Sex Differences in Associations Between Body Modifications and Subdimensions of Impulsivity and Aggression

Lauren M. Sargent, Katheryn C. Sauvigné, & Robert D. Latzman
Georgia State University, Department of Psychology

Introduction
- Body modifications: Piercings and tattoos
  - Prevalence in undergraduate students: 51% piercings; 22% tattoos (Mayer et al., 2008)
- More research examining body modifications needed due to popularity and acceptance of body modifications
- Existing research primarily focused on behavioral outcomes (e.g., smoking, violence, gang affiliation, drug use and early sexual experiences) (Carroll et al., 2002; Deschesnes, Finès & Dories, 2008; Guégan, 2012; Kertzman et al., 2011)
- Research has indicated sex differences in correlates of body modifications (Kertzman et al., 2011; Robert, Storch & Bravata, 2004)
  - e.g., violence associated with men and women differently with body modifications (Carroll, Riffenburgh, Roberts & Myhre, 2002)
- Impulsivity -- related traits (e.g. sensation seeking) implicated as contributing factors in the attainment of or risk behaviors associated with body modifications (Kertzman et al., 2011; Robert, Storch & Bravata, 2004)
  - Negative and positive urgency reinforce maladaptive behavior (Berg, Latzman, Bliese, & Lilienfeld, 2015)
- At this time, research has yet to investigate how impulsivity and aggression could function as driving factors for attaining body modifications through multidimensional analyses

Current Study
- Intended to analyze associations between subdimensions of impulsivity and aggression and number of body modifications in men and women

Hypotheses
- Females
  - • More piercings → higher positive urgency
- Males
  - • More tattoos → higher negative urgency
  - • More tattoos → higher aggression
- Both genders
  - • More body modifications → higher sensation seeking
  - • More body modifications → higher lack of premeditation

Methods
- Participants
  - 308 undergraduate students
    - 74% female; 35.4% Black/African American; 35.4% White/Caucasian; 19.5% Asian; 5.8%Biracial; 3.9% Hispanic/Latino

Measures
- Body Modification Self Report Survey
- UPPS-P Impulsivity Scale (Whiteside & Lyman, 2001; Cyders et al., 2007)
  - • Lack of Premeditation (e.g., I have a reserved and cautious attitude toward life)
  - • Negative Urgency (e.g., I have trouble controlling my impulses)
  - • Positive Urgency (e.g., When I am very happy, I can't seem to stop myself from doing things that can have bad consequences)
  - • Lack of Perseverance (e.g., I generally like to see things through to the end)
  - • Sensation Seeking (e.g., I generally seek new and exciting experiences and sensations)
- Reactive – Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (Bravata, Kertzman, & Robert, 2015)
  - • Reactive Aggression (e.g., I yell at others when they have annoyed you)
  - • Proactive Aggression (e.g., I fight with others to show who was on top)

Data analyses (see Table 1)
- Data log transformation to normalize distribution
- Zero-order bivariate correlations used to examine associations between body modifications and subdimensions of impulsivity and aggression by gender

Results

Discussion
- • Results suggest that psychological factors play an important role in the pursuit of body modifications.
- • Females:
  - • Impulsivity
    - • Of the subdimensions, sensation seeking seems to be most relevant with regard to piercings, where as, in tattoos lack of premeditation seems to be most relevant
  - • No significant association found between piercings and positive urgency
  - • Surprisingly, despite evidence negative urgency underlies broad psychopathology, no association was found between negative urgency and body modifications (Berg, Latzman, Bliese, & Lilienfeld, 2015)
    - • Could imply body modification may not be a sign of maladjustment despite popular belief
  - • Aggression
    - • Aggression seems to play a role in attaining increasing numbers of tattoos but no apparent influence with regard to piercings
  - • Males
    - • Lack of significant correlations observed could imply more of an influence of impulsivity and aggression on body modifications in women than men

Limitations
- • Disproportion of women (N=288) to men (N=80)
  - • Small sample size of men decreases ability to detect effects
  - • Skewed distribution due to number of participants reporting zero body modifications

Implications
- • Associations between body modifications and risk behaviors may stem from shared underlying psychological or personality influences that could potentially be used to help identify youths more likely to engage in risky behaviors

Future Directions
- • Future research should assess whether subdimensions of impulsivity and/or aggression act as moderators in the association between body modifications and risk behaviors

Correspondence regarding this presentation should be directed to:
Lauren M. Sargent
lsargent1@student.gsu.edu
References


