art is not just a link to social deviancy like once believed but a way of self-expression. The reasoning behind this study is to stop biasing towards tattoos and piercings; as unusual or uncommon as they appear, they do not always symbolize something harmful or wrong. Sociologists sometimes use their understanding of deviance to explain otherwise ordinary events such as tattooing and body piercing (Anderson & Taylor, 2008).Many researchers have done experiments to prove that deviancy is related to piercings and tattoos but all dated years earlier, before society changed its outlook on this controversial subject; it is possible this concept on corrupt behavior linked to body art has changed over time and evolved into something more relaxed to this day in age.

In this study, the experiment being conducted will test whether participants judge the photo of the individual as more likely or unlikely to participate in the four deviant activities: binge drinking, stealing, having unprotected sex, or cheating in class. The hypothesis being tested in this study is that the majority of people will still not understand the full meaning of body art and will continue to associate tattoos and piercings to a form of deviancy while the photo of the individual without piercings and tattoos will almost always receive “unlikely to participate” in the four deviant activities.

Although research suggests that society is becoming more lenient in seeing more forms of body art in the world it is still not acceptable in the work force; some occupations ask for you to cover your tattoos up or to take your nose piercing out because it’s not respectful looking and could turn potential patrons away. It is probable that these employers are just bias to their employee’s forms of body art because they are simply not used to it or because they would never get one their self. Adams (2009) states that history reveals that the labeling of behavior as deviant is contingent on the assessments and subsequent reactions of others; it is possible that these employers singly believe that their employee’s tattoos or piercings could represent past deviant behaviors in which case they’d want it covered up or because it makes them feel uncomfortable. The most evident reasoning behind their unawareness to their worker’s tattoos is because they are uninformed of the meaning behind it; they simply wish to just not see it. If more individuals were to focus on the meaning and not just assume that all forms of tattoos refer to negative concepts, the meaning behind body art as a whole would be more understanding and acceptable.

With each year, the normality in culture has the potential to change; society will not always stay constant. More changes are made and things that were once uncommon or infrequent become routine. Certain forms of body art are more acceptable than others but that is because they are either more common or people are more understanding and opening towards the meaning. Body art is not a subject that everyone will understand or participate in but it is becoming more apart of society each year that the relationship between body art and deviancy is not as strongly correlated as once believed.

**Method**

**Participants**

Thirty college students (18 women, 12men, *M*age = 19.3 years, age range: 17-22 years) will be recruited from Longwood University through an online signup system called Sona-System. The participants will all be psychology majors and will be compensated with one point of extra credit for each study they participate in. When finished with the studies, the teacher will then decide how the extra credit would count towards their final grade.

**Materials**

The stimuli will be two separate images of one individual; the first photo will show the individual with no body art and the second photo will show the same individual covered in body art. The materials used for this experiment will be a projector screen showing a picture of the individual with or without tattoos, a questionnaire asking how likely the individual is to participate in the four listed deviant activities (binge drinking, stealing others personal belongings, participating in unprotected sex or cheating in class), and pens. All participants will view one of the two photos and rate the supposed participation on each activity using a Likert scale (ranging from very unlikely to very likely).

**Procedure**

This experiment will take place in a classroom setting. Participants will be told directions orally with a questionnaire face down in front of them. They will view the picture on the projector screen for 30 seconds; after the time is up they will turn the questionnaire over and rate how likely they believe the individual is to participate in each activity using the Likert scale; participants who rate from 4-8 will see the individual as unlikely to participate in deviant activities and participants who rate from 16-25 will see the individual as likely to participate in deviant activities. Those who rate the individual in between will see the male as neither likely nor unlikely to participate in deviant activities. When completed with their task, the questionnaire will be picked up and participants will be asked to keep the parts of the experiment and study a secret to decrease demand characteristics.

**Results**

In order to determine the effect of body art on individuals and their hypothetical deviancy perceived by others I will use an independent *t* statistical analysis. My predictive results will indicate that individuals with body art such as tattoos and piercings will be viewed as more deviant than individuals with no body art. I do predict that the results will be statistically significant. I hypothesize that gender and attractiveness will play a role in this study as well; I believe the participants will view men with body art as more deviant than females and the participants will view more attractive individuals as less likely to participate in deviant activities.

**Discussion**

Due to previous research and stereotypical beliefs, I predict that individuals with body art will be viewed as more deviant than those with no body art. My predictive results will indicate that participants who view the photo showing the individual with tattoos and piercings will see the individual as more likely to engage in deviant actives than not; in regards to the photo showing no body art, I predict the participants will think the individual is either not likely or less likely to partake in deviant activities. I predict these results will support past research showing that the presence of body art plays a significant role in one’s perceived deviancy (Beeler, K 2005).

In my study I will use an independent-groups design. I decided on this design so all participants would be unaware of the manipulation of my independent variable and not know what the other groups were viewing. My study will show internal validity because the questions asked will strictly relate to deviant activities and the total score will help represent that body art such as tattoos and piercings relate to a higher level in deviant activities. Because my study will use the same male in each photo shown it eliminate extraneous variables such as gender.

This study will have few limitations; the recruiting process for this study limits other students because this study is only offered as extra credit to psychology majors who chose to sign up. . My study will have weaker external validity because all the participants will be psychology majors at Longwood University. Because this study is only happening at one school it does not show a good representation of a whole population.

Future studies related to this experiment could examine the perceived physical attractiveness of an individual with body art. I predict that individuals with body art will be viewed as less attractive when compared to an individual without body art. Future studies could also use a more diverse population and not just focus on a certain group of people such as college students at one university.

References

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*Figure 1.* This figure illustrates the effect of body art present and the individuals perceived deviancy .



*Figure 2.* This is one of the two photos a group of participants will view.



*Figure 3.* This is the second of the two photos a group of participants will view.

Appendix

1. How likely is the individual to participate in binge drinking?

Very Likely

Likely

Neutral

Unlikely

Very Unlikely

1. How likely is the individual to participate in stealing?

Very Likely

Likely

Neutral

Unlikely

Very Unlikely

1. How likely is the individual to participate in cheating in class?

Very Likely

Likely

Neutral

Unlikely

Very Unlikely

1. How likely is the individual to participate in unprotected sex

Very Likely

Likely

Neutral

Unlikely

Very Unlikely

**LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY**   
**Institutional Review Board**   
**Committee Action Form**

(To Be Completed By Researcher)

Proposal Title: Effects of Body Art on Perceived Deviancy

Principal   
Investigator: Haley Marshall

................................................................................................................................................

(For IRB Use Only)

[  ]  Meets the criteria for making research exempt from obtaining written informed consent and Committee review.

[  ]  Approved by the Longwood University Institutional Review Board.

[  ]  Approved with revisions by the Longwood University Institutional Review Board.

[  ]  Rejected by the Longwood University Institutional Review Board.

Date: December 2, 2013

Signature of IRB (circle one) Member/Chair:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

**Longwood University Institutional Review Board**   
**Research Proposal Submission Form**

**I. Proposal**

All Longwood University administration, faculty, and students conducting investigations involving human subjects, and all other researchers conducting investigations involving human subjects at Longwood University, must submit a research proposal to be reviewed and approved by the Human Subject Research Review Committee prior to the commencement of research.  Research involving children should conform to the ethical standards found at <http://www.srcd.org/ethicalstandards.html>. **Some types of human subjects research are exempt from the provisions of state and federal law, however, even research exempt from these provisions must be reviewed by the committee to determine that they are indeed exempt.**  Research proposals submitted to the committee must follow the protocols contained in this form and include the following information.  *Check those that are included*.

[ ]  A description of the research, including:

1) A Title,   
2) The purpose of the research, and   
3) The methods or procedures to be employed including descriptions of:   
    a) The human subjects and the criteria for including them in the research,   
    b) What is to be done with or to them,   
    c) Any possible risks, stress, or requests for information subjects might consider personal or sensitive, or which may be illegal, and whether or not the only risk to the subjects is the harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality,  
    d) the steps that will be taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects,   
    e) the permissions from other institutions, if required, that will be obtained.

[ ]  A signed, completed copy of this submission form.

In addition, the research proposal may have to include the following documents.  *Check those that are included*.

[ ] A copy of the test, survey, or questionnaire, if employed, and if it is not a standardized professional diagnostic tool otherwise specified in the proposal.

[  ]   A copy of the written statement explaining the research indicating that participation is voluntary, if required. (See III. A. below.)

[ ]  A copy of what will be said to subjects before and after the research is conducted, if the methodology requires that the subjects be misled in any way.  (See III. B.)

[ ] A copy of the informed consent statement that will be used, if required.  (See Sec. IV. below.)  A model informed consent statement can be found at the end of this form.   
    
 **II. Exemptions**

If your research falls into any of the categories of research below, it is exempt from the requirement of obtaining written informed consent and being reviewed by the entire Committee, and only 1 copy of the proposal need be submitted. All others must submit 3 copies of their proposal. If your project conforms to any of the following descriptions, check those which apply:

[ ] Research or student learning outcomes assessments conducted in educational settings involving regular or special education instructional strategies, the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods, or the use of educational tests, whether cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, or achievement, if the data from such tests are recorded in a manner so that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

[ ] Research involving survey or interview procedures unless responses are recorded in such a manner that the subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and either (i) the subject's responses, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or (ii) the research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior, such as sexual behavior, drug or alcohol use, or illegal conduct.

[ ] Research involving survey or interview procedures, when the respondents are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

[ ] Research involving solely the observation of public behavior, including observation by participants, unless observations are recorded in such a manner that the subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and either (i) the subject's responses, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or (ii) the research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior, such as sexual behavior, drug or alcohol use, or illegal conduct.

[ ] Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in a manner so that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

# III. Special Types of Research

A. In addition to the above types of research that are exempt from the requirement to obtain written informed consent and full committee review, the committee may waive the requirement that the investigator obtain written informed consent for some or all subjects for the following type of research. If your research conforms to the following description, indicate by checking.

[ ] Research in which the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document, and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality.

In the forgoing type of research, the committee may require the investigator to provide the subjects with a written statement explaining the research and indicating that their participation is voluntary. In addition, each subject shall be asked whether s/he wants documentation linking him or her to the research, and the subject’s wishes shall govern. In the case that the subject agrees to be identified in the research, her or his written permission to do so shall be obtained by the researcher.

B. Some research methodologies may require that the subjects be initially misled regarding the purpose of the research, and so require that the consent procedure omit or alter some or all of the basic elements of informed consent, or waive the requirement to obtain informed consent. If your research conforms to the following description, indicate by checking.

[ ] Research involves no more than "minimal risk" or risk of harm not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests, research could not practicably be performed without the omission, alteration or waiver, and the omission, alteration or waiver will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

Inthe forgoing type of research, the committee requires the researcher to provide the subjects with an adequate post-investigative explanation of the purpose and methods of the research, or explanatory debriefing procedure to be undertaken immediately after the conclusion of each subject's participation. The committee requires investigators undertaking this sort of research to furnish the committee with copies of the information that will be supplied to the subject before and after the investigation.

**IV. Written Informed Consent**

    Research engaged in all other types of research must obtain written informed consent from the research subjects. Informed consent means the knowing and voluntary agreement, without undue inducement or any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, or other form of constraint or coercion, of a person who is capable of exercising free power of choice.

    The basic elements of information necessary to such consent are:

 1. A reasonable and comprehensible explanation to the person of the proposed procedures of protocols to be followed, their purposes, including descriptions of any attendant discomforts, and risks and benefits reasonably to be expected;

 2. A disclosure of any appropriate alternative procedures or therapies that might be advantageous for the person;

 3. An instruction that the person may withdraw his consent and discontinue participation in the human research at any time without prejudice to her or him;

 4. An explanation of any costs or compensation which may accrue to the person and, if applicable, the availability of third party reimbursement for the proposed procedures or protocols; and

 5. An offer to answer and answers to any inquiries by the person concerning the procedures and protocols.

    Informed consent must be obtained in the following manners for the following types of human subjects: (a) competent, then it shall be subscribed to in writing by the person and witnessed; (b) not competent at the time consent is required, then it shall be subscribed to in writing by the person’s legally authorized representative and witnessed; or (c) a minor otherwise capable of rendering informed consent, then it shall be subscribed to in writing by both the minor and her or his legally authorized representative.   
    Legally authorized representative means (a) the parent or parents having custody of a prospective subject, (b) the legal guardian of a prospective subject, or (c) any person or judicial or other body authorized by law or regulation to consent on behalf of a prospective subject to such subject’s participation in the particular human research.   
    Any person authorized by law or regulation to consent on behalf of a prospective subject to such subject’s participation in the particular human research shall include an attorney in fact appointed under a durable power of attorney, to the extent the power grants the authority to make such a decision. The attorney in fact shall not be employed by the person, institution, or agency conducting the human research. No official or employee of the institution or agency conducting or authorizing the research shall be qualified to act as a legally authorized representative.   
    A legally authorized representative may not consent to nontherapeutic research, or research in which there is no reasonable expectation of direct benefit to the physical or mental condition of the human subject, unless it is determined by the human subject research review committee that such research will present no more than a minor increase over minimal risk to the human subject.   
    Notwithstanding consent by a legally authorized representative, no person who is otherwise capable of rendering informed consent shall be forced to participate in any human research.   
    In the case of persons suffering from organic brain diseases causing progressive deterioration of cognition for which there is no known cure or medically accepted treatment, the implementation of experimental courses of therapeutic treatment to which a legally authorized representative has given informed consent shall not constitute the use of force.   
    No informed consent form shall include any language through which the person who is to be the human subject waives or appears to waive any of her or his legal rights, including any release of any individual, institution, or agency or any agents thereof from liability for negligence.   
    Human subject research investigators are responsible for obtaining written informed consent from research subjects in accordance with these specifications, and for obtaining permissions from any other institutions that may be involved in informed consent statement which conforms to these specifications.

    The Longwood University Institutional Review Board must be informed of any violation or alteration of the research protocol.  Continuing research projects must be re-approved annually.

    The undersigned researcher(s) indicate that the information provided to the committee is accurate and true to the best knowledge of the researcher(s), and that the researcher(s) have conformed to the above guidelines to the best abilities of the researcher(s).

Date: December 2, 2013   Signed (legibly): Haley Marshall

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Signed (legibly):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If this research is being completed in partial fulfillment of a Masters degree, the thesis committee must approve of your project prior to submission of these forms. The signature(s) of your committee chair/advisor on the appropriate form constitutes acknowledgement of this prior approval by your committee.

Please indicate the address where you would like the approval form sent (along with phone # and/or e-mail address):

Further information of the status of proposals may be found at the following:     
  
          Dr. Eric Laws, Department of Psychology; Phone:  (434)395-2841; e-mail:  lawsel@longwood.edu

<!doctype html public "-//w3c//dtd html 4.0 transitional//en">

**DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH**

Title of Research:  **Effects of Body Art on Perceived Deviancy**

1. Purpose of Research: The goal of this research is **stop bias towards body art and the negative belief behind it**. The research is being conducted as a between groups design, under the supervision of  **Dr. Buchert.**
2. Methods and Procedures:
3. Participants: Participants will be Longwood University students who agree to voluntarily participate in the research. The purpose of the research will be explained to the students and they will be asked to participate with the provision that they are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.
4. Procedures:  The participants will be asked to view one of two photos: an individual with or without body art and rate how likely (or unlikely) the male in the photo is to participate in the four listed deviant activities: binge drinking, cheating, stealing and participating in unprotected sex. I will collect my data by adding the scores on the Likert scale questionnaire. The participants who score between the ranges of 4-8 will suggest that the individual is unlikely to participate in deviant activities and the participants who score 16-25 will suggest that the individual in the photo is likely to partake in the deviant activities.
5. Possible Risks: It is anticipated that participants will be at no physical, psychological, or emotional risk at any time during the research. Nor is it anticipated that participation in the research will place the participants at any risk of criminal or civil liability, or damage the participants' financial standing or employability.
6. Assurance of Anonymity and Confidentiality: Participants will be informed of the voluntary and confidential nature of the research via instructions on the data collection instrument. Participants will also be instructed not to put their name or any identifying information on the instrument. When collecting data from participants, the researcher will immediately place the data in a large envelope, and will not examine any of the data until all data have been collected. Once collected, the raw data will only be accessible to **Haley Marshall and Dr. Buchert**. In the event that any information provided by a participant should become known outside the research, it is unlikely that any harm would come to the participant.

**Longwood University**   
**Consent for Participation in Social and Behavioral Research**

I consent to participate in the research project entitled: Effects of Body Art and Perceived Deviancy being conducted in the Department of Psychology by Haley Marshall.

* I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time and to discontinue participation in this project without penalty.
* I acknowledge that the general purpose of this study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation have been explained to me.
* I acknowledge that I have the opportunity to obtain information regarding this research project, and that any questions I have will be answered to my full satisfaction.
* I understand that no information will be presented which will identify me as the subject of this study unless I give my permission in writing.
* I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily.  A copy of this form will be given to me.

Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_        Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I understand that if I have concerns or complaints about my treatment in this study, I am encouraged to contact the Office of Academic Affairs at Longwood University at (434) 395-2010.