About the Author: My name is Danya and I am a senior in Kinesiology at University of Illinois. The research I did this semester was about tanning on campus. I had no prior knowledge about this topic except that I noticed a lot of people go tanning. This topic was good to do research on because it relates a lot to this class. More specifically, it shows how the tanned body is accepted and works in this culture and society.

Keywords: Tanning, self image, confidence, body image, skin, beauty, health

Abstract: Our hypothesis was that there is a stigma attached to those that tan on campus and that type of person can be found associated with certain types of campus organizations. More specifically tanning is thought to be influenced by peer pressure/gaining of popularity in campus groups. The questions researched in this study were: Who uses tanning beds on campus? Specifically does age, club associations, gender, etc., factors play a role? Is this campus helping or hindering students from looking at the risks of campus? Through interviewing salon managers, a doctor, tanning students, and non-tanning students we concluded that females are more likely to tan than males of campus. We also found out that many students believed that tanning can be unsafe, but students still participate in tanning to improve self image.

Response I: The main idea behind the book The Body in Society: An Introduction is to examine the many taken-for-granted aspects of the human body and what they reveal about the social organization of everyday life (Howson 7). The introduction goes on to describe that within the human body there are entities of the body and mind. And different sociologists tend look at body and mind either together or separately. From this idea many different theories have been created but the crucial idea behind these theories that the book brings up is that the way we engage with the world and the people is due to how we use our bodies. Chapter one focuses on the emergence and development of self. Self is typically explained through social interaction in which it focuses more closely on the mind however thought and action of the mind can only be displayed by the body. The two approaches that looked at this idea, the significance of the human body in presenting the self, are the symbolic interactionism and the phenomenological approach. The symbolic interactionism looks at how bodily control and knowledge of somatic norms is crucial to the competent presentation of self. The phenomenological approach shows how important sensory experience is to the development of a sense of self and to relations with others (Howson 37).

Previously in class we discussed definitions of a lot of the vocabulary used in this literature. A lot of ideas from class were definitely repeated in the book. For example, in class when we were asked to define body some individuals explained it as the physical body while others described it as a functioning thing. The
introduction spoke about how different sociologists take both of those definitions into consideration while looking at the body. However it is important to consider all parts of the body whether just physically or functionally. In class we also spoke a lot about how the three words body, culture, and society are related. The idea that I developed from the literature’s perspective about these three words is that they interact. For example, it is the body that develops a sense of self. This particular self is based off of one’s culture. For example, the literature talked about how sometimes body betrayals are not accepted by culture. An example is that sometimes these betrayals can lead to stigmas for example if one has blemishes or deformities that appear to be associated with disease culture/society will not accept them. Thus in general the literature simply discussed a lot about how the culture and society have a set of body norms and it is up to the individual whether to use there body to become accustomed to the norms.

A part of the literature that I would like to specifically critique is the idea of the body, society, and disabilities. I noticed that the social model of disability is the one that this campus tends to take on which is that physical and social environments are dis-abling rather than an individual having impairment. It is this model that has helped create disability rights and has made this campus so accessible to those who are disabled. But why were disabilities not always looked this way? What caused society/culture to change their perspective on this idea? Also if society truly believes in this idea how come there is still a separate Olympics for those who are disabled and those who are not?

Response II: Danya Lev

Body Work

Chapter 1 & 3

A) The reading for this week focused on two parts of work that can be done with the body. The first one was hair dressing. Reading the chapter on hair dressing discussed the different viewpoints that could be taken such as the hair dresser versus the customer and who ultimately has the most power in the decision making and also who has the most knowledge in what is best for the customer. Some other things that the chapter mentioned were the issues of class. Specifically how individual’s roles according to class decides how they should look. Also Gimlin mentioned that an important part of the hairdresser/customer relationship is that hairdressers do not just cut hair but are also seen as therapists that their customers can talk to. The other chapter read discussed the art of cosmetic surgery. Gimlin researched this issue more ethnographically by interviewing those who went under the knife. Individuals in this case had different reasons for going through with cosmetic surgery. Also a big difference with cosmetic surgery is that the
doctor will and can refuse patients. But it was also really interesting to see how only patients that had no ‘other’ options were those permitted to go through with cosmetic surgery. Also Gimlin emphasized many times that cosmetic surgery cannot be taken lightly. It is a very expensive/time consuming process that many individuals have to make huge sacrifices for.

B) This book is very different than the other books we have read. *Body Work* is technically Gimlin’s report of her ethnographic research. It is very interesting how she went about researching though. She specifically chose to focus her work on women and the different things they go through in order to present their bodies. But for everyone she interviewed she had a specific reason for interviewing them. Also in order to talk to the hair dressers she needed Pamela’s permission and to talk to the cosmetic surgery patients she needed permission from the doctor. I think that this maybe how I will go about interviewing individuals for my project. For example I am doing tanning on campus and I should ask the managers of tanning salons which customers I should talk to. This way you are not offending anyone and they are giving you honest answers. Additionally other things to play close attention to are the relationships that are formed. For example, hair dressers were seen as therapists for their customers. Maybe tanning for some individuals is a form of therapy which completely changes the way tanning is viewed. Also individuals who do go tanning might be like the women who go to the hair dresser. They might feel compelled to go because society expects that those individuals look tan because of their class or role they play. So basically Gimlin’s research gave me more ideas that I can ask about when I do my research.

C) Cosmetic surgery is something that intrigues me very much. I have known a handful or people to go through with it but I have never really taken it too seriously. In chapter 3 Gimlin discusses that cosmetic surgery should not be taken lightly. For example, for many individuals it is very costly. Anne Marie a patient who had cosmetic surgery had to take up another job and give up home improvements in order to get a face lift. But after getting the face lift Anne Marie was so happy with her decision. So is it worth it? When does cosmetic surgery cross the line? Gimlin and Dr. Norris suggest that it is not something that should be done if there are other answers. However it is also interesting that this field has recently started within the past half century and within that time the number of doctors has tripled. Why is that? I think that cosmetic surgery is being abused. But I do not think that it is wrong. It clearly has made people happier and more comfortable in their skin. And I think that being able to do that is great in regulated doses though.
Proposal

Pitch: Are students that work out happier than those who do not? Collect a lot of data from students all over the campus by doing this we are bound to find both ends of the spectrum. Then the data will be analyzed and if certain conclusions can be drawn this information will help this campus with ideas on how to improve its mental health.

Group Proposal/Plan:

Group Members:

Danya Lev

Tracy Ziberna

Description:

Who uses tanning beds on campus? Specifically does age, club associations, gender, etc. factors play a role? Is this campus helping or hindering students from looking at the risks of campus?

Research Questions:

Questions addressed to students:

Do you tan? If so are you part of any university organizations including greek life? Specifically which ones? Do you feel your affiliation with the group has an effect on your tanning activities?

What year are you at this university? Do you tan now? Did you used to tan in past years and if you have stopped why? Did advertisements from McKinley or on this campus effect your actions?

Do you live in housing that proves a tanning bed for your access? How do you feel about this situation? Why do you think a tanning bed is appropriate or not to be in your housing? Do you feel some people use the bed to fit into groups?

Questions addressed to tanning salons staff:

How often can people go tanning? Is there a limit to how long individuals can tan for? Would you say there is a stigma associated with your clientele? Do you do anything to insure better health for your cliente;e? What do your customers complain about if they do?

Questions addressed for McKinley:

Do you have any students come in the have health issues due to indoor tanning? If so what are they? On average how many do you see? Do
you give students any advice about indoor tanning? Do you think that indoor tanning is an issue on this campus?

Methods:

The methods used for this research will be to have students fill out surveys in classes. Also if we can get permission from tanning salons we would like to interview clientele and staff. Additionally we would like to interview McKinley and find what they do for students who go tanning and if they have seen any issues resulting.

Sources:

The sources used for this project will be advertisements for tanning. Information provided from our interviews/surveys from students, salon owners, and McKinley staff and advertisement. And also information from health websites about risks of tanning.

Data I: 1st interview

Do you tan?

Yes

If so are you part of any university organizations?

Mmmm yes

Which ones?

The pre dental club

Anything else?

No

Do you feel your affiliation with the group has any effect on your tanning activities?

No

What year are you at this university?

I am a Senior
Did you use to tan all your years here?

No

What has made you start tanning?

In preparation for spring break

So do you just do it seasonally?

Well starting this season?

Do you do it every year that way?

No I haven’t gone any place warm like in the past 3 years

Did advertisements from McKinley or on this campus effect your decision to go tanning?

No except for the tanning advertisements yes but not McKinley

Okay where did you find your tanning advertisement?

UM like on the store window

Okay have you ever lived in housing that providing tanning access?

No

How do you feel about that situation?

I don’t really care I mean it is not a big deal

Do you feel like there is a stereotype stigma attached to tanning?

A little bit yea

Can you explain that for me?

It just that it can give you skin cancer

What about the people who tan do you think there is a stereotype?

Um not really no
Do you think that there are any health issues due to indoor tanning?

Yes skin cancer

(laughs)

Do you think indoor tanning is an issue?

Like on campus?

Yes

Um not really I mean I don’t know anyone who is like addicted to tanning

Do you think tanning has an effect on your student life?

No

Do helps or hinders you as a person or as student?

I like being more tan so maybe it helps my self esteem

Okay do you feel that you feeling better is just a psychological thing or that there are physical/biological aspects that are involved in that?

Oh psychological

Okay um so why do you think when you are tan you feel more confident?

Um because I don’t like my pale skin (chuckles)

Do you think that that is because of a trend that is going on or do you think that your body just looks more tone when you are tanner or that you feel you look more skinner or you look more like an avid role....

Well I think tanness is like better I mean I think people like it more and stuff. Do you know what I mean because like some countries like don’t think pale but like tan is good but like in America yea tanning is good

So you think it’s just a trend that is going on

Yes

Do you that is something that has always been the case?
Here yes

Okay well I think those are all the questions I have thank you

(The girl in this interview was not of Anglo-saxon origin her parents were both born in Thailand so she naturally has a darker skin color. Also she did not seem confident in her answers)

2nd Interview

Do you go tanning?

Yes

How long have you been tanning for?

Um probably 2 and half weeks

So 2 ½ weeks ago was your first time you went tanning?

Oh no I’ve done it like every so often

Why do you do it?

Um usually I do it before I vacation to get a base tan or sometimes I just do it because I think my skin looks better tan.

How does tanning make you feel?

Um well I like the after effects of it. I like being tan so I guess it gives me more confidence

Why do you think that the tan image is something that provides confidence?

Well I think that like there is in our society makes like beautiful like their image of beauty is tan people so I think that a lot of girls and guys get it in their heads that they need to like be tan to be beautiful.

Do you that there is a certain stereotype associated with people who go tanning?

Um not really but I think that on our campus the majority of people who do go tanning are like people who are in sororities or fraternities.

Are you in any organizations on this campus?
I’m in a sorority. Yes

Do you feel that your organization has influenced you in any way to go tanning?

Um no I think that no

How did you chose the place you went tanning was it through advertisement through friend through seeing it all over campus or what

Um probably through advertisement but also cause it is so close to where I live

Do you think that if people lived in housing that provided tanning beds do you think you would go tanning more?

Um probably not just because I have the fear of getting cancer from tanning bed but I probably would go more than what I go now

SO you are aware of the health risks involved in tanning?

Yes

Are you also aware of the benefits involved in tanning?

Um benefits meaning like becoming tan?

Health benefits

Um what are they

Tanning has been provided to increase melanin levels which has been shown to increase happiness and also that with seasonal depression tanning can make people happier in the wintertime so those are some of the benefits. How do you feel about that?

That’s great but I did not know that

Do you think that it will influence on why you go tanning next time?

Probably not no

Also do you think that tanning helps or hinders you as a student?

I don’t think it has either effect. But I guess that if it makes me happier its probably like yea I don’t know. Like academically I don’t know if it has any effect but if I’m a happier person in life then it will probably affect the way I life
and study and stuff

Okay great thanks for your help

(The female in this interview seemed to be more confident about her answers her skin did appear tan. When asked about her origin she said her parents of from Eastern Europe thus providing more of a darker complexion)

3rd Interview

Do you go tanning?

No

Have you ever been tanning?

Uh yes I have

Why did you go tanning that time?

I went tanning because I had just gotten back from vacation and I wanted to keep my tan when I got back

Do you think that that time tanning provided you with any benefits?

Physically I mean my skin was tanner longer for about a week longer than it would have been had I not gone tanning when I got back from vacation but overall no there weren’t any huge benefits.

Do you think that there are benefits to tanning?

Well I think it makes I think it is good for a girl’s body image I think that girls feel more confident when they are tanner. But um I mean I don’t think that being pale hinders anybody’s self esteem.

Are you aware of the health risks involved in tanning?

Yes I am

Do you think that those outway the benefits?

I definitely think they do and they are also the reasons why I don’t go tanning because my family has a history of melanoma of my grandma and my dad have both had melanoma.
Also do you think that there is a certain stereotype or stigma attached to tanning?

Um I think that it is probably mostly sorority girls that go out a lot at night that are aiming to look good and are concerned with body image.

Are you a part of any organizations on campus?

Uh I am in a sorority (said proudly)

Do a lot of your sisters go tanning?

Yes they do

Do they ever influence you to go tanning with them?

Usually no

Would you say a lot of your friends on campus go tanning?

Uh a couple of my close friends go tanning but a majority of my friends don’t.

(Specifically looks at her friends I previously interviewed and they snicker)

Do you think that maybe if tanning was more available to you you would go tanning?

No

Okay those are all the questions I have for you thank you for your time

Okay thank you

(The female interviewed here is of European descent. She is not tan and has a light complexion. A lot of this female’s answers were very matter of fact she was more confident in her answers in comparison to the other females who I interviewed that do go tanning)

Data II:  

Danya Lev

Ok how did you become a salon manager?

Well I’ve been manager before at other places so what I filled out an application I
was hired as a manager here from the get go.

*Ok how did you get involved in the tanning industry?*

Um I tanned. I actually tan as when I was younger because the doctor recommended it because of female problems and it helped. It’s like a big ol’ heating pad to me.

*Do you think being on a college campus effects why you chose to work here or?*

I have two teenage daughters and two sons and I’d like for all the girls to know that tanning is good for them. You get vitamin D from this. So actually when you tan your are getting vitamin D and you need vitamin D everyday.

*Would you also recommend it for you sons too?*

Yes I do. I recommend it for my husband also.

*Okay. Do you mind sharing like an initial revenue of how much you made and how much the salon in general makes?*

Well I don’t do that part because there are so many of them. So the owner does that.

*Okay. Do you see that there is a distinct stigma or stereotype of the customers that come in here?*

No not really

*Like do you feel that you have more than one gender that walks in the door?*

More probably more females than males. But it depends on the time of the year.

*Um do you think that these females or males are part of certain organizations on campus?*

No because the gentlemans that I get here they can live across time they work up here or come to mine because it is closer.

*So really it is location..?*

Location is the key

*What about race do you think that plays a part in tanning?*
No any race can tan. It’s just some chose not to. I have Mexicans, I have Puerto Ricans, I have whites. 

(The dinging noise in the background is the sound of customers entering and exiting the salon)

Do you feel that there is more of one race that comes in here?

There is more than one race.

What would that be?

Your whites.

Okay how do you go about when you get new customers? Are there forms that they fill out?

There are forms they have to fill out front and back and it lets us know where they live and what their skin type is. So we know how to put them in the beds.

Okay so what are the regulations to tanning for the first time?

The first time depending on your skin type we don’t want you to burn so if you are a new client depending if you are normaler skin you may start out between eight and twelve most of them go about twelve.

Um do you ever say no to any skin type?

No

Do you also always suggest to your customers and do they take your suggestions or do they pretty much do...

We are here for suggestions um because we know what the beds can do for you. We also know that your skin if you are sensitive you are going to burn so to put a sensitive person in for 20 minutes when they should only be going 8 to 10 a lot of them will take our suggestion.

Okay um so the limits you set for your tanners what are they? Are there certain limits you will say absolutely not to?

Usually we do not say absolutely not to anything. You know your are welcome to do whatever we are just here to help you along.

Okay have you ever consulted McKinley about any of the regulations you have
We have health inspectors that come so we are very well checked out with the health inspectors.

Okay um what kind of environment would you say you provide for you clientele like decorations?

Usually around the holidays I will decorate it up. You know right now you’ll see there is a bit of Easter on the counter. Or may behind the seat but if we want to decorate it the manager decorates it their own salon.

Okay um is there a certain style you’ll go for? Like beachy or...

Um no usually around Christmas time there is Christmas reefs there are stockings hanging up Halloween there maybe some Halloween decorations that it just depends on what it is. Sometimes if it is less simple because I also find that on a college campus things get stolen.

(laugh) Okay what are some of the strengths and weaknesses you see in the tanning industry?

Mmmm....the strength are people are tanning more often because they can get vitamin D from it okay. The weakness is that it is not out there truthfully at what it can help. I mean people are afraid that it can cause cancer there are a lot of things that can cause cancer. But as far as weakness it is the knowledge of your tanning.

Okay um when you I see you provide some products to your customers are they all related to tan or are there accessory products too

These are all related to tanning I have the tanning lotions step 1, step 2, I also have step 3 which is your moisturizers and extenders uh we also have the eye wear which you have to wear your own eye wear is it the state law that they have to wear them everyday. Wear them every time they tan if they don’t have eye wear then they can’t tan.

Are lotions also compulsory?

Lotions are very important cause if you go in the bed without lotion there’s valleys in your skin so the rays are going to bounce from you so if you go in for 10 you might only get about 5 cause the rays are going to bounce for you. You also are going to dehydrate your skin so you want to keep it dehydrated be keeping the moisture on it.
Um as far as pulling customers in do you place your advertisements somewhere or how do you get the word of mouth out?

We have advertisement on classictan.biz, we have it through the yellow page, we send out postcards there are little college coupon books there is probably about two maybe three that I am aware of that gets advertisement out.

Do you ever post in anything with the university like the DI or...

There maybe a website that is kind of linked with the U of I. I’m not sure what it is but most likely people can get a hold of us with the classictan.biz

Okay so do you think if your salon wasn’t on campus it would be very different?

No cause I’ve worked at all of them. Uh Classic tan has 5 of them and I’ve worked at all of them.

Do you think that tanning helps or hinders the students on campus?

As far as hindering them

Helps or hinders do you think it helps?(to help clarify)

It helps them because a lot of them come in when they’ll be stressed out

Okay

So they come in well being stressed out from testing and they’ll say that they relax them. I use to do it for medical reasons now I do it for relaxation.

Okay so a lot of the benefits are relaxation?

A lot of the benefits are relaxation yeah.

Um do you think that um also there are self esteem images?

Oh sure in a lot of them

Ok so going along with that how and why do you think the tanning image has become so popular and promoted?

Well people want brown color you know if you’re pale and white you look like a ghost if you got brown color you look like you are brown and sugar. So a lot of people want to uh look good.
Okay so this is just a question I know you have kind of already answered it. Uh do you tan?

Yes I do

And how do you feel after you tan?

I actually feel good but I do mine in moderation I don’t tan everyday. I may not tan for weeks but I know when to stop some people tan too much.

Okay thank you for time

Your welcome

(This interview was conducted in the waiting area of the manager’s tanning salon. Due to the fact that customers were walking in and out and that they were in ear’s range of this interview this manager’s answers may have been altered)

Danya Lev

Survey Data Analysis

I created a simple survey to get a general idea from the student population what they thought of tanning. While handing out the surveys I simply stated that this was a survey that will be used to find out who tans on campus and what students think about tanning. I made twenty copies of the survey and made sure the ten were distributed among males and ten were distributed among females. I wanted to get equal amounts of each gender because from my interviews I noticed that everyone says that females have a greater tendency to participate in tanning. However, many salon managers did acknowledge that there are a small percentage of males who use the tanning facilities. Below in tables provided are the gender differences I found. I ask the questions who tans currently and who has tanned before because there also is a large number of students who have tanned but do not anymore.

Students currently participating in tanning

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Students who have participated in tanning

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Something interesting about this data is that 90% of the females interviewed had
participated in some sort of salon tanning at one point while only 20% of the males have. The gender difference is very prevalent so it can be concluded that it is more so the females on campus who participate in tanning.

Another question I asked on my survey was what organizations the individual is a part of. The reason for asking this question is that through my interviews it was predicted that many sorority/fraternity people participate in tanning. Furthermore, I also thought that maybe if people were apart of certain organizations like profession oriented ones they would care more about how they looked and thus participate more in salon tanning.

How I counted this data was by looking to see which individuals ever tanned and counted all the organizations they were a part of. In some instances students were a part of more than one group so that is why the data adds up to more than twenty. Additionally the data proved the stereotype wrong apparently students who are apart of major related organizations on campus tan the most however this isn’t significantly higher than any other type of organization so it can be assumed that one student isn’t more likely to tan than the other depending on what campus organizations they belong to.

Another question that I asked was whether tanning helps or hinders students. In the data I collected I included all the boxes the students checked. Some of them believed that tanning helps and hinders students. Additionally I also had the students write down why they thought it helped or hindered and there were numerous responses that can be seen in the surveys.

Does tanning help or hinder
Females

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Males

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Something interesting to notice about the data is that among the females most of them thought it hindered students however most females have participated in some sort of tanning. In contrast males appear to be torn between whether tanning helps or hinders students. So based on the data maybe it takes one to try tanning to see whether or not it hinders them.

Another question I asked was about race. I asked this question because I wanted to see if race had anything to do with tanning frequency. Unfortunately, I did not get a large enough variety of different races to be able to draw any conclusions from this.

Moreover I wanted to see why students go tanning. I collected the common answers that were recorded from interviews and provided them as options on the survey the results I got are listed below. Once again participants were allowed to check all boxes that they believed would apply.

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Based on this information many participants believe that students go tanning in order to improve self image. This is interesting because it shows that the tan image is a self image that many students want to gain.
All together this survey basically proved the females are more likely to tan and that when participants stop tanning them does it because they realize it hinders them. Additionally, it appears that students tan on campus to attain this popular idealized image of a tan body. Being tan helps students feel more confident which leads them to tan even though most of them know the hindering effects. Lastly, I did this survey on a Sunday night at the undergrad library because I felt that at this time there is a wide variety of students studying at the UGL.

**Group Analysis:**

Today, we can not classify people to ethical groups by skin tone because people have chosen to change their skin tones. Specifically, one group, Caucasian, participates in this trend of changing their skin tone. Artificial tanning beds have been a hot spot for many students on this campus for years. Why is this tan image the new image? Many tanners themselves cannot explain this phenomenon on our campus. Those who are naturally tan just don’t see the point while others have made it apart of their student life.

You may have heard a few girls chatting as one says “You look so good. Did you go tanning?” While the other girl responds yes with a smile on her face. Tanning has not only changed the look for many students on campus but it has created positive personal feelings. Inevitably, our culture has changed through the years. Since so many students have become wrapped up in this tan look, they may have not been exposed to past social ways. Tan was not always popular. In the 10th century, the tone of your skin showed economic status. It separated the working class from the ruling class. Those who worked on the fields became tan while those who had money sat inside with no exposure to the sun. Many of the women and men of higher class went to great extents to become paler. Arsenic was used to die the skin lighter but had very harmful effects. Queen Elizabeth is an example of a women who had painted her face white and wore a mask when exposure to the natural sunlight in order to demonstrate her elegance and class. It was not until the 1920s that the tan image became popular. It was thought to become a fad by accident when French celebrities, Coco and Chanel modeled a new fashion but in a tan body. Outdoor tanning became popular and acceptable for women but this was not enough. In the 1970s, German scientist Friedrich Wolff performed experiments testing UV tanning lights on athletes. In hopes to find that the UV enhanced the athletes performance, athletes liked the golden tan they received and how their body image improved. (Angua, 2008)

After this information was brought to our attention, we decided it was time to link that information to the student body at the University of
Illinois in Champaign. Through observation and research, we found that tanning salons are everywhere on our university. Since tanning is trend with college students specifically, we wanted to find out who is tanning on this campus. More explicitly, we hypothesized that there is a stigma to those that tan on this campus and that type of person can be found associated with certain campus organizations. More formally, we thought that this type of person tans due to the peer pressure provided by the campus organization they are apart of and the popularity of the tan image. Our original research questions we went out on the field to find were a few of the following listed. Who uses tanning beds on campus? Specifically does age, club associations, gender, etc., factors play a role? Is this campus helping or hindering students from looking at the risks of campus?

In order to answer all these questions we had we first decided to approach tanning salon managers on campus. We felt that tanning salon managers could give us a good basis of information to start with because they were the ones who saw which students come to tan. We interviewed three different salon owners. We asked them a lot of questions about how they accept their clientele but also how they get their clientele. By asking the managers these types of questions we were able to gain an idea about how students begin the tanning process. We noticed that a lot of these tanning salon managers were very biased about tanning. The managers never once in their interviews stated that tanning was a bad health choice. One particular salon manager that was interviewed on campus gave us some particular insight as to the students she sees on campus. She said it was typically your white females however she does recommend tanning to everyone including her husband, daughters, and sons. She also said she never turns down any customer and will allow anyone to tan. She saw tanning as very beneficial for the reasons that it increases vitamin D and that it can act as a relaxation technique for students. She did say that the problems with tanning, "is that it is not out there truthfully at what it can help. I mean people are afraid that it can cause cancer there are a lot of things that can cause cancer. But as far as weakness it is the knowledge of your tanning." After collecting this initial data, we found this information to be quite contradictory to common knowledge. We decided to test these ideals by approaching a doctor at McKinley. A lot of the questions we asked the doctor were how tanning influenced one's health. We additionally asked him questions as to why he thought tanning was popular and if there was anything McKinley did to provide knowledge to students as to how bad tanning really is. After taking all the information and perceptions from the doctor and managers we decided to find out what the students really thought/did about tanning. Interviews were conducted with students of both sexes and with students who tanned.
and did not tan.

In general, the tanning industry has rapidly grown through the help of many college students. Students tan for their own purposes but get lured into many lotion promotions or tanning time deals. From interviewed salon managers, we found that owners of tanning salons did not decide to work at a salon for the culture of tanning but for the rapid popular growth of the student tanners. One tanning salon owner had received her masters degree in business from the University of Illinois in Champaign and spotted a salon for sale. She said that the salon was a perfect opportunity for a great business. While another owner’s family handed down the responsibilities of management to him, the new graduate went on to start her new business with her mom. Tanning is a different type of business than many others in that the product is not materialistic. The product is the customers own change in body appearance. Thus, owners try to grab students’ attention more on the personal level. One salon owner chooses the method of befriending her customers through Facebook in order to contract them about the salon’s promotions but more importantly this form of contact is private and efficient. She said advertising in the Daily Illini and the Booze News were impersonal and people do not pay attention to that. Tanning can become an intimate experience so choosing a salon would be highly affected by word of mouth recommendations.

Tanning salons offer students a personal experience. Multiple salon owners used ‘comfortable’ to describe the relaxing and family owned feel of their salons. Through comparison of salon interviews to student tanners, a concept developed. While salon owners promote psychological benefits of tanning, students tan mostly for the physical outcome and feelings that are involved with the post tanning activity. Owners agreed that they feel many students come and relax on their beds. The beds are there to give a students a time out from their life and provide a warm comforting feeling. After interviewing students, it was established that although tanning created a relaxing effect, this was not the reason for tanning. Tanners said they go just to become tan because the tan image is what creates positive feelings about themselves. More specifically Gimlin talks about a link that exists between self and body. She says that the link can be renegotiated through work on the body in this case it is through tanning (Gimlin 60).

Additionally a survey was also conducted to get general ideas regarding tanning from the student body. The purpose of the survey was used to find out who tans on campus and what students think about tanning. Twenty copies of the survey were made. Surveys were distributed to ten females and ten males. An equal amount of each gender seemed
desirable because from the interviews it was concluded that tanning was a female activity. However, many salon managers did acknowledge that there are a small percentage of males who use the tanning facilities. The data found that 90% of the females interviewed had participated in salon tanning at one point while only 20% of the males partaken. The prevalent gender differences lead to the evident conclusion that females were the dominant tanners.

Another question asked on the survey was about individual organization involvement. The reason for asking this question is that in our hypothesis we predicted that a certain type of student tans. Furthermore, we speculated if people were apart of certain organizations such as a professional oriented one, they would care more about how they looked. Thus, these particular people may participate more in salon tanning. Statistics showed that student organization had no effect on involvement in tanning on campus which proved our hypothesis wrong. Another question we asked was whether tanning helps or hinders students. Although, most of the females participated in tanning, their response showed that they thought tanning hindered students. In contrast, males appear to be torn between whether tanning helps or hinders students. We were left with uncertainty because the question that still lingers is why do many students still participate in tanning if they know it hinders them?

Significantly, we found that most of the females interviewed on campus had the same reasons for going tanning. This idea is support by Debra Giblin in Body Works. She states, “Physical attractiveness is simply more important for women than for men, a fact that contributes to women’s preoccupation with appearance and psychological, physical, and financial investment in their bodies. Women, far more than men, involve themselves in groups aimed for altering the body.” (Gimlin 2002). Pale skin was seen as a much unwanted physical trait that could be easily changed. When surveyors were asked to write a word or two on why they tanned, surprisingly majority of them said for self-image and confidence. The interviewers clarified why self-confidence was improved. On campus, many females feel that a thin, tan, healthy look is most beautiful. This confidence was a personal feeling that many females obtained specifically from tanning. A salon owner said, “You feel healthier. You feel sexier. You feel cuter. You feel confident. It’s really interesting how just changing your skin color can make you feel more confident or more attractive.” Particularly, one tanner interviewed said she tans to reduce pimples, look skinner, whiten her teeth, and hide cellulose on her legs, all of which helps her feel more beautiful thus gain self-confidence. After interviewing a male non-tanner, his views on tanning were quite
different. He felt that tanning was a waste of time and did not improve female body images. Tan was not a factor to him when looking at the other sex but a good personality was said to be his preference. Beauty has become powerful on our campus and moreover our society. Yet, what is beauty? It can be defined differently by every individual and alludes to why tanning is mainly a personal activity.

As we came to the conclusion that the main reason female students on this campus tan to improve self image and confidence, new questions are brought to our attention. If it is dominantly females who tan, do males engage in another particular activity to satisfy their needs to improve self-image? Has our culture on campus pressured the females to improve their image over males? Tanning has attracted the female student population for a reason. Are students unknowingly becoming tanorexics? We could further our research by obtaining surveys from tanners before and after their experience. Also, observing tanners at the salon could help articulate our assumptions. Facial expressions could help identify emotions and personal feelings. Observations of tanners coming alone would support our analysis that tanning is a personal activity done for individual improvements. If tanning has harmful long term effects, why aren’t these advertisements as prominent as those against smoking and drinking? One student might have a cigarette or beer to relax while another may spend a few minutes in a tanning bed. All the three activities could potentially lead to cancer but why has this campus stressed two of the issues over the third?

References


**EUI Links:**

Beauty

"She's Got the Look": Cultural Beauty Ideals from the Asian American Woman's Perspective by Devayya, Dhaya

This IDEAL looks at Asian American beauty. Specifically this was researched because college students especially women are very conscious of their appearance. Physical appearance is a major
representation of one’s identity, Beauty ideals are different not only between ethnicities but within them. This researcher found that the women of different regions of Asian emulate to look the certain region of their region. However, after interviewing second generation Asian Americans it was found that most of them desired body types more similar to the mainstream American ideal which is often unrealistic. This study is similar to tanning because these women like those tanning individuals are unhappy with the way they look and instead emulate to look mainstream American.

Social status

Class and the consumption of status symbols on the U of I campus by Norberg, Jennifer

In this IDEAL about social status an ethnographer discusses how she conducted initial surveys and interviews. In her survey/interviews she asked questions like Do U of I students use consumer goods to display their socio-economic status? Are some students manipulating their image by purchasing expensive clothing or accessories (jeans, purses, cell phones, shoes) to give the appearance that they belong to a higher status than their actual financial means? The data in this study showed that material things presented one’s social status. Social status seems to concern individuals who are under classman more. This is because when they enter the university they are unsure of themselves and also have a credit card for the first time. During this time they find themselves spending through impulse to fit in. This impulsivity can relate to tanning too. For example there are a large number of students who have tried tanning however they may not do it anymore. They have originally tried it to look better and fit a social status but as the student gets older they realize that it is not a must anymore similar to the way they think of materialistic things.

Reflect: Doing EUI research was a great experience. I have never before done any research but have read many ethnographic pieces. Being able to finally do ethnographic research has allowed me to gain a greater appreciation for it. The process for doing EUI research was a little challenging. The consent forms were not always clear and were hard for me as a researcher to understand and hard for my subjects to understand. It would be easier if the forms were in easier to understand and cut straight to the point. Having moodle set up for this project was really helpful because it allowed an organized place for projects to be stored and it allowed me to view what other students were doing and gave me the opportunity to get ideas from them. While conducting the research some parts felt very tedious such as recording and
transcribing. It seemed like I had to go everyday to check out/renew a tape recorder and then spend hours transcribing it was a lot of work to go through in order to make our interviews official so that we could use them in our data. I'm really excited about the possibility of archiving because currently there is nothing on tanning so our study will provide a basis for future studies.

Recommendations: Obviously at University of Illinois there are a lot of students who have/do tan. Unfortunately there is biased information on tanning depending on who you talk to. For example, when students walk into tanning salons they are told all these benefits of tanning such as increasing vitamin D, causing relaxation, etc. In contrast, these students are never told that this information is incorrect. For example when we approached the doctor at McKinley he stated that there were no benefits of tanning students should be made aware of this information. Additionally there is no health education about tanning that McKinley provides maybe if the risks were in students faces more there would be less tanners.

A lot of students already know that tanning is bad but persist to do it. Another recommendation that could be made is to the tanning salons. A lot of the managers said they only make suggestions to their customers they never say no. If there were more regulations they put on the customers maybe the risks of tanning could decrease and it would not be so harmful.