

ASSOCIATIONS REGARDING TATTOOED INDIVIDUALS AMONG VARIOUS AGE COHORTS

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Abstract

Basing on the previous research, one can state that tattooing was mainly perceived from the perspective of clinical psychology and interpreted as self-injury that indicated negative attitude towards oneself, various mental disorders regarding – for example negatively developing personality. Tattoos were often associated with other risk – taking behaviors such as the use of psychoactive substances, the increased level of aggression and impulsiveness.

However, nowadays one can observe that more and more people are getting tattooed.

In addition, numerous tattoo parlors are being set up and more professional artists are interested in this kind of body art. The recent studies carried out in different parts of the world point out that there are more similarities than differences between their tattooed and non-tattooed participants. Therefore, one can conclude that tattoos are becoming a part of our mainstream culture. That is why, it is worth re-examining both the associations and stereotypes among different age cohorts connected with tattooed individuals.

In the first stage of the research program, a semi-structured interview was conducted to determine the attitude that different age cohorts towards tattoos and tattooed individuals. The given results show the differences in associations regarding tattooed people among different age groups.

400 Polish participants were obtained from the following development stages: preschool period, early school period, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. The study was conducted in a form of a semi-structured interview. The study results were analyzed using the chi-square test.

The research results showed that the associations regarding the tattooed individuals were significantly different in the studied age groups. Moreover, the younger age cohorts – pre-school period, early school period, adolescence and early adulthood – associated tattooed individuals with positive features. They often described them as interesting, brave, creative. The detailed research results will be presented during the conference.

Associations regarding tattooed persons change with age. Young people more often have a positive attitude towards tattooed individuals. It may indicate that tattoos are becoming a part of our mainstream culture. Basing on the research results, standardized questionnaire will be created to evaluate psychological reasons and effects of different body modifications. The questionnaire will also investigate the attitude to individuals with body modifications.

Keywords: *Body modifications, tattoos, stereotypes, positive and negative attitude towards distinctiveness of others.*

1. Introduction

The recent studies carried out in different parts of the world point out that there are more similarities than differences between their tattooed and non-tattooed participants. Therefore, one can conclude that tattoos are becoming a part of our mainstream culture (Antoszewski, Sitek, Fijałkowska, Kasielska & Kruk-Jeromin, 2016; Armstrong, Owen, Roberts & Koch, 2002; Armstrong, Roberts, Koch, Saunders, Owen & Anderson, 2008; Armstrong, Stuppy, Gabriel & Anderson, 1996; Broussard & Harton, 2017; Claes, Vandereycken & Vertommen, 2005; Daniszewska, 2012; Deschesnes, Demers & Fines, 2006; Jaworska, Fijałkowska & Antoszewski, 2018; Pajor, Broniarczyk-Dyła & Świtalska, 2015; Swami, Gaughan, Tran, Kuhlmann, Stieger & Voracek, 2015; Swami, Tran, Kuhlmann, Stieger, Gaughan & Voracek, 2008; Tate & Shelton, 2008; Zeiler & Kasten, 2016; Naude, Jordaan & Bergh, 2017).

Many studies show that negative associations and stereotypes about tattooed individuals still occur in society and have an influence on the perception of their e.g. character traits or deciding if somebody is guilty or not during a trial (Armstrong, Stuppy, Gabriel & Anderson, 1996; Durkin & Houghton, 2000; Forbes, 2011; Funk & Todorow, 2013; Zestcott, Bean & Stone 2015; Zeiler & Kasten, 2016; Broussard & Harton, 2017).

The research carried out in Australia pointed out that children at the age of 6 appear to have acquired strong negative stereotypes of persons with tattoos. Further, it indicated that while making a decision to obtain a tattoo, young people are already aware of the criminal stigma attached to this form of body marking (Durkin & Houghton, 2000).

Our own research shows that people from different age groups differ in terms of perception of people's tattooing motives, anticipated potential effects of obtaining a tattoo, as well as in terms of the emotional attitude towards tattooed individuals (Winiarek & Wojciechowska, 2019a; 2019b; 2020).

1.1. Research hypothesis

Representatives of different age groups have different associations regarding tattooed individuals.

1.2. Aim

In the first stage of the research program, a semi-structured interview was conducted to determine the attitude that different age cohorts have towards tattoos and tattooed individuals.

2. Method

A total of 400 people from different development stages (pre-school period, early school-age period, adolescents, early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood – according to Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory) took part in the study. The study was conducted using a semi-structured interview.

The semi-structured interview was conducted directly by the researcher or using an online questionnaire (only in the case of adults). The study was carried out from October 2018 till February 2020. The research took place in Poland.

3. Results

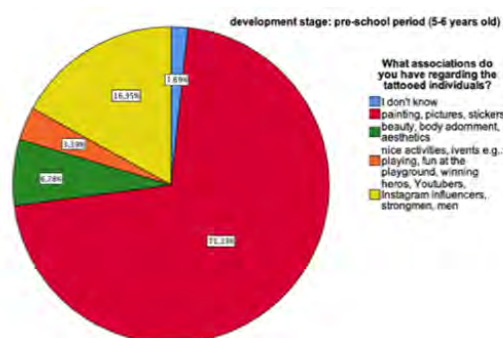
The collected data was analyzed using the χ^2 test.

$$\chi^2(155, N=400) = 539,24; p < 0,001$$

A significant dependence is observed between the age and the association regarding tattooed individuals.

Answer the following question: What associations do you have regarding the tattooed individuals?

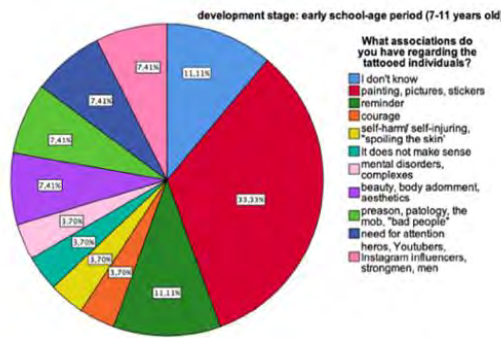
Figure 1. Percentage distribution of results in the pre-school period.



1. Pre-school children associate tattooed people most often with various types of pictures. This is a significantly more frequent response than in other age groups ($p < 0,05$). These are example answers given by children: "I associate tattooed people with painting, stickers, flowers, roses, fish, smoke, a dog, a cat, or with skulls." This shows that children associate tattooed people mainly with the content of pictures of the tattooed individuals.

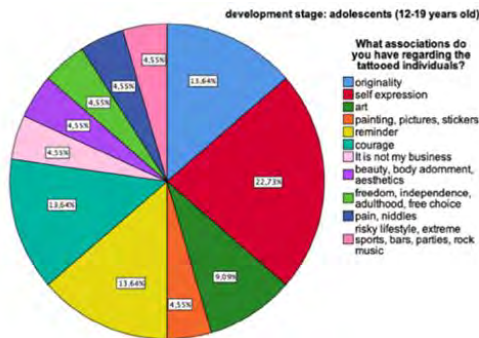
2. Definitely more often than in the group of teenagers and adults ($p < 0,05$), children associate tattooed people with heroes e.g. Avengers, Batman, Super Man, Star Wars. Perhaps these are also the motifs that children have seen in adults or it may be the motifs of washable tattoos for children.

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of results in the early school-age period.



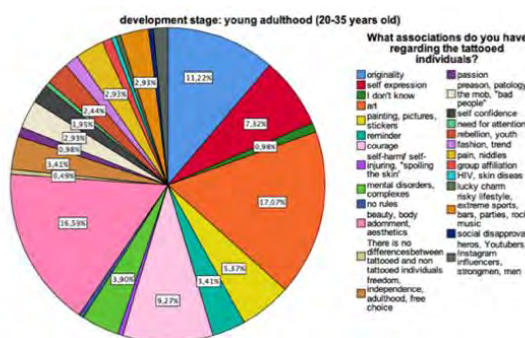
1. As in the previous age group, children in early school-age also associate tattooed individuals with various types of pictures.
2. Significantly more often than in the middle adulthood group, children in early school-age mentioned that they associate tattooed individuals with people who "want to show off" ($p < 0,05$).
3. It was significantly more difficult for children than for the early adulthood group to tell what tattooed people are associated with - the answer "I don't know" ($p < 0,05$).

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of results in the adolescents.



1. Tattooed individuals are most often associated by teenagers with the form of self-expression. This association is significantly more often declared by adolescents in comparison with the group of preschool children and the group of people from late adulthood ($p < 0,05$).
2. Significantly more often than in the group of early adulthood, teenagers believe that tattooing is a private matter of another person ($p < 0,05$).

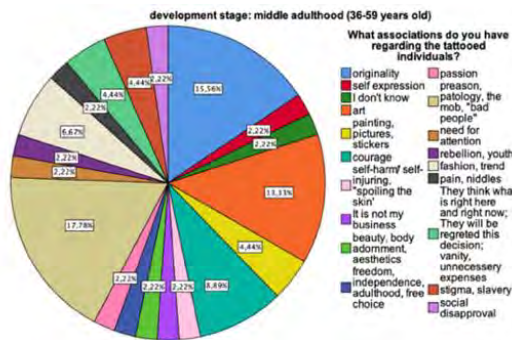
Figure 4. Percentage distribution of results in the young adulthood.



1. The early adulthood turned out to be the most diverse in terms of associations regarding tattooed people.
2. The most common association in this age group with regard to tattooed individuals was art. This association was definitely more often mentioned compared to preschool children ($p < 0,05$). Therefore, it can be assumed that children perceive tattoos more as a content aspect, and people in early adulthood as a form of art, e.g. the artistic style of a tattoo. The example answers are: "a work of art", "hard work of the artist", "artist's skills".

3. The second most frequently mentioned association with tattooed individuals was the association with beauty, body adornment, aesthetics, which may also be connected with artistic expression.

Figure 5. Percentage distribution of results in the middle adulthood.



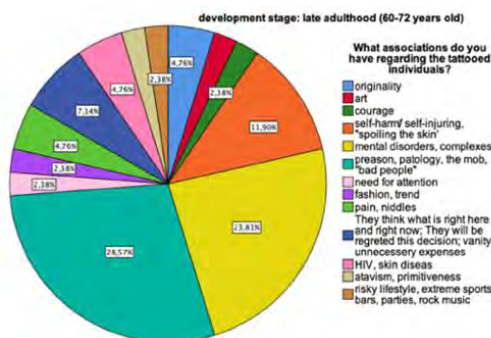
1. The middle adulthood group associates tattooed people most often with prison, pathology or crime / the mob. This association occurs significantly more often in comparison with the group of early adulthood and preschool children ($p < 0.05$).

2. In addition, it turns out that respondents from this development stage associate considerably more often the tattooed individuals with originality and interesting personality than the preschool children. *These are some examples of their answers: "they have their own style", "they are creative", "expressive".*

3. The middle adulthood respondents associate significantly more often the tattooed people with an impulsive, reckless decision to get a tattoo than the representatives of early adulthood ($p < 0.05$). These are examples of the way they described this decision: *"they will regret it", "they only think what is right here and right now", "unnecessary expense", "vanity".*

4. In comparison with the early adulthood, the representatives of the middle adulthood phase associate the tattooed individuals more often with slavery and stigma ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 6. Percentage distribution of results in the late adulthood.



1. People from the late adulthood stage associate the tattooed individuals most often with prison, pathology and the mob. This association appears significantly more often in this group rather than in early adulthood and in the group of preschool children ($p < 0.05$).

2. This age phase associates the tattooed people more often with self-harm, self-injuring than the early adulthood group ($p < 0.05$). *For example, they describe tattoos as "questionable body adornment".*

3. In comparison with the early and middle adulthood and also preschool children, the late adulthood group associates the tattooed individuals significantly more often with mental disorders, complexes ($p < 0.05$). *The examples of their answers are: "they are not so well-ordered", "they are simply crazy", "they are full of complexes."*

4. Compared to the group of early adulthood, the late adulthood respondents believed that tattooing is an impulsive and hasty decision ($p < 0.05$). *An example response is: "they were temporarily insane."*

4. Discussion

Our study confirmed the existence of stereotypical associations regarding the tattooed individuals in the Polish society.

It is evident that the older the respondents are, the more negative the association of the tattooed people they express. This may be related to the previous experiences of people in the late adulthood.

An interesting idea might be to check what kind of experiences with tattooed people the representatives of the late adulthood had.

The next stage of our research will be to create a standardized questionnaire to assess associations with tattooed people.

Analyzing previous studies (e.g. Broussard & Harton, 2017), it seems important to consider the sex of the respondents in subsequent research (in our study, most participants were women – 79%) and take more development phases into account.

Many studies suggest that what really matters is the content of a tattoo and not the fact that an individual possesses it (e.g. Zeiler & Kasten, 2016; Zestcott, Bean & Stone, 2015).

Therefore, it may be interesting to evaluate associations in terms of different tattoo contents.

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