Are Tattoos Fashion? Applying the Social Change Theory

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of the requirements for the degree
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This thesis titled

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ABSTRACT

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Are Tattoos Fashion? Applying the Social Change Theory

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The purpose of this study was to explore current perceptions of tattoos as fashion, with application and analysis of the social change theory as the research framework. Qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to analyze current levels of social acceptance of tattoos and perceptions of tattoos as fashion phenomena. Participants were recruited through purposeful convenience sampling from Midwestern and Western regions of the United States. A total of 212 surveys were collected from 46 men and 166 women; 62 members of the sample had at least one tattoo and 150 had no tattoos.

While recognition of social change with respect to tattoos was documented, and evidence of tattoos as a fashion phenomenon emerged, this study supports the notion that social influences restricting tattoo acceptance as a mainstream fashion continue to exist. Among this sample population, tattoos are perceived as fashion objects; however, there are complexities in the way that tattoos reflect fashion, largely due to their permanency on bodies.

The overarching theme, emergent from qualitative survey data, addressing the acceptance of tattoos and their status as fashion items was visibility. A substantial portion of respondents, both tattooed and non-tattooed, indicated that the ability to modify appearance, either to display or hide tattoos, was an important factor in tattoo consumption. This desire to modify personal adornment, through choice to “wear” a
tattoo (i.e. visibly display the tattoo), reflects the flexible, discretionary, and temporary aspects of fashion. Related to respondents’ desires or preferences for appearance modification, personal roles and symbolic communication were referenced. Predominantly, tattoos were labeled as inappropriate in professional settings; however, tattoos were noted by participants as acceptable in certain groups including celebrities, bikers, music artists, and athletes.

Using t-tests to compare tattooed and non-tattooed participants, significant differences were found in levels of tattoo fashionability, levels of tattoo acceptability, and perceptions of tattoo consumption as a good use of money. Tattooed participants considered themselves significantly more knowledgeable about tattoos than the non-tattooed participants. No differences were observed between the two groups with respect to perceptions of observed changes in social acceptance of tattoos during their lifetimes. Respondents in the two groups did not exhibit significantly different political orientations nor were there differences between the two groups with respect to influence of religion and influence of political beliefs on tattoos. Sixty-nine percent of the tattooed respondents confirmed that they view their tattoos as fashionable although their reasons are varied and somewhat ambiguous.

Using t-tests to compare male and female respondents, three items were significantly different by sex. Females believed more strongly than males that tattoos are appropriate only on certain body parts. Males believed more strongly than females that tattoos are acceptable in their religious beliefs, and the political orientations of males and
females in this population sample were significantly different. Males were more conservative and females were more liberal.

This study provides insight into topics for future research related to social changes affecting tattoo acceptance and the role of tattoos as fashion. This study was limited to primarily young adult, Caucasian participants with some college education, thus the results cannot be generalized across populations. Future analysis surveying more diverse populations in terms of ethnicity, education, socioeconomic status, religion, and political affiliation should be conducted to better understand the phenomena of tattoos as fashion in a broader context. Additionally, further exploration of sex and age differences would provide greater insight into the social change of tattoos, both in terms of tattoo acceptance and tattoos as fashion items.

Approved: __________________________________________________________________________

V. Ann Paulins

Professor of Human and Consumer Sciences Education
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of tattoos has increased over time in today’s Western culture (Demello, 1995; Horne, Know, Zusman, & Zusman, 2007; Irwin, 2002; Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2005; Kosut, 2006a; Laumann 2006; The Pew Research Center, 2007; Vail, 1999; Velliquette, Murray & Creyer, 1998). According to a Harris Poll (2003), 40 million Americans (16% of the population) had tattoos in 2003. Thirty-five percent of 25- to 29-year olds were found to have at least one tattoo (Server, 2003). In 1997 the tattoo industry was reported as one of the top businesses in the Hartford Current (Vail, 1999).

As with other social change movements, tattoo behaviors and designs reflect aspects of society, such as popular culture, economic environments, technological advancement, demographic shifts, social and community structures, family situations, and fashion styles that have changed over time (Mun, Janigo, & Johnson, 2010; Sweetman, 1999).

Because tattoos are permanent body decorations, the role of tattoos as fashion warrants further exploration. Tattoo practices range from covering the entire body to application of small designs that are not visible on a clothed body (Edgerton & Dingman, 1963; Kang & Jones, 2007). While fashion styles themselves change over time (Horn, 1968; Roach & Eicher, 1992; Sproles, 1981), tattoo designs remain permanent. Furthermore, tattoos may have significant symbolic meaning or may simply be results of choices to become decorated. Motives for tattoos may influence their roles as fashion statements.

Tattooing has emerged as a recognized element of American culture (Demello; 1995; Horne, Know, Zusman, & Zusman, 2007; Irwin, 2002; Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson,
In fact tattoos have diffused into popular culture, aided by media promotion on television shows such as *Miami Ink* and *Tattoo Highway* (Adams, 2009; Kosut, 2006a), and also due to technological advances of the tattoo techniques, inks, and equipment (Swami & Furnham, 2007).

Clearly, social perceptions of tattoos in current fashion have changed over the past several decades; however, the catalysts and barriers that have contributed to a social change in tattoo behaviors have not been thoroughly explored. Insight into tattooing practices offers a lens for consumers, retailers, and social scientists to better understand how and why tattoos have entered mainstream America. The purpose of this study was to identify and explore the manner in which tattoos have become prevalent social phenomena. Whether tattoos have gained increased acceptance across sex, age, ethnic, educational, religious, geographical, economic, and social class categories was of interest. The specific goals of this study were to:

1. Explore the relationship between elements of social change and the current status of tattoos.
2. Gain an understanding of the current state of tattoos as fashion items.
3. Examine the applicability of existing fashion theory with respect to tattoo adoption.
Definition of Terms

*Deviance*- The infraction of some agreed-upon rule (Becker, 1963, pg. 8).

*Dress*- Includes anything put on the body; this includes but is not limited by applications of clothing, makeup, perfume, and hair style. Dress is used to express group affiliation, values, standards, cultural ranking, religion, occasion, utilitarian and hegemonic reasoning (Roach & Eicher, 1965).

*Fashion Change*- The following of trends and fashion involvement based on socio-cultural factors. These factors include: custom, law, planned reformed movements, cultural contact, fashion, and fashion leadership (Horn, 1968; Roach & Eicher, 1965).

*Poor Chic* - Identifies the practice of creating expensive fashion inspired by styles worn by people in working classes, and even in poverty stricken socio economic groups (Halnon, 2002).

*Social Change*- The theory of social change involves the differentiations in social organizations that include changes in customs, mores, institutions, laws, language, and ideologies (Nordskog, 1960).

Flash Tattoos- Ready-made sheets of traditional style images that are widely distributed to tattoo artists and displayed in tattoo shops for the purpose of inspiration and advertisement. Flash tattoo designs can be traced and copied for tattoo application.

*Trickle Down Theory of Fashion*- Social stratification of fashions from the upper class adoption to the diffusion downward to lower classes (Sproles, 1981).

*Trickle Up Theory of Fashion*- Styles are copied from everyday individuals and are adopted by upper class individuals and labeled as fashion items (McCraken, 1987).
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

To address the overarching research purpose, “to identify and explore the manner in which tattoos have become prevalent social phenomena,” a review of related literature was conducted and is presented here. The study’s specific goals provided the organizational structure of the literature review, resulting in sections addressing social change as the theoretical framework, the historic roles of tattoos as symbolic elements of dress, and tattoos as fashion.

Theoretical Framework: Social Change

Social change can be measured through the examination of stimulants, agents, and sources of economic, political, social, cultural, psychological, and ecological phenomena and institutions (Dwyer & Minnegal, 2010; Krznaric, 2007; Kuhn, 1972; Land, 1975; Lenski, 1976; Moore & Cook, 1967; Nisbet, 1972; Nordskog, 1960; Ogburn, 1979; White, 1972). The theory of social change involves the differentiations in social organizations that include changes in customs, mores, institutions, laws, language, and ideologies (Nordskog, 1960). In contemporary culture, social change addresses the transformation of human behaviors such as attitudes and beliefs (Krznaric, 2007).

The organization of social change theory is determined through sources, agents, and stimulants that broadly categorize indications of the change process. Social change can occur at the macro (government, family, and economy), meso (sub cultural groups, age, gender, and ethnicity) or micro (individuals) levels (Dwyer & Minnegal, 2010; Krznaric, 2007; Kuhn, 1972; Land, 1975; Lenski, 1976; Moore & Cook, 1967; Nisbet, 1972; Nordskog, 1960; Ogburn, 1979; White, 1972). Sources of change include

Poor Chic

"Poor Chic" is a social change that capitalizes on the style of the poverty class. Halnon (2002) introduced the term Poor Chic, which identifies the practice of creating expensive fashion inspired by styles worn by people in working classes, and even in poverty stricken socio economic groups. Halnon (2002) noted four change processes that rationalize consumption of poverty and specifically focus on tattoo consumption; these include control, efficiency, predictability, and calculability.

Control is the ability to adopt clothing and appearance styles associated with poverty but not the lifestyle that poverty commands. Through control, adopters of Poor
Chic fashion do not fully experienced the realities of poverty. Poor Chic fashion adopters have control over their choices of fashion that depict poverty-influenced style (Halnon, 2002). For example, individuals can obtain tattoos without being associated as deviants (Halnon, 2002).

*Efficiency* is a shortcut to experience stereotypical roles without having to immerse fully into the style of living in poverty (Halnon, 2002). De-privatization of poverty allows for efficient imitation by saving time and energy in pursuit of experiences that are safe and temporary imitations of permanent, risky poverty-associated experiences (Halnon, 2002). For example, temporary tattoos offer consumers efficient access to tattoo culture without having to undergo the process and permanency of permanent body tattoos (Halnon, 2002).

*Predictability* is the re-creation of familiar behaviors and identities that have been labeled as poverty symbols, and relabeled into fashion refurbished items (Halnon, 2002). The redefined items are then accepted and consumed by other socio economic classes (Halnon, 2002). Specifically, tattoo culture has become glamorized by upper societal classes with the creation of art pieces, desired literature, and tattoo publications (Halnon, 2002).

*Calculability* is the control over investment that individuals decide to put into the product. Individuals can control time invested, money invested, and physical investment of the item or experience (Halnon, 2002). Halnon (2002) elaborated that tattoos are viewed in terms of their total costs, including, price of the tattoo, investments of time and money, application and removal processes, and social risks (Halnon, 2002).
Fashion Change and Social Change

Fashions change constantly as trends go in and out of style. Horn (1968) noted that fashion change can be hindered by social environments. Rigid class distinction, sumptuary laws, customs, isolation, fear, government restrictions, and socialism are forces that restrict fashion change (Horn, 1968). Alternately, indicators serving as catalysts for fashion change include open class systems, abundance and diffusion of wealth, increased leisure time, sports, education, cultural contact, emphasis on youth, social agitation, gender equality, and technology (Horn, 1968). Social changes are often reflected in fashion specifically because fashions are typically both highly visible and easily modified (Horn, 1968). Through analysis of fashion changes between 1920 and 1985 (identified as the modern era), Behling (1985-86) sought to develop a predictive model for fashion change. In her review, she acknowledged fashion change was influenced by sources, stimulants, and agents of social change. Specifically, economy, government, and demographics emerged as contributors to fashion change.

The following specific research questions were developed to explore tattoos and social change:

- Do people recognize social change with respect to tattoos?
- What is the current level of social acceptance of tattoos?
- Does social change with respect to tattoo acceptance differ according to sex, age, ethnic, educational, religious, geographical, and economic, and social class categories?
History of Tattoos

Tattoos were termed “tatu” by Captain Cook in the eighteenth century, but were known long before Cook's voyages of discovery (Blanchard, 1991 &; Caplan, 1997, 2000; Schildkrout, 2004). Greeks and Romans were known to tattoo slaves and prisoners as signs of ownership or punishment (Caplan, 1997, 2000; Schildkrout, 2004). During the Medieval period, tattoos reflected religious values; saints and other religious figures tattooed their bodies with holy images (Caplan, 1997, 2000; Schildkrout, 2004). Subsequently, stigmatization of tattooed people emerged as early as the seventeenth century (Caplan, 1997, 2000).

The images of the sailor tattoo and the working man’s tattoo date to the late eighteenth century, when members of European subcultures identified their service or status in their communities with symbolic tattoos (Caplan, 1997, 2000). Caplan (1997, 2000) noted that tattooing became more recognizable in the late eighteenth century because visual observations of bodies (through medical exploration, shared living facilities, and punitive judicial markings) were more frequent. With increasing travel, tattooing became popularized. Historically, tattooing was considered a masculine trait and women were rarely tattooed; Caplan (1997, 2000) elaborated that women with prominent tattoos were labeled prostitutes. By the nineteenth century, tattoos were associated with deviant subcultures, most notably sailors, criminals, and miscreants (Caplan, 1997, 2000).

Popularization of tattoos, and more frequent consumption of tattoos, occurred in North America with the modernization of tattoo equipment and marketing techniques. As
Caplan (1997, 2000) pointed out, tattoo inks and applications transitioned from homemade to cottage industry. Imagery become more elaborate as artists specialized in tattoo application. Samuel O' Reilly, a nineteenth century tattoo artist, is attributed as the inventor of the electric tattoo gun. He was also a catalyst of Japanese flash tattoo design\(^1\). O'Reilly’s creation of Japanese flash tattoo designs printed and published throughout the United States, enhanced opportunities for tattoo adoption (Blanchard, 1991).

During the modernization of tattoos, the practice underwent scrutiny and was generally not accepted in popular culture. Tattooing was subject to governmental intervention that prohibited or put boundaries on tattooing, which further marginalized the practice in the mainstream population. In the 1950's state governments took action to restrict tattooing. In New York City, in response to a Hepatitis outbreak, the city closed down all tattoo venues and prohibited the application of tattoos (Armstrong, 2005). As recently as 1979, tattoos were banned in four states (Massachusetts, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Vermont) – a restriction that was in place until 1995 (Armstrong, 2005).

**Tattoos and Fashion**

*Deviancy and Anti-fashion*

Once an outlawed activity, tattoos today have become situated into mainstream consumption (Adams, 2009). Adams (2009) studied the changing status of tattoos, recording the evolution from their association with deviant subcultures to their current acceptance in mainstream society. Tattooing has historically been used to differentiate

\(^1\) Japanese flash tattoo designs are ready made sheets of traditional Japanese style images that are widely distributed to tattoo artists and displayed in tattoo shops for the purpose of inspiration and advertisement. Flash tattoo designs can be traced and copied for tattoo application.
society members and to identify individuals as members of groups. In current popular culture, increased consumption has made tattoos more widely accepted (Adams, 2009). Adams surveyed 500 tattooed and non-tattooed respondents (120 tattooed; 380 not tattooed) to understand tattoo behavior and the relationship between tattoos and deviancy. Using a stigma proxy and regression model, Adams (2009) found that income and education were inversely related to tattoo consumption. That is, the higher one’s income, the less likely one is to be tattooed. Additionally, he found that people whose friends and family members had tattoos were more likely to be tattooed themselves, supporting a relationship of group behavior and acceptance with tattoo activities. Adams (2009) concluded that while tattoo acceptance has increased over time, a certain degree of marginalization of tattooed people in modern society still exists.

Kosut (2006b) used ethnographic analysis, personal experiences, and in-depth interviews to explore tattoo culture. Kosut found that tattoos, through historical examination, are associated with deviant behavior and concluded that, while the prevalence of tattoos is increasing, association of tattoos with deviance still exists.

Fashion Theory

Fashion is the prevailing style of the time (Horn, 1968; Roach and Eicher, 1992; Nystrom, 1928; Simmel, 1957; Sproles, 1981). Sproles defined further that, "Fashion is a culturally endorsed style of aesthetic expression in dress and adornment, which is discernible at any given time and changes over time within a social system of group associated individuals" (Sproles, 1974, p. 3). Lang and Lang (1961) defined fashion with three characteristics:
The label suggests, first, that the commodity is transitory, not lasting or permanent. Second, its novelty—not any intrinsic rationality—governs its acceptance; the value of what is fashionable is independent of its rational utility. Third, the label [fashion] suggests the trivial. Fashion is allowed free sway because it is assumed to move only within the limits of what is culturally approved (p. 322).

Sproles (1974) elaborated on the foundations of fashion and what makes something fashion by stating that, "The fashion object must be a non-permanent object which is subject to change, obsolescence, and eventual replacement by 'newer' objects" (p. 4). Sproles (1974) continued to describe that fashion must entail functionality, and be accepted by the general public.

Public and Private Self

When dealing with image, the idea of self and the display of the self in private and public manners can be debated within individual psyches and with respect to social expectations (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Fenigstein et al. (1975) discussed that people’s self-awareness is used as a tool and goal for displaying themselves in certain ways, or to defend themselves from negative reactions. People’s self-consciousness of their own images and actions provides a lens into their personal thoughts and beliefs (Fenigstein et al., 1975). With respect to fashion, self-presentation is described as the communication of behaviors or images that build a public self which fits the ideals set in society (Baumeister, 1982). Baumeister (1982) explained that constructing the ideal public self has two motivations behind the creation: reward of approval of creating the
ideal self and verification that the ideal self has been created. The public self reflects the idea that people work throughout their lives to achieve the ultimate display of societal perfection and to become influential and desired. When the ideal of the public self is discovered, the individual ultimately tries to parallel his or her public and private selves (Baumeister, 1982). Eicher (1981) described that each individual represents three different selves: the public self, the private self, and the secret self. The public self (reality) communicates, age, sex and occupation through dress. When people dress for their public selves, they are looking to fill the categories that fit their characteristics (Eicher, 1981). The private self (fun) communicates less formal activities that involve friends and family (Eicher, 1981). The secret self (fantasy) communicates (or does not communicate) a type of dress that delves into sexual dress, or bold colors that typically would not be worn in public, or even private, lifestyles (Eicher, 1981).

The following research questions were developed to further explore the role of tattoos in current Western fashion:

- Are tattoos considered fashion?
- Are tattoos private fashion behaviors?

Deviancy

Deviancy, on the social scale, is "the infraction of some agreed-upon rule" and depends upon who is breaking the rules and why (Becker, 1963, pg. 8). Becker noted that a behavior is labeled deviant only through the reaction to the action (Becker, 1963).

When analyzing popular culture and the acceptance of behaviors in that culture, the idea of whether the behaviors are accepted (or not) is based upon society’s collective
reactions to the behaviors (Sanders, 1990). Sanders (1990) reflected upon deviance in popular culture, clarifying that the perspective of observers of potentially deviant behavior defines deviance. Sanders (1990) emphasized that deviance, "depends on who engages in the behavior, the purpose of the action, who becomes aware of the conduct, and the situation in which the behavior is carried out" (pp. 3-4). It is expected that, within societies, there are people who violate behavioral norms (Sanders, 1990). Behaviors of popular culture contradict deviant actions because popular culture reflects widespread actions and accepted practices (Sanders, 1990).

Socioeconomic Influenced Theories

The Trickle Down Theory, proposed by Simmel (1904), presents the idea that fashions change based on behaviors reflected in social class activities, and the deciding social class that determines fashion is the elite upper class. Sproles (1981) identified social stratification of fashions from the upper class adoption to the diffusion downward to lower classes to support this theory.

The Trickle Up Theory is the idea that fashion originates from everyday individuals and is adopted by upper class individuals and labeled as fashion (McCraken, 1987). Style patterns that could be seen on the streets, such as punk or grunge, make their way to the fashion runways where the elite social classes may adopt the style (Sladen, 1994). McCraken (1987) argued that diffusion of fashion does not always occur in a downward fashion; it has the ability to move upward. Sladen (1994) noted that in popular culture, people look for group affiliation. Sladen (1994) elaborated that style is one facet where group affiliation can occur, and it occurs on both spectrums: at the top trickling
down to the masses, and starting from the bottom and being adopted upward by elite social classes.

*Dress*

Roach-Higgenes and Eicher (1992) analyzed literature and the usage of the term *dress* to determine how people defined the word in their cultural landscapes. They studied the ways in which dress communicates aspects of people’s lives. Furthermore, they explored the motivations that individuals hold with respect to decisions about dress.

Dress is defined as “an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body” (Roach-Higgenes & Eicher, 1992, p. 1). Dress is considered an extension of the self that does not come naturally or biologically (Roach-Higgenes & Eicher, 1992). Dress includes hairstyle, skin color, body piercings, tattoos, body fragrance, jewelry, accessories, and apparel (Roach-Higgenes & Eicher, 1992). Roach-Higgenes and Eicher (1992) specifically identified tattoos as components of dress because they permanently change the color, shape, and texture of the skin.

**Summary of Research Questions**

In summary, the purpose of this study was to identify and explore the manner in which tattoos have become prevalent social phenomena. The specific goals of this study were to:

1. Explore the relationship between elements of social change and the current status of tattoos.

2. Gain an understanding of the current state of tattoos as fashion items.
3. Examine the applicability of existing fashion theory with respect to tattoo adoption.

In addition, the research questions explored in this study are summarized here:

- Do people recognize social change with respect to tattoos?
- What is the current level of social acceptance of tattoos?
- Does social change with respect to tattoo acceptance differ according to sex, age, ethnic, educational, religious, geographical, and economic, and social class categories?
- Are tattoos considered fashion?
- Are tattoos private fashion behaviors?
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, primarily qualitative data was sought. Quantitative data was collected to lend insight into the research questions and to support the qualitative data. To reach a sample size that would provide sufficient data to explore the research questions, a survey method was selected. As required for the use of human participants, approval for the study was obtained from Ohio University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is presented in Appendix A.

Population Sample and Recruiting Participants

Participants were recruited using purposeful convenience sampling. Participants included Ohio University students, Oregon State University students, and people who were contacted through word-of-mouth. The participants were required to be at least eighteen years old to participate. The participants did not have to have a tattoo to complete the survey, nor were there any demographic requirements for participation. Participants were found in general university courses and through personal networks in order to compile as diverse a sample as possible using the convenience sampling method.

Survey Development

A survey was developed that contained questions relevant to identifying characteristics attributed to the foundations of the social change theory. The first part of the survey included demographic questions that were formulated using reference from the U.S. Census. The aims of the demographic questions were not only to describe the sample population, but also to associate demographic information with tattoo adopters.
The next portion of the survey contained questions that generated quantitative and qualitative data. A series of questions presented agreement scales with choices ranging from one to 10 (1 = strongly disagree; 10 = strongly agree). Respondents were asked to elaborate about their responses on the agreement scales with short explanation responses. The questions requiring responses on scales from one to 10 were:

- I find tattoos fashionable.
- I find tattoos socially acceptable.
- I believe tattoos are appropriate only on certain body areas.
- I find tattoos socially acceptable in my circle of friends.
- I find tattoos acceptable in the workplace.
- Tattoos are more socially acceptable among certain types of groups than others.
- I have seen a change in social acceptance of tattoos during my life.
- My religious beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos.
- Tattoos are acceptable in my religious beliefs.
- There have been people who have been influential in my perceptions of tattoos.
- My feelings about tattoos have changed throughout my life.
- Tattoos are not a good use of my money.
- I consider myself knowledgeable about tattoos.

A continuum, rather than a one to 10 scale, was created for the participants to rate their political orientations. Numeral values were omitted to reduce association of value with political orientation. Liberal was placed on the far left on the continuum and conservative was placed on the far right. For quantitative analysis, values were assigned
(1 = strongly liberal, 10 = strongly conservative, with values between 1 and 10 reflecting the respondents’ continuum locations).

Questions requiring "yes" or "no" responses were formulated; those questions were:

• Have there been any pivotal events in your lifetime that have changed your perceptions of tattoos?
• In your workplace, have tattoos been addressed in workplace appearance codes?
• Do you seek information about tattoos?
• Do you plan on getting a tattoo in the near future?
• Do you currently have any tattoos?
• Have you ever had any tattoos removed?

Quantitative data were analyzed to compare (a) male and female and (b) tattooed and non-tattooed participants. T-tests were employed to determine whether means between the paired groups differed statistically.

The last section of the survey was to be completed only by participants with tattoos. Questions included “yes” and “no” responses as well as short answer. The following questions were asked:

• How many tattoos do you currently have?
• Do you consider your tattoos fashionable? Please Explain.
• Were there any specific reasons or influences that prompted your tattoo(s)? Please describe.
• When wearing typical clothing, at least one tattoo is visible.
• Was the placement of your tattoo deliberate in terms of its visibility to others? Please explain.
• Do you undertake conscious efforts to cover your tattoo(s)? Please describe.
• Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) in the workplace, among family members, among friends, or in general public atmosphere? Please describe.
• Where on your body is your first tattoo located?
• What year did you get your first tattoo?
• Describe the circumstances and reasons related to your first tattoo.
• What year did you get your most recent tattoo?
• Do your tattoo(s) influence how you feel about yourself? Please describe.

Evaluation of Survey Questions

Principles of grounded theory were used to assign and define qualitative data as well as to compare the responses between two data sets – tattooed and non-tattooed people (Charmaz, 2011). Qualitative data were categorized using content analysis, with emergent themes identified as suggested by Berg (2009). The theory of social change served as reference as responses were categorized. Indicators included the stimulants, agents, and sources of change. There was effort reduce bias in the survey, by using the U.S. Census was used as a guide. Scales were used to quantify how strongly each participant agreed or disagreed with the statements.
A phenomenological psychological approach was used in analysis of the qualitative data (Wertz, 2011). Using this approach, responses were analyzed with the following process suggested by Wertz (2011): (a) individual responses were analyzed to reach comprehensive conclusions and (b) meaning of the responses were categorized and considered.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In the manner described in Chapter 3, data were analyzed with respect to the research questions. The data were derived from a total of 212 returned surveys; 46 from men and 166 from women. Sixty-two (30%) of the respondents, 17 men (8% of the total) and 45 (21% of the total) women, had at least one tattoo. Thirty-seven percent of men and 27 percent of women in this study were tattooed. All survey participants were age 18 or older. Table 1 presents a summary of the participants’ demographic profiles.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total n</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 and Above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Ethnic Origin  | African American | 3 | 1% | 5 | 2% | 8 | 3% |
|                | Hispanic         | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1% | 3 | 1% |
|                | Caucasian        | 36| 16%| 140|66%|176|82%|
|                | Korean           | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 3 | 2% |
|                | Chinese          | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1% | 2 | 1% |
|                | Japanese         | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 2 | 2% |
|                | Filipino         | 1 | 1% | 2 | 1% | 3 | 2% |
|                | Vietnamese       | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1% | 2 | 1% |
|                | Other            | 3 | 1% | 9 | 4% | 12| 5% |
|                | No Response      | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Total          | 46   | 22% | 166   | 78% | 212     | 100%    |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total n</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Grad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-$29,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-$59,999</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-$89,999</td>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$90,000-Above</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>97</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Suburbs</td>
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<td>12%</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Christian</td>
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<td>6%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Evangelical</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total n</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tattooed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequencies of responses to survey items were analyzed to compare two groups: (a) tattooed and non-tattooed respondents and (b) male and female respondents. See Tables 2 and 3 for frequency summaries. Table 4 presents frequencies of responses for selected items between female and male tattooed participants. Table 5 shows selected items presented only to tattooed participants. For statistical comparisons, selected survey items were analyzed with t-tests. Table 6 presents the t-test results comparing tattooed and non-tattooed respondents. Table 7 presents the t-test results comparing male and female respondents.
### Table 2

*Frequency of Responses to Survey Items by Tattooed and Non-tattooed Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Tattooed (n = 62)</th>
<th>Non-Tattooed (n = 150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have there been any pivotal events in your lifetime that have changed your perceptions of tattoos?</td>
<td>19 (31%) 42 (68%) 1 (1%)</td>
<td>26 (17%) 123 (82%) 1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your work experience, have tattoos been addressed in workplace appearance codes?</td>
<td>31 (50%) 30 (48%) 1 (1%)</td>
<td>77 (51%) 71 (47%) 2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you seek information about tattoos?</td>
<td>23 (37%) 37 (60%) 2 (3%)</td>
<td>25 (16%) 124 (83%) 1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you plan on getting a tattoo in the near future?</td>
<td>35 (56%) 25 (40%) 2 (3%)</td>
<td>46 (30%) 102 (68%) 2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever had any tattoos removed?</td>
<td>0 (95%) 59 (0%) 3 (5%)</td>
<td>0 (97%) 145 (0%) 5 (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Frequency of Responses to Survey Items by Male and Female Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Male (n = 46)</th>
<th>Female (n = 166)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have there been any pivotal events in your lifetime that have changed your</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceptions of tattoos.</td>
<td>(22%)</td>
<td>(78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your work experience, have tattoos been addressed in workplace appearance</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>codes?</td>
<td>(44%)</td>
<td>(56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you seek information about tattoos?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(29%)</td>
<td>(71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you plan on getting a tattoo in the near future?</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(35%)</td>
<td>(65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever had any tattoos removed?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(99%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Frequency of Responses to Survey Items for Male and Female Respondents with Tattoos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Male (n = 17)</th>
<th>Female (n = 45)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) in the workplace?</td>
<td>Yes 3 (18%)</td>
<td>Yes 5 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 13 (76%)</td>
<td>No 39 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Response 1 (6%)</td>
<td>No Response 1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) among family members?</td>
<td>Yes 5 (29%)</td>
<td>Yes 22 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 11 (65%)</td>
<td>No 22 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Response 1 (6%)</td>
<td>No Response 1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) among friends?</td>
<td>Yes 1 (6%)</td>
<td>Yes 3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 15 (88%)</td>
<td>No 41 (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Response 1 (6%)</td>
<td>No Response 1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) in general public atmosphere?</td>
<td>Yes 2 (12%)</td>
<td>Yes 5 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 14 (82%)</td>
<td>No 39 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Response 1 (6%)</td>
<td>No Response 1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider your tattoo(s) fashionable?</td>
<td>Yes 6 (35%)</td>
<td>Yes 37 (82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 11 (65%)</td>
<td>No 5 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 0 (0%)</td>
<td>No 3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When wearing typical clothing, at least one tattoo is visible.</td>
<td>Yes 4 (24%)</td>
<td>Yes 22 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 12 (70%)</td>
<td>No 21 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 1 (6%)</td>
<td>No 2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your tattoo(s) influence how you feel about yourself?</td>
<td>Yes 7 (41%)</td>
<td>Yes 18 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 8 (47%)</td>
<td>No 24 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 2 (12%)</td>
<td>No 3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*Frequency of Responses to Selected Survey Items by Tattooed Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider your tattoo(s) fashionable?</td>
<td>43 (69%)</td>
<td>16 (26%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When wearing typical clothing, at least one tattoo is visible.</td>
<td>26 (42%)</td>
<td>33 (53%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) in the workplace?</td>
<td>8 (13%)</td>
<td>52 (84%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) among family members?</td>
<td>27 (44%)</td>
<td>33 (53%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) among friends?</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>56 (90%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s) in general public atmosphere?</td>
<td>7 (12%)</td>
<td>53 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your tattoo(s) influence how you feel about yourself?</td>
<td>25 (40%)</td>
<td>32 (52%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

Comparison of Mean Scores (and Standard Deviations) of Tattooed and Non-tattooed Participants and t-test Results for Selected Survey Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tattooed (n = 62)</th>
<th>Non-tattooed (n = 150)</th>
<th>t-test (sig)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I find tattoos fashionable.</td>
<td>7.61 (2.36)</td>
<td>5.63 (2.38)</td>
<td>5.547 (0.000)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find tattoos socially acceptable.</td>
<td>8.23 (1.73)</td>
<td>6.65 (2.16)</td>
<td>5.574 (0.000)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe tattoos are appropriate only on certain body areas.</td>
<td>6.44 (3.18)</td>
<td>6.38 (2.97)</td>
<td>0.118 (0.906)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find tattoos socially acceptable in my circle of friends.</td>
<td>9.1 (1.48)</td>
<td>7.34 (2.42)</td>
<td>6.446 (0.000)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find tattoos acceptable in the workplace.</td>
<td>5.76 (2.58)</td>
<td>4.56 (2.56)</td>
<td>3.085 (0.003)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos are more socially acceptable among certain groups than others.</td>
<td>8.61 (1.69)</td>
<td>7.83 (2.30)</td>
<td>2.732 (0.007)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have seen a change in social acceptance of tattoos during my life.</td>
<td>7.81 (2.04)</td>
<td>7.2 (2.14)</td>
<td>1.949 (0.054)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My religious beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos.</td>
<td>2.73 (2.58)</td>
<td>3.15 (2.79)</td>
<td>1.055 (0.294)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos are acceptable in my religious beliefs.</td>
<td>6.19 (2.60)</td>
<td>5.4 (3.08)</td>
<td>1.855 (0.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My political beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos.</td>
<td>2.49 (2.29)</td>
<td>2.43 (2.02)</td>
<td>0.194 (0.847)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the continuum below, rate your political orientation.</td>
<td>4.98 (1.96)</td>
<td>5.06 (2.18)</td>
<td>0.245 (0.807)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tattooed (n = 62)</th>
<th>Non-tattooed (n = 150)</th>
<th>t-test (sig)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There have been people who have been influential in my perceptions of tattoos.</td>
<td>6.82 (2.65)</td>
<td>6.09 (2.80)</td>
<td>1.714 (0.082)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My feelings about tattoos have changed throughout my life.</td>
<td>6.15 (3.26)</td>
<td>6.00 (2.63)</td>
<td>0.314 (0.754)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos are not a good use of my money</td>
<td>4.77 (2.57)</td>
<td>5.89 (2.80)</td>
<td>2.806 (0.006)(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself knowledgeable about tattoos.</td>
<td>6.82 (2.30)</td>
<td>4.79 (2.44)</td>
<td>5.654 (0.000)(^a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Significant at \( \alpha < 0.05 \)

NOTE: survey scale on 10 points: 1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree

Table 7

*Comparison of Mean Scores (and Standard Deviations) of Male and Female Participants and t-test Results for Selected Survey Criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (n=46)</th>
<th>Female (n=166)</th>
<th>t-test (sig)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I find tattoos fashionable.</td>
<td>5.96 (3.03)</td>
<td>6.28 (2.39)</td>
<td>0.676 (0.501)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find tattoos socially acceptable.</td>
<td>7.28 (2.47)</td>
<td>7.07 (2.08)</td>
<td>0.544 (0.588)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe tattoos are appropriate only on certain body areas.</td>
<td>5.04 (3.29)</td>
<td>6.77 (2.84)</td>
<td>3.239 (0.002)(^a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7: (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean (and Standard Deviations)</th>
<th>Male (n=46)</th>
<th>Female (n=166)</th>
<th>t-test (sig)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I find tattoos socially acceptable in my circle of friends.</td>
<td>7.85 (2.31)</td>
<td>7.86 (2.34)</td>
<td>0.020 (0.984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find tattoos acceptable in the workplace.</td>
<td>5.59 (2.96)</td>
<td>4.72 (2.49)</td>
<td>1.812 (0.075)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos are more socially acceptable among certain groups than others.</td>
<td>8.48 (1.74)</td>
<td>7.95 (2.26)</td>
<td>1.717 (0.089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have seen a change in social acceptance of tattoos during my life.</td>
<td>7.38 (2.35)</td>
<td>7.38 (2.07)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My religious beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos.</td>
<td>3.35 (3.25)</td>
<td>2.93 (2.57)</td>
<td>0.798 (0.428)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos are acceptable in my religious beliefs.</td>
<td>6.44 (3.00)</td>
<td>5.38 (2.93)</td>
<td>2.100 (0.039)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My political beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos.</td>
<td>2.24 (2.25)</td>
<td>2.5 (2.05)</td>
<td>0.716 (0.477)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the continuum below, rate your political orientation.</td>
<td>5.6 (1.86)</td>
<td>4.89 (2.16)</td>
<td>2.110 (0.038)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There have been people who have been influential in my perceptions of tattoos.</td>
<td>5.67 (3.21)</td>
<td>6.48 (2.62)</td>
<td>1.562 (0.124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My feelings about tattoos have changed throughout my life.</td>
<td>5.57 (3.03)</td>
<td>6.18 (2.75)</td>
<td>1.232 (0.222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoos are not a good use of my money.</td>
<td>5.57 (2.77)</td>
<td>5.57 (2.79)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself knowledgeable about tattoos.</td>
<td>5.37 (2.79)</td>
<td>5.37 (2.08)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.996)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aSignificant at \( \alpha < 0.05 \)

NOTE: survey scale on 10 points: 1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree
Do people recognize social change with respect to tattoos?

On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, “I have seen a change in social acceptance of tattoos during my life.” Moderate positive agreement was exhibited by participants in both groups (tattooed $\bar{x} = 7.77$, non-tattooed $\bar{x} = 7.22$); there was no statistical difference between tattooed and non-tattooed respondents ($t = 1.949; \text{sig} = 0.054$). Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses to this question. One respondent offered the insightful comment, "[Tattoos are] not as tacky anymore, though in the 90's tattoos were trendy; i.e. armbands, tribal tattoos & Chinese symbols." Two tattooed respondents claimed that they saw little or no change in tattoos.

Seventy-two non-tattooed participants acknowledged change and increased social acceptance of tattoos during their lifetimes. Popularity, younger generational influences, the media, and styles of the time were some reasons given for their perceptions of change in tattoo acceptance. Reflective of social change recognition, one respondent noted, "When I was younger I didn't see many tattoos. They always seemed to be on criminals, rebels, bikers...but now it is common to see many people that [sic] have them." Only five non-tattooed respondents reported that they had not seen a change in the acceptance of tattoos.
Figure 1. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “I Have Seen A Change In Social Acceptance During My Life” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

When the respondents were asked "There have been people who have been influential in my perceptions of tattoos," the mean response from both groups was a moderate positive agreement (tattooed $\bar{x} = 6.82$, non-tattooed $\bar{x} = 6.09$). There was no statistical difference in responses between the tattooed and non-tattooed respondents ($t = 1.714$; sig = 0.082). Figure 2 illustrates responses to this item. Twenty-nine tattooed respondents noted that their tattoo perceptions were influenced by parents, friends, uncles, grandparents, partners, colleagues, celebrities, and media. An insightful comment, "My ex-girlfriend still looked beautiful after she got tattoos and she showed me you could get tattoos that were expressive and neat," reflects a positive perception of tattoos and process of tattoo acceptance. Some respondents noted that they look for approval from family and friends to get tattoos. One person illustrated this influence by stating, "I still have acceptance of others on the type of tattoo and where I place it." Eight tattooed respondents noted that they were not influenced by anyone with respect to perceptions of and acceptance of tattoos.
Sixty-eight non-tattooed participants related that family, friends, religious leaders, role models, celebrities, professional athletes, group affiliations and different atmospheres influenced their perceptions of tattoos, both in negative and positive ways. One person commented, "My parents influenced my idea of tattoos, but at college it is different because it is widely accepted." Fourteen non-tattooed participants reported that they were not influenced by others on their perceptions of tattoos.

Figure 2. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “There Have Been People Who Have Been Influential In My Perceptions of Tattoos” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

Participants were asked to respond, on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), to the question, "My feelings about tattoos have changed throughout my life." Means for both tattooed and non-tattooed groups indicated moderate positive agreement, reflecting change in perceptions of tattoos (tattooed $\bar{x} = 6.15$, non-tattooed $\bar{x} = 6.00$). There was no statistical difference between tattooed and non-tattooed groups ($t = 0.314$; sig = 0.754). Figure 3 presents distribution of responses. Seventeen tattooed
respondents noted that their attitudes towards tattoos have changed toward greater acceptance. Age, influential people, and popularity were noted as reasons for changed attitudes, as illustrated in this response, "When I was younger, I thought tattoos were a rebellious thing. Now it's just like piercing, a way to differentiate yourself." One respondent raised in a religious environment related how he overcame a previous negative attitude toward tattoos that was based on religious values, "When I was younger, I was going to keep my body pure and treat it as God's temple, but recently I went and got a tattoo in white ink of a cross to symbolize my beliefs." Six tattooed respondents reported that their attitudes toward tattoos became more negative over time. Professional career, life changes, and the current status of tattoos were reasons listed reflecting their negative changes towards tattoos. One survey participant explained, "It made me more anti-tattoo. People are just getting carried away with them." Thirteen tattooed respondents reported that their attitudes about tattoos have not changed.

Fifty-five non-tattooed individuals responded that they have changed their attitudes of tattoos, becoming either more tolerant or more negative towards tattoos. Representative factor in an attitude change was expressed by one respondent, "I used to believe it was ugly and idiotic, now I accept certain tattoos as long as there is a story behind it." Other participants also differentiated tattoos that had meaning as acceptable, whereas tattoos without meaning were unacceptable. Thirty-three non-tattooed participants reported that they had no attitude change towards tattoos.
Figure 3. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “My Feelings About Tattoos Have Changed Throughout My Life” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

Respondents were asked to respond on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) to the question, "Tattoos are not a good use of my money." Figure 4 illustrates the response distribution. There was significant difference in the mean responses between tattooed and non-tattooed groups ($t = 2.806; \text{sig} = 0.006$). The mean for tattooed participants exhibited neutral to slight disagreement to the statement ($\bar{x} = 4.77$), whereas the mean for non-tattooed respondents reflected slight agreement ($\bar{x} = 5.89$). Twenty-eight tattooed respondents noted that tattoos were a viable use of money, with some respondents noting the permanency of tattoos as an investment. One respondent reflected, "You can express yourself ultimately through tattoos. They're permanent and a bold statement." However, some respondents reported priorities for necessary expenses such as bills, and food over tattoos. Six tattooed respondents reported that tattoos are expensive, and that money could be used for better consumer choices.
Thirty-three non-tattooed participants reported that tattoos were expensive and not a good use of money. Forty-six non-tattooed participants reported that people can choose to spend their money on whatever they like, illustrated by the comment, "One could argue expensive pieces of ancient Chinese decoration tapestry could be a bad use of money, it's all about perceptions." The symbolism of tattoos emerged as a validating element, with agreement among some respondents that it was appropriate to spend money on tattoos when tattoos have meaning.

**Figure 4.** Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “Tattoos Are Not A Good Use of My Money” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

Respondents were asked to respond either yes or no to the question, "Have there been any pivotal events in your lifetime that have changed your perceptions of tattoos?" Fourteen tattooed respondents reported that, yes, life events such as death, tragic events, age, personality changes, personal independence, and life milestones were influential toward their perceptions of tattoos. Eighteen non-tattooed participants reported that their perceptions were changed by pivotal events during their lifetime. Relationships, deaths, life milestones, group affiliations, change in personality, independence, religion (finding, or leaving), influential people with tattoos were reported events.
What is the current level of social acceptance of tattoos?

Participants agreed that they find tattoos socially acceptable. On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), in response to the question “I find tattoos socially acceptable,” there was a significant difference between tattooed and non-tattooed respondents ($t = 5.574$; sig = 0.000). Tattooed respondents exhibited strong agreement ($\bar{x} = 8.23$) to the social acceptance of tattoos, while non-tattooed respondents showed moderate agreement ($\bar{x} = 6.65$). Figure 5 presents the distribution of these responses.

![Figure 5](image.png)

**Figure 5.** Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “I Find Tattoos Socially Acceptable” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), respondents were asked “I believe tattoos are appropriate only on certain body areas.” The means for both the tattooed and non-tattooed groups indicated moderate positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 6.44$; $\bar{x} = 6.38$, respectively) that was not statistically different ($t = 0.118$; sig = 0.906). Figure 6 shows this distribution. Nineteen tattooed respondents provided comments about their perceptions of inappropriate tattoo placements. These body placements included the face, head, neck, entire body, hands, arms, genitals, and chest. Similarly, 38 non-tattooed
participants reported their perceptions of inappropriate tattoo placements which included the face, head, neck, entire body, lower back, rib cage, hands, arms, genitals, and chest. Both tattooed and non-tattooed participants elaborated with comments about inappropriate tattoo placements using words such as, “creepy,” “disgusting,” “distracting,” “extreme,” “gross,” “inappropriate,” “odd,” “over the top,” “slutty,” “terrible,” “too much,” “trashy,” “thug like,” “unacceptable,” “unattractive,” “unprofessional,” “unflattering,” and “weird.” Interestingly some respondents stated that tattoo placement is up to the owner of the tattoo. One person elaborated, "I believe tattoos are personal choices. People have the right to express themselves." The relationship between body placement and public visibility emerged as a factor for both tattooed and non-tattooed participants. Six tattooed and 14 non-tattooed respondents commented that tattoos should be placed where they can be hidden easily. One participant explained, "I think that is more appropriate to have tattoos that can be hidden."

Figure 6. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “I Believe Tattoos Are Only Appropriate On Certain Body Areas” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents
On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), participants were asked, “I find tattoos socially acceptable in my circle of friends.” There was a significant difference between tattooed and non-tattooed respondents ($t = 6.466; \text{sig} = 0.000$). The mean of tattooed respondents reflecting very strong positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 9.10$), and non-tattooed respondents’ mean indicated moderately positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 7.34$). Figure 7 presents the distribution for this question.

_Non-tattooed_  |  _Tattooed_
---|---
Strongly Disagree | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 2  | 0  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
Strongly Agree    | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |

**Figure 7.** Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “I Find Tattoos Socially Acceptable In My Circle of Friends” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), participants were asked “I find tattoos acceptable in the workplace.” There was a statistically significant difference ($t = 3.085; \text{sig} = 0.003$), with tattooed participants’ mean indicating a slightly positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 5.76$), and mean of non-tattooed participants indicated a slightly negative agreement ($\bar{x} = 4.56$). Figure 8 illustrates these distributions.
Figure 8. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “I Find Tattoos Acceptable In the Workplace” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), participants were asked to respond to “Tattoos are more socially acceptable among certain types of groups than others.” Statistical significance resulted between groups (t = 2.732; sig = 0.007). The tattooed participants’ mean expressed strong positive agreement (x̄ = 8.61) and non-tattooed participants’ mean reflected a moderate positive agreement (x̄ = 7.83). Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of responses.

The acceptability of tattoos, according to 11 tattooed respondents, depends upon religion, political orientation, cultural status and beliefs. Five tattooed participants related tattoos acceptable among bikers, punk and Goth groups, artists, musicians, and professional athletes. Some people noted that having a tattoo was a requirement to be part of those groups, "If you are a teen Goth, skater, or biker it's almost a rite of passage to have a tattoo."

Thirteen non-tattooed participants responded that people of professional status should not have tattoos, as one explained, "I think that they are more socially acceptable
when you do not hold an important position in the workplace or serve as a role model. They are less acceptable for teachers, politicians, CEO's CFO's etc." Eight non-tattooed participants labeled occupation such as celebrities, bikers, hip hop artists, professional athletes, and rock stars as acceptable groups for their members to have tattoos. One person commented, "Rockers, musicians, drug addicts, rebels and more tend to have tattoos compared to those in school or work settings." Twelve non-tattooed respondents associated acceptable and unacceptable groups based on criteria including meaning of the tattoo, religious affiliation, belief systems, and political orientation. One respondent elaborated, "Some religious, racial/ethnic and gender groups are more open to accepting tattoos than others."

![Figure 9](image_url)

*Figure 9. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “I Find Tattoos Socially Acceptable Among Certain Types of Groups than Others” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents*
Does social change with respect to tattoo acceptance differ according to sex age, ethnic, educational, religious, geographical, and economic, and social class categories?

Sex comparisons were made for selected survey items (See Tables 3, 4, and 7). Male and female respondents did not display notable difference in the frequency of responses for most items reported in Table 3. Table 4 illustrates three areas of difference between males and females with tattoos. Female participants did report higher frequencies of negative reactions to their tattoos from family members than were reported by males. Females, more frequently than males, reported that they consider their tattoos fashionable. Additionally, females reported with more frequency than males that they have at least one visible tattoo.

On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), participants were asked the "My religious beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos." The mean of both groups reflected strong negative agreement (tattooed $\bar{x} = 2.73$, non-tattooed $\bar{x} = 3.15$), with no statistical difference ($t = 1.055$; sig 0.294). Figure 10 presents the distribution of the responses.
Figure 10. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “My Religious Beliefs Influence My Feelings About Tattoos” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), participants responded to, "Tattoos are acceptable in my religious beliefs." There was statistical significance between the two groups ($t = 1.855; \text{sig} = 0.066$). The mean of the tattooed group mean was moderate positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 6.19$), and the non-tattooed group mean indicated slight positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 5.40$) to the statement. Figure 11 displays the distribution of responses.
Figure 11. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “Tattoos Are Acceptable In My Religious Beliefs” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), participants were asked “My political beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos.” Both groups indicated strong disagreement (tattooed $\bar{x} = 2.49$, non-tattooed $\bar{x} = 2.43$) to the statement. There was no statistical difference ($t = 0.194$; sig = 0.847) between tattooed and non-tattooed respondents. Figure 12 reports the distribution of responses.

Figure 12. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “My Political Beliefs Influence My Feelings About Tattoos” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents
On a 10 point continuum, liberal to conservative, participants were asked “On the continuum below, rate your political orientation.” No statistical differences emerged between tattooed and non-tattooed participants ($t = 0.245; \text{sig} = 0.807$). Both tattooed and non-tattooed respondents’ means reflected neutral political affiliation (tattooed $\bar{x} = 4.98$, non-tattooed $\bar{x} = 5.06$). Figure 13 displays the distribution of responses.

*Figure 13. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “On The Continuum, Rate Your Political Orientation” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents*

Are tattoos considered fashion?

Both groups agreed that tattoos are fashionable. In response to the survey question (1 = strongly disagree; 10 = strongly agree), “I find tattoos fashionable,” there was statistically significant difference in the mean levels of tattooed and non-tattooed participants ($t = 5.547; \text{sig} = 0.000$) as shown in Figure 14. The mean for respondents with tattoos reflected moderate positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 7.61$) and the mean for the group without tattoos reflected slight positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 5.63$).
Figure 14. Frequencies of Agreement to the Statement, “I Find Tattoos Fashionable” for Tattooed and Non-Tattooed Respondents

On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), there was a statistical difference ($t = 5.654; \text{sig} = 0.000$) between tattooed and non-tattooed responses to the question, "I find myself knowledgeable about tattoos." Tattooed respondents’ mean reflected moderate positive agreement ($\bar{x} = 6.82$) and non-tattooed respondents’ mean reflected slight disagreement ($\bar{x} = 4.79$). Fourteen tattooed respondents noted that they received information about tattoos from media outlets such as magazines, Internet, and television. Twelve tattooed participants reported that they received information from friends, peers, or family. Eleven tattooed respondents reported that they sought information from tattoo artists, and tattoo shops. Figure 15 shows the distribution of responses.
Twenty-eight non-tattooed respondents reported that they find information about tattoos from media outlets, including the Internet, television, and magazines. Thirty-seven non-tattooed respondents noted that they receive information about tattoos from friends, family, peers and acquaintances. Six non-tattooed individuals reported that they seek artists and tattoo parlors for information regarding tattoo knowledge.

When participants were asked to elaborate in response to, "Do you plan on getting a tattoo in the near future? If yes, please explain why," tattooed respondents reported that family, friends, self-expression, milestones, and setbacks in life were purposes for their tattoos. Non-tattooed respondents, who indicated that they plan to get a tattoo, reported that artistic reasons, belief systems, family, friends, memorials, just because they like them, meaning, religious symbols, aesthetics, and group affiliations were reasons for wanting to get a tattoo.

Tattooed participants associated symbols that were related to fashion, such as designer brand symbols, popular images presently, and tattoo attractiveness in response
to the question, "Do you consider your tattoo(s) fashionable?" A woman with multiple tattoos confirmed her view of fashion stating, "They are girly and fun except for one. I also have a Chanel symbol." Some respondents noted that their tattoos were personal, and not meant for fashion status or to be popular. The status "Not for fashion, for personal sentiment" reflected this perception.

Are tattoos private fashion behaviors?

In response to, "Was the placement of your tattoo deliberate in terms of its visibility to others?," 39 tattooed participants noted that their tattoo placements were made specifically so that tattoos could be covered if desired. Participants indicated desire for control over the public viewing of their tattoos, and noted the importance of being able to hide their tattoos in professional settings. Comments such as, "I made sure placement was considered. Not to be displayed in public" illustrates this behavior. Some participants also noted that the location of the tattoo was considered because of anticipated aging of the body with comments such as, "I wanted them in certain places where the skin would not stretch. Also I can easily cover them or expose them."

Tattooed respondents were asked, "Do you undertake conscious efforts to cover your tattoo(s)? Please Explain." Twenty-eight respondents noted that they did not take conscious efforts to cover their tattoos. Sixteen respondents reported that they took conscious efforts to cover their tattoos under certain circumstances, including in front of disapproving family members, at work, during school activities where they are not permitted, and in front of people they did not know well.
Tattooed respondents were asked, "Have you experienced negative reactions among family, among friends, in the workplace, and in general public atmosphere?" Nine respondents reported that they have received negative reactions to their tattoos from family members. One respondent noted that negative reactions were exhibited by friends; another respondent noted that negative reactions occur as a result of living in a conservative town and that co-workers have responded negatively. Interestingly, females reported higher frequency of negative reaction from family members than males.

Tattooed respondents were asked, "Do your tattoos influence how you feel about yourself?" One respondent noted, "I feel less confident when exposing tattoos to certain groups of people." Another participant elaborated, "I like to relate to it [my tattoo] and I think it's a powerful statement." Additionally, a participant noted that his tattoo makes him feel unique and different.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

While recognition of social change with respect to tattoos was documented, and evidence of tattoos as a fashion phenomenon emerged, this study supports the notion that social influences restricting tattoo acceptance as a mainstream fashion continue to exist. Among this sample population, tattoos are perceived as socially acceptable fashion objects; however, there are complexities in the way that tattoos reflect fashion, largely due to their permanency on bodies. The personal motives for tattoos, and the risks associated with permanent body adornment, support tattoo consumption as an often private fashion behavior.

The overarching theme, emergent from qualitative survey data, addressing the acceptance of tattoos and their status as fashion items was visibility. A substantial portion of participants, both tattooed and non-tattooed, indicated that the ability to modify appearance, either to display or hide tattoos, was an important factor in tattoo consumption. This desire to modify personal adornment, through choice to “wear” a tattoo (i.e. visibly display the tattoo), reflects the flexible, discretionary, and temporary aspects of fashion. Related to participants’ desires or preferences for appearance modification, personal roles and symbolic communication were referenced. Predominantly, tattoos were labeled as inappropriate in professional settings; however, tattoos were noted by respondents as acceptable in certain groups including celebrities, bikers, music artists, and athletes. Each of the research questions are more fully explored below.
Do people recognize social change with respect to tattoos?

The result that both tattooed and non-tattooed participants moderately agreed that they have seen a change in social acceptance is insightful, particularly because of the young age of the people in the sample (the largest age category was 18-28). The universal agreement among participants that they had not experienced pivotal life events shaping their perceptions of tattoos (68% tattooed; 82% non-tattooed) provides support to seek insight about the underlying reasons for social change. Investigation of the symbolism value articulated by respondents—that tattoos with meaning are more readily accepted than tattoos without meaning—is an important future area for research that would lend additional insight into personal rationales associated with tattoo acceptance.

It was expected that tattooed participants would exhibit higher levels of perceived knowledge about tattoos than non-tattooed participants. The confirmation of this significant difference between groups reflects typical consumer behaviors of information gathering, product assessment, and post-purchase experience similar to consumption of other products. Knowledge levels are positively related to social change, thus it is expected that people with more knowledge would be more accepting of social change than those with less knowledge. Future research focusing on how prospective tattooees seek information, and the ways that tattoo knowledge is constructed, would lend insight into consumer behaviors related to planning and decision making with respect to tattoo consumption.
What is the current level of social acceptance of tattoos?

In contrast to the finding that tattoos have grown in social acceptance, both tattooed and non-tattooed participants agreed that body placement affects level of acceptability. The fact that higher proportion of females than males indicated that at least one of their tattoos is visible supports the occurrence of social change, not only regarding tattoo consumption, but also the relationship of tattoos and women. There was agreement that it is socially risky to tattoo the face, neck, hands, and entire body, indicating that people with tattoos still face marginalization in today’s society. This aspect of tattoo consumption introduces reference for the relationship between tattoo visibility and tattoo acceptability. This result supports research by Adams (2009) and Kosut (2006b) who also found that that tattoos are still associated with deviance. Future research should investigate the contrast between tattooed consumers who select highly visible tattoos and those who select less visible ones. Furthermore, the relationship between tattoo design, in addition to placement, and perceptions of acceptability and deviance should be more fully explored.

Interestingly, the majority of tattooed participants (56%) indicated plans to get tattooed in the near future, lending support for the concept of self-validation associated with previous consumption. The fact that 33% of currently non-tattooed participants indicated plans to get a tattoo in the near future shows acceptance for tattoos in society. This relatively high portion of respondents who are considering their first tattoo reflects support for tattoos as fashion – and the respondents as potential consumers of a fashionable behavior.
Does social change with respect to tattoo acceptance differ according to sex, age, ethnic, educational, religious, geographical, and economic, and social class categories?

The demographics of the sample limited this analysis opportunity. Interestingly, comparing male and female participants’ responses yielded few differences by sex. Using t-tests to compare male and female respondents, three items were significantly different by sex. Females believed more strongly than males that tattoos are appropriate only on certain body parts. Males believed more strongly than females that tattoos are acceptable in their religious beliefs, and the political orientations of males and females in this population sample were significantly different. Males were more conservative and females were more liberal. This finding contradicts previous knowledge that tattooing is historically a male dominant behavior.

The majority of participants were between the ages of 18-28 limiting the analysis of age comparison. Both tattooed and non-tattooed respondents noted that tattoo acceptance could be affected by religious and political environments; however, both tattooed and non-tattooed respondents strongly disagreed that politics and religion influenced their perceptions of tattoos. Future research exploring populations with greater diversity of political and religious members is needed to further understand the influences of these institutions.

Are tattoos considered fashion?

Increased acceptance of tattoos supports their role as fashion items. Both tattooed and non-tattooed participants further confirmed the role of tattoos as fashion with mild (non-tattooed participants) and moderate (tattooed participants) agreement to the
statement “I find tattoos fashionable.” Women, more so than men, reported that their tattoos are fashionable. Among the 69% of total tattooed participants who responded that they consider their tattoos to be fashionable, a variety of reasons were offered. The tattooed respondents reflected criteria such as receiving compliments, designs with fashion symbols, designs with meaning, trendy designs, creativity of design, and artistic execution of the tattoos when explaining why their tattoos are fashionable. The apparent disconnect between tattoo wearers’ interpretations of fashionability and the definition of fashion in scholarly literature warrants further investigation.

The fact that tattooed participants consistently reported higher levels of agreement with respect to acceptance of tattoos is consistent with their adoption behavior as tattoo consumers. Further research should explore the decision making process of tattoo consumption to determine whether the fashionability of tattoos influences adoption, or whether committed consumers (post-adoption) become more positive in their perceptions of tattoo acceptability.

The acknowledgement of tattoo popularity lends to the acceptability and fashionability of tattoos. Fashion theory is challenged by the fact that tattoos are permanent but their adoption by wearers reflects fashion behaviors. This study revealed that tattoos are still associated with traditional negative perceptions, resulting in marginalization of their wearers and also contradicting fashion theory. If an item is deemed fashion, then the item is typically accepted in social environments and its wearer is also accepted as a fashion adopter. Traditionally, fashions do not need to be associated with symbolic meaning or artistic interpretation to be accepted. However, in the case of
tattoos, numerous factors affect the way that others perceive them as fashion, and their wearers as fashion adopters. These factors include size and design of the tattoo, extent to which the wearer’s body is tattooed, the tattoo location on the body, the wearer’s role in society, and other overall appearance cues of the wearer. Thus, with visible tattoos, there is still some restraint on the acceptability and fashionability of tattoos, while at the same time there is growing acceptability of visible tattoos as fashion. There is a line past which bigger, bolder, more visible tattoos lose acceptability in mainstream culture. This is different from typical fashions where the more prominently a given style is displayed, the more that style is associated with fashionability.

Are tattoos private fashion behaviors?

Both tattooed and non-tattooed respondents noted that visible tattoos are inappropriate in a variety of situations. Related to visibility, both tattooed and non-tattooed respondents offered specific body locations that were deemed inappropriate or associated with negative symbolic messages. For example, "The neck area and face I think are not as appropriate. They are more branding of your social class, usually on ‘thug’ like people." Furthermore, tattooed participants offered insight regarding their decisions about tattoo placements. Tattooed participants indicated that they were concerned about the placements of their tattoos, and the visibility of their tattoos to others, reflected through the following representative comment, "Yes the decision of where to put my tattoo was based on visibility. I wanted it to be hidden until I wanted to show someone." Through qualitative data analysis, the rationale that if tattoos have meaning, then they are acceptable emerged. Comments such as, “I just don't personally
like tattoos, unless they have meaning behind them” were offered by respondents. Insight would be gained about private fashion behaviors through future research of tattooed respondents whose tattoos are generally not visible.

Interestingly, the majority of tattooed respondents reported that they had not felt negative reactions to their tattoos in the workplace, among family members, among friends, or in the general public atmosphere. This could be a reflection of (a) the careful choices described above with respect to tattoo visibility, (b) social change in terms of tattoo acceptability, and (c) successful navigation and execution of public and private self. It is important to note that, even though most tattooed participants had not received negative reactions from family members, a large proportion (44%) had. This proportion was larger than the respondents who had received negative reactions at work (13%), among friend (7%), and in general public atmospheres (12%), and was larger among females (49%) than males (29%). The role of family members’ influences toward decisions about tattoo behavior warrants further investigation, given the portion of tattooed respondents who indicated receiving negative reactions from family members. Perhaps family members are more critical of their kin than they are of general members of the population, including co-workers and friends. It could be that people with tattoos care more about family members’ reactions than reactions from others. Future research should investigate these topics.

Implications and Limitations

This study provides insight into the scope of social change that has occurred with respect to tattoo acceptance among a specific, convenient, sample population.
Investigation of the current state of tattoos as fashion provides an opportunity for media, retailers, and advertisers to capitalize on this phenomenon. Tattoos may be consumed as products per se or interpreted as fashion inspiration on accessories, home furnishings, and apparel. Pattern surface design inspired by the popularity of tattoos has wide application in the marketplace. Products such as temporary tattoos provide opportunities for consumers and retailers to participate in tattoo fashion behaviors without the complexities of permanency and code regulations. A better understanding of the phenomena of tattoo fashions will improve the ways tattoo inspired merchandise is marketed.

Consumers seem to want more information about tattoos. Retailers and marketers could assist consumers with learning about tattoo history, meanings, ideas for application, and design choices. Increased exposure of and consumer interest in tattoos presents retailers with an opportunity to offer accessible venues for people to experience tattoo consumption.

This study was limited to primarily young adult, Caucasian participants with some college education, thus the results cannot be generalized across populations. Future analysis surveying more diverse populations in terms of ethnicity, education, socioeconomic status, religion, and political affiliation should be conducted to better understand the phenomena of tattoos as fashion in a broader context. Additionally, exploration of sex and age differences would provide greater insight into the social change of tattoos, both in terms of tattoo acceptance and tattoos as fashion items.
REFERENCES


Vail, D. (1999). Tattoos are like potato chips ... you can't have just one: The process of becoming and being a collector. *Deviant Behavior*, 20(3), 253-273.


APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: IRB

Ohio University
Office of the Vice President for Research

11E020

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2. research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title: Tattoos as Fashion: Investigation and Analysis of Social Change

Primary Investigator: Tasha Ann Agustin

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: V. Ann Paulins

Department: Human and Consumer Sciences Education

Robin Stack, CIP, Human Subjects Research Coordinator
Office of Research Compliance

Date: 02/11/2011

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Survey Exploring
Perceptions of Tattoo as fashion

This study is exploring tattoos as fashion. The survey will take a few minutes to complete and your answers are confidential. To participate in this survey you must be 18 years or older. The participation in this survey is voluntary. You may stop taking the survey at any time. The results of this survey will be used for research in completion of a master's thesis for Tasha Agustin, a graduate student in the Apparel, Textiles, and Merchandising program at Ohio University.

Complete all sections of the survey, and please do not record your name anywhere on the survey. Again the responses in this survey are anonymous. In order to participate in the survey you must be 18 years or older.

Please complete the survey and return it me or the person administering the survey.

If you have any questions, please contact:
Project coordinator: Tasha Agustin, graduate student 330-518-8641
Graduate Advisor and Project Instructor: Dr. V. Ann Paulins 740-593-5880

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740) 593-0664.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey for my research thesis!

Tasha Agustin
1. What is your gender? (Please circle one)
   Male          Female
2. What is your age. __________________
3. What is your ethnic origin? (Please check one)
   _____ Native American   _____ Korean
   _____ Asian Indian      _____ Chinese
   _____ African American  _____ Japanese
   _____ Hispanic         _____ Filipino
   _____ Caucasian        _____ Vietnamese
   _____ Samoan           _____ Native
   _____ Hawaiian        
   Other ______________________
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Please check one)
   _____ Some high school
   _____ High school graduate
   _____ Some college
   _____ Associate's Degree
   _____ Bachelor's Degree
   _____ Graduate Study
5. In the household that you most closely affiliate with, what is your yearly household income? (Please check one)
   _____ Less than $10,000     _____ $60,000 to $69,999
   _____ $10,000 to $19,999    _____ $70,000 to $79,999
   _____ $20,000 to $29,999    _____ $80,000 to $89,999
   _____ $30,000 to $39,999    _____ $90,000 to $99,999
   _____ $40,000 to $49,999    _____ $100,000 to $149,999
   _____ $50,000 to $59,999    _____ $150,000 or more
6. Which of the following best describes the area you live in? (Please check one)
   _____ Urban
   _____ Suburban
   _____ Rural
   Name of the city of residence that you most currently affiliate with.
   City ____________________ State ________________________
7. What is your religious affiliation? (Please Check one)
   _____ Protestant Christian
____ Roman Catholic
____ Evangelical Christian
____ Jewish
____ Hinduism
____ Muslim
____ Other ______________________
____ Not Applicable

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) please respond to the following statements.

8. I find tattoos fashionable. (Please circle one)
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

9. I find tattoos socially acceptable. (Please circle one)
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

10. I believe tattoos are appropriate only on certain body areas. (Please circle one)
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
    Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

Please Explain
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

11. I find tattoos socially acceptable in my circle of friends.
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
    Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

12. I find tattoos acceptable in the workplace.
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
    Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

13. Tattoos are more socially acceptable among certain types of groups then others.
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
14. I have seen a change in social acceptance of tattoos during my life.  
1              2                 3               4                5              6            7            8              9
10

15. My religious beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos.  
1              2                 3               4                5              6            7            8              9
10

16. Tattoos are acceptable in my religious beliefs.  
1              2                 3               4                5              6            7            8              9
10

17. My political beliefs influence my feelings about tattoos.  
1              2                 3               4                5              6            7            8              9
10

18. On the continuum below, rate your political orientation.  
|            x                 x               x                x              x            x            x              x                   |
Liberal                        Conservative

19. There have been people who have been influential in my perceptions of tattoos  
1              2                 3               4                5              6            7            8              9
10


20. My feelings about tattoos have changed throughout my life
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9
10
Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree
Please describe how your attitude has or has not changed and explain why.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

21. Have there been any pivotal events in your lifetime that have changed your perceptions of tattoos?
   _____ Yes   _____ No
If yes please explain.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

22. Tattoos are not a good use of my money
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9
10
Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree
Please Explain
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

23. In your work experience, have tattoos been addressed in workplace appearance codes?
   _____ Yes   _____ No
If yes please describe.
24. I consider myself knowledgeable about tattoos.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
25. How do you get information about tattoos?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

26. Do you seek information about tattoos?

_____ Yes  _____ No
If yes please describe the type of information you seek and how.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

27. Do you plan on getting a tattoo in the near future?

_____ Yes  _____ No
27A. If yes please explain the reason or purpose of your tattoo.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

28. Do you currently have any tattoos? (Please check one)

_____ Yes  _____ No
28A. If yes, how many?

___
28B. Have you ever had any tattoos removed?
If you do not have any tattoos the survey is complete. Thank you for completing the survey!

29. How many tattoos do you currently have? If you are unable to come up with an exact number, please provide an estimate.

________

30. Do you consider your tattoo(s) fashionable?
   _____ Yes  _____ No
   Please explain.

31. Were there any specific reasons or influences that prompted your tattoo(s)? Please describe.

32. When wearing typical clothing, at least one tattoo is visible.
   _____ Yes  _____ No

33. Was the placement of your tattoo(s) deliberate in terms of its visibility to others? Please explain.
34. Do you undertake conscious efforts to cover your tattoo(s)? Please describe.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

35. Have you experienced negative reactions to your tattoo(s)
A) in the workplace    _____ Yes    _____ No
B) among family members  _____ Yes    _____ No
C) among friends       _____ Yes    _____ No
D) in general public atmosphere  _____ Yes    _____ No
Please describe.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

36. Where on your body is your first tattoo located?

________________________________________________________________________

37. What year did you get your first tattoo?

________________________________________________________________________

38. Describe the circumstances and reasons related to your first tattoo.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

39. What year did you get your most recent tattoo?

________

Do your tattoo(s) influence how you feel about yourself?
_____ Yes    _____ No
Please describe.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
40. Was there anything else that you would like to share about your tattoo(s)?