



**TATTOOING:  
A VEHICLE FOR SELF-EXPRESSION**

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The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine if, and how, tattooing communicates the self. This study was the first to combine the Public, Private, and Secret Self Model (Eicher & Miller, 1994) and Proximity of Clothing to the Self (Sontag & Schlater, 1982). A convenience sample of 200 individuals who patronize tattoo parlors were included in the study. Data were collected through a 51-item written survey including 15 items from the Proximity of Clothing to Self (PCS) scale. Prior to data collection, public, private, and secret locations of male and female bodies were determined.

The sample of tattoo patrons was 61% male and 38% female. Age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 50 years. Number of tattoos for the sample ranged from one to over 100. Data were analyzed using chi square, analysis of variance, a general linear model (sum of squares), and paired sample statistics. Findings indicate that tattooing for the public, private, and secret self vary by sex. One hundred and thirteen males (or 92%) had tattoos on private areas of the body. Thirty-four women (or 44%) were more likely than men to have tattoos on secret areas of the body. In addition, individuals tattooed on public and secret parts of the body had significantly higher PCS scores than individuals tattooed on private areas of the body.

Implications from the study indicate that an individual's sex is an important variable when discussing tattoos and self-expression. Differences between what is considered public, private, and secret areas of male and female bodies must be considered when interpreting the study's findings.

Eicher, J. B., & Miller, K. A. (1994). Dress and the public, private and secret self: Revisiting a model. *ITAA Proceedings*, p. 145.

Sontag, M. S., & Schlater, J. D. (1982). Proximity of clothing to self: Evolution of a concept. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 1, 1-8.