

The view of tattoos in our society today



The View of Tattoos 1 The View of Tattoos in Our Society Today Melissa

Oliphant Axia College of University of Phoenix The View of Tattoos 2 “ People

who drink, do drugs, have been jailed or do not believe in religion are more likely to be tattooed. “ , said Mom. Is there any truth to what Mom said?

According to a study conducted by the Journal of Academic Academy of

Dermatology in 2006, 24% of Americans between 18 and 50 are tattooed.

That averages to be almost one in four Americans with tattoos.

Perhaps there is some truth to what Mom said. Mom was quite possibly

falsely stereotyping individuals. The act of tattooing began many centuries

ago. In our society today tattoos are becoming more popular. The body art

trend consists of no set age limit. Tattoos are commonly seen on

grandparents, parents, doctors, lawyers, or even priests today.

Tattoos have oftener gotten a negative stigma attached to them throughout

society. Such is the case of Mom’s opinion, for example. Society’s perception

of body art and tattoos often stems from pseudo- stereotyping of tattooed

individuals, but tattoos can function as a way to tell life stories, a form of

self-expression, and as a way to claim one’s own identity. Many tattooed

individuals become subject to stereotyping.

They soon realize while reasons behind getting a tattoo may be symbolic to

them; other people’s views are often quite different. Several factors alter a

person’s perception of body art and tattoos. Society’s’ views of body art is

often influenced by certain factors. Some of these factors include childhood

views, parental views, religious beliefs, and gender. However, two main

factors that stimulate stereotyping are social class and the size of the tattoo.

In America tattoos used to be a symbol of upper class status until the invention of the electric tattoo needle in 1891. This invention increased the ease of applying tattoos and hence decreased the price making them accessible to lower classes (Modification, ND). Perhaps this was the beginning of the negative stereotypes about tattoos, relating to society. The prison population represents a large group of individuals with body modification.

In the past bikers, sailors, truckers and the rock-n-roll industry have all been related to the tattoo industry. The most common pseudo assumptions are that people with tattoos are criminals or social deviants. Even more interesting is the differences between genders and how society views body modification for each sex. Tattoos have always been primarily a man's activity. According to research used to examine undergraduate students' attitudes toward women with tattoos, (Hawkes, Senn, and Thorn) found those women may be more than 50% percent of the individuals currently obtaining tattoos.

Women experience more negative reactions from society than men do (2004). Therefore, individuals who choose to express themselves through body art and tattoos are stereotyped against. This occurs due to other people's biased opinions, negative influences or associations with tattoos. Employment often poses a problem with individuals and their body art. People with tattoos or body art have limited rights in the workplace, which makes proving employers views based on gender stereotypes difficult to prove.

According to Louis Pitchman, a lawyer, who specializes in employment law, concludes: “ Neither federal nor state law protects employees from discrimination due to their tattoos or body piercing” (Bahadosingh, 2007). In the case of Hub Folding Box Company, Inc. vs. Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination, Deborah Conner, a clerk for Hub, sued her employer for gender discrimination.

A male employee was not required to cover his navy tattoo; however, Conner was told to cover her heart-shaped tattoo on the forearm or be terminated. The companies reasoning was based on outdated gender stereotypes. Conner won her case when the courts ruled in her favor (Bahadosingh, 2007). Employers often rely on the stated exempted reasoning, “ in a business establishment for, a reasonable business purpose when retaliating lawsuits (Bahadosingh, 2007). Employees need to consider the employer’s policies on appearance and dress code when seeking employment, where body art is acceptable. The Views of Tattoos 4 People choose to indulge in body art and tattoos for many positive reasons, yet many tend to regret having gone through with the act of tattooing later in life.

The most common reason is to tell a life story through the use of the tattoo(s). The tattoos can be compared to a map that narrates a story. Another reason may be to memorialize a loved one or to help the individual cope with a loss. Tattoos and body art the ultimate form of self expression for non-conformists. Tattooing provides a way for the individual to feel a sense of control over one’s own body.

Time and again when young people get tattoos or often already heavily tattooed, they have to hide them from their parents. Later on in life the “parents” tend to be replaced with “bosses”, in regard to employment. Most people have good logical reasons for wanting to get a tattoo. However, they can not control the outcome of how people in society will perceive them. Ted Mitchell, (Tattoo Magazine, 2002, 160: 61) describes his attitude towards tattooing: “The meanings overall are very personal and I don’t tell anyone what this is. People often regret later in life in having participated in body art, at all.

According to a national survey in which 163 tattooed men and women were asked about their tattoos one-third of those men and women said they regretted having gotten their tattoo(s) (Bahadosingh, S. and Anderson, D. , 2007). Age seems to be the most common reason for regret. What one finds amusing and cool at 20 years old changes by age 50. Some other common reasons why people may regret getting tattoos are; a lover’s name, a gang symbol, a prison tattoo, and the location of the tattoo itself.

Getting tattooed is a very personal decision that should not be taken lightly. Removal of a tattoo can get expensive, costs can range up to one thousand dollars depending on the size of the tattoo being removed (Bahadosingh, 2007). The art of Tattooing is very much alive in American culture today. Some experts believe the act of tattooing is fueled by a fear to conform to society. There are two groups of people within the “Tattoo/Body Modification” world. They are the conformists and the non-conformists, groups.

Both The Views of Tattoos 5 groups need each other and depend on each other. The conformists have themselves tattooed on non- public skin, while the non-conformists choose to display their tattoos on visible skin. The conformists tend to hide their tattoos from society. While the non-conformists seem to seek attention from theirs, in order to send a message to society. The conformists need the non-conformists to assert themselves; push the envelope of what is acceptable in society and the conformists is needed to make sure the boundaries are not pushed to far. Maybe the groups are two entirely different subcultures that in time will grow both more distinct and closer together at the same time”(Modification, N.

D.). Tattoos become more popular with all age groups of people. The tattoo industry is experiencing a surge in growth.

According to an U. S. News and World Report article, there are an estimated 20, 000 plus parlors operating in the United States alone, and an establishment is being added in the country everyday. Although, tattoos may have had an unsavory reputation in the past, during the past decade soceity’s views about them have changed dramatically. Soceity will learn to be more accepting of people with tattoos. Psuedo-stereotyping of tattooed individuals will decrease with time as more people participate in the body art trend.

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