
Understanding individual differences in attitudes towards touch with a focus on faith

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Abstract

It is well known that human beings are inherently social creatures. With touch being one of the earliest senses to develop and to subsequently remain an integral part of our lives, it is unsurprising to see research highlight how touch can have a significant impact on both our physical and mental well-being. Attitudes, recency and use of touch all show evidence for individual differences on many levels, including gender, sex, attachment styles and culture. Faith/ religion is one aspect that is yet to be fully explored, despite research having shown how faith/religion play a large role in the formulation of attitudes and morals. With a growing religious population in the west it becomes pertinent to investigate any faith based differences, as these will impact how we act with one-another in the workplace, treatment setting and social interactions. This study acts as the first investigation into the differences between individuals who are religious and non-religious on their attitudes towards touch. The current dataset was drawn from a larger online survey (known as the Touch Test) designed to explore attitudes and experiences towards touch. The scores on three scales; touch experiences and attitudes questionnaire (TEAQ), social touch questionnaire (STQ) and touch in health scale (THS) were investigated. Overall we found the religious group had a more positive attitude towards touch on all three of the scales. This study provides a valuable first step into understanding attitudes towards touch and how this may differ based on an individual's religious affiliation.

Keywords: Affective touch, religion, faith, individual differences

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